

**Author's Response  
to Review of Max Weber. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.  
New Translation and Introduction by Stephen Kalberg.**

At a very minimum, the author of a review of a new translation is obligated to communicate to his readers the manner in which the new and old translations vary. This task can largely be accomplished by a) a comparison of passages from each translation that assesses clarity, accuracy, readability, etc., and b) a summary of the various ways in which the two versions differ "externally." John Hillman's highly polemical review of my translation of Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* falls down on both counts. (I will not comment here on Hillman's treatment of the other translation under review.)

In respect to a): The reader is offered blanket judgments: "many ... distortions" and "serious deficiencies" characterize the new and old translations. Strong words, especially when a systematic discussion or comparison of passages (either to the Parsons version or to the original) is lacking. Instead, Hillman chooses to focus upon two (!) of my terms and one phrase---as if translation involved nothing more than good dictionary skills rather than assessment of the ways in which terms are used in specific intellectual contexts and debates, knowledge of the usage of terms at the time when Weber wrote, awareness of his unusual usages, cognizance of the many ways in which terms relate to specific social features of German society, etc., etc. The reviewer then offers a further polemical statement ("[Kalberg fails] to grasp some of the elementary features of the history of Protestantism"), substituting for an argument brief reference, in parentheses, to two examples (both erroneous). If a translation of this large scale is to be assessed adequately, global judgments must be either avoided or substantiated.

In respect to b): The reader is left with the impression that nothing has changed. However, as other reviewers have noted clearly, I undertook significant measures to distinguish my translation "externally" from that of Parsons and to render it more accessible to today's reader (see pp. v-vi). If I may be so bold, for the record (from pp. vi-vii), for example:

- Persons, places, groups, and documents were identified in short bracketed phrases inserted into the text (and, in many cases, further identified in new endnotes);
- Occasional endnotes clarified Weber's arguments and literary references, and identified his interlocutors;
- Translations, in brackets, of foreign language passages were added;
- Key terms were identified in a glossary;
- The translation of key terms and phrases was standardized;
- Innumerable partial bibliographical entries were adjusted and completed;
- Weber's (frequent) italicization and inverted commas were retained;
- Paragraphs and endnotes added by Weber in his 1920 revision were indicated (and *contra* Hillman, many are **not** trivial).

Moreover, why does Hillman note positive features of the other translation under review while omitting mention of the same features of my translation (retaining of Weber's italics and inverted commas; an introduction that places the text in context)? Finally, the long introduction I (unlike Parsons) offer, which was designed to assist today's ill-equipped reader to understand a complex argument often misunderstood even by scholars, is dismissed in a flippant manner---and, again, without a single reference to the text. Undergraduate students in North America today constitute by far the book's major readership, and Weber did not write with this audience in mind!

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<http://www.arts.ualberta.ca/cjscopy/reviews/kalberg.html>

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