‘Hellenic Intellectual Culture’ and the Origins of Weber’s Political Thinking

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Abstract
This essay explores what Thucydides in particular, and classical studies in general, meant to Max Weber. Of course, only a handful of Weber’s writings make use of directly classical material; but judging his work quantitatively in this way tells us relatively little about his perspective on the world, and the stance he adopted to it. Hennis finds a way into this problem through consideration of Roscher’s own Habilitation dissertation, Leben, Werk und Zeitalter des Thukydides (1842). Taking up Weber’s comment in the methodological essay on Roscher, that it is directed to Roscher’s early writings, Hennis shows how this can illuminate our understanding both of Weber’s classical background and his ‘historical methodology’.

Keywords: Classical studies, history, Max Weber, methodology, politics, Thucydides.

All previous objective comprehension of the world weaves on a cloth begun by the Greeks. We see with the eyes of the Greeks, and use their phrases when we speak.¹

In this final attempt at an understanding of the biography of Max Weber’s writings I wish to present a thesis expressed in this aphorism from the introduction to Burckhardt’s Griechische Kulturgeschichte. Weber had eaten of the tree of knowledge: he was consciously perceptive, but no sage, and certainly not a prophet. Behind him there lay Plato, Kant and, of course, Rickert’s Wertlehre. After Nietzsche, he was the first conscious ‘sophist’: he viewed the world with the eyes of a Greek and expressed himself in these terms. Here I resume my initial venture against the anachronism of treating Weber as a sociological ‘founder father’, a critique that is now more than twenty years old. Among the tasks I then proposed was that we

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should do more than simply place Weber’s work within contemporary ‘bourgeois’ thought; his work should also be treated as part of the conception of a ‘fully-developed’ mankind that proved such an irritant to modernity—a conception that defined political thought from Machiavelli through Rousseau and Tocqueville to Weber. Here I will try to make something of this idea. Appraisal, critique and above all further development of this proposition must, on the other hand, be left to specialists.

There is a passage invoking Thucydides in Jakob Burckhardt’s Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen which, like little else, makes science so appealing to a young person. I have in mind the passage where he refers to sources that stem from great men. They are, he writes, simply inexhaustible; books that have been dissected a thousand times still have to be read once more ‘because they present a peculiar aspect, not only to every reader and every century, but also to every time of life. It may be, for instance, that there is in Thucydides a fact of capital importance which someone will note in a hundred years’ time.’ The present writer first read Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen as a fifteen year old, and this statement expressed something not easily forgotten: that science could be a passion, could not be pursued entirely dispassionately. For me, Max Weber is a ‘great man’, and I read his texts as ‘sources’, so that I might better understand this man.

I have never noticed a new fact of great significance in Thucydides. I cannot even read him in the original; but I do not think that necessary for my purposes. I think a translation will do: my topic is Weber, I want to shed a little more light on his intellectual development, on the biography of his work. Given the variety of translations and the wealth of commentary there is no need for me to read Thucydides in the original.

In approaching this topic I have sought to keep in mind a remark made by Eduard Meyer, to whom we shall come shortly. He noted that there was an increasing tendency in recent historical writing ‘...to turn scientific method into its opposite: instead of proceeding from the quite certain to the less certain in interpretation and composition, conclusions were drawn from indefinite factors and then used to overturn the known and the familiar, forcing an artificial intuition

3. Translated and abbreviated as Reflections on History (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1943); here p. 29; the sense of this passage can also be found in the ‘Introduction’ to Burckhardt, The Greeks and Greek Civilization, p. 10.

upon historical material'.

I take this proposition to heart; but, all the same, ‘Nothing can be done here without some hypotheses’. That is, of course, a quote from Max Weber.

So, to begin with, did Weber know his Thucydides? How significant was classical Periclean Greece for him? Did this singular epoch of world history make any impression upon his way of thinking, perhaps reinforcing his early inclination? What was Hellas to him? ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’, his formulation, was certainly one of the ‘crucial aspects’ in the ‘cultural development of the Occident and the Near East’, ‘ranking equally’ with the ‘historical significance’ of ancient Judaism, Roman Law, and a Roman Church founded upon the Roman concept of administration, running into Protestantism as the ultimate pivot for the ‘cultural development of the Occident’. Why is ‘Science as a Vocation’ really the only classical text that comes to mind if we think about Weber’s assessment of the universal historical significance of ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’ — that swansong to all the hopes stemming from a science arising out of the spirit of ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’, that ‘enormous experience that gave inspiration to Socrates’ pupils’? The impact of Weber’s speech was likewise ‘enormous’. Whoever began his studies in a German university after 1945 could detect the aftershocks in the minds and souls of all the better teachers.

Prompted by his writings on the sociology of religion, but also by the impact of the two important addresses on science and on politics, Weber’s contemporaries freely compared him with Old Testament prophets of doom. That fitted the time: Spengler, exis-

7. The most important writings of Weber were available shortly after the end of the war. Dieter Henrich’s dissertation was completed in 1952. Despite opposition from ‘Frankfurters’ Weber was the theme of the 1924 Sociological Congress. Nonetheless, a positive reception was withheld from Weber, especially on the part of political science, due to the influence on opinion of its leading ‘founding fathers’ — see Gangolf Hübinger, Jürgen Osterhammel and Wolfgang Welze, ‘Max Weber und die wissenschaftliche Politik nach 1945’, Zeitschrift für Politik 37 (1990), pp. 181-204. For the impact of Weber on the author see ‘Political Science as a Vocation. A Personal Account’ in my Max Weber’s Central Question, pp. 211-35.
tential philosophy, the irrational fascination with doom and death.  
There is however another image of Weber’s intellectual profile that I find more convincing. We have Eduard Baumgarten to thank for it. During the final phase of his life, when Weber lived in Munich, the Spartakist rising took place, the Munich Workers’ Republic came and went, and Kurt Eisner was murdered by a young Count Arco. When Weber heard that contemptible anti-Semitic comments had been made in the Student Assembly he hurried to the lecture theatre, thunderously brought the students to order, raged at the feebleness of the Rektor and the spinelessness of the Senate, and in so doing made public internal university debates. The Rektor’s office wrote to him appealing for ‘collegial regard in respect of possible damage to the standing of the Senate’. Even the newspaper, otherwise well disposed to Weber, warned him to have due regard to the unpleasant consequences that could follow for his own standing as a university professor. He had a short answer for the newspaper: what were they getting so worked up about? And to the Rector he stated that ‘where public interests of such importance are at stake I am quite happy to let collegiality go hang’.

Weber was asked by the Rektor to appear before the Senate to justify his actions. The following comes exactly from Baumgarten, 9 who had the story from Heinrich Wölfflin, the great art historian, who told Baumgarten after Weber’s death of what happened in that Senate meeting.

We sat in our extravagantly-upholstered seats. The historian next to me, von Müller, said to me ‘My dear professor, the most excitable man in the world is about to storm in’. Weber came and sat down quietly. He looked at the assembly with interest, somewhat darkly. I said to my neighbour, ‘I can’t see that this man is so excitable’. Weber stood up. He cast his eyes over us. One of his first sentences was ‘I hope you do not think that this assembly could impress me in the slightest. I am happiest when chairlegs begin to fly.’ Then he gave an account of the issues surrounding the pardon to the Count, the scandal of the student


assembly. The man invited by the Rektor to give an account of himself became at once the Rektor’s judge. The Rektor made a muted objection to Weber’s forcefulness of expression, and then Weber left the room, his face half scornful, half angry. We followed him out with a word. He had shamed us all. But I also learned something during this hour that I had not previously known: in this figure I saw, for the first time, what a Hellenic speaker must have been like.\(^\text{10}\)

There is a second witness to this way of looking at Weber. During the Summer semester of 1918 Weber lectured in the University of Vienna’s large auditorium—more or less to try the experience out again, to see if he could do it. Towards the end of the semester, on 16 July 1918, the *Neue Wiener Tageblatt* printed in its feuilleton section an appraisal of the German professor’s performance.\(^\text{11}\) It noted that since the days of Unger, Lorenz von Stein and Ihering, no academic teacher in the Law Faculty had been such a draw as Max Weber. This extraordinary power of attraction lay not just in the rhetorical mastery of the man, nor in the originality and objectivity of his thought, avoiding all phrase-making, …but first and foremost in his ability to rouse feelings that slumber in the souls of others. In every word it is clear that he regards himself as the heir of a German past, and that he is governed by a consciousness of responsibility to his successors… Tall and bearded, this scholar looks like a stonemason from the time of the Renaissance. Only the eyes lack the unselfconsciousness and sensuality of the artist. His gaze comes from hidden depths, and sweeps into the farthest distance. His mode of expression corresponds to this external appearance. There is something eternally substantial in it. We have here today an almost Hellenic way of seeing.

The number of sciences that lay claim to Weber as their firstborn roughly matches the number of cities that declared themselves to be Homer’s home town. Without any doubt he began with law, his Habilitation being remarkable for its combination of Roman with Commercial Law, the latter normally the domain of German Jurisprudence. Otto von Gierke was quite out of sympathy with this combination, from which he found it hard to make anything; although a compulsory foundation in Weber’s legal sociology would provide a kind of guarantee for the subsequent quality of legal studies. And

\(^{10}\) My italics, Wilhelm Hennis.

\(^{11}\) On Max Weber’s period in Vienna see the extensive material in Franz Josef Ehrle, ‘Max Weber und Wien’ (dissertation, Freiburg i. Br., 1991), from which I took the reference to Erich von Körnigen’s report that Weber reacted ‘angrily’ to this ‘theatrical review’—Ehrle, pp. 57ff.
sociology? Weber’s ‘sociology of verstehen’ has nothing at all to do with that which today is practised internationally as ‘sociology’.

*Political science*, at any rate a German political science influenced by Leo Strauss, Eric Voegelin and Hannah Arendt, held fast to this ‘value-free nihilist’. It was, however, pure coincidence that Weber did not, shortly before his premature death, assume the Bonn chair of Politics (no suffix)\(^{13}\) that had been expressly created according to his wishes by Carl Heinrich Becker; instead he took over Lujo Brentano’s vacant chair of economics in Munich, mainly for domestic reasons.

*Economics* has a good claim, if not via primogeniture, then through adoption—Weber’s professorial positions in Freiburg, Heidelberg, Vienna and Munich were all chairs of economics. But the modern discipline has all but forgotten Weber, as they have the German Historical School of Economics of which Weber always thought himself a member. There has recently been a slow dawning of a somewhat antiquarian interest in this perspective—initiated in Japan, England and Sweden more than in Germany.\(^ {14}\) The author has the complete lack of interest in older German economics on the part of Freiburg University’s economists to thank for the initial impulse to study the relation of Weber and Thucydides; specifically, the weeding out of older holdings from the library of the Economics Seminar during the 1970s.


13. Palonen is mistaken (*Eine Lobrede für Politiker*, p. 8) in assuming that there was no German political science in Weber’s time. Although not as a discipline so differentiated as today’s ‘Politology’, this cannot be said to be a disadvantage. See, for an account of Politics in Weber’s time, Gangolf Hübinger, ‘Staatstheorie und Politik im Kaiserreich: Georg Jellinek, Otto Hintze, Max Weber’, in Hans Maier et al. (eds.), *Politik, Philosophie, Praxis.—Festschrift für Wilhelm Hennis* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988), pp. 143ff.

Which leaves History. The ‘Prefatory Remarks’ to the *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion* begin as follows:

The son of modern European culture would, inevitably and justifiably, approach universal historical problems from the following perspective: what sequence of events has engendered those cultural phenomena which, unique to the occident, we like to think as having developed in such a way as to assume universal significance and validity?

Only in the occident is there ‘science’ elaborated in a way that we recognise as having ‘validity’. Empirical knowledge, reflection on problems of life and of the world, philosophical and theological wisdom, knowledge and observation of the most sublime kind – these can all be found elsewhere, especially in India, China, Babylon and Egypt. It is true that the complete development of systematic theology is suited to Hellenically-influenced Christianity, and that only the beginnings of such are to be found in Islam and some Indian sects. But, Babylonian and every other astronomy lacked the mathematical foundation that the Greeks first provided – a circumstance that makes Babylonian astrology all the more astonishing. Indian geometry lacked rational ‘proof’; again, a product of the Hellene spirit that also created mechanics and physics… Nowhere outside the Occident did a rational chemistry develop. An otherwise highly-developed Chinese historiography lacked Thucydidean pragmatism.15

Here at least Thucydides turns up as an adjective. And it goes on — the ‘state’ in the sense of a political institution was known only to the West—until we arrive at a statement that proves central for the whole work: and this is also true of that most fateful power of our modern life, *capitalism*.16

What do historians make of Weber’s claim that they practise historical science in a unique manner? Max Weber was central to the 1985 Annual Historical Conference in Stuttgart. Jürgen Kocka edited the proceedings under the title *Max Weber, Historian*.17 Not once in almost three hundred pages do we find the name Thucydides. This despite the fact that Max Weber retains an eminent and undisputed stature in the speciality of ancient history, where scholarship is no hollow boast. The foremost ancient historians of the past century — Arnaldo Momigliano, Moses Finley, and in Germany Alfred Heuß — could not praise him highly enough. So, what does this reputation rest upon? On Weber’s contribution to Roman history, specifically to Roman agricultural history, linked to his dissertation

15. GARS I, pp. 1-2.
16. GARS I, p. 4.
17. See Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft Bd. 73, Göttingen 1986.
of 1891 ‘Roman Agricultural History and its Significance for State and Private Law’. Beyond this, only the fragment ‘The City’ and those sections relating to Hellas in the 1909 version of the reference book essay ‘Agrarian Relations in Antiquity’ interest specialist historians, although with increasing intensity. Consequent upon the editorial work connected to the Gesamtausgabe issues relating to the biography of the work have become of greater interest: the relationship with Eduard Meyer is studied, and the importance to Weber of Jacob Burckhardt and Fustel de Coulanges is recognized.

Now it is quite true, although somewhat remarkable, that page for page Weber’s contribution to ancient history is confined almost exclusively to Roman history and real property in antiquity; while, on the other hand, those rationalizing forces listed in the ‘Prefatory Remarks’ as Occidental ‘achievements’ are credited almost exclusively with Greek origins. Is the ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’ to which Weber ascribes such a prominent place in ‘Occidental cultural development’ perhaps a blind spot in Weber’s universal historical perspective?18 Or, to pose the question in an even more direct fashion: is the classical epoch of Greece, and in particular, a Thucydides whom Weber barely mentions, perhaps more important to his universal historical comprehension than Rickert, Husserl, Windelband and all the rest who are repeatedly cited as of preeminent importance for his sociological method? More important than his doctoral supervisor Goldschmidt; or than August Meitzen, who had suggested the topic of his Habilitation; more important even than Theodor Mommsen, the dominant scholarly figure in Weber’s younger years?

That will do as an introduction to my original question, what did Thucydides mean to Max Weber? I have raised it since I believe there is a tolerably adequate point of connection in the writings, perhaps even a ‘pivot’ for the entire work, or at any rate for his concepts, endlessly raked over under the name of ‘method’.

That a kind of ‘elective affinity’ unites Weber and Thucydides, that there is a ‘line’ from the one to the other, has been remarked

18. Finley, Kritische Studien zur Geschichtswissenschaft Bd. 73, p. 96 remarked on this constricted outlook: ‘Greek history seems however to me a far more interesting topic, in part because Weber only made some passing remarks upon it, or gave some flawed explanations’. That cannot be the last word. Even if Weber only made a few ‘remarks’ on Greek history, his lasting preoccupation with it is reflected in his ‘concepts’, i.e., what might be called his ‘theory’. For Weber’s conception of ‘theory’ see the acute ‘Erklärung’ that he wrote with Sombart in response to his co-editor Edgar Jaffé’s article ‘Das theoretische System der kapitalistischen Wirtschaftsordnung’, Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik 44 (1917), p. 348.
upon before. Both are political ‘realists’, both are connected in their efforts to develop the power of political ‘judgement’. Many years ago in his major article ‘Weber before Weberian Sociology’ Lawrence Scaff pointed to their shared ‘heroic’ or ‘pessimistic’ realism, raising the question of whether ‘Weberian sociology’ has ever freed itself from this ‘Thucydidean’ pessimism, or whether this pessimism is rather deeply rooted in its ‘categories’ and basic concepts. This question of a ‘relationship’ has long preoccupied me; pure chance gave me a clue. We need to talk about Wilhelm Roscher.

In 1987, at Wolfgang Mommsen’s London conference on ‘Max Weber and his Contemporaries’, I presented to a sceptical audience the importance of Karl Knies as a teacher of Weber, at least in respect of the substance of what he learned. As a student in Heidelberg Weber attended with growing profit Knies’ economics lectures—the extensive notes in Weber’s files held at first Merseburg and today in Berlin provide ample evidence for this—and in 1897 he became Professor of Political Economy in direct succession to Knies. Could Knies be regarded as a ‘contemporary’? Had not Weber, in his first ‘methodological’ essay on Roscher and Knies, ‘surpassed’ Knies, coldly ‘finished him off’ in fraternity-speak? Why did he bring Wilhelm Roscher into this? In his first comment on Roscher’s ‘historical method’, the first section of a three-part essay, begun in 1903 and abandoned unfinished in 1906, he states quite clearly: ‘We analyse here in detail Roscher’s long-superseded ideas’. What did Weber, having regained his health, want with Roscher? Was there perhaps something for which he was lastingly grateful? Michael Sukale has recently conclusively demonstrated that we should not look to Weber’s account of Roscher for insight into Roscher’s real position. Sukale argues that Weber often ‘…distorts what he reads, or he reads very superficially’. If we want to know about Roscher,

23. WL, p. 3 n. 1.
then Weber’s chapter on Roscher is just as unhelpful as the one on Knies. Nonetheless, the section of ‘Roscher and Knies’ devoted to Roscher is of the greatest importance for the ‘biography of the work’. It shows the newly-recovered Weber his theme, his real historical ‘method’, not so much in his analysis of Roscher, who is only the intermediary here: more, it is a confrontation with Thucydides, the undisputed master of occidental historiography.

Catherine Colliot-Thélène writes in her marvellously acute studies on Weber—which certainly mark a decisive shift in French Weberian studies to a rigorous work-historical reading—that one needs un flair de policier, a nose for detection, if one is to identify scholarly sources. It is true, he had no didactic or systematic ambition, and today we recognize many of his allusions only with some effort. But we do not require any specialist skills to make the assumption

25. A reliable overview of Roscher’s political writings can be found in Dieter Koop’s contribution to Wilhelm Bleek and Hans J. Lietzmann (eds.), Schulen der deutschen Politikwissenschaft (Opladen: Leske & Budrich, 1999), pp. 131-57. There is no reference here to Thucydides, apart from in the bibliography.


27. Weber’s greatest clanger as a political thinker who could be more or less acceptable for present-day purposes is most certainly his flippant remark that ‘We made human beings of the Poles’. He was referring to the fundamental differences between Germans and Poles in nutrition and housing, a central element of the studies on rural labour (the ‘damned lack of need’ on the part of Poles in comparison with the ‘claims’ of German rural workers). In saying this he simply echoed a comparison, quite probably familiar to his listeners, that Macaulay had made in his History between the living conditions of the settlers and the native Irish—Thomas Babington Macaulay, The History of England from the Accession of James the Second (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855), III, p. 136. In his 1906 study of Russia Weber expressly referred to Poland as ‘this Russian Ireland’—Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik 23 (1906), p. 364. Remarkably, there is no mention in any of Wolfgang Mommsen’s many works on Weber’s ‘nationalism’, nor in Cornelius Torp’s study Max Weber und die preußische Junker (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1998) of Leo Wegener’s dissertation Der wirtschaftliche Kampf der Deutschen mit den Polen (Posen, 1903), which Weber supervised. Wegener was obviously one of Weber favourite pupils (Marianne Weber, Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild [Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1926], p. 257); he read the ‘very detailed’ draft dissertation in Rome, as Marianne reported to Helene (Letter of 26 November 1901). Some of the letters from Wegener to Weber dating from 1893–1903 can be found in the Weber-Schäfer holding (Munich). Germans, whether they are estate owners, craftsmen or rural labourers, all come off badly; the ‘strength of character’ of the Poles is praised. Why then did Weber only want Poles in his future seminars, alongside Jews and Russians?
that Weber knew Roscher’s writings on politics, and that he freely used and indeed plundered Roscher’s encyclopaedic work for his own ends, especially for the ‘sociology of domination’.29

Weber’s ‘bright ideas’ are hardly ever the consequence of ‘influence’ in the conventional literary sense. These ‘bright ideas’ mostly take the form of contexts or contrasts, and they were his own. He had an immense knowledge of literature, so he knew where to look. Could he also have read Roscher with profit on ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’? Where might we find traces of that in Weber’s work?

If I am not mistaken, then it is there for all to see in the opening pages of the Wissenschaftslehre—despite the fact that the enormous literature on Weber’s ‘methodology’, which always begins with ‘Roscher and Knies’, has never remarked upon it.30 On the second page of the Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre, quite plain for all to see, Weber writes: ‘We therefore begin with a presentation of Roscher’s basic methodological views, as to be found in his Leben, Werk und Zeitalter des Thukydides (1842)’.31

28. Collected together as Politik. Gesichichtliche Naturlehre der Monarchie, Aristokratie und Demokratie and cited as such by Weber in WL, p. 28 n. 4.
29. This is true above all of Weber’s conception of ‘plebiscitarian leadership democracy’ and its antecedents in the post-Napoleonic concept of Caesarism. Roscher’s Umrisse zur Naturlehre des Caesarismus (Abhandlungen der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der Sächsischen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften Nr. IX; Leipzig, 1888) is certainly still the most detailed treatment of the issue. Peter Baehr investigates the differences between Roscher and Weber in his Caesar and the Fading of the Roman World: A Study in Republicanism and Caesarism (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1997).
31. The complete title is: Leben, Werk und Zeitalter des Thukydides. Mit einer Einleitung zur Aesthetik der historischen Kunst überhaupt (Göttingen: Vandenhoecck & Ruprecht, 1842). This is Roscher’s (he was born in Hanover in 1827) Göttingen Habilitation dissertation dedicated to Leopold Ranke and Heinrich Ritter. Roscher linked greater ambitions with this book; it was presented as the first volume (‘Prolegemona-Thucydides’) of a series: ‘Clio: Contributions to the History of Historical Art’. It was, according to the ‘Preface’, supposed to be followed by a volume on Herodotus and Xenophon, and a third that would deal with the ‘five great Roman historians’. The importance of Roscher’s Thucydides for Weber clearly escaped Johannes Winckelmann, whose historical-critical work on Weber is so praiseworthy. The second edition of the Wissenschaftslehre (1951) contains the beginnings of a bibliographic commentary that was omitted from later editions, together with a priceless subject index (pp. 630-87!). In that edition no comment is made either to the
Weber based his exposition of ‘Roscher’s Historical Method’ – the title of the first part of the Roscher essay – on a number of Roscher’s early writings, explaining in a footnote: ‘There are hardly any significant material changes to the central points of importance to us in the later volumes and editions of Roscher’s main writings’.

We are not interested here in ‘Roscher’s main writings’, but rather solely in the status of Roscher’s Thucydides in ‘forming’ Weber’s image of ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’. And beyond this, it will also become evident that the work has consequences for Weber’s own historical way of thought; or as we might also say, his method of ‘sociological understanding’, or even his ‘political thought’.32

I. ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’ and the ‘private reading’ of the Gymnasiast

For this we need to form an idea of the school routine and studiousness of the schoolboy ‘Maximilian Weber’, as he is officially recorded in the class lists of the Empress Auguste Gymnasium in Charlottenburg, where he completed his Abitur during Easter 1882. We do know about Weber’s reading of the classics during this period, the intensity with which he devoured them, his know-all judgements—Cicero is the first literary figure that he puts straight—as well as the way that the first decades of the Second Reich marked his choice of reading. All of this we can read in the screeds that he wrote to his cousin Fritz Baumgarten (1856–1913), eight years older and living in Straßburg. Some of these letters were included by Marianne Weber reference Weber makes to Roscher and Thucydides on p. 2, nor on p. 28 n. 4, where he outlines Roscher’s most important writings. Clearly he had no luck in finding a copy of this extremely rare book while he was attempting to reconstruct Weber’s working library. Nor has Hubert Treiber, who has made such efforts with Weber’s ‘ideal library’, managed to locate a copy of Thucydides—see his ‘Max Weber und die russische Geschichtsphilosophie. Ein “erster Blick” in Webers “ideale Bibliothek”’, in V. Krech and H. Tyrell (eds.), Religionssoziologie um 1900 (Würzburg: Ergon, 1995), pp. 249ff. I am all the more thankful to him for his studies, especially concerning Nietzsche’s knowledge of Roscher’s Thucydides. Once this essay is printed I will deposit my copy—without doubt Max Weber’s own schoolboy copy—in the Max-Weber-Arbeitstelle, Munich. I am deeply grateful to my student friend Kurt von Eicken for his research into Weber’s schooling in ancient languages in the Berlin Library for Educational Research.

32. See Palonen’s acute and accurate comment on this, Eine Lobrede für Politiker, p. 8: ‘Politiologie would accordingly be a science directed at “interpretive understanding” of rule-breaking and rule-creating activity’.

in her collection of Jugendbriefe; but among the papers preserved in Munich and Dahlem there is more in this line of interest to us. Fritz played a very important role here.

We know a great deal more about Weber’s school years, and especially his interest in the world that ancient languages opened up for him, than the maximum that the humanistic Gymnasium sought to cultivate in its pupils.33 Weber’s style of thought, taking position with respect to the world, was certainly not shaped by anything earlier than his reading of classical writers—and this made a deep impression upon his scholarly interests and categories. He schooled ‘temperament’ and ‘spirit’ through the ‘ancients’—just like Nietzsche did in Schulpforta and Jacob Burckhardt in the Basel Gymnasium. One argued with these ‘contemporaries’, they were quite familiar, although they did not have much to tell anyone. By the time that a young person of Weber’s calibre moved from school to university he was fully prepared to ‘take a position’ with respect to the world as a person, as a politician, or as a scholar—for every ‘objective’ scientific statement implies a ‘standpoint’ once it goes beyond purely positivistic data processing. The capacities that a well-educated person should have acquired by the end of the school years: eagerness to learn, application, critical capacity, an ability to distinguish ‘great’ from ‘lesser’, the important from the unimportant, and the direction to be taken for career and ‘higher studies’—all of these factors were bound up with matriculation, together naturally with the ability to embrace the new, and not regress into philistinism.

Weber’s 46-page-long essay ‘Observations on the character, development and history of peoples of the Indo-Germanic nations’34 studies the cultivation of ‘temperament’ and ‘spirit’ among these peoples, a reflection of the manner in which the classically-based Gymnasium, through contact with these ‘our closest strangers’ sought to rouse, to train, not simply the intellect but also the faculty of sensitivity, that ‘temperament’ or ‘disposition’ rated normatively only in terms of ‘low’, ‘higher’, or ‘highest’. Assuming the arousal of this ‘temperament’, any familiarity with the manner in which the heroes of Homer and the figures of Greek tragedy are ensnared by circumstance leads

33. For an outline of the objectives of instruction in ancient languages Friedrich Paulsen’s Geschichte des gelehrtten Unterrichts (Leipzig, 2nd edn, 1897) remains the classical source, but the works of Fritz Baumgarten are also noteworthy—more on this below. A warning of the present threat to this heritage can be found in Manfred Fuhrmann, Bildung. Europas kulturelle Identität (Stuttgart: Reclam, 2002).
34. Berlin Nachlaß.
necessarily to a confrontation with their weakness and depravity, or perhaps even their refinement and moral strength. If the spirit (‘intellect’) was sufficiently prepared by a training in grammar a fascinating world opened up to the (open-minded!) pupil: an alien world, yet all the same comprehensible without too much difficulty, furnishing figures and quotations that would serve a lifetime. This learning was for life, not for the school—that was the idea at least. The testimony that we have from Weber’s school years brings to life the lasting impression that the humanistic Gymnasium could make, the degree of curiosity, hard work and inquisitiveness—the sheer pleasure in learning—that could be stimulated. Quite obviously Weber never knew what boredom was. As the 15-year old began his lengthy reading of Cicero he borrowed the letters so that he might ‘get a more exact picture of the man’ as he wrote at the close of the letter to his cousin Fritz Baumgarten on 10 August 1879:

You sleep, eat, drink and work, time is like butter in your hands: and should tedium ever creep up on us—something by the way that should never happen to reasonable people—I know what I will do: I will resort to desperate measures and learn Herr von Varnbühler’s customs duties by heart!^{35}

The impression that Weber’s school years made upon him cannot, in my opinion, be underestimated. Marianne Weber’s testimony shows how quickly Weber’s interests and perspective were complete, how soon he formed his ‘philosophy’ as would be said today. He built upon his earliest stages, including his schooling; and as we shall see Roscher’s *Thucydides* provided some of the most important impulses for the rest of his life.

This assessment of the great impression made upon Weber by his school years conflicts with Jürgen Deininger’s view. In his introduction to the *Gesamtausgabe* edition of *Roman Agrarian History* Deininger rejects Eduard Baumgarten’s assumption that Weber’s schooling was of seminal importance to him, and argues that ‘…the decisive turning point for Weber’s scholarly interest in antiquity can be traced to his enrolment in the Heidelberg Faculty of Law in 1882’.^{36}

Deininger reaches this conclusion having thoroughly examined the letters written during the school years. My own (repeated) scrutiny of


^{36.} Max Weber Gesamtausgabe I/2, pp. 2ff.
the letters, especially those written while Weber was at school, leads me to a different evaluation. Since this seems to me to be a fundamental question I wish to pursue it, even at the risk of seeming pedantic.

Quite apart from the special qualities of Max Weber the person, I think that Deininger misconstrues ‘youthful psychology’—the enormous potential in a young man of 16 or 17 for intellectual receptivity and experience. He also misunderstands the character of the final two years in a humanistic Gymnasium of Weber’s time, actually quite comparable with the formative years in English and American colleges. It is at this time that the confrontation with religious issues occurs—this critical question is decided once and for all during these years. Never again will one ever be so sensitive. Whoever studies the testimony from these years with any attention—takes seriously a mother’s concern for her son’s ‘introversion’, as we would say today—witnesses the slow formation of Weber’s special interests, his striking ‘sobriety’, his delight in honing judgement upon his contemporaries and the quality of the literature that he devours. He has in his brother Karl the worrying exemplar of an inwardly ‘impoverished’ and ‘desolated’ person. A few weeks before his confirmation Max writes to his cousin Fritz that he is conscious of the importance of this turning point for his life.

Please do not think that I am any the less sensitive because I have not written to you about it, nor spoken to you; it is rather in my nature, I think, that I seldom share my feelings with others, and to do so often takes some effort. As a rule I enjoy every pleasure for myself, but my feelings are no less for that, it is just hard to talk to others about such matters. Those things upon which I reflect I also normally keep to myself, risking being taken for someone who is entirely unreflective.

In the same way that Weber’s long essay on ‘the psychology of peoples’ investigates the ‘developmental tendencies of peoples with respect to their ‘spirit’ and ‘temperament’, we cannot understand Weber’s personality, or his ‘value free’ science, without that capacity for empathy; in every one of his central statements both take a part, even where he seeks to distance himself from his ‘feelings’. It is there for life: ‘For nothing is worth anything to a man, as a man, if he cannot do it with passion’.

It is only intellectual passion that can move a young person to get through such enormous quantities of ‘material’, as is evident from the letters of the youth and student. It is only when he approaches his doctorate, guided by Goldschmidt, that he first seeks to learn what real work is like\textsuperscript{40}—that is, to work towards the completion of a scholarly piece of work. Nevertheless, the range of books that the young reader found especially attractive does open up a perspective on the unique quality of Weber’s work, even if it remains, at its most decisive, unwritten work but nonetheless clear in intention.

The letters of Weber’s youth enable a judgement to be made on the material that Weber worked through most intensively, what he quite early described as ‘barren’ and ultimately what simply ‘bored him to death’.

Positive law was quite early on included under this last category when pursued purely as a norm without regard (according to Weber) for the ‘practical interests whose regulation is the elementary task of legal development’.\textsuperscript{41} These ‘practical interests’ are those of buyers, renters, leaseholders, merchants ‘in trade’, and naturally also political associations; these presented issues that seemed ‘to escape the means of our science, and so my impulse to study [legal] science for its own sake diminished considerably’. ‘In short, all sorts of impressions drove pure jurisprudence from the centre of my interest and made it difficult for me to complete a successful piece of work of this sort…’ It is certainly no coincidence that Weber chose a \textit{legal-historical} topic in commercial law for his doctoral dissertation, a ‘developing’ branch of law (Dietrich Schindler) exposed to the pressure of ‘practical interests’, and that during his period in Freiburg the regulation of the stock and commodity exchanges was of such great interest to him.

In contrast to this stood criminal law, this ‘criminal province of jurisprudence’ in which he whiled away his pupillage.\textsuperscript{42} At the age of 23 he wrote to Professor Frensdorff in Göttingen that he had never found anything especially attractive in penal matters, they had about them rather an air of desolation and he had never been inclined to work up any especial scholarly interest in them. And so it remained all his life.\textsuperscript{43}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[40] \textit{Jugendbriefe}, p. 216.
\item[41] \textit{Jugendbriefe}, p. 271.
\item[42] \textit{Jugendbriefe}, p. 284.
\item[43] See also the letter to Georg Jellinek of 16 July 1909 (MWG II/6, p. 189: ‘Penal law…this really insipid entity!’
\end{footnotes}
It would be a complete misunderstanding of Weber’s ‘legal sociology’ if it were not recognized that here legal thought is more or less stood on its head—the eggshell of normative science is entirely discarded. Only once did Weber have any definite praise for law lectures:

Gneist’s lectures on German Constitutional Law and Prussian Administrative Law are I think a true masterwork, both in form and in content... I have never read or heard anything on Constitutional Law that has dealt with its questions, to the extent that they are historical, so directly and practically while maintaining their connection with those economic and religious elements that have an influence upon the development and organisation of the state.44

It might be observed that this practico-historical approach to the law was displaced in Weber’s lifetime by Laband’s ‘positivist’ treatment of public law; and via Gneist’s pupil Albert Hänel it had a late blossoming once more in Rudolf Smend’s ‘theory of integration’. The ‘Karlsruhe value positivism’45 that has developed within the basic law of the modern German constitution is neither historically nor practically oriented, and so its findings are entirely dependent upon convention and the accidents of party political tactics.

Weber still counts as the great ‘methodologist’ of social science. It should not be denied that ‘value freedom’ and ‘ideal type’ are central to his analysis of the historical-political world. But their character is misrecognized if they are linked exclusively to the new philosophical and ‘methodological’ discussion of the nineteenth century. Weber’s position is far more original, ‘more classical’, free of the textbook conventions of the day. And from the earliest years.46 At the close of a long screed to Emmy Baumgarten he excuses himself for his ‘vain philosophical lecture’ but he could not help himself; years ago he ‘had so much trouble with all these conceptual monstrosities, very little came of it, I know that now very well, but from time to time one gets carried away again’.47 Contemporaries asked themselves again and again why Weber, like Marx with his own ‘critical business’, constantly became ‘carried away’, which is what the ‘methodological’ ‘critiques’ of allcomers from Martha to Arthur are all about. Only

44. Jugendbriefe, p. 145.
45. Karlsruhe is the seat of the German Constitutional Court. [Keith Tribe]
46. Thucydides ‘value freedom’ and his ‘historical impartiality’ (see Roscher, Leben, Werk und Zeitalter, pp. 229ff.) is the offspring of the ‘destructive partisanship of the times’ (Roscher, p. 230) — a professional duty for the truly great historian.
47. Letter of 5 July 1888, Jugendbriefe, p. 262.
four weeks after the letter to Emmy he wrote in similar vein to his brother Alfred, supposedly ‘not that ready for major disputes over principle’, so that he might warn him against the quite enormous overestimation of theory in the world. Many years before ‘Science as a Vocation’, with its nostalgic recollection of the Socratic invention of ‘the concept’, he warned Alfred of the ‘prime error: the excessive value, so I believe, placed upon conceptual knowledge in general’.  

If I see aright, Weber’s radical repudiation—concentrated in his ‘invention’ of the ‘ideal type’—of occidental thought from Plato to Kant and of course Hegel has barely ever been registered. ‘Max Weber knew hardly anything of Kantian ideas’ complained Jaspers sorrowfully. No, he was simply not interested! These ideas just did not give him much help in understanding the world, the ‘uniqueness of the lived reality within which we are placed’. Eduard Baumgarten, whose judgement of his so highly regarded uncle I rank higher than that of the majority of commentators on Weber, wrote on 17 June 1930 to Marianne:

His philosophy is unKantian from the ground up: it is all about action in the world…for philosophy ‘life’ is the world… He is the first philosopher to be true to the reality of the world right down to its foundations. Alongside him Bergson and Nietzsche are just heaven-struck theologians.

Let us turn now to closer examination of the books to which, as his letters show, the pupil devoted especial attention, industriously taking notes, going beyond the prescribed school syllabus and learning. The ‘temper’ of this 14-year-old boy, the sheer strength of his sensitivity, is captured by his statement that ‘of all the writers I have read, Homer suits me best’. Although a novel might fix the reader’s attention, this was missing in Homer. For our reader, the attraction lay in ‘the very natural manner in which all action was described’. But one should take note that both of Homer’s books are epics, narrating the skills of heroes. Even at the age of 12 he had reached for Herder’s El Cid, the greatest of all Spanish heroic poems. When Weber, turned down for military service, wrote to his mother in 1916

51. Weber-Schäfer Archive, Munich.
53. *Jugendbriefe*, p. 3.
that he of all her sons had the ‘greatest martial instincts’, then it is easy to guess what so drew him to Homer.

You can stop reading him and at any time pick it up again, because he does not present a chain of actions the one following the other, but rather traces the origin and the predictable consequences of action… In Homer everything has quite inevitably long been determined by fate.\(^{54}\)

The young letter writer knows how to convey the mood that this reading creates in him. One almost wants to mention his favourite word: ‘cosy’. Several decades passed before Karl Reinhardt wrote his important essay ‘the Crisis of the Hero’.\(^{55}\) In Weber’s world heroes still ‘existed’, they were still needed, even if they were heroes ‘in a very simple sense of the word’.\(^{56}\) There is the same ‘cosy’ feeling when he reports on his reading of Viktor Hehn’s *Cultivated Plants and Domestic Animals*, on which he had spent several months. Even today this is a fascinating and diverting book. It is no book for children, it is a work of the highest scholarship, an unusually informative reference work, a veritable model for the writing of cultural history. You do not need to travel to Greece or Sicily to understand vegetation, useful plants and their way with domestic animals—and with this the foundation of all culture. The bibliography of the 1898 Heidelberg lectures on economic theory cites alongside the classic work of Viktor Hehn in section 1, ‘The oldest conditions of existence of human science’, Hahn’s *Domestic Animals* of 1895. Weber was quite excellently prepared for his studies of rural labour, with their careful observation of the culture of nutrition.

For Christmas 1898 the 14-year-old Weber asked for the German version of Gaston Boissier’s *Cicero and his Friends*.\(^{57}\) He spent several months with this book, but was not able to alter his negative view of Cicero. (Later he apologized for all of his know-all judgements). Together with Boissier he got the three volumes of Curtius’ *Greek History*, all 2511 pages. He read greedily (“such a solid book”).\(^{58}\) The author was the Göttingen, Straßburg and ultimately Berlin ancient historian, tutor to the later Kaiser Friedrich II and grandfather of

\(^{54}\) Jugendbriefe, p. 10.


\(^{58}\) Letter to Fritz, 19 January 1879, Berlin Archive.
Ernst Robert Curtius. What could not be learned from such a book by an eager pupil; where today are there students who begin their study of ancient languages by securing such impressive knowledge through detailed notes? It was here that Weber made his first literary acquaintance with the *Agon*.

There is a delightful piece of evidence in the Berlin archive for the enthusiasm with which Weber pursued his autodidactic study of ancient history, especially ancient Greek history. He can always report excellent schoolwork to his mother and father, and so on 14 August 1876 he wrote to his mother that ‘In Greek I have written the best free essay’. The day after to his father, ‘I have handed in an excellent German essay and an excellent Greek exercise’. His cousin Fritz cannot respond quickly enough to his ‘thick and fat’ letters, he seeks discussion of his intellectual experiences. On 19 August 1879 he writes to his father, ‘I just came from the city, where I had with my friend been searching through all the bookshops for a cheap edition of Diodor that I would really like’. On the 22 August he expanded on this pressing need. ‘You might have been surprised by my wish to have a copy of Diodor, but after Herodotus and Xenophon, Thucydides and Polybius, the last two of which we do not actually have, Diodorus is the most important Greek writer.’ He ordered a copy from Gsellius in Leipzig. Three days later, on 25 August, he reported that Gsellius would send all four volumes of Diodor for four Marks each. He had a guilty conscience, ‘I should have waited until you came… But I never thought once about it.’

**II. Fritz Baumgarten – Max Weber’s Hellenic mentor**

A natural break is called for here. There is not the slightest doubt that while Weber was in his final year of Gymnasium he thoroughly worked through Roscher’s *Thucydidès* in his spare time. Indubitable evidence is provided by the underlinings, marginal notes and a small personal index in the copy that came into my hands. It is also clear that when Weber finally got around to writing the section on Roscher in the Roscher and Knies essay he reached back to this familiar work. In the 41 pages of this section there are 81 references

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59. ‘After sacrifice there was no more important part of Greek festivities than the games.’ Ernst Robert Curtius, *Griechische Geschichte* (6th edn, 1887), I, p. 483. It is rather surprising that Wolfgang J. Mommsen places Weber’s central categories of struggle and competition as a reflection of contemporary imperialist competition.

60. Dahlem Archive—my emphasis, Wilhelm Hennis.
to Roscher, of which 41 are taken from this early work of the great economist. This raises the question of who could have suggested to Weber that he might, in the year that he took his Abitur, include this almost forgotten book in his private reading. There can be no doubt that Weber was aware of the controversy surrounding Nietzsche’s *Birth of Tragedy*. We also know how preoccupied he became with Jacob Burckhardt’s *Griechische Kulturgeschichte* while staying in Rome during 1901–1903. We will return later to deal with these points in detail.

Who prompted Weber’s interest in ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’; who might have been ready to discuss it with him? Without an answer to this question the whole enterprise of determining the significance of Thucydides for Weber appears to be left up in the air. Weber’s writings were, almost without exception, the product of external impulses. He always needed a ‘motive’ together with a real authority who could respond to specialist questions and upon whom he could test out his ‘problematics’. He did not think much of Heinrich Rickert’s theory of value ('sentimental nonsense')—but all the same he maintained active contact with him. Genuine friendship bound him to Georg Jellinek, he venerated the great scholar. None-theless, behind Jellinek’s back he made fun of the legal formalism of his political judgement.61 Who commended Roscher’s *Thucydides* to Weber, with whom was he able to discuss questions of Hellenic intellectual culture right up to the time he began work on the *Protestant Ethic*?

For a long time this simple question seemed quite insoluble to me. Max Weber’s own scholarly papers, or their remains, are for the most part in the state archives in Berlin-Dahlem. I have worked through these papers many times, but found nothing of any help on this question.

A great part of Marianne Weber’s papers are deposited with the Manuscripts Department of the Bavarian State Library in Munich. They are in the ‘Weber-Schäfer Papers’. Max Schäfer—one of the sons of Weber’s sister Lilly, who with her suicide in 1919 left four orphans who were then adopted by Max and Marianne—lived as a student with Marianne in Heidelberg after his visit to Salem. From the memoirs of Golo Mann, a close friend of Max Weber-Schäfer from

61. Max wrote to his brother Alfred on 22 May 1907: ‘Jellinek’s essay, with all the best intentions, is typical of the way that lawyers deal with political affairs. The more brilliant they are, the more that formalism blinds them’ (MWG II/5, p. 311).
their time together in Salem, we know about the not uncomplicated life under one roof of the young Max and Marianne. Nevertheless, Marianne entrusted a major part of her treasured correspondence to her adopted son—even the very personal letters—and in this way this part of the papers came to be in the Bavarian State Library.

Bearing in mind Jacob Burckhardt’s counsel in Griechische Kulturgeschichte that one should read authors exhaustively—that if we wished to find something important to us then we could only find it ourselves—I finally found what I had been looking for. It was the last letter of several hundred that I had looked through. It was a little note from Fritz Baumgarten to Marianne Weber dated 19 July 1900—Weber’s worst year. Fritz congratulated Marianne on the appearance of her book Fichtes Sozialismus und sein Verhältnis zur Marx’schen Doktrin (1900). But Fritz had to be brief, ‘I am very busy with a Greek history for young readers’.

Hitherto Fritz has only made an appearance in Weber commentary as the recipient of Max’s schoolboy letters that break off shortly after his reading of Cicero. Fritz, the oldest son of Helene Weber’s sister Ida Baumgarten, wife of the Straßburg historian Hermann Baumgarten, is Helene’s favourite nephew. Eight years older than Max, he is accepted by Max as an authority in his area, but it is nonetheless possible for them to share a close brotherly feeling. We know how important the Baumgarten’s Straßburg house was for Weber’s development, it has even been mooted that the concept of the ‘ideal type’ arose out of the varied experiences of home life that Weber had in Straßburg and Charlottenburg. While the younger brother Otto Baumgarten (1858–1924), a Kiel theologian, is a figure familiar in Weber commentary because of the interest he shared with his cousin Max in social and church policy, Fritz only crops up as a confidante of Helene through whom she is able to make contact with her difficult and wayward son. There is the well-known story that she asked Max to leave room for her own greeting on his letters to Fritz so that she might be able to read them, that she even asked Fritz to send her Max’s letters so that she might find out more about him. I have never ever read any more than that about Fritz in the commentary on Weber. Marianne for her part reports on their shared years in Freiburg that Fritz was an ‘excellent teacher’ in the Gymnasium.62

A glance in the Freiburg university library catalogue suffices to show clearly that, with Fritz Baumgarten, someone entered Weber’s

biography who must have been of the greatest importance to the development of his thinking. It is no surprise that the cousin’s correspondence breaks off in 1879, for Fritz moved to Berlin for a few semesters, where he became for Helene her ‘dearest’ child. She regarded him as her ‘oldest son’. The cousins would have seen each other almost daily. In 1882 Weber sat for his Abitur in Berlin, the year before Baumgarten had gained his doctorate in Bonn, supervised by Büchler, with a thesis entitled ‘De Cristodoro Poeta Thebano’. The oral disputation was conducted by Paul Wolters, Robert Menzel and Erich Marcks. Astonishingly Jacob Bernays is not included among the teachers whose lectures ‘Fridericus Baumgarten’ had attended; Bernays had that same year published his famous book on Phokion, the Athenian statesman, from which Weber, following the ‘literary’ Cicero, could perhaps have taken the first model of a ‘good person’. In any case the question of quite why Weber was so keen to order Diodorus Siculus from Gsellius in Leipzig remains unresolved. It is known that Diodor was the most important source for Phokion after Plutarch.

Fritz Baumgarten must have been an inspired schoolteacher. After his doctorate and his state examination for higher education he spent one and a half years as tutor to the German consul in Athens. His travels from there throughout Greece were of decisive importance for him. In 1887 he wrote An Exploration of Athen’s Ruins, remarking in its conclusion: ‘As the reader will have noticed, I have limited myself to those points of Athenian topography mentioned by the authors of our schoolbooks, or that play a part in school lessons’.

In 1892 he delivered a lecture to the Mannheim Antiquity Society on ‘Old and New in Greece’ complete with witty observations on the commercial cunning of the Greeks. The little monograph Friedrich-August Nüsslin also provides an insight into his nature. Nüsslin was the admired Greek tutor to the important Baden statesman Julius Jolly, Hermann Baumgarten’s brother-in-law. Baumgarten wanted to write a biography of Jolly and drew Nüsslin to Fritz’s attention. In Fritz’s little work we can read: ‘He [Nüsslin] had often read the

65. Fritz Baumgarten, Friedrich-August Nüsslin (Freiburg, 1896).
66. See Roth, Familiengeschichte for these details.
speech [Pericles’ funeral oration] with his finalists and noted that no writer, Homer excepted, had such a powerful and lasting impact upon the more able pupils as this great historian’.

Fritz will have sought to achieve the same pedagogic effect. But his principal work is to be found in two books that he wrote with Franz Poland and Wilhelm Wägner: *Hellenic Culture* and its subsequent weighty tome *Hellenic-Roman Culture*. For the first of these the authors used as an epigraph a passage from Jean Paul: ‘Contemporary humanity would sink to immeasurable depths if youth did not enter the carnival of later life through the tranquil temple of ancient times and people’.

Baumgarten assumed responsibility for the art historical sections of both volumes—his 1903 Freiburg Habilitation was in the history of art, in 1911 he was appointed as a full professor—in no way then was he just a decent schoolteacher. The extent of his reputation among the ‘schoolmen’ of the time is clearly demonstrated by the fact that he was asked to revise the most widely-used young person’s introduction to ancient Greece, originally published in 1859. In his foreword—dated July 1901, Freiburg i.B., so that Fritz’s letter of 19 July 1900 to Marianne refers to his revisions for this work—Baumgarten writes: ‘Today I still like to recall my own boyhood reading of Wägner’s *Hellas*, delighting in his inspired descriptions and enjoying his pictures’.

If these books were meant ‘for young readers’, as stated in the letter from Fritz to Marianne, one is simply amazed today by the level of reading and comprehension that they take for granted. If you ask yourself how Germany could for over a century once have been the leading world scientific power, arriving in the ‘West’—and including Königsberg!—certainly no later than did Paris, London and Washington, one cannot overlook the fact that no other people, ‘...more than all other present-day nations had so buried itself in the depths of the Hellenic conceptual world, and so successfully preserved the treasures of classical antiquity’. ‘What don’t we owe to this tiny people, the Greeks! It is true that the clear heavenly light of the greatest truth, through which we poor people became the children of a loving God, originated elsewhere—that would come from


68. Wilhelm Wägner, *Hellas.—Das Land und Volk der alten Griechen* (Leipzig: Verlag Otto Spamer, 1859)—Wägner had been a Church Councillor in Hesse. Fritz was asked to work on revisions for the 9th edition, published in 1902.

a little-regarded Asian tribe and spread throughout the world—but the concept of the beautiful was first conceived by Hellene people. And if we ask where on this earth human beings first devoted themselves to pure scientific endeavour, where the search for truth for its own sake was taken up out of sheer enthusiasm, the answer is: in Greece.’ These passages from the introduction to the revised edition of Wägner’s classic text ring changes upon the epigraph of Jean-Paul cited above. And in Baumgarten’s words: ‘In Greece lie the roots of our culture [“Bildung”]; we would be infinitely impoverished if we ever allowed the connection with this our spiritual home to loosen’.

In any case, what became decisive for the relationship between the cousins Max and Fritz was that during Weber’s Freiburg years which, as we now know, were filled with a heavy burden of university and public lecturing besides the writings on the bourse, his cousin Fritz lived with his large family in Freiburg. The two households were very close. The letters which Marianne regularly sent to her mother-in-law Helene report in detail on Max’s doings, visits, family life and so forth, and they always also report on meetings with Fritz and his growing family. The two cousins read each other their latest work, Christmas is celebrated together, the sorrows of the Baumgarten family are shared. In Freiburg Weber found in Gottfried Baist an esteemed colleague and expert on Roman philology. Nonetheless, I would like to assume that cousin Fritz was the more inspiring interlocutor in questions of classical antiquity. The ‘popular lecture’ of 1896, ‘The Social Causes of the Decline of Ancient Culture’, read in the Freiburg ‘Academic Society’ can certainly be traced back to Fritz’s prompting. Fritz was a much-requested lecturer, and his guided tours of Freiburg Minster were renowned. Like Max, Fritz came from a highly-politicized family home; the Straßburg uncle and father of Fritz, Hermann Baumgarten (1825–1893) was one of the most important political connections for the young Weber. Fritz, clearly less politically engaged than his younger brother, the theologian Otto, made up for this by being a passionate schoolmaster, and his interest in ancient, and especially Greek, culture went far beyond a philological interest. At the forefront was art, history and culture. With the certain instinct of a teacher he would

69. Wägner, Helles. – Das Land und Volk, 1902, p. 3.
70. Now in the Max Weber-Schäfer papers, Munich.
71. See the obituary of Fritz Baumgarten by Hermann Thiersch, Freiburg Professor of Archaeology in Akademische Mitteilungen (Freiburg i. Br.) NF XIV of 6 May 1913. I owe the reference to Wägner to Ernst Schulin.
have advised his younger cousin\textsuperscript{72} on the most suitable works for his ‘private reading’.

And this brings us back to Max Weber’s reading of Roscher’s early work during his final year at Gymnasium. Around 1880 Roscher’s book was not a forgotten work, but no longer one that played any part in Thucydides scholarship. Roscher himself had not returned to it; the year after publication of his Habilitation dissertation his epochal Grundriß zu Vorlesungen über die Staatswissenschaft appeared, the founding text of the so-called ‘Older Historical School of German Political Economy’.

The language of Roscher’s Thucydides might be alien to us, but it would be terrible if we were no longer able to empathize with the feelings expressed there. At the close of the ‘Prolegomena’, what we might call Roscher’s ‘Historical Prologue’ — Gangolf Hübinger has outlined the relationship to Gervinus and the origins of German Historicism in an excellent monograph\textsuperscript{73} — at the end of this methodological prolegomena Roscher writes: ‘The observations have unconsciously led us to the door that should open up to us the temple of the Thucydidean spirit. A stirring moment! We remove our shoes, for this is holy ground that we wish to enter.’\textsuperscript{74}

This empathetic arousal by Thucydides’ work belongs to the era of later Romanticism; but even modern historians — I am thinking here of my late Freiburg colleague, Hermann Strasburger — have not found it possible to escape the depth and force of what is certainly the greatest book in historical writing.\textsuperscript{75}

Nevertheless, when Weber was in his final year at Gymnasium this book was out of fashion. The historical and ‘artistic’ approach to reading Thucydides typical for the period and language had been displaced by specialist philological study concerned with the ‘Thucydidean question’. A particular role was played here not only by the issues that law students still occasionally encounter in exegesis of the Digests — the question of how these patched parts go together, whether a section is a later addition, is this passage corrupted and so on — this was, during my years in Göttingen, the most exciting part

\textsuperscript{72} Eight years younger, not six as Marianne writes, Max Weber, p. 50.

\textsuperscript{73} Gangolf Hübinger, Georg Gottfried Gervinus. Historisches Urteil und politische Kritik (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1984).

\textsuperscript{74} Roscher, Thucydides, p. 78.

\textsuperscript{75} See Strasburger’s contribution to Hans Herter (ed.), Thucydides (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1968), and his introduction to his Phaidon edition of the Peloponnesian Wars (Essen, no date) in the translation of August Horneffer.
of my legal studies, despite having only a moderate knowledge of Latin. This epoch was in turn ended, if not by Eduard Schwartz’s *Das Geschichtswelt des Thucydides* (1919) then certainly by Wolfgang Schadewelt’s little book *Die Geschichtsschreibung Thucydides. Ein Versuch* (Berlin 1929).  

Schadewelt states that more than 80 years had passed since ‘Franz Wolfgang Ullrich, Professor at the Hamburg Johanneum, posed and answered the prime question regarding the historical origins of the Thucydidean histories’. And 80 years after Ullrich, research would still be at a point where ‘the weighty voices of prominent scholars rejected quite fundamentally the existence of an objectively-founded justification for such a question’.

Whether justified or not—it is certain that this never interested Max Weber. When Fritz, for who else could it have been, recommended Roscher for his younger cousin’s leisure reading, he knew the connection that Max would make with the book. He would learn to read Thucydides in the same way that everyone read Thucydides, before the posing of the Thucydidean question: as a great, perhaps the greatest, introduction to the world of politics that has to this day been produced by historical science.

III. ‘The revaluation of many values’ and Jacob Burckhardt’s Griechische Kulturgeschichte. Nietzsche’s experience

When Fritz Baumgarten and his co-authors wrote the ‘Preface’ to the second 1908 edition of the *Hellenic Culture* they noted that the ‘enthusiasm for classical antiquity and firm belief in its great value’, during the eighteenth century stirred anew among the German people by its great thinkers and poets, had given way to ‘other views’. ‘The critical spirit of the times, so ill-disposed to dogmatic argument of any colour, was also resolutely turned upon the dogma of classical antiquity.’ It was not only that ‘the great achievements of the natural sciences and technology seemed to fill the life of modern man so completely that constant reconsideration of a past long vanished was for many an idle, and therefore almost dangerous, diversion’. A ‘revaluation of many values’ had also occurred in the science of antiquity. ‘Gone is the idea of the Hellene as an ideal people inspired by God…it now sought to present men and peoples as they really

76. A concise overview of the history of this area of research can be found in Max Pohlenz, ‘Die thukydideische Frage im Lichte der neueren Forschung’, in Herter (ed.), *Thucydides*, pp. 59ff.
were, with their merits, but also their mistakes. In this way much of the venerable tradition hitherto accepted without question has turned out to be without foundation.' Nevertheless, ‘none of this critical research has changed the fact’ that the peoples of antiquity ‘possessed in their unique culture a level hitherto unmatched’; and that this culture, ‘created by the Greeks and diffused by the Romans throughout their empire’ ‘remains as before a critical foundation of our contemporary culture’.77 Thus whoever wanted to have any great insight into contemporary culture would of ‘necessity constantly return to study of the Greeks and the Romans’.

Max Weber participated vigorously in this struggle against the ‘revaluation of many values’ alongside and almost in the physical presence of one of its most passionate adversaries. Every line of his work proves that the ‘intellectual culture’ created by the Hellenes remained a critical foundation for any deeper understanding of our world. Testimony to this can be found in his familiar statement on the ‘Maintenance and Future Prospect of the Gymnasium’ from 1919.78 But he could not any longer see it with the eyes of Winckelmann and Goethe; after the ‘revaluation of [so] many values’ he could no longer share the ‘optimism’, the belief in ‘Socratic man’, in ‘theory’, ‘progress’ and ‘science’ as the path to all that was most desirable in modern civilization.

In a letter of 2 November 1885 from Göttingen, Weber reported to his father a visit to Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, Theodore Mommsen’s son-in-law.79 The dispute between Wilamowitz, Overbeck and Erwin Rohde has been finely detailed in the literature.80 Although Weber was in some respects an in-law of Wilamowitz— Wilamowitz had married a daughter of Mommsen’s and a son of Mommsen’s had married one of Weber’s sisters—and he certainly held the great philologist in great esteem,81 in this dispute he would

77. Emphasis added Wilhelm Hennis.
hardly have been on the side of the classicist. But I cannot find in Weber’s papers any point of connection to the development of his writings that might cast light on the effect that *Greece and Pessimism*—the more understandable subtitle of the 1886 edition which included the ‘Essay in Self-criticism’—had upon Weber and Fritz Baumgarten. Perhaps Fritz Baumgarten’s papers, so far unexplored, will do so.

The chord which the ‘Nietzsche experience’ (Thomas Mann) would have touched in Weber becomes, however, a little clearer if we turn to consider the experience of Thucydidies for Nietzsche. So far as I am aware, its significance has never been fully recognized in all the flood of work on Nietzsche; the comprehensive bibliographies published by *Nietzsche-Studien* include no title on a theme that is obvious to a lay-person browsing through the index of the critical edition of his writings. I leave detailed investigation to the specialists, and introduce here only those passages where Weber, if he knew them or could have known them, would have encountered a fellow spirit.

In the Critical Edition of Nietzsche’s letters Thucydidies crops up first of all in a slip—’Nietzsche most respectfully requests 1 Thaler 20 Sg. For Thucydidies in the Krüger edition’. The request is repeated in a letter of 10 April 1863 to Hermann Kletschke: ‘The boarder Nietzsche requests permission to be assigned the following books: Thucydidies, Krüger edition’. Some 17 years later he orders the Stahl and Schöne edition with the Tillmanns commentary from Ernst Schmeitzer, requesting that they be ‘sent immediately’. But this is only to drive home the point that there are, more importantly, passages in the *Kritische Studienausgabe* that need exploration, investigation that I, however, have to leave for others.

In the ‘Attempt at a Self-criticism’ with which Nietzsche prefaced the new 1886 edition of his *Birth of Tragedy* he raises the question, ‘Well, what is dionysesian?’ Fundamental to this is the relationship of the Greeks to pain. That is the question

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82. Here I am elaborating points made in my essay ‘The Traces of Nietzsche in the Work of Max Weber’, *Max Weber’s Central Question*, pp. 149-70.
84. Cited in the following as KSB.
85. Pforta 11.9.1861 KSB, 1, p. 175.
of whether their ever more intense craving for beauty, for festivals, entertainments, new cults, grew out of a lack, out of deprivation, melancholy, pain. If this is indeed so—and Pericles (or Thucydides) would lead us to believe as much in his great funeral oration—what would be the origin of the opposite craving that occurred earlier in time, the craving for ugliness; the good, rigid resolve of the older Greeks for pessimism, for the tragic myth, for the image of everything terrible, evil, cryptic, destructive and deadly underlying existence; what then would be the origin of tragedy?... What then? Might we not assume—in the face of all 'modern ideas' and prejudices of democratic taste—that the victory of optimism, the now predominant reason, practical and theoretical utilitarianism, like democracy itself, with which it is coeval, is a symptom of waning power, of approaching senescence, of physiological fatigue? And precisely not pessimism?86

Giorgio Collio write in his afterword to the first volume of the KSA: ‘Nietzsche was interested in Greece, not Rome, or more precisely: pre-Hellenistic Greece. Whose essence lay not in “humanity” but “man”.’ Clarification of this aspect of early antiquity ‘has probably contributed to the growing interest in Thucydides’.87

This is classically-expressed in the closing passages of Twilight of the Idols:

I received absolutely no such strong impressions from the Greeks; and, not to mince words, they cannot be to us what the Romans are. One does not learn from the Greeks—their manner is too strange, it is also too fluid to produce an imperative, a ‘classical’ effect... For the Platonic dialogue, that frighteningly self-satisfied and childish kind of dialectics, to operate as a stimulus one must never have read any good French writers... Plato is boring. —Ultimately my mistrust of Plato extends to the very bottom of him: I find him deviated so far from all the fundamental instincts of the Hellenes, so morally infected, so much an antecedent Christian—he already has the concept ‘good’ as the supreme concept—that I should prefer to describe the whole phenomenon ‘Plato’ by the harsh term ‘higher swindle’ or, if you prefer, ‘idealism’, that by any other... My recreation, my preference, my cure from all Platonism has always been Thucydides. Thucydides, and perhaps the Principe of Machiavelli, are related to me closely by their unconditional will not to deceive themselves and to see reason in reality—not in ‘reason’, still less in ‘morality’... For the deplorable embellishment of the Greeks with the colours of the ideal which the ‘classically-educated’ youth carries away with him into life as the reward of his grammar-school drilling there is no more radical cure

than Thucydides. One must turn him over line by line and read his hidden thoughts as clearly as his words: there are few thinkers so rich in hidden thoughts. *Sophist culture*, by which I mean *realist culture*, attains in him its perfect expression—this invaluable movement in the midst of the morality-and-ideal swindle of the Socratic schools which was then breaking out everywhere. Greek philosophy as the decadence of Greek instinct; Thucydides as the grand summation, the last manifestation of that strong, stern, hard matter-of-factness instinctive to the older Hellenes. *Courage* in face of reality ultimately distinguishes such natures as Thucydides and Plato: Plato is a coward in face of reality—consequently he flees into the ideal; Thucydides has *himself* under control—consequently he retains control over things…  

In *Human, All Too Human* we find:

*The evolution of the spirit feared by the state.*—… On the other hand, one should not invoke the glorificatory speeches of Pericles: for it is no more than a grand, optimistic illusion as to the supposedly necessary connection between the *polis* and Athenian culture; immediately before night descends on Athens (the plague and the rupture of tradition), Thucydides makes it rise resplendent once again, like a transfiguring evening glow in whose light the evil day that preceded it could be forgotten.  

And in *The Dawn*:

*A model.*—What is it I love in Thucydides, why do I honour him more highly than Plato? He takes the most comprehensive and impartial delight in all that is typical of men in events and believes that to each type there pertains a quantum of *good sense: this* he seeks to discover. He displays greater practical justice than Plato; he does not revile or belittle those he does not like or who have harmed him in life. On the contrary: through seeing nothing but types he introduces something great into all the things and persons he treats of; for what interest would posterity, to whom he dedicates his work, have in that which was not typical! Thus in him, the portrayer of man, that *culture of the most impartial knowledge of the world* finds its last glorious flower: that culture which had in Sophocles its poet, in Pericles its statesman, in Hippocrates its physician, in Democritus its natural philosopher; which deserves to be baptised with the name of its teachers, the *Sophists*, and which from this moment of baptism unfortunately begins suddenly to become pale and ungraspable to us—for now we suspect that it must have been a very immoral culture, since a Plato and all the Socratic schools fought against it! Truth is here so tangled

and twisted one does not like the idea of trying to sort it out: let the ancient error (error veritate simplicior) continue to run its ancient course.\textsuperscript{90}

There is no end of such juxtapositions. Perhaps I might also be permitted to note that not only Weber, but also Nietzsche, read with great profit the second 1870 edition of Henry C. Carey’s \textit{Lehrbuch der Volkswirtschaft und Sozialwissenschaft}\textsuperscript{91} where equilibrium is made the precondition of justice.\textsuperscript{92} And in respect of this Nietzsche writes in \textit{Human, All Too Human}:

\textit{Origin of justice}. – Justice (fairness) originates between parties of approximately equal power, as Thucydides correctly grasped (in the terrible colloquoy between the Athenian and Melian ambassadors: where there is no clearly recognizable superiority of force and a contest would result in mutual injury producing no decisive outcome the idea arises of coming to an understanding and negotiating over one another’s demands: the characteristic of exchange is the original characteristic of such justice.\textsuperscript{93}

Here there is something to be added. If Thucydides has so far failed to attract attention from Nietzsche scholars, then that is even more true of Wilhelm Roscher and his relationship with Nietzsche—Roscher’s both senior and junior. Here Roscher’s Göttingen Habilitation dissertation of 1842 sets up a real triangular relation.

In the circle around Nietzsche’s Leipzig teacher Friedrich Ritschl (1806–1876) the Bautzen mythology scholar and Gymnasium teacher struck up a close friendship with his fellow-student Wilhelm Heinrich Roscher Jr (1845–1923). Nietzsche seems to have really liked ‘little Roscher’. In Leipzig it was quite usual to attend the lectures of ‘old Roscher’, as he then was for the young students. Nietzsche certainly also gained the sympathy of the older man, for he reported in his letters an invitation to a ‘gentleman’s dinner’.\textsuperscript{94}

If one thinks of the enthusiastic tone with which Nietzsche wrote of Thucydides, the fact that he borrowed Roscher’s book of 1842 no less than three times from Basel University Library gains consider-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{90} F. Nietzsche, \textit{Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality} (trans. R.J. Hollingdale; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), para. 168.
\item \textsuperscript{91} Henry C. Carey, \textit{Lehrbuch der Volkswirtschaft und Sozialwissenschaft} (Munich: Fleischmann, 1866), translated by Karl Adler, with authorized additions. This text does not correspond directly to any English original [Keith Tribe].
\item \textsuperscript{92} Ottmann notes this, \textit{Philosophie und Politik bei Nietzsche}, pp. 131, 224.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Nietzsche, \textit{Human, All Too Human}, p. 49.
\item \textsuperscript{94} KSB II, p. 373.
\end{itemize}
able biographical weight. The first loan is dated 7 November 1869; Janz reports a joint reading of Thucydides in Tribschen—hence with Cosima and Richard Wagner in January 1870. The other two loans are dated 12 January and 13 April 1874. During the Winter Semesters of 1871/72, 1873/74, and 1875/76 the Gymnasium class had Thucydides as ‘individual reading’; Nietzsche took this institution with him from Schulpforta to Basel and recommended its emulation on a letter to the school authorities. Even if here again I must leave detailed investigation for future research, there is no possible doubt that Nietzsche’s image of Thucydides, and hence of classical Hellas, was not insignificantly conditioned by Nietzsche’s enthusiastic reading of a book by a young Göttingen academic, a book which still retains its appeal today. It is also more than mere supposition that Jacob Burckhardt, who in old age ignored ‘modern’ work and stuck to the sources, knew of Roscher’s Thucydides. Stefan Bauer’s phenomenally learned work on Burckhardt’s Griechischer Kulturgeschichte makes no mention of Roscher—there is to my knowledge no direct evidence of such knowledge on the part of Burckhardt. But it is acknowledged that Karl Otfried Müller’s Geschichte der griechischen Literatur bis auf das Zeitalter Alexanders is the most important secondary source in Burckhardt’s Griechischer Kulturgeschichte. In the third (1875) edition of Müller’s great book Roscher’s Thucydides is cited twice—but even in the absence of this citation Burckhardt would have known of the work of an author only nine years younger, and so like him in his mixture of sobriety and enthusiasm. Hubert Treiber, whom I have to thank for this reference, likewise suspects that Müller’s great work, whose first volume includes a chapter on ‘The Early Development of Greek Music’, was drawn on by Weber when writing his sociology of music.


96. In striking contrast to the young man the portrait of the old Roscher that can be found in Georg Friedrich Knapp (author of a ‘wonderful book’ on monetary theory, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft, p. 109) Aus der Jugend eines deutschen Gelehrten (Berlin, 1927), p. 178: ‘His thin voice, with the anxious Hannoverian accent, moreover his total lack of passion, for me always created a distance’. A reading of his Thucydidès is rendered such an experience precisely because of its pace and scientific passion. The 23-year-old Roscher wrote of Thucydidès’ alleged ‘refutational zeal’:

‘Nothing comes more naturally to the scholar as the wish to extirpate error, wherever he finds it’ (p. 126). How true!

This brings us back to Max Weber, and we can follow him to Rome where, slowly recovering from his long illness, between 1901 and 1903, with many interruptions, he tormented Roscher’s book with ‘sighs’, until Marianne is able to write to her mother-in-law that the manuscript has been sent off to Schmoller.\(^8\) The first part of ‘Roscher and Knies’ then promptly appeared in the October number of Schmoller’s *Jahrbuch*.\(^9\) Let us take a look at this fraught beginning for the series of articles, a piece that is just as laborious to read as it was for Weber to write.

**IV. Roman reading**

Instead of getting on straightaway with finishing the serially and roundly cursed ‘Festschrift contribution’\(^10\) Weber busied himself with something else really interesting. On 10 December 1900, while the Webers were touring Corsica, Marianne wrote to Helene from Ajaccio: ‘What you write about Neumann and his lectures interests us greatly’. Weber had found in Heidelberg a new colleague with whom he could share his interest in art and antiquity. Max, writing from Grindelwald, reminded Marianne of the ‘Burckhardt index’ that she should bring with her. In a letter from Heidelberg dated 10 July 1901 she reassured him, ‘I’ll bring the Burckhardt index as well’. It is not difficult to guess what this was about: this urgent request concerned sections from Carl Neumann’s still very readable essays on Burckhardt, especially *Griechischer Kulturgeschichte*.

Carl Neumann (1860–1934) had attended Burckhardt’s lectures in Basel, and in Heidelberg he quickly entered Weber’s circle of close friends.\(^11\) The literary relationship between Neumann and Weber was initiated through the former’s essay on Burckhardt in the *Deutsche Rundschau* of 1897, for which Weber thanked Neumann in a letter of 14 March 1898 — full of the greatest interest in Burkhardt’s work. I will cite a few passages from Neumann’s essay that could

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100. I have not been able to determine exactly for which Festschrift (see Lebensbild, p. 272) the ‘Roscher and Knies’ essay was intended. It is possible that it was meant for Otto Freiherr von Boenigk (ed.), *Festgaben für Karl Knies zur 75. Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages* (Berlin, 1896), a collection that contains Eugen von Böhm-Bawerk’s well-known essay ‘Karl Marx and the Close of his System’ — one of the most outstanding appreciations of Marx by a ‘bourgeois’ economist.
have attracted Weber’s especial interest. ‘The culture of which the modern world boasts’ originated according to Burckhardt in Italy. It was first in Italy that space was created for a ‘new, non-medieval culture’.

Countenances begin to separate and gain distinctiveness…personality enters the scene. It seeks means and weapons that might advance its natural tendencies, and finds them in the newly-discovered world of antiquity. Newly-kindled individualism enters the school of antiquity so that the real world [emphasis added by W. Hennis], to which medieval man is a stranger, might be discovered and conquered. The activity of the new man is directed along conscious, rational lines and is aimed at this visible world.

For fifteenth-century Italians

a contemporary phenomenon such as the impractical, arrogant and knightly Charles the Bold of Burgundy was virtually unintelligible. What they themselves imagine, order and aspire to assume is the form of a rational work of art… Everything is reconstructed and measured by the standard of scholarly reflection informed by experience.

Ancient literature ‘was placed at the service of life as an oracle of praxis [emphasis added by W. Hennis]. In this school one learned to open one’s eyes and to make criticism the foundation of all knowledge…’ (p. 378).

Neumann suggests that Burckhardt’s problems ‘coincide at many points with those of the greatest eighteenth-century historical work, Edward Gibbons’ Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire’ (p. 383). Here we can recall Weber’s reading of Gibbon during his later school years. It is highly likely that when Weber met Fritz Baumgarten in Straßburg during the Christmas holidays of 1883 Fritz recommended not only Jacob Bernays’ Phokion und seine neueren Beurtheiler, the classical depiction of a ‘virtuous person’, but also had his interest in Gibbon strengthened. In the second volume of Bernays’ Gesammelte Abhandlungen from 1885 there is a masterly ‘Essay in Appreciation’ of Gibbons’ ‘historical work’; in any event a re-reading of Gibbon was part of the ‘fabulous jumble’ of Weber’s reading in Rome, according to a letter by Marianne to Helene on 29 January 1902.

In this, however, Burckhardt’s Griechischer Kulturgeschichte appears to have had priority. In the ‘Burckhardt file’ there would also have been Carl Neumann’s major essay on ‘Greek Cultural

102. Jugendbriefe, p. 65 (1882) and p. 90 (1884).
103. Jacob Bernay, Phokion und seine neueren Beurtheiler (Berlin, 1881).

History according to Jacob Burkhardt’, if Weber had not obtained a copy of the most recent number of the journal from Karl Schellhass, an important friend during his stay in Rome, a department head and deputy to Paul Kehr at the Prussian Historical Institute. This work from Burkhardt’s mature years was very important for Weber’s penetration of ‘Hellenic intellectual culture’, and Carl Neumann’s essay that Weber had read ‘with great pleasure’ may have helped ‘open his eyes’. Straight after reading the essay Weber wrote a long letter to Neumann that, in my opinion, belongs to the most important testimony for Weber’s view of the classical Hellenic era. From this letter I am only able reproduce those passages that I noted down 20 years ago in the Merseburg archives:

Concerning Burckhardt’s book itself, an economic philistine of my sort would have organised it differently and in this way also have arrived in part at different material results. It seems to me that the struggle of all against all in the external political domain of the Hellenic states is a fixed, given prime condition (B. conceives it as Agon directed externally) and, in my view, the atmosphere created by this state of constant jeopardy to all existence (‘in the midst of life we are surrounded by death’) reverberates as the strongest note in that specifically Hellenic pessimism that B. portrays so wonderfully. The organisation of the city as a closed guild arming and independently equipping the physically and economically capable as well as a militia can be derived from that as well, and is the basis of the enormous difference between the entire structure of the ancient polis as against modern cities, even those among them which so strikingly foreground unconditionally the ‘public nature’ of all existence.

We should recall Paul Honigsheims’s testimony regarding the importance of Burckhardt for Weber:

If there was one historian of whom Weber spoke with reverence, it was Jacob Burkhardt. Here he thought it inappropriate to say a great deal. He was content to repeat the words of his friend Jellinek, who, during his brief period as a Professor in Basel, had been able to speak to the great recluse: ‘One felt that one stood before one of the eminences of this world’. But let us return to our real purpose, or rather that of Weber, his chore during his period in Rome: ‘Roscher’s Historical Method’ and the book with which he had been familiar for 20 years, and on which his first critique of Roscher is mostly based.

104. C. Neumann, ‘Greek Cultural History according to Jacob Burkhardt’, Historische Zeitschrift 49 (1900), pp. 385-452.
105. Honigsheim, Max Weber zum Gedächtnis.
Unfortunately there is neither sense nor pleasure in seeking or analysing in any detail the ‘method’ employed by Weber in this critique. Just as in the critique of Knies, almost worse than that, it tells us practically nothing about Roscher’s ‘great book’\(^{106}\)—and nothing at all about his *Thucydides*. The essay is the outcome of laborious effort on the part of a still-sick man, concerned solely with Roscher so that he can demonstrate his ‘critical’ abilities. There is no doubt in all of this of the importance of Roscher to Weber’s acquisition of competence in economics, nor, after some preliminaries, of Knies’ eminence. During his second Heidelberg semester Weber wrote to his mother on 4 November 1882: ‘I won’t be certified for Knies, since the lecture is read in a really boring way and I think that from Adam Smith and Roscher there is more I can learn, and more agreeably’. Why did Weber behave so ungenerously towards those from whom he had learned most? Who, reading of *Griechischer Kulturgeschichte* in the third 1909 edition of ‘Agrarian Relations in Antiquity’ with his repetition of the familiar criticism that Burckhardt has ignored all recent research, would be able to gauge the importance of Burckhardt to Weber?\(^{107}\) He could have read how irrelevant this criticism was in Neumann’s essay from 1900: ‘If Burckhardt had wanted to write about the Attic Law of Marriage, or the nature of Ephebi, the neglect of recent research would have mortified him; but his object was quite different’.\(^{108}\)

Just as in the critique of Knies, in his treatment of Roscher Weber is eaten up by the obsession that Roscher has fallen victim to Hegelian

\(^{106}\) WL, p. 2.

\(^{107}\) *Agrarian Sociology*, pp. 336-37; GASW, p. 254. Without being able to expand on this here, the ‘social orders and powers’ that govern Weber’s conception of *Economy and Society* is barely conceivable in the absence of Burckhardt’s doctrine of ‘potencies’. See, on this doctrine, Ernst Schulin, ‘Burckhardtts Potenzen- und Sturmlehre’, in *Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Phil.-Hist Klasse 1983), 2, and Schulin’s contribution to Hans R. Guggisberg, *Umgang mit Jacob Burckhardt* (Basel: Schwabe, 1994), pp. 87-100. As ever the ‘sociological-systematic’ interpretation of Weber overlooks the fact that Weber understood his essays on the Protestant Ethic as ‘cultural-historical’ texts. Without reference back to Burckhardt (as well as to my knowledge for his influence on Weber entirely neglected Hippolyte Taine) Weber could hardly have employed the concept of ‘cultural-historical’. It is possible to date quite precisely the minting of the concept in Burckhardt—see the letter to Preen, from Basel, New Year 1870: ‘As a lecturer in history a quite extraordinary phenomenon has become clear to me: the sudden devaluation of all mere “events” of the past. My courses lay emphasis only upon the cultural historical, and retain only the most necessary elements of the external framework.’

emanatism. Note the forced nature of just one sentence: ‘His entire manner of conceptual construction shows that he remains distinct in principle to the Hegelian standpoint; but, all the same, he works with metaphysical ideas which could only be consistently associated with Hegelian emanatism’. 109 ‘Could’ be, but are not!

Let us leave it at that. As already noted, even Sukale capitulated in the face of Weber’s tortuous critical efforts. Far more important than literary product during this period in Rome is the stay itself: in my view the incubation period for the major writings that surge forth in 1904, first the ‘Geleitwort’ written for the assumption of control of the Archiv, the essay on objectivity and naturally the Protestant Ethic.

But this is no ‘new beginning’, nor even the inception of the ‘real’ work as used to be suggested in Weber commentary fixated upon the evolution of sociological ‘founding fathers’. Weber ‘took his scholarly past with him’ is how Marianne formulates it in her biography. 110 Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than his return to the reading of his school years, to Roscher’s Thucydides. However unedifying the literary result of Weber’s reading is—this cannot be the sole result. However professorial his approach to it, he was surely instructed and stimulated by the youthful intensity of Roscher’s book. Why did he allow himself to become involved in the dismemberment of Roscher’s ‘method’? We know exactly what Weber thought about method—very little! If only he had taken Carl Neumann’s pithy sentence to heart—Weber read it before he wrote a line of the Roscher critique, 111 ‘Ultimately method and criticism are merely systematised common sense’. 112 Why in his critique of Roscher did he not concentrate on the points that he had thought important as a youth, listed in a little index on the reverse of the title page of Roscher’s book? Here are a few of them: ‘Rights and Wrongs’ 113 (p. 271), where we find, ‘Where two parties clash, and fight from the necessity of conviction, then both are in the right; in other words, here the idea of right and wrong is irrelevant’. The young Weber did not only mark this with his familiar blue pencil, it was marked in red as well and an additional NB put in the margin.

109. WL, p. 19
111. On 3 January 1903 (!) he wrote to Marianne from Nervi: ‘I hope at least to bring home with me the draft outline for the remainder of this damned essay’.
112. P. 435.
113. Orig. Recht und Unrecht [Keith Tribe].

Weber’s entry for ‘party rule’ (p. 245), leads us to the following passage in Roscher: ‘He [Thucydides] asserts that independence under party rule is more oppressive than alien servitude (IV, 86); and is aware that even in the most extensive democracy only a few in reality rule, and that subjects are abused equally by oligarchy and democracy (VIII, 48)’. Finally, a thought that seemed so important to Weber that he copied it word-for-word from p. 216 straight into his index: ‘Unrestrained democracy is on the whole little inclined to acknowledge unseen powers’. As if this were in need of explanation, Weber wrote in his still tidy schoolboy hand a marginal note, ‘God’.

Thucydides tells of truly godless times in his ‘composition’ (‘syngraphe’). The nature of politics, what happens when one thinks one has the ‘right to seize the spokes of the wheel of history’ — this can still be etched into the heart and head of any attentive reader by the History of the Peloponnesian War. Kari Palonen in his important book The Contingency of the Political demonstrates that Machiavelli’s fortuna, shaped as a universalized end of all security, returned to the world a few centuries later as a more or less-stabilized ‘order’. We know how much Weber thought of Machiavelli’s History of Florence. If he had written as planned the chapter ‘Convulsions’ for Economy and Society — a litmus test unfortunately never made for his well-earned claim to be a ‘classical political writer’ — then Machiavelli’s History of Florence would have given him ample material. In Rome he certainly read Machiavelli once more. Karl Schellhass was indispensable to Weber for discussion and for literary supplies — ‘Max is now impatient if he does not see Schellhass for a while—his need for “life” is increasing’. Among the works ‘supplied’ was Aristophanes, to whom Roscher devoted an entire chapter, comparing him with his near contemporary Thucydides. Marianne later wrote about this reading in her biography. In the printed version, she struck out a comment on Aristophanes — ‘that mucky talker’. Among other books that she mentioned were Rousseau’s Emile, a work that includes the essence of the contrat social; and Montesquieu,

115. Actually the subtitle to the unfortunate title Das Webersche Moment (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988).
116. Umwälzungen [Keith Tribe].
117. ‘That good, dear Schellhass! What a lovely man!’ Letter of Marianne to Helene Weber, 1 April 1901.
frequently cited by Roscher in *Thucydides*.\(^{120}\) Weber’s copy of *L’esprit des Lois* is full of interesting underlinings—Montesquieu’s ‘principles’ may well have served as godfather to Weber’s ideal type.\(^{121}\) Finally, Marianne mentioned ‘Taine’s complete works’. These were certainly of extraordinary importance to Weber’s conception of ‘cultural history’.

V. Towards a conclusion

And so I endeavour some kind of conclusion concerning the impact that Weber’s view of antiquity, focused through the understanding that Roscher’s *Thucydides* brought to his writing. I think back to the epigraph that stands at the head of this essay, but would like here to enter a *reservatio*. For here I should name the group of scholars indebted to Weber who command both a knowledge of Weber’s writings and of ancient history.\(^{122}\) I have done my duty and exhausted my expert knowledge by pointing out Roscher’s *Thucydides* and the significance of Fritz Baumgarten. I would, however, like to make some observations prompted by my reading of *Thucydides* over the last few years.

*How* did Weber read Thucydides? I believe that he did just as Thucydides wished of an ideal reader, drawing from the work a purpose, political instruction once and for all. Once the linguistic barrier had been surmounted, this was the way you read classical texts in the Gymnasium, there was no other way. It is hard to imagine the loss in political education since the humanistic Gymnasium

\(^{120}\) See pp. 23, 34, 42, 185.

\(^{121}\) Weber had the 1869 Garnier (Paris) edition, which can be found in the Munich MWG Arbeitstelle. Montesquieu’s ‘principles’ are of course also something quite other than ‘philosophical’ concepts.

\(^{122}\) For Germany I can name here Wilfried Nippel and Aloys Winterling; for Italy Pier Paolo Portinaro, Realino Marra and Luigi Capogrossi Colgnesi; and for the English-speaking world Peter Baehr and Peter Ghosh. Kari Palonen too could also, through Machiavelli, include Thucydides in his purview. I cannot here pursue the very interesting historiographical question of quite how Roscher’s *Thucydides* vanished from the consciousness of German historians. Weber wondered about Roscher’s ‘religious conviction’ (‘thoroughly unmodern’, WL, p. 3), although he did concede: ‘Wherever God surfaced in history, our knowledge was at an end for him too’ (WL, p. 20). It was certainly no coincidence that Ranke’s dissertation, also dealing with Thucydides, has not survived. Italian historiography, defined by the school of Santo Mazzarino (*Il pensiero storico classico*, Bari 1966), has never forgotten Roscher. See, e.g., Marcello Catarzi, *Il paradigma mimetico. L’incendenza tucididea nella teoria della conoscenza storica di W. Roscher*, X, pp. 121-75.
was eradicated out of sheer foolishness. Stefan Kipf published a monograph in 1999 on ‘Herodotus as a schoolbook’. What trouble the Prussian school authorities went to in finding the right texts for each age group. Thucydides was considered really too difficult, but also not unproblematic—he rather tended to stimulate independent thought. Here I can remind the reader of Thucydides’ intention, his expectation of the reader in I, 22:

I have checked everything with all possible exactness. Scrutiny was most troublesome… My work will probably not suit ceremonial readings… but if those who find my work useful in an exact knowledge of the past and of the future, how it will be replicated or emulated according to human nature—that will suffice. I have written it as a possession of lasting value.

He wrote his history ad usum delphini: for the education of the political class, and it has been read as such. Thomas Hobbes was certainly the most reflective reader, and he translated it as a text for the political education of his pupil, the son of the Duke of Devonshire; Charles V read it in the same way, and so did the sons of those called to the political leadership of nineteenth-century Europe.

A focus of recent Thucydides scholarship concerns the importance of Hippocratic writings for the ‘physician’s gaze’ used in Thucydides’ history. Among the enormous specialist literature I select here only Klaus Weidauer, Thukydides und die hippokratischen Schriften. In this physician’s gaze, the ‘trained ruthlessness of the gaze’ of one who, without pretension, wants to know the situation of

123. Herodotus als Schulautor. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Griechenunterrichts in Deutschland vom 15. bis zum 20. Jahrhundert (Study and Documentation to the History of Education in Germany, 73; Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999). The book refers extensively to contemporary reading of Thucydides. Besides the classical text by Friedrich Paulsen (see n. 33 above), Ludwig von Rönne’s Das Unterrichts-Wesen des Preußischen Staates (1855) (edited and with an introduction by Hans Jürgen Apel; Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1990), leads us to the sources. On the tradition of ‘individual reading’—a school institution besides which today’s ‘homework’ is a pale shadow—see pp. 212ff. Also M. Killmann, Die Direktoren-Versammlungen des Königreichs Preußen von 1860–1882 (Berlin, 1890), especially on ‘private studies’, pp. 140ff.


a patient, the future of a nation, of ‘mankind’—here Weber’s intellectual affinity with Thucydides is especially clear. Even if we are not talking of Thucydides or Weber, a key work for understanding this diagnostic stance is Wolfgang Wieland’s masterly 1975 book, *Diagnose*. I admit that it was this book that finally made quite clear to me what a political *science* is that seeks to be a *practical science* and *not* a practical *philosophy*.127

It is also worth discussing the question why Weber wrote nothing on Thucydides and next to nothing on ‘agrarian relations in antiquity’, apart from the few pages of the great 1909 encyclopaedia entry. There are many reasons for this. But one of them is I think that he did not dare. He wrote *scholarly* texts—to be sharply distinguished from the *journalistic* pieces—only about subjects where he thought no-one superior. Eduard Meyer *was* in this respect superior, and Weber was not free of resentment in appreciating this. He did however manage to hack at Meyer’s shins by choosing a different ground—the question of historical causality and the right of the historian to pose hypothetical questions.128 This is the domain of what if…?—for example, if the July Plot129 had been successful and so on, recapitulating in fact the homework that the Head of the Gymnasien had set the 15-year-old Weber on 10 August 1879: to search through all the Philippic speeches for hypothetical propositions of this kind.130 Three days later he wrote to his father, ‘I have gone through six Philippic speeches and already found several examples of this kind’.131 What a wonderful schooling, that so stimulated historico-political *imagination*—something at which above all Thucydides’ great work is unsurpassed.

Individual points I must here leave to one side. A book such as Hans-Peter Stahl’s *Thucydides. Die Stellung des Menschen im geschichtlichen Prozeß* identifies more ‘analogies’ and ‘borrowings’ than should encumber Weber’s reputation. Reflecting on Thucydides, it

127. In this I distance myself today from Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin. It was their interpretations of Thucydides that made me doubt their ‘sobriety’, or rather their Platonic ‘tendency’.
128. WL, pp. 266ff.
129. The failed attempt to assassinate Adolf Hitler on 20 July 1944 [Keith Tribe].
131. *Jugendbriefe*, p. 27.
seems to me that Weber’s lack of interest in the significance of the
democratic ‘state form as such’ is of especial interest, no matter how
difficult this might be for our ‘correct’ contemporaries to accept. If
‘society’ played no role on Weber, then ‘constitutional questions’ qua
the constitutionalism of his and our time likewise played a very subor-
dinate role.133 ‘Making the world safe for democracy’134 would never
have interested him—just as constitutional questions in the stricter
sense meant nothing to Thucydides—but ‘political leadership’ was
of great importance to him. Weber was interested in the ‘social orga-
nization’ upon which a ‘political body’ could rest. However odd this
might seem to modern ears, but quite appositely all the same, this
depended upon the distribution of social ‘honour’, hence ‘largely on a
structure that was based upon usurpation (as was the case originally
with nearly all forms of corporate [ständisch] “honour”).’135 Whatever
Weber did not learn from Thucydides he got later from Tocqueville,
for whom ‘honour’—or what was thought of as honour—was one
element, perhaps the crux of his political diagnostics.136

Neither should we belittle the value of the insights into interstate
relations that Thucydides lends the attentive reader, above all of
course for Germany’s position ‘among the European world powers’
(1916) but also soon with respect to the United States. There are no
fixed formulae here, but plenty to think about, as for instance on the
distinction between sea and land powers as recently recapitulated
in Martin Dreher’s Athen und Sparta.137 One of the most stimulating
books among the international scholarship on Thucydides, in which
Germany’s share is very much reduced, is the collection edited by
Lowell S. Gustafson, Thucydides’ Theory of International Relations: A
Lasting Possession.138

133. Apart from the lack of a rigorous right of inquiry and the incompatibility
of membership of both Bundesrat and Reichstag, he really had little further complaint
about the Bismarckian constitution.

134. English in the original [Keith Tribe].


136. Democracy in America, Second Part, Third Book, Ch. XVIII: ‘Of honour in
the United States and in democratic communities’. What we today experience, at
the beginning of the Third Millennium, is a transformation from societies resting on
the distribution of honour—whether that of warriors, priests, scholars, bourgeois
entrepreneurs, or free workers—into ‘respectable societies’. A ‘correct’ democrat can
therefore only take offence at Sheldon S. Wolin’s major new book Tocqueville between


138. Lowell S. Gustafson, Thucydides’ Theory of International Relations: A Lasting
In summary, I would like to draw a conclusion from this attempt to establish an elective affinity between the first great historico-political thinker and perhaps the last political thinker belonging to Old Europe.\textsuperscript{139}

Given the dreadfully fragmentary character of Weber’s work, I think we have to re-order and re-assess it. The canon will look different. The orthodoxy has the real Weber beginning in 1903 with the ‘methodological’ writings. Then comes the Protestant Ethic and the supposedly contrasting investigation of the ‘Economic Ethic of World Religions’—China, India, ancient Judaism. And last of all the torso of Economy and Society. Next to nothing is said in teaching and commentary on Weber about Weber’s surveys, whether completed, or planned and then abandoned. If they are read at all, then as a rule far too narrowly; so the studies of rural labour are thought to be dominated by the nationalistic interests of an alleged Pole hater.\textsuperscript{140} Only now, thanks to Knut Borchardt’s wonderful edition of the Börsenschriften, do we have any idea of what Weber was up to during his three years in Freiburg, from 1894 to 1897. The studies of ‘psychophysics’, the plan for the survey of the press, the Verein für Socialpolitik survey, the planning that he did with Georg Jellinek for the Carnegie Institute for International Politics\textsuperscript{141}—only through

\textsuperscript{139}. In a letter to Rickert (in the Rickert Papers, very likely dated the end of November 1913) Thucydides’ work has first place in a list of examples of scholarly works that are ‘superseded’ but also ‘completed’—a judgement that Weber usually reserved for works of art (my thanks to Horst Baier for bringing this to my attention).

\textsuperscript{140}. See n. 27 above.

\textsuperscript{141}. MWG II/6. The letters to Jellinek of September 1909 outline an entire programme of study that would today consume unimaginable sums in ‘research funding’ and keep several ‘politology’ institutes going in grand style well into old age. This project can only be understood against the background of Thucydides’ analysis of Athens versus Sparta and Aristotle’s polities. I have already described how the first literary form of a politics that understood itself as a (‘sophist’) science was the ‘description of states’—see my Politik und praktische Philosophie, reprinted in my Politikwissenschaft und politisches Denken (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), pp. 77ff. Weber always wants to assess concrete ‘situations’: rural workers in East Elbia, bourgeois democracy in Russia, and so on—their being ‘historically so and not otherwise’, the future potential that they contain within themselves. A decisive motive for his participation in the Archiv’s editorial board was the hope that he would be able to organize ‘supplements’, along the lines of his reports on Russia, of social conditions in the ‘major cultural states’. Most of the friction with his fellow editors resulted from the disintegration of these hopes. Likewise, his participation in the ‘Society for Sociology’ interested him exclusively with respect to the support it might offer for the undertaking of large-scale surveys. Nothing came of this either.
these do we know about his ‘eye’, what observational apparatus he brought to the ‘science of reality’ that he sought to pursue. Nothing came of any of this, to a great extent his own fault. Even in the Economic Ethic of World Religions one can detect a passion for working up the material as a survey report, his most important sources are the extensive British census reports, drafted by colonial officials who worked with a trained eye. Thucydides’ *Peloponnesian War* is certainly no work of narrative history, it is a ‘report’, more a survey than history in the sense of Herodotus or Xenophon.142

What place does the *Protestant Ethic and the ‘Spirit’ of Capitalism* have within this overall reassessment? This is Weber’s *Peloponnesian War*! For Thucydides, this was the greatest ‘convulsion’ (*Kinesis*) of all time, the most violent event of world history, hence the endless trouble that he took with it. Hegel could have said that Thucydides’ work was the profit that mankind drew from the Peloponnesian War. Perhaps that will be said of Weber’s *Protestant Ethic*, which in his opinion also deals with the greatest occurrence in world history, the break with all tradition, the ‘great fracture of world history’ (Sombart), the ‘Great Transformation’ (Polanyi). Weber obdurately defended the significance of the penetration of man’s soul by the capitalistic economy as a ‘monstrous development’143 which would mark for ever all human culture. Towards the end of his *Protestant Ethic* Weber reveals that he has described a ‘convulsion’ paralleled only by the Peloponnesian War of Thucydides. For Goethe, knowledge that ‘action’ and ‘renunciation’ today, immutably, reciprocally condition each other means bidding ‘farewell to a period of full and fine humanity, the likes of which we shall not see again in the course of our cultural development, any more than *full flowering of Athens in antiquity* will be repeated’.144 It should be recalled that after long preparation the *Protestant Ethic* was nurtured during Weber’s years in Rome. Even if only as part of his critique of Roscher he had, among


144. *Protestant Ethic*, p. 120; my emphasis Wilhelm Hennis.
all his other reading, returned anew to Thucydides, and his thoughts were certainly not that dissimilar to Edward Gibbons’ melancholy mood.

The task for all these various surveys and investigations should be a more exact charting of this new world situation in all its manifestations. All of them have a pretty murky background. In Roscher we can find wonderful phrases on the tragic irony of the great tragedians. He thinks of Sophocles: ‘In the tragedian there is in this wistful irony of human blindness something deeply tragic, for the historian something genuinely historical, for here the possibility first takes shape of the unseen approach of ruin’.  

Another final thought. In Otto Regenbogen’s wonderful 1933 essay ‘Thukydides als politischer Denker’ he notes towards the end, after some moving words on Thucydides’ writings that ‘the ultimate meaning of Thucydides’ work is Plato’. For it was Plato, not Thucydides, in search of a just state, who wrote ‘the last will and testament of the Attic spirit for the millennium’. 

One has to lend this emphasis: without doubt, Thucydides understood himself as a sophistes, a knower and not a sage. A political scientist, no political philosopher. Political science in the tradition of Thucydides—that is, insofar as one dare talk of it, surreptitiously, from behind a raised hand—Machiavelli, Hobbes, a Montesquieu whose writing is cryptic and coded, the best in Tocqueville, and, in my opinion, Max Weber. There is no demand for this kind of political science, at any rate in Germany.  

Leo Strauss, Hannah Arendt, Eric Voegelin—Weber made them shudder, the ‘ruthlessness of his gaze’, everything based on violence, struggle and yet more struggle. Surely that was not true!

The relationship of Weber to Plato is a mystery. A young Swiss scholar, Arthur Mettler, wrote an excellent dissertation in 1934 on ‘Max Weber and the philosophical problematic of our times’. In a

145. Roscher, Thucydides, p. 170.
146. In Herter, Thucydides, p. 58.
147. Quite different in the United States and Great Britain. From the most recent literature I cite only J. Mearsheimer, The Tragedy of Great Power Politics (New York: Norton, 2001); Jonathan Haslam, No Virtue Like Necessity: Realist Thought in International Relations since Machiavelli (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Philip Bobbit, The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace and the Course of History (New York: Knopf, 2002). All of these are directed to a rehabilitation of a ‘realist’ theory of politics at which my first publication of 1951, Das Problem der Souveränität (Tübingen: Mohr, 2003) was aimed, via the writings of E.H. Carr. The ‘normative’ orientation at the back of mind was taken for granted, as it is today.
footnote he reveals that he also wrote a long chapter on Plato, but had to leave it out on account of its length. I don’t believe that—the results would have certainly been too shocking. Of course Weber had the greatest respect for Plato, whom he knew down to the last crease and certainly enjoyed, honoured and admired. Nonetheless, in Science as a Vocation there is the awful passage about ‘naïve optimism’, of seeing in ‘science’ the path to happiness—we might also say to virtue, to justice. ‘Who believes in that? Apart from adult children in the lecture-room or in editorial offices.’ Thucydides was certainly no child. Neither was Plato. But was he perhaps the forebear of so many small and not so small children in research laboratories and in the lecture hall—offering mankind a better future ‘through science’, whether natural or social science: genetic engineering, ‘space travel’, ‘peace research’, ‘happiness’ research and so on?\footnote{148}

\footnote{148. Everything that can be said about this has already been said by Friedrich Wagner, Die Wissenschaft und die gefährdete Welt. Eine Wissenschaftssoziologie der Atomphysik (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1962); not republished since, and certainly not entirely coincidentally.}