

BOOK REVIEW

Helping Hands

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Leff, Laurel (2019) *Well Worth Saving: American Universities' Life-and-Death Decisions on Refugees from Nazi Europe*. New Haven; London: Yale University Press

357 pp.

ISBN 978-0-300-24387-1

Price: \$30.00

Mulder, Bertus (2021) *Sophie Louisa Kwaak und das Kapital der Unternehmerfamilie Weil: Ein Beitrag zur Wirtschaftsgeschichte der Frankfurter Schule* [Sophie Louisa Kwaak and the capital of the entrepreneurial family Weil: A contribution to the economic history of the Frankfurt School]. Translated from Dutch by Arne Braun. Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag

283 pp.

ISBN 978-38353-3915-6

Price: €24.90

Stöckel, Tommy (2020) *Wissenschaftsorganisatoren in den Sozialwissenschaften 1890–1940* [Managers of the social sciences 1890–1940]. Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien (Humboldt University Berlin Dissertation)

575 pp.

ISBN 978-3-658-38168-4

Price: €64.99

It is really a truism to assert that practicing the profession of science needs not only intellectual capacities. One crucial element of the 'add-ons' in scholarship is that it requires other people. Another is the enabling activities; in most cases, relevant and essential actions are performed by non-scholars, sometimes, however, scholars themselves devote time and effort to help peers to be able to continue with their core business. Those who concentrate completely on the helping side seldom gain any kind of recognition in the history of science and scholarship, and the scholar who volunteers in these supportive roles usually does not improve their reputation as a scholar – because scholarly credit is calculated according to intellectual contributions alone.

The three books under review here deal with individuals who devoted (some of) their energies in the support of scholars. The most voluminous is a dissertation from the Department of History at Humboldt University in Berlin. Indeed, the book presents three relatively unrelated cases from the

social sciences in France and the United States. Stöckel calls his subject *Wissenschaftsorganisatoren*, and one could translate this compositum to organizers of science and scholarship (the more telling alternative “organisation men” —alluding to William H. Whyte’s famous book from 1956—is nowadays inappropriate for well-known reasons). Stöckel, who left academia after finishing his PhD, analyzes organizational activities in the first half of the 20th century where prominent social scientists played crucial roles. The author claims that the new role of the organizer crystalized in these decades but concedes elsewhere that some organizing was also done in earlier epochs.

The first case compares two French sociologists, the famous Émile Durkheim and the less prominent René Worms. Those familiar with Durkheim and his school won’t learn much from the chapter, but putting the more famous alongside the one who lost much of his reputation (and might not have gained a level of acclaim during a lifetime which could compete with that of Durkheim); highlights that even an author of the standing of Durkheim did have the obligation to spent a reasonable part of his efforts in supporting activities such as founding a journal, persuading others to submit their promised contributions, and writing letters to publishers, to name just a few. Interestingly enough, one of the endeavors of Worms remains, even if it is only experts who remember the founder of the Institute International de Sociologie. The journals founded by Durkheim and Worms lived much shorter lives.

The second case study is concerned with the creation of the *Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, edited by Edwin R. A. Seligman and Alvin S. Johnson. The fifteen volumes were published between 1930 and 1934 by Macmillan, sixteen reprint editions came out after WWII until the next, the *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences*, substituted for its predecessor in 1968. Based on archival material, Stöckel demonstrates the crucial role of Johnson in the whole enterprise. The somewhat older Seligman presided more over the project, whereas Johnson really organized it. Given the fact that the same man was also president of the New School of Social Research where he initiated the University in Exile for the disbanded German professors, and took part in other refugee help schemes, one is surprised about the time resources of the no longer quite young man. Stöckel concentrates on Johnson’s editorial role and presents several telling stories about it. It is worth mentioning that Stöckel disapproves the established view about the influence of the (older) German *Handwörterbuch der Staatswissenschaften* (4th edition 1923–1929). Johnson had been aware of the eight volumes of German scholarship in the field, which at that time was called *Staatswissenschaften* but covered nearly the same territory as the social sciences in the English-speaking world (the difference was in the approach, more humanistic in the German world, more empiristic in the US).

Two of Stöckel’s findings deserve to be mentioned. On the one hand, the finances of the project were affected by the Great Depression, but Johnson outmaneuvered those who felt the enterprise would fail by promising deliveries at deadlines he overstretched regularly. When threatened with premature termination by the publishing house’s accountants, he even cut Seligman’s honorarium instead of backing down. The Foreword to the 1968 *Encyclopaedia* and Johnson’s *Pioneer’s Progress: An Autobiography* (1952) have hinted towards his leading role in the enterprise but Stöckel’s chapter reveals many more details. On the other hand, it is interesting to learn the extent to which Johnson and his associate instructed the authors – taking a far greater editorial role than either previous editors or those subsequent. Johnson, Seligman and a handful of other scholars prepared not only a list of entries, but designed every contribution with regard to both content and scope. Obviously, some of the invited contributors did not follow these editorial commands. It would have been worth investigating this further, but unfortunately the author switches to another case.

The third case is concerned with the role of the Rockefeller philanthropies in the development of the social sciences in France during the wars. The 130+ page long chapter presents a detailed coverage, based on the French, English and German literature plus archival material located in the Rockefeller Archive Center. The multilingual author deserves credit for the coverage of the many less successful interventions by the officers of the Rockefeller Foundation. For various reasons, the Americans did not collaborate with the most innovative exponents of French human sciences, such as Marc Bloch, Lucien Febvre, Maurice Halbwachs, or Marcel Mauss, but with second ranked representatives including Célestin Bouglé and Charles Rist. Whereas the Rockefellers made a difference in most European countries where they invested effort and money in the interwar years, they could not overcome the French system of patronage.

Laurel Leff, specialist in Jewish Studies and journalism, investigated the role of university presidents and similar administrators in the years after 1933, when Hitler held power in Germany, dismissing many scholars who then sought refuge abroad. With some verve, Leff follows the struggle of Jewish scholars to escape Nazi territory and establish themselves elsewhere. Leff picked eight scholars as cases and studied their destinies in detail: Max Fleischmann (law), Hedwig Hintze (history), Leonore Brecher (zoology), Michel Gordin (Russian literature and linguistics), Mieczyslaw Kolinski (musicology and anthropology), Marie Anne Schirmann (physics), Käthe Spiegel (medieval history) and Hedwig Kohn (physics). The first names of these individuals indicate a gender proportion of five women to three men: thus clearly suggesting the eight were not drawn as a representative sample of refugee scholars. However, the selection legitimately demonstrates the failure of rescue. Only one of the eight reached American shores, another survived in hiding as a “U boat” in Nazi occupied Belgium. The other six perished in the course of the killing of Jews in the 1940s by the Nazis. Leff claims that all could have been saved if the American institution had been more helpful. The evidence is overwhelming, and Leff accurately exposes the responsible actors: university presidents, like the ones from Harvard and Columbia; James Conant and Nicholas M. Butler; the State Department; and a majority of US consuls abroad. He claims they were lazy, anti-Semitic, or highly bureaucratic and overly officious.

Leff pays tribute to those who devoted much of their time and energy trying to save foreign scholars. Besides the already well-known institutions, such as the University in Exile and the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars; Leff found some more candidates for Yad Vashem’s Righteous Among the Nations. Besides Johnson, mentioned earlier, the New York physician Alfred E. Cohn, Leff depicts the efforts of another prominent scholar, who acted as a helper: anthropologist Melville Herskovits fought for many years to bring the musicologist Kolinski to the US but was unsuccessful. After the liberation of Europe, Herskovits was happily informed of Kolinski’s survival who finally arrived in America in 1951.

Leff’s well-researched book includes two appendices, the first concerning the American institutions and individuals who played a central role in determining whether refugee scholars could come to the US, and the second a list of displaced scholars and how they fared. The author is to be praised for avoiding overstretched deductions from a handful of cases by paying tribute to the helpers and their efforts. She is outspoken in her condemnation of those Americans who had had the chance to do better. I hesitate to mention that Leff’s scholarship would have been even more impressive if she had included studies on her subject published in other languages.

Whereas Leff presents a collective biography, Mulder decided to focus on a single case. A social historian by profession, Mulder had previously published two papers on the fate of Andries Sternheim, who was a collaborator of Max Horkheimer's Institute for Social Research Geneva branch in the 1930s. When as a consequence of Friedrich Pollock's failed investments at Wall Street Horkheimer reduced Sternheim's salary, the Swiss authorities terminated his residence permit. Together with his family Sternheim returned home to Amsterdam, where the Nazi seized and deported them. They died in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. In the course of his research on Sternheim, Mulder must have come across another Dutch employee in the service of the Institute of Social Research: Sophie Kwaak, the daughter of working-class parents living in rural Netherlands who managed to climb the social ladder and became a stenographer typist in a Rotterdam investment firm. In 1933, Kwaak was hired by a newly established firm, the *Rotterdamsche Belegging- en Beheermaatschappij* (ROBEMA). Initially only a secretary, she was conferred as procurator in 1938 and assistant manager in 1939. ROBEMA handled the investments of the Argentinian-German family Weil, famous in the history of social research because early in 1920 Felix Weil persuaded his father Hermann to donate money for the creation of an institute devoted to the study of Marxism. It finally became known as the Institute for Social Research. This privately financed research enterprise successfully transferred its wealth out of Germany before Hitler became Reichskanzler. For more than 30 years, Kwaak worked for ROBEMA, and came to be in touch with the men running the Institute: Weil, Pollock and Horkheimer. Whereas these three men and the initial manager of ROBEMA, Arthur E. Nadel, lived in the US, Kwaak, who was not Jewish, stayed in the Netherlands and managed to save the assets of the Weils and the Institute. Mulder tells this story with compassion for his hero, amidst his detailed reports about the finances of the Institute.

It is not known whether Kwaak only administered the accounts or made decisions regarding the investment of assets, but it is clear that she did not collaborate with the Nazi occupiers but wholeheartedly resisted them. The Nazi administration in the occupied Netherlands sought to get hold of all "Jewish money" but Kwaak ingeniously fooled the Germans and their Dutch helpers. Her bravura was not without risk for herself because if the Nazis were to become aware of her disobedience the consequences would have been severe.

After liberation, Kwaak continued with her efforts to put the interests of ROBEMA above personal wishes from some of the Weil family. The relationship to the Institute was affected by the fact that Kwaak's former boss, Nadel, experienced increasing resentment from Horkheimer and Pollock after his arrival in New York (Nadel reported this to Kwaak after liberation). Her own interaction with Pollock remained punctilious on her side but condescending from his.

The full life history of Kwaak in Mulder's account might not be of undivided interest for those who are concerned with the history of the social sciences, but readers interested in the conditions of life of ordinary people will find this biography worth reading.

While both traditional and recent histories of science, as well as STS, focus on researching individuals or on the immediate research process (the laboratory); studies such as those presented here can alert us to the fact that successful research requires more: institutional frameworks shaped by actants (rather than just the actants themselves), researchers who undertake organizational activities, and individuals, readily referred to as auxiliaries, who keep the machines running. All three books are relevant for a better understanding of the role of these helping hands for the development of science and scholarship.