

Civil courage (*Zivilcourage*): The case of Knut Wicksell

RICHARD SWEDBERG

Stockholm University

During the last few years the interest for what in Europe is called *Zivilcourage* (*civillkurage*, *valor civil*, *courage civile*) seems to have increased among the public at large.¹ Although no overviews of the contemporary literature exist, this appears to have been the case especially in Germany and Sweden.² Social scientists, however, have shown little interest in this topic, something that is a pity since “*civil courage*” (as I propose to call it in English³) represents a fascinating phenomenon in its own right.

One of the few facts that is known about the history of civil courage is that the term itself comes from the German, more precisely, from Bismarck. According to several sources, it was in 1864 that Bismarck for the first time used this expression, when he said that although in Germany there are many people who show courage on the battle field, this is much less common in life outside the military.⁴ As a historical phenomenon, civil courage is of course older than the term itself, even though there exists no good history of civil courage that we can refer to. Standard definitions of civil courage – e.g., “*to dare to act because of one’s conviction, even at the risk of paying a high price for this conviction*”⁵ – indicate, however, that civil courage has existed as long as there have been “convictions” that deviate from the norm in some group or society. The first person to show civil courage may well have been somebody with a deviating *religious* opinion. As an example of this one could mention the prophets in the Old Testament. These knew that they were going to be met with derision and anger, and often with violence as well; but they nonetheless stood up in the streets and squares in ancient Palestine and preached their messages. What is characteristic of these prophets, Weber says, is that they all felt personally called by God to criticize the established order, whatever the consequences would be for themselves (“It is said ... but *I* say to you”).⁶

Since there exists very little material on civil courage by social scientists, a number of important tasks remain to be done. There is a need, first and foremost, for historical studies of civil courage and for discussions of this phenomenon in moral philosophy and political theory. What I do in this article, however, is something else, namely to show what a *sociological* analysis of civil courage might look like. Such an analysis represents a challenge for several reasons. For one thing, there exists an important individual dimension to civil courage, which is hard to get at from a sociological perspective. At the moment of acting, for example, the individual typically stands alone. On the other hand, it is also clear that sociology is well equipped to bring out the social or group dimension of civil courage, especially the way that family, friends, and sympathizers stand behind and support the person who in some situation displays civil courage. There is finally also the fact that acts of civil courage often evoke a very strong sense of admiration. In an objective sociological analysis this admiration should be explained – but not be allowed to infuse the way that civil courage is analyzed.

An example of civil courage: Knut Wicksell

Modern sociology often works with huge data sets in order to produce empirically reliable descriptions and explanations. If such data sets also exist for civil courage I do not know, even though it would in principle be possible to put some together. One could, for example, try to gather statistics about the people in nineteenth-century United States who helped slaves to escape from states that still allowed slavery. Or, to take another example, one could study those who helped the Jews or other persecuted minorities during World War II.⁷ In this article, however, I proceed in exactly the opposite manner, and instead take one single case and look at it in great detail. The disadvantages with this approach are obvious, but by looking at one case in great detail, one is more likely to include the kind of facts that are usually sorted out in huge data sets, when the behavior that is being studied needs to be standardized. The advantages of using a single case are especially clear when one is not sure exactly what one is looking for. In brief, an analysis of this type can be justified as long as the analysis is exploratory in nature.

The case I have chosen to focus on is Knut Wicksell (1851–1926), who is generally regarded as one of the great economists of all times and

who also was a person with a great deal of civil courage. His life and work can be summarized as follows.⁸ Wicksell was born in 1851 and grew up in the southern part of Stockholm, Sweden, where his father had a small business. Wicksell became religious in his teens, but after a few years as a student in Uppsala, he becomes a free-thinker. One author that influenced Wicksell very much while in Uppsala was John Stuart Mill; he also read Malthus and became a fervent Malthusian. Wicksell's ambition as a student was to take a doctorate in mathematics and then become a professor of mathematics. He was, however, also very interested in social and political questions, and after some time at the university he realized that he did not want to devote himself as wholeheartedly to this topic as was necessary for a successful career as a mathematician.

In 1880 Wicksell caused a first-class scandal in Uppsala by publicly advocating the use of contraceptives. He then finished his studies in mathematics, without completing a doctorate; and tried instead to make a living through public lecturing on various social and political topics. For several years he travelled around in Sweden and gave radical talks on such topics as marriage, prostitution, and the population question. His opinions on topics such as marriages of conscience, the Swedish economy, euthanasia, and so on caused quite a stir.⁹ He also wrote a number of pamphlets on social and political questions, and was one of the founders of the famous student association *Verdandi*. Wicksell's political attitude can be characterized as left liberal, but he never became a member of a political party. He once said, "I do not belong to the herd. I am a sheep all of my own."¹⁰

During the 1890s Wicksell worked extremely hard to become a professional economist. He quickly wrote three major works in economics and also got his Ph.D. in economics. In 1901 – after a number of difficulties and much hardship – he was finally appointed professor in economics at Lund University ("*e.o. professor i nationalekonomi och finansrätt*"). In Lund, Wicksell continued to give radical speeches and write radical pamphlets. On several occasions he succeeded in getting the whole of the audience against him, especially when he discussed Sweden's defense. Wicksell was of the opinion that it was futile for a small country like Sweden to defend itself, and that it could use its tax money in better ways than to spend it on the army. Instead of Sweden joining England or Germany in an alliance, as many Swedes wanted at the time, Wicksell advocated that Sweden should become part of Russia.

Wicksell also succeeded in endangering his own appointment to full professor. In order to become a professor in Sweden in those days, you had to write a letter, addressed to the King and signed with the words “your servant” (“*underdånigst*”). Wicksell, however, thought that this was humiliating and replaced the words “your servant” with “sincerely” (“*vördsamt*”). This scared his family and friends, who had supported him while he studied economics and who feared that Wicksell’s appointment would be endangered by his choice of words. The authorities, however, decided to ignore the wording of Wicksell’s letter, and he got his professorship.

During his years as a professor of economics, Wicksell produced a great number of articles in economics as well as a famous textbook. He also caused two big scandals. In 1905 he greatly angered the audience at the so-called Tegnér Festivities in Lund by criticizing Sweden’s behavior toward Norway, and a few years later he wanted to test the limits of freedom of expression and ended up in jail for blasphemy. Also after 1916, when Wicksell retired from Lund University and moved to Stockholm, he continued with his radical activities, even though he by now was a well-regarded economist who also did some consulting for the Swedish state and the Central Bank. The last work that Wicksell worked on, before his death in 1926, was a revised version of a Verdani pamphlet that he had written while in jail.

This brief sketch should have given the reader something of a feeling for Wicksell’s personality, including the fact that he was a person with a great deal of civil courage. To his contemporaries, Wicksell was a source of inspiration through his courage and principled stand on various issues. Eli Heckscher – the great Swedish economic historian – stated, for example, that “there is perhaps no person in modern Sweden who, as much as he [that is, Wicksell], has understood to live his life in accordance with his own being ... and to follow his thought to its end, state his opinion, and live his life without regard for dangers, be they intellectual or moral, social or individual. And for nothing does he deserve to be thanked as much as for this.”¹¹ Ernst Wigforss – famous finance minister of the Social Democrats from the 1920 to the 1940s – has spoken of Wicksell’s “total freedom from considerations of what could be useful or good for himself, his unstoppable desire to tell the truth as he saw it, and to say things which usually were unpleasant for the mighty, the powerful and the majorities.”¹² Wigforss adds that even though Wicksell was much admired and appreciated in the labor movement, “he never concealed those of his opinions that the

labor movement disliked.”¹³ On one occasion, when Wicksell had given one of his anti-militaristic speeches in Lund, a friend of Wigforss asked Wigforss if he really agreed with Wicksell since he had seen Wigforss applaud with great energy. “I answered something like this: it is one thing to approve of what Wicksell says; still, I cannot but admire his courage to fight all alone.”¹⁴ In a similar manner, the Rector at Lund University stated when Wicksell was about to retire that however much he personally disliked Wicksell’s opinions, his admiration for Wicksell’s courage was even greater.¹⁵ In brief, even Wicksell’s opponents admired and appreciated his civil courage.¹⁶

Three episodes in Wicksell’s life

I now present in detail a few of the more spectacular episodes from Wicksell’s political career, and in this way produce some material for the sociological analysis in the next section. The three episodes I have chosen are the following: Wicksell’s advocacy of contraceptives in Uppsala in 1880, his defense of Norway’s right to be an independent nation at the Tegnér Festivities in 1905, and his speech in Stockholm in 1908 that led to him being thrown in jail for blasphemy.

Episode no. 1: Uppsala 1880

The background to the scandal in Uppsala in 1880 is the following. When Wicksell arrived in Uppsala in 1869 to study at the university, he was deeply religious and concentrated on his studies. After a few years, however, he began to have serious doubts about his faith, and some time later he publicly declared himself a free-thinker. Especially two books had made him change his mind: George Drysdale’s *Elements of Social Science* (1854) and John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty* (1859). Drysdale’s book is unknown today, but was a bestseller in England during the second half of the nineteenth century; and in 1878 it had been translated into Swedish by a friend of Wicksell. The analysis in this work is pervaded by a deep belief that all social problems are caused by overpopulation. Drysdale’s argument had an enormous impact on Wicksell, who became a convinced Malthusian overnight.

The second book that made a deep impression on Wicksell was, to repeat, John Stuart Mill’s *On Liberty*. Wicksell was later to write that for him and his friends “Mill’s *On Liberty* became the foundation and

codex in which all that we had vaguely sensed, was spelled out with great clarity and set in its proper logical context.” What Wicksell especially admired in Mill’s work is obvious from the following quote:

What was relatively new at the time [that is, in the 1870s and the 1880s] was the idea that the suppression of any opinion and any attitude is something bad, whatever the circumstances may be, including the case when the suppressed opinion is wrong. This is also the case – yes, even more so – when it comes to attempts to “live life in novel ways,” through which no one is hurt. These latter attempts should be regarded as a gain for humanity, and they should be encouraged rather than persecuted and treated with derision.¹⁷

In an account of the history of the famous Swedish student association *Verdani*, one can read that “on February 19 a flash of lightning hit Uppsala and caused a fire, the size of which it would not see for forty years and which had not been seen for fifty years.”¹⁸ What had happened was the following. In February 1880 Wicksell took the initiative to make a speech about the negative effects of alcohol. On February 19, at the temperance lodge “The Army of Hope” (“*Hoppets här*”), he gave a speech on the theme of “The Most Common Causes of Habitual Drunkenness and How to Remove Them.” Wicksell’s talk was well received by most of the audience, but some people were clearly shocked by what he had to say, especially by a carefully worded and brief argument to the effect that contraceptives ought to be permitted. The few words on contraceptives were picked up and magnified in the local press, and when Wicksell on September 25 gave his talk again, the place was packed with students and academics. Wicksell now repeated, but also amplified his argument that contraceptives should be permitted. About a month later Wicksell also published a printed version of his talk. The title was *Some Remarks on the Chief Causes of and Social Remedies for Social Ills, with Special Attention to Drunkenness* (95 pages), and it was followed the same year by *An Answer to My Critics* (110 pages).

In the introduction to his pamphlet, Wicksell says that when you try to understand phenomena such as drunkenness, you must not stop when you encounter unpleasant facts but bravely continue. Wicksell cites at this point the words of an Uppsala philosopher, Benjamin Højjer (1767–1812): “*Seek the truth; and if this search takes you to the gates of Hell, you must knock on them!*”¹⁹ According to Wicksell, alcoholism should be regarded as an illness, and the most common cause of this illness was poverty. This may not sound very original, but Wicksell had his own definition of poverty. Someone is poor, he said, when he or she

does not have what he or she really needs; and he emphasized that what each human being needs is, first and foremost, *a home*. “What the poor person in our country primarily lacks is *a home*, a place to which he can retire, once work is done, in order to at least enjoy a little something of the good of this life, in the company of his family.”²⁰

Overpopulation was the ultimate cause of poverty, according to Wicksell, and what Malthus had to say on this issue must be taken very seriously. Overpopulation is an evil and it can only be stopped by people having fewer children. It is therefore important – and here comes the sentence that was to cause such an uproar – that if a doctor knows of some means “through which marital association can be possible without the woman becoming pregnant,” the doctor should set this means “at the disposal of a suffering humanity.”²¹ Wicksell also lashed out at the double morality that was prevalent in Swedish society. “For of all the vices that you may find in a people, I can think of none that is more loathsome than a widespread hypocrisy.”²²

Toward the end of his pamphlet Wicksell says that in the struggle against overpopulation little is to be expected from legislation, at least for the moment. One should instead rely on “people’s voluntary willingness to sacrifice themselves” and start associations against overpopulation. The effect of having associations of this type will not be noticeable for a long time, according to Wicksell, who also noted that “those of us who today want to stand at the head of this movement will have to experience all the danger and unpleasantness that come with being pioneers for a new idea.”²³

There was a very strong reaction in Uppsala to Wicksell’s first talk. A number of hostile newspaper articles appeared in the local press, and Wicksell was immediately called in for a talk with the Rector at Uppsala University. Whatever the Rector told him had no effect on him, or rather, it must have had the opposite effect, since Wicksell’s second speech contained more about contraceptives than the first had done. The attacks on Wicksell after his second speech were even stronger – but he still did not budge, and even decided to intensify the struggle. He did this by publishing his speech as a pamphlet, something that meant that he now also could reach the whole country. The attacks in the press also constituted a good advertisement for Wicksell’s pamphlet, which was sold in more than 6,000 copies.

A couple of days after Wicksell's second speech, someone wrote in a letter that Wicksell "arouses admiration, astonishment, loathing and hatred. Some paint him blacker than the Devil himself; they deride and abuse him; while others pity him and bewail his errors, yet others defend him. You don't know where to find the truth in all this chaos."²⁴ Another person similarly observed in a letter that "all doors are [now] closed for this once so popular young man."²⁵ Some people supported Wicksell in public, but he also received several positive letters from people who did not dare to express their support for him in any other way.

The Rector at Uppsala University had, as we know, called in Wicksell for a talk after his first speech, and when this did not have the desired effect, he saw to it that Wicksell got an official warning from the University. The medical doctors' association in Uppsala issued a public announcement against the use of contraceptives, and at a public meeting, organized by people who disapproved of Wicksell's behavior, an association was created to improve the morals of female prostitutes and wayward students. Wicksell describes the activities of this association in the following manner in a letter to one of his sisters:

A complete system of spying on the private lives of students has recently been organized here. Secret denunciations and anonymous letters seem to belong to the order of the day, particularly since the organizers have managed to interest the town's new chief of police (who incidentally is famous for being the most stupid man in Scandinavia) in the matter. He gets his subordinates to spy on the students and then sends reports either to Rector Magnificus or to Mrs. Norrby, who seems to work for our moral uplift.²⁶

Episode no. 2: The Tegnér Festivities in Lund 1905

This episode took place in Lund, where Wicksell had move in 1900 to teach economics at the university. The reader should be aware of Wicksell's reputation at the time for being very sympathetic to Russia (the archenemy of Sweden), and that the union between Sweden and Norway was about to break up. Early in 1905 the Norwegians had announced that they did not want to continue to be united to (and dominated by) Sweden, something that had caused deep resentment in Swedish patriotic circles. During all of 1905 patriotic sentiments had been on the verge of boiling over in Sweden, especially during the fall. On October 26 King Oscar II of Sweden was to renounce the crown of Norway, and it was about three weeks before this event that people in Lund began to prepare for the annual Tegnér Festivities.

The person who in 1905 had been invited to be the main speaker at the Tegnér Festivities, when new students by tradition are welcomed to Lund University, was Verner von Heidenstam, the national poet of Sweden. During the speech of Heidenstam, which was held on October 4 in the hall of the Academic Association in Lund, Wicksell sat “angrily growling,” according to a local newspaper.²⁷ The main thrust of what Heidenstam had to say was that Sweden had behaved in an honorable manner toward Norway, and that it now was time to turn the love for one’s country inward. The speech of Heidenstam was received with standing ovations.

What happened after this is not very clear, but most observers agree on the following. After Heidenstam had ended his speech, Wicksell went up to the podium and began to talk. The honorable audience, he stated, should pretend that it was visiting an old lady who had the annoying habit of telling her visitors about her dreams; and in this particular dream Russia had asked Sweden to destroy all of its fortresses along its border to Finland. The audience did not at all like what Wicksell was saying; some began to shout and others to sing a patriotic song. The head of the student union, Torgny Segerstedt, said to Wicksell that he would resign unless Wicksell stopped his nonsense. Wicksell, however, did not budge (“and had an insane smile on his lips,” according to a reporter); and he sometimes joined the audience in the song. When the song was over, Wicksell again attempted to speak: “After that beautiful song I beg to continue.”²⁸ A real pandemonium now broke loose:

One of the academic authorities rushed up to the podium, where Wicksell was standing, and tried to pull him down. A student jumped onto the back of the person who had rushed at Wicksell and succeeded in pulling him down with the indignant cry, “That professor can be such a...” (deleted word). Wicksell stayed put, as the brave soldier he was. A professor of history shouted that Wicksell should be thrown out of the window, and an older academic official ran up and down in the hall yelping, “should ... should ... should ... anyone be allowed to say whatever he wants! – which has answered with a curt, “yes!” by a few youths.²⁹

When Wicksell still refused to leave the podium someone turned off the light in the hall, and the audience began to leave while singing, “Brothers, like thunder let us sing.” Some students held up lighted candle sticks so that Wicksell could continue with his talk. Finally, however, he gave up, and he then had to be escorted through the hall so that he would not be beaten up by some thuggish students. Anna

Bugge, Wicksell's wife (in a so-called marriage of conscience) was later to describe what had happened in the following way in a letter to one of her sons: "The other day father was nearly killed in the hall of the Academic Association because he stood up and defended Norway, which I think was very brave of him."³⁰

After the Tegnér Festivities a number of newspaper articles were published that were all very critical of Wicksell. According to *Lunds Dagblad*, it was not only a shame for Lund University and the city of Lund, but for the whole country that someone like Wicksell was allowed to give speeches. Bengt Lidforss, a famous polemicist, wrote in *Arbetet* that Wicksell should not have been allowed to remain at the podium, and that he should not have expressed himself in such an odd manner. Lidforss noted that John Stuart Mill at one time had succeeded in calming an angered audience of workers through his courageous and firm behavior – "but if Mill had followed Wicksell's strategy of presenting himself to the workers as an old lady, who used to have strange dreams, he would surely have suffered as ignoble a fate as Wicksell."³¹

As an answer to Lidforss and his other critics, Wicksell published a newspaper article entitled, "A Speech That Was Not Allowed To Be Held." It then turned out that Wicksell had not at all stood up after Heidensam to say a few spontaneous words, but rather had carefully prepared what he was going to say. Wicksell's speech was also considerably more innocent than the audience had thought. Wicksell had indeed begun by asking the members of the audience "to imagine that they were visiting an old lady who had the annoying habit of telling you about her dreams"; but he had then tried to argue that the Swedes would not have liked to be treated in the same humiliating way as they had treated the Norwegians.³² Sweden, Wicksell pointed out, had demanded that the Norwegians should destroy their fortresses along the border between Sweden and Norway – but how would the Swedes have felt if the Russians had demanded that they destroy the powerful fortress at Boden, in the North of Sweden? Wicksell ended his speech by saying that the new students, who were about to begin at Lund University, should forget about the past and instead try to be friends with the Norwegians ("Give your hand to your Norwegian brother").³³ A new union ought to be created between the Scandinavian countries – "a union of the hands and of the hearts, which nobody could sunder. Long live this Union!"

Since Wicksell had been criticized for speaking up at all at the Tegnér Festivities he also added a short section to his newspaper article, in which he explained why he had chosen to say something at just this occasion:

I have made it a rule never to push myself forward and speak up when something that in my opinion ought to be said, already has been said by someone else; but also never to be silent when no one speaks up for a cause which is close to my heart, however small and insignificant my contribution might be. It is clear that if you follow a rule like this, you are bound to look paradoxical; and it would no doubt be both better and have more of an effect if you also stand up for ideas which already have some support – but this would among other things demand more time than I have at my disposal these days.³⁴

Episode no. 3: Prosecution and jail for blasphemy, 1908–1909

Ever since his encounter with the ideas of John Stuart Mill as a student in Uppsala, Wicksell had been a strong advocate of the freedom of expression. Around the turn of the century in Sweden, however, a number of people had been jailed for crimes such as blasphemy, anti-militaristic propaganda, and the like, which all involved the freedom of expression. In 1907, for example, an agitator called Olof Ljungdahl had been sentenced to three months in jail for blasphemy, and Wicksell felt that it was time to join the battle himself for the freedom of expression and also, if possible, to help Ljungdahl. What he finally decided to do was to behave in a provocative manner by saying something blasphemous, and if he was *not* taken to court, Ljungdahl would be helped. Wicksell was aware that he himself might be prosecuted, but seems to have thought that this would not happen. He chose between two strategies, according to a letter to a friend: “either to *blaspheme* outright, without attempting to make a joke out of it – I compiled a *rather violent* tirade which I should have ‘dictated’ to the police reporters – or to be ironical and pretend to take the part of the Holy Ghost against Ljungdahl and so on.”³⁵

The occasion that Wicksell had chosen to carry out his plan was on November 2, at a speech he gave at the People’s House in Stockholm. The title of the speech was “The Throne, The Altar, The Sword and the Money-Bag,” and Wicksell began by saying that he was not particularly interested in speaking about these four topics, but rather about their relationship to the freedom of expression. He then began to talk about his own view of the freedom of expression, which to a large

extent had been influenced by John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty*; and he pointed out that there were very few people in Sweden who were willing to defend unconditionally the freedom of expression. The arguments for the freedom of expression that can be found in Mill nonetheless still hold, he argued. First, what someone believes to be true can always be wrong; and it is therefore important to have freedom of expression so counterarguments can be heard. And second, even if some opinion is clearly wrong, you should be able to discuss it – or it may be forced underground and grow in strength. The only time when the freedom of expression can be legitimately curtailed, he continued, is when an opinion is expressed in a situation where it can be directly harmful, in the sense that it may result in some dangerous form of direct action. The example that Wicksell used was that of an agitator, telling the angry masses, in front of a corn dealer's warehouse, that corn dealers live by exploiting poor people.

Wicksell then proceeded to go through the four institutions he had chosen to discuss: the throne (monarchy), the altar (religion), the sword (the defense), and the money-bag (economic power). While the institution of monarchy, in Wicksell's mind, was about a hundred years behind the times, the institution of religion was five-hundred years behind the times. The Swedish army he called "a useless, but not totally harmless toy"³⁶; and economic power, he said, needed to be democratized.

The passage that would lead to prosecution for blasphemy was part of the discussion of the altar, and was not allowed to be included in the printed version of Wicksell's talk.³⁷ Wicksell has, however, described what he said in a letter to a friend, and from this it is clear that he had chosen the strategy to be ironical and to joke, rather than to "blaspheme outright." What he said in his speech was the following:

What can we then say about the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary? Well, you can't exactly say that the Holy Spirit seduced her, since she was pretty willing to start out with; as soon as the topic was brought up, she curtsied and said, "I am the servant of the Lord" (here I myself made as if to curtsy on the podium, something which in some mystical manner has been interpreted as an absence gesture³⁸), and this without even having asked her fiancée for permission. You really have to feel sorry for the poor chap ... I am sure he was unhappy about all of this, and that he must have said to himself when no one listened, 'damned that the Holy Spirit would not let me make little Jesus myself.'³⁹

Wicksell was taken to court, and he chose not to be represented by a lawyer. The grand strategy of his defense was to show that the conception of Mary, as this was described in the Bible, could not be regarded as being as part of "God's holy words"(!). This was naturally not accepted, and Wicksell was sentenced to two months in jail. He appealed; and the higher court replaced the jail sentence with fines. The prosecutor, however, was dissatisfied, and when the case was brought to the Supreme Court, the original verdict was reestablished: two months in jail.

The decision of the court affected Wicksell in more ways than one. First and foremost, Wicksell had to go to jail, and the period between October 4 and December 3, 1909 he spent at Ystad Jail. Being in jail was not a particularly hard experience for Wicksell. He spent his two months in a cell that, according to a letter from Wicksell, had "a lovely view over the sea and the railroad, and fine afternoon sun as well."⁴⁰ The food was good, and Wicksell spent the days working on a pamphlet on the population question; he also helped a friend to translate *The Wealth of Nations* into Swedish.

Probably worse than the prison term itself was the fact that Wicksell had to pay for the trial and that he also was deprived of his salary as a professor while in jail. All of this amounted to about a third of Wicksell's annual salary, and friends had to help him out. Anna Bugge was not at all happy that her husband had been sent to jail, and in a letter from Ystad Jail Wicksell promised her solemnly that from now on he would always let her read his speeches in advance. "It is self-evident that hereafter I shall keep absolutely still: not say a word that little Pussycat [that is, Anna Buggel] has not in advance approved and cleared with her seal of approval."⁴¹ That also other people in Wicksell's circles disapproved of his actions soon became clear. When Wicksell's classmates in Stockholm organized a party to celebrate a 40 years jubilee, several of them let it be known that they would not attend if Wicksell was present. The whole thing was solved by Wicksell not going to the party.

During the next few years Wicksell often wanted to fight for the freedom of expression, and in these cases either Anna Bugge or his close friend Hjalmar Öhrvall tried to talk him out of it. After one of these successful operations, Wicksell felt particularly low and wrote to Öhrvall: "Yes, I guess I should give up all thoughts of this in order not to bring unhappiness to those who are nearest to me (*married* apostles

belong to the devil!) – but it is hard, because there is much that needs to be done; and quite a bit, I feel, could be accomplished this way [that is, through blasphemy].”⁴²

The spirit of rebellion in Wicksell was, however, hard to quench, and it became increasingly difficult for him to keep his promise to his wife. In July 1913 he wrote to her, “Now I have something to confess, something which has lain heavily on my conscience, and that is that I could not resist going to Stockholm to give my lecture, the one that disgusted you so much.... If, contrary to expectations, I am prosecuted for it – which you will have heard about before you read this – I shall have to defend myself as well as I can.”⁴³ Anna Bugge, however, was not amused, and she asked Wicksell if he was not ashamed of behaving “like a mouse when the cat is away.” She was especially angry with Wicksell for his tendency to act like a clown, when he gave his speeches, and to be ironical instead of delivering his message in a dignified manner. “You may give as many talks as you wish on the subject, if you are straightforward about it; what I object to is the *form*, and it is the form for which you might be prosecuted – but a form can in itself never be a matter of conscience.”⁴⁴ Wicksell defended himself by saying that when you speak in public, you have to use the means at your disposal; “if I were an artist or a literary writer I am sure that you would never think of trying to prevent me from following my *geist*; but a speaker is something of an artist as well – he must choose the manner of expression which he thinks will have the greatest possible effect, or the whole thing will become dull and flat.”⁴⁵

Civil courage as a sociological phenomenon

While there exist several well-known social science studies of why people *obey* – by scholars such as Ash, Milgram, and Noelle-Neumann – there does not exist one single major study of civil courage.⁴⁶ The reason for this is not clear; perhaps sociologists have not studied civil courage for the same reason that they have shied away from, say, studying geniuses, namely that civil courage seems to be a phenomenon that, by virtue of its individualistic flavor, is resistant to a sociological approach. Another factor may be that civil courage, like civil society, has seemed to be more of an ideological construct than a concrete, really existing phenomenon.

This, however, does not mean that there do not exist ideas and concepts in sociology that can be of great help when one attempts to analyze civil courage. I shall try to illustrate this statement by first looking at the classics, especially Durkheim and Weber. I then draw on some more recent material, in particular on Robert Merton's analysis of nonconformity. Merton's argument is important in this context for several reasons, one of which is that he addresses the issue of whether civil courage should primarily be viewed as a form of deviant behavior, or if some other approach is more appropriate. A few words will also be said about the possible use of threshold analysis and preference falsification for an understanding of civil courage.

Emile Durkheim argues in a well-known passage in his work on sociology of religion that the believer gets strength from his or her contact with God; and it clearly seems as if people with civil courage have more strength than others. "The believer who has communicated with his god," Durkheim says, "is not merely a man who sees new truths of which the unbeliever is ignorant; he is a man who is *stronger*. He feels within him more force, either to endure the trials of existence, or to conquer them."⁴⁷ Wicksell, as we know, was not a religious person (save in his youth), but Durkheim notes that in modern society individualism has been elevated into a kind of secular religion, in the sense that the individual is seen as holy and endowed with sacred rights of the type that were proclaimed in the French Revolution. The work of John Stuart Mill exemplifies this type of individualism as well; and we know that Mill's writings were extremely important to Wicksell, especially *On Liberty*.

It also deserves to be emphasized that the kind of individualism that Durkheim refers to is very different from the kind of laissez-faire individualism that Herbert Spencer and the economists advocated during the late nineteenth century. Indeed, the former type of individualism is termed a "social institution" by Durkheim, who also shows how it has gradually emerged throughout history.⁴⁸ Individualism of this type is part of a higher form of human society, Durkheim says, where people are tied together, among other things, through their respect for the rights of the individual. The closest that Durkheim comes to discussing a case of civil courage, it can be added, is in his comments on the trial against Socrates in *The Rules of Sociological Method*. Durkheim here points out that courageous behavior of Socrates' type can be viewed as a way of clearing the way for a new social morality:

According to Athenian law, Socrates was a criminal, and his condemnation was no more than just. However, his crime, namely his independence of thought, rendered a service not only to humanity but to his country. *It served to prepare a new morality and faith which the Athenians needed, since the traditions by which they had lived until then were no longer in harmony with the current conditions of life.* Nor is the case of Socrates unique; it is reproduced periodically in history.⁴⁹

Many ideas in the work of Max Weber can also be of help when one attempts to analyze civil courage from a sociological perspective. In *Economy and Society* Weber defines, as we know, sociology as the science of “social action,” and by social action he understands action by an individual that takes other actors into account and “is thereby oriented in its course.”⁵⁰ The idea of the individual taking other individuals into account constitutes the theoretical heart of Weber’s sociology and the theoretical point of departure for his analysis. Several aspects of civil courage can also be illuminated with its help. Persons who have civil courage orient their behavior, for example, to other actors in a very special way – for example to an audience at a speech, to the police or the authorities when a law is broken, and perhaps also to future generations, as Durkheim suggests.

All individuals are furthermore driven by a combination of ideal and material interests, according to Weber, and in the case of civil courage, the ideal interests clearly predominate. In summary, we can say that from a Weberian perspective, civil courage is a phenomenon where the actor is influenced by ideal motives and where he or she takes other actors into account in a special manner. This is a very general description, and as we soon shall see, it is possible to get quite a bit more out of Weber’s sociology.

In *Economy and Society* Weber not only presents a general model of social action but also a number of fundamental concepts in sociology. Several of these can be of help in getting a better handle on civil courage as a sociological phenomenon, especially “conflict,” “convention,” and “value-rational social action.” The concept of “*conflict*” is defined by Weber as a kind of action that the actor attempts to carry out, even if it will be met with resistance by one or several actors.⁵¹ This concept captures, in my mind, an important aspect of civil courage, namely that the actor wants to do something *regardless* of the fact that he or she may lack the power to reach his or her goal. Concept number two, which is important in this context, is “convention”; and a convention is defined by Weber as a situation in which there is a special

order, and where deviations from this order are punished by informal sanctions, especially by disapproval.⁵² If there also exists a group whose task it is to police the order, there is a “law” not a “convention” in Weber’s terminology. That acts of civil courage often have as their aim to break with a convention or a law is clear.

The concept in Weber’s sociology that fits civil courage the best, however, and which also captures quite a bit of its essence, is “*value-rational social action*.” According to Weber, this type of action is characterized by the following: (1) the action is inspired by “*a conscious belief in a value for its own sake*”; and (2) it is carried out “*independently of its prospects of success*.”⁵³ One example of value-rational action would be Luther’s decision to challenge the Catholic Church, regardless of the consequences, as expressed in his famous words “Here I stand; I can do no other.”⁵⁴ While Weber never singled out civil courage as a specific phenomenon in its own right, his work is rich enough to supply us with a number of helpful concepts, which add up to the following: an act of civil courage can provisionally be characterized as a form of value-rational social action; more precisely, it can be characterized as an action, which is inspired by ideal interests, which is carried out irrespective of its chances of success, and which entails a conflict, typically by challenging a law or a convention.

The closest any sociologist has come to providing a substantial analysis of civil courage, that I have been able to locate, is Robert Merton’s ten-page section entitled “Nonconformity as A Type of Reference Group Behavior,” which is part of a larger paper in *Social Theory and Social Structure*.⁵⁵ Merton here presents an original and provocative theory of how a certain type of dissenting behavior can be analyzed from a sociological perspective, based on reference group theory. Of interest for this article is also the fact that Merton takes up – and dismisses – the notion that civil courage can best be analyzed as a form of deviant behavior. The key idea in Merton’s effort to explain what civil courage is derives from the proposition that some behavior cannot be explained by the group an actor is part of, but by his or her relationship to some other group. “Adhering to the norms and values of some reference group other than the group to whose expectations he [that is, the nonconformist] will not conform,” Merton says, “he is prepared to accept, if not to welcome, the almost certain and painful consequences of dissent.”⁵⁶ Although Merton never uses the term “civil courage” in his study, it is clear that his analysis includes this phenomenon. He emphasizes the “disinterested quality” of the non-

conformist, points to his or her “courage,” and notes that “the avowed nonconformist tends to be regarded with mingled feelings of hate, admiration, and love, even by those who still cling to the values and practices being put in question.”⁵⁷ To provide an example of nonconformist behavior, Merton mentions John Kennedy’s *Profiles in Courage* (1955) – a work that in Germany was published under the title *Zivilcourage*.⁵⁸

According to Merton, it is possible to argue that nonconformist behavior falls in the category of deviant behavior as “a loose approximation,” but he is also adamant that it would be wrong to analyze exclusively this type of behavior as if it were just a kind of deviance. The reason for this, he says, is that crime and delinquency, on the one hand, and nonconformist behavior, on the other, represent two very different sociological types.⁵⁹ The criminal, for example, has no interest in changing the values of society; he or she wants to evade the law, not to change it; and he or she is not driven by disinterested motives. To analyze both the nonconformist and the criminal with the help of the same kind of theory, Merton states, would represent a case of “vicious abstractionism”; and it would be about as useful as putting Eugene Debs and John Brown in the same sociological category as Al Capone and Albert B. Fall.⁶⁰

It is also possible to find some ideas that can be useful in analyzing civil courage in more recent social science work. Studies of whistleblowing, for example, highlight the enormous social force that can be directed against an individual whose behavior has been judged disloyal by an organization of which he or she is a member.⁶¹ And ideas of thresholds and preference falsification may be useful in the effort to formalize why some people, but not others, are ready to step forward at the very beginning of a social movement.⁶²

That it is possible to find some ideas and concepts in the works of Weber, Durkheim, Merton, and others that can be of help in analyzing a phenomenon such as civil courage appears clear. But it is also true that civil courage represents a very rich phenomenon in its own right, and that it is necessary to add to what sociologists have said until now. One way to proceed in this situation, I suggest, would be to take a closer look at the material on Wicksell that was presented earlier in this article.

Two important insights may be generated in this way. First of all, the circumstances surrounding the three episodes of civil courage in the case of Wicksell make us realize that acts of civil courage are always embedded in a social context and that Wicksell had quite a bit of social support for his oppositional activities. Wicksell, for example, often defended causes that were part of larger social movements in Sweden. His advocacy of temperance as well as birth control and the freedom of speech are examples of this. Wicksell, as we know, was able to support himself for several years in the 1890s by travelling around the country as a public speaker. Later on in his career, Wicksell was also sheltered by the tradition at Swedish universities not to let a person's political opinions stand in the way for him or her being appointed to a professorship – or being dismissed, once appointed to such a professorship. Wicksell had furthermore throughout his adult life not only a network of acquaintances and sympathizers to draw on, but also two extremely close friends (Theodor Frölander and Hjalmar Öhrvall), who always backed him up, morally as well as with money. The strong support from his wife (whom he married in 1889) must also be mentioned in this context. And last but not least, Wicksell had from early on immersed himself in the tradition of “the religion of humanity” (Durkheim), in which he found moral support for many of his ideas.

The second important insight that can be drawn from the material on Wicksell, it seems to me, is that there exists a certain order or rhythm to the three episodes from Wicksell's life that I have discussed: the speech in Uppsala in 1880 that led to such a scandal; Wicksell's actions at the Tegnér Festivities in 1905, which made the patriotic feelings of the audience boil over; and the blasphemous talk in 1908 in Stockholm, which ended with Wicksell being sent to jail. Four fairly distinct phases can be discerned in what happened at each of these occasions:

- (1) First Wicksell decided to act, that is, to do something that would help to advance his cause. This was the case in Uppsala in 1880, when Wicksell himself took the initiative to give a speech on the causes of drunkenness, but also in Lund and in Stockholm.
- (2) Wicksell then carried out whatever act he had decided upon, usually to present his opinions in some public forum and to challenge the ruling opinion. The interaction between the actor and his environment became violent in the case of Lund, where Wicksell stood eye-to-eye with an angry audience.
- (3) The next phase is characterized by the introduction of sanctions of different kinds: a conversation with the Rector and a warning

from the University, in the case of Uppsala; threats of physical violence in Lund, followed by critique in the newspapers; and prison as well as loss of income and critique from his wife in Stockholm.

- (4) In connection with all of these confrontations there was a diffusion of Wicksell's ideas – through newspaper articles, pamphlets, letters, gossip, and so on.

The order or rhythm that one can find in these three episodes can be summarized in the following way. The actor first makes a decision to act, after quite a bit of thinking (*deliberation*). Then comes the acting (*action*). This has negative consequence for the actor (*sanction*), but also entails some publicity and increased awareness of the actor's ideas (*diffusion*). These four stages can be kept apart analytically, even if they often meld into one another in reality. Stage 1 (*deliberation*) may, for example, invite reflections on the role played by earlier cases of civil courage for the actor, as inspiration or as a model. It is also at this stage, it should be noted, that the actor "communicates with his god." Stage 2 (*action*) is the place per excellence, where actors take each other into account and where conflicts, in Weber's sense of the word, occur. One could, for example, make a Goffmannian analysis of what goes on at this stage, and discuss the structure of the social setting (actors, scene, audience, and so on). Recent research on audiences is, for example, of much relevance here.⁶³

That actions usually lead to counteractions, so that a convention or a law is restored, is characteristic of stage 3 (*sanction*). These sanctions can be informal as well as formal; and the one that executes them can be the audience at a speech or the police authorities when a law is broken. As we have seen, sanctions can also come from the actor's own family. Wicksell wrote in a letter that apostles should not be married, and one wonders if in some cases he was not more worried about what Anna Bugge would say than what the authorities would do.

Stage 4 (*diffusion*) is characterized by a high level of complexity as well. The actor often attempts to spread his or her message in some specific way, but quite a bit of diffusion also goes on without being planned, e.g., through the sanctions that his or her behavior sets off (critique and slander help to spread the message). A real confrontation can also lead to diffusion – for example, through writings in the press and the like. This last fact may well be the reason why Wicksell sometimes liked to act in a provocative manner when he gave his speeches.

If, on the other hand, there is no diffusion, and the actor gets no support from friends and acquaintances, the sense of failure and the pressure can become overwhelmingly strong. At one point, when this happened to Wicksell, he wrote: "At times I am forced to question my own common sense, when I find that I am the only one who believes in some cause, which seems so evident to me."⁶⁴ In times of failure, however, the idea that things may be different in the future can be comforting and help to counteract the feeling of defeat and social isolation. On Wicksell's sixtieth birthday, Ellen Key, a leading Swedish feminist, commented on her friend Wicksell in the following way: "Our time says 'Don Quixote', but the future will say 'hero.'"⁶⁵

Concluding remarks and some remaining questions

It is immensely moving when [a person] acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere reaches the point where he says: "*Here I stand; I can do no other.*"

– Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation"⁶⁶

Using just a few examples, as I have done in this article, has some distinct disadvantages, and one of these is that the attempt to generalize may go totally wrong. Whether my suggestion that there exists a certain rhythm to acts of civil courage is correct or not, is, for example, very difficult to say, based on the evidence presented here. What is clear, however, is that such a rhythm does *not* characterize all acts of civil courage. More precisely, the sequence of *deliberation-action-sanction-diffusion* is at best only characteristic of those cases of civil courage where the actor wants to spread a certain message. There, however, also exists a more minimal form of civil courage, which only includes the first three stages (*deliberation, action, and sanction*) and where the element of diffusion is absent.

For an example of this latter form of civil courage, one can cite the famous case of Joseph Schultz, a German soldier who was killed during World War II.⁶⁷ During the summer of 1944, Schultz took part in a cleaning-up operation in the Balkans, which had as its purpose to clear the flank for Nazi Germany and thereby facilitate its attack on the Soviet Union. Together with some fellow soldiers Schultz had been ordered to execute some captured partisans by shooting them. Instead of doing so, however, he laid down his gun on the ground, crossed over to where the partisans were lined up to be executed, and let himself be

shot together with them. We only know of this remarkable incident because it was photographed by an German army photographer and then deposited in the Nazi War Archives.

I shall not argue that this minimal version of civil courage, as I have called it, is somehow more pure than the one where diffusion plays a central place. To do so does not seem meaningful; and one can perhaps just say that there probably exist different (sociological) types of civil courage. What can be said with some assurance, however, is that in situations where the actor has as a goal to spread a message and win over people to his or her point of view, it is easier to document the whole thing afterward than when this has *not* been the case. Even though the Nazis were very careful to record their various atrocities, the fact that the act of Joseph Schultz was caught on photograph was something of a fluke; and one suspects that several other heroic actions during World War II were not recorded, and therefore have been forgotten.

Another issue that needs to be discussed in this article is the normative dimension of civil courage. As mentioned earlier, it is important to acknowledge that acts of civil courage are often looked upon by admiration; but also not to let this admiration carry over into the analysis. There is, however, quite a bit more to the normative dimension of civil courage than that. Let us take the imaginary case of a racist who stands up in front of an audience, which consists of convinced anti-racists, and launches into a violent speech in favor of a race war. Does this represent and act of civil courage or not? As I see it, one can go in two very different directions in trying to answer this question. One would be to argue that sociology must not be normative, and from this follows that the racist has indeed displayed civil courage. The advantage with this way of proceeding is that the analyst is provided with an easy criterion. He or she does not need to get involved in difficult normative discussions, and it becomes easy to maintain a critical distance to the object of study. The second way to proceed would be to argue that a phenomenon such as civil courage is connected to civil society, and that acts of civil courage embody the values of civil society. Racists, fascists, and advocates of similar ideas, on the other hand, are intensely hostile to these values and want to impose their own values on civil society through force. From this perspective, the racist who stands up in an audience of anti-racists has *not* shown civil courage. To argue along these lines, and to connect civil courage to the liberal-political theory of civil society, is preferable to the non-

normative approach, it seems to me, even though a certain care has to be taken so that civil courage is not in the process transformed into a purely ideological category.

It is no doubt true that a certain affinity exists between the phenomenon of civil courage and the concept of civil society. Bismarck, to recall, placed civil courage outside the sphere of the military, where physical courage is decisive; and civil society is similarly often conceptualized as an area outside of the state, where physical coercion must be absent.⁶⁸ Civil courage is closely linked to the freedom of expression, and also this right is typical of civil society. Other dimensions of civil society – such as respect for the individual, the right to form associations, toleration, and the like – are similarly linked to the notion of civil society.⁶⁹

It also seems clear that the notion of civil courage could contribute to the development of the concept of civil society. Today's discussion of civil society covers quite a few phenomena, and, as is often pointed out, there is little consensus of how to define civil society. It is nonetheless remarkable that the contemporary discussion of civil society practically never touches on the problem of civil courage and the difficulty of the individual to stand up to a hostile majority.⁷⁰ Statements by people like Tocqueville and Jellinek, which suggest that a democratic society can silence people much more effectively than an autocratic regime can, have, for example, not been followed up.⁷¹

What is needed today, as I see it, is a thorough discussion of the social and institutional conditions under which individuals can acquire the strength to stand up and defend their rights in difficult social situations. We especially need to address questions of the following type: What kind of schools, universities, and corporations are needed for civil courage to flourish? What kind of families and friends and social networks can nurture people's capacity to display civil courage? What social mechanisms, more generally, are involved in furthering – and stopping – civil courage?

Notes

1. The first version of this article was written for a conference on virtues, which was held in the early summer of 1998 at Friibergh's mansion in Sweden. I then continued to work on the article during the fall of 1998, when I was a fellow at the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in the Social Sciences (SCASSS) in

- Uppsala. For comments, I would like to thank especially Patrik Aspers, Carl-Gunnar Janson, Jim Kemeny, Stephen Turner, Hans Zetterberg, Cecilia Swedberg, Emil Uddhammar, two anonymous reviewers, and the Editors of *Theory and Society*.
2. Till Bastian, *Zivilcourage* (Berlin: Rotbuch, 1996); Kurt Singer, *Zivilcourage wagen* (Munich: Piper, 1997); Harry Järv, "Civillkourage," 356–367 in *Prometheus' eld* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1998); and Örjan Nilsson, *Törs du? Civillkourage i vår tid och historisk* (Malmö: Liber Ekonomi, 1997). For a social science analysis, see Wolfgang Heuer, "Ich kann nichts anders, Ich muss reden." *Entstehung und Habitus von Zivilcourage* (forthcoming in 1999).
 3. There exists no direct equivalent of *Zivilcourage* in English, but, just as there is the expression "civil society" I think there should be an expression called "civil courage." A related, but by no means identical concept, is that of "civil disobedience." As opposed to *Zivilcourage*, civil disobedience is centered around opposition to the state; it is also less individualistic in the sense that while it is easy to imagine a social movement centered around civil disobedience, this is less the case with *Zivilcourage*.
 4. "Mut auf dem Schlachtfelde ist bei uns Gemeingut, aber Sie werden nicht selten finden, dass es ganz achtbaren Leuten an Zivilcourage fehlt" – cited in Bastian, *Zivilcourage*, 38. Most dictionaries also state that it was Bismarck who coined this term.
 5. Nilsson, *Törs du?*, 20, emphasis added.
 6. Max Weber, *From Max Weber*, H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, editors, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 249. Weber also states that the prophets typically did not want to propound the messages that God wanted them to spread; that they were never paid; and that they often had "the charisma of speech." For Weber's most complete analysis of the prophets, see his sociology of religion discussion in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 439–468.
 7. See, e.g., Samuel P. Oliner and Pearl M. Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: The Free Press, 1992).
 8. The information on Wicksell in this article mainly draws on the standard work on his life by Torsten Gårdlund, a biography of his wife (Anna Bugge Wicksell) by Liv Wicksell Nordqvist, and on the author's own independent research. See Torsten Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell. Rebell i Det Nya Riket* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1956), Liv Wicksell Nordqvist, *Anna Bugge Wicksell. En Kvinna före sin tid* (Stockholm: Liber Förlag, 1985), and Richard Swedberg, "Knut Wicksell – en samhällsvetenskaplig klassiker," 7–48 in Knut Wicksell, *Stridsskrifter och samhällsekonomiska skrifter* (Stockholm: City University Press, 1998). The standard work on Wicksell's economics is Carl G. Uhr, *Economic Doctrines of Knut Wicksell* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1960).
 9. For Wicksell on euthanasia, see the article "Om Evtanasi," *Socialdemokraten*, March 23, 1887, which contains an account of a much debated speech that Wicksell gave in Stockholm. He similarly advocated "the killing of idiots" in a speech in Uppsala the same year, according to *Uppsala*, March 7, 1887. Toward the end of his life Wicksell got worried that if the Swedish race became too streamlined, odd talents – like himself? – would be eliminated as well. See Wicksell's letter from about 1910 as cited in Håkan Westling, *Ivan Bratt. Legendarisk läkare, Systemets grundare* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 1997), 257. For a comment on Wicksell and euthanasia, see Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 117–118.

10. Wicksell as cited in Wicksell Nordqvist, *Anna Bugge Wicksell*, 52.
11. Eli Heckscher, "Knut Wicksell 70 år," *Dagens Nyheter*, December 20, 1921, 9.
12. Ernst Wigforss, *Skrifter i urval. VII. Minnen före 1914* (Stockholm: Tidens Förlag, 1980), 189.
13. Wigforss, *ibid.*, 189–190.
14. Wigforss, *ibid.*, 184.
15. Cited in Emil Sommarin, "Minnesord över professor Knut Wicksell," 21 in Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskapssamfundet i Lund, *Årsberättelse* (Lund: Gleerup, 1926–1927).
16. Civil courage can also cause irritation. As an example of this one can cite Gunnar Myrdal's opinion of Wicksell: "Wicksell had the integrity of a saint. Few people have gone through life as untouched by moral compromise as he did.... Personally Wicksell was without pretensions and deeply human in all his contacts. At the same time he was deeply inhuman in his blind desire to follow his own moral convictions in absurdum and as these were crystallized in his oddly puritanical and mathematical mind" – Gunnar Myrdal, *Vetenskap och politik i nationalekonomien* (Stockholm: Rabén & Sjögren, 1972), 271. See in this context also the later citation in this article by Robert Merton, to the same effect.
17. Knut Wicksell, "Recension av John Stuart Mill, Om friheten," *Forum* 4 (1917): 359.
18. Karin Kock, "Nymalthusianismens genombrott i Sverige," 75 in *Studier i ekonomi och historia* (Stockholm: Bonniers, 1944).
19. Knut Wicksell, *Några ord om samhällsolyckornas viktigaste orsak och botemedel med särskilt afseende på dryckenskapen* (Uppsala: Författarens förlag, 1880), 3. This pamphlet (minus its appendix) has recently been reprinted in Knut Wicksell, *Stridsskrifter och samhällsekonomiska analyser*, Richard Swedberg, editor (Stockholm: Cityuniversitetet, 1998).
20. Wicksell, *ibid.*, 7.
21. Wicksell, *ibid.*, 63.
22. Wicksell, *ibid.*, 66.
23. Wicksell, *ibid.*, 69.
24. Cited in Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 60.
25. Gårdlund, *ibid.*, 60.
26. Gårdlund, *ibid.*, 72.
27. Cited in Gårdlund, *ibid.*, 274.
28. Gårdlund, *ibid.*, 274.
29. Eyewitness cited in Wicksell Nordqvist, *Anna Bugge Wicksell*, 147.
30. Cited in Wicksell Nordqvist, *ibid.*, 148.
31. Cited in Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 276.
32. Wicksell, "Ett tal som icke fick hållas," *Arbetet*, October 6, 1905.
33. Wicksell, *ibid.*
34. Wicksell, *ibid.*
35. Cited in Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 278.
36. Wicksell, *Tronen, altaret, svärdet och pänningpåsen* (Stockholm: Östermalmstryckeriet, 1909), 33.
37. Wicksell, *ibid.*
38. On this point Wicksell is wrong. In the police protocol, on which the decision to prosecute was based, one can read: "at this point the little round Wicksell is supposed to have curtsied," cited in Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 278.
39. Cited in Nordqvist Wicksell, *Anna Bugge Wicksell*, 154.
40. Cited in Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 283.

41. Cited in Wicksell Nordqvist, *Anna Bugge Wicksell*, 156.
42. Cited in Gårdlund, *Knut Wicksell*, 292.
43. Cited in Gårdlund, *ibid.*
44. Cited in Gårdlund, *ibid.*
45. Cited in Gårdlund, *ibid.*, 293.
46. See Samuel Ash, "Effects of Group Pressure upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgments," 177–190 in Harold Guetzkow, editor, *Group, Leadership and Men: Research in Human Relations* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Institute of Technology, 1951); Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View* (New York: Harper & Row, 1975); and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion – Our Public Skin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993). See also in this context, Robert B. Zajonc, "Conformity," 253–260 in vol. 3 of David L. Sills, editor, *International Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences* (New York: MacMillan and The Free Press, 1968). It should be added that this literature, when read from the perspective of civil courage, has quite a bit to teach. As an example of this, one can cite Ash's finding that a person's capacity to withstand group pressure increases significantly if he or she is joined by just *one* other person.
47. Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965), 464.
48. Emile Durkheim, "L'individualisme et les intellectuels," in *La science sociale et l'action* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1970), 275. See in this context also, Marcel Mauss, "A Category of the Human Mind: The Notion of Person; The Notion of Self," in Michael Carrithers et al., editors, *The Category of the Person* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 1–25.
49. Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* (New York: The Free Press, 1964), 71, emphasis added. Durkheim continues, and develops what can perhaps be called the functionalist theory of civil courage: "It would never have been possible to establish the freedom of thought we now enjoy if the regulations prohibiting it had not been violated before being solemnly abrogated. At that time, however, the violation was a crime, since it was an offense against sentiments still very keen in the average conscience. And yet this crime was useful as a prelude to reforms that daily became more necessary. Liberal philosophy had as its precursors the heretics of all kinds who were justly punished by secular authorities during the entire course of the Middle Ages and until the eve of modern times" (*ibid.*, 71–72).
50. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 4.
51. Weber, *ibid.*, 38.
52. Weber, *ibid.*, 34.
53. Weber, *ibid.*, 25, emphasis added.
54. Max Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 127 in Weber, *From Max Weber*, H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, editors.
55. Robert K. Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 411–422.
56. Merton, *ibid.*, 418–419.
57. Merton, *ibid.*, 419–420.
58. Kennedy's suggestions to the publisher for alternative titles included *Patterns of Political Courage*, *Eight were Courageous*, and *Courage in the Senate*. Rumors that Kennedy was not the author were investigated in the winter of 1957–1958 and found groundless. See Theodore Sorensen, *Kennedy* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1965), 69–70.
59. Merton, *Social Theory*, 417.

60. Merton, *Social Theory*, 418, 420–421. Albert B. Fall, President Harding's Secretary of the Interior, was involved in a famous financial scandal. A question that may be asked (and which was asked by one of the reviewers) is whether civil courage can be seen as a form of *public* nonconformity? The general thrust of Merton's argument is applicable also in this case, it seems to me. Not everybody who engages in public nonconformity does so because of disinterested motives, out of desire to change society's values, and so on.
61. See, e.g., Nick Perry, "Indecent Exposures: Theorizing Whistleblowing," *Organization Studies* 19 (1988): 235–257. "Whistleblowers' are defined as insiders who 'go public' in their criticism of the policy and/or conduct of powerful organizations" (235).
62. For the idea of thresholds – that is, the fact that people have different levels at which their behavior is triggered (typically measured by the precise number of other actors doing something) – see Mark Granovetter, "Threshold Models of Collective Behavior," *American Journal of Sociology* 83 (1978): 1420–1443. For the idea of preference falsification – that is, the tendency of an actor to hide his or her true preferences in public – see Timur Kuran, *Private Truths, Public Lies: The Social Consequences of Preference Falsification* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).
63. See especially Mustafa Emirbayer and Mimi Sheller, "Publics in History," *Theory and Society* 28 (February 1999): 145–197.
64. Wicksell, "Mitt recept," *Dagens Nyheter* April 19, 1919. In this article Wicksell argues that the extraordinary profits that some people had made in Sweden during World War I were unfair and should be repaid after the war. No one supported Wicksell's demand. For a study of the situation in which an individual is treated as dead by his or her community, see Marcel Mauss, "The Physical Effect on the Individual of the Idea of Death Suggested by the Collectivity (Australia, New Zealand)," 35–56, in *Sociology and Psychology: Essays* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979).
65. Ellen Key, "Knut Wicksell 60 år," *Aftontidningen*, December 19, 1912.
66. Weber, "Politics as a Vocation," 217.
67. See, e.g., the account in Harry Järv, *Prometheus' eld*, 356–367. Doubts about the existence of this episode were recently expressed in a German television program entitled "Soldaten für Hitler."
68. Michael Walzer, for example, describes civil society as "the space of noncoerced association and also the set of relational networks." He adds that in civil society "coercion is used only to keep the peace." See Michael Walzer, "The Civil Society Argument," 89, 101, in Chantal Mouffe, editor, *Dimensions of Radical Democracy* (London: Verso, 1992). That civil society should be conceptualized as separate from the state is a standard argument in modern theories of civil society. See, e.g., Adam B. Seligman, *The Idea of Civil Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992).
69. According to Cohen and Arato, "the norms of civil society" are the following: "individual rights, privacy, voluntary association, formal legality, plurality, publicity, free enterprise." See Jean L. Cohen and Andrew Arato, *Civil Society and Political Theory* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1992), xiii.
70. Cohen and Arato's standard work, *Civil Society and Political Theory*, includes a long chapter on "Civil Disobedience and Civil Society." Civil disobedience is clearly related to civil courage, but by no means identical (see note 3).
71. In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville states that: "Under the absolute sway of one

man [that is, in a tyranny] the body was attacked in order to subdue the soul; but . . . such is not the course adopted by tyranny in democratic republics; there the body is left free, and the soul is enslaved." In the rest of the argument Tocqueville states that, in a democracy, the citizen will retain his or her "civil rights," but these will be useless since he or she will be totally isolated and shunned ("an existence worse than death"). See Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (New York: Vintage Books, 1945), vol. 2, 274–275. Jellinek writes, with this very passage of Tocqueville in mind, that "much greater courage is required to oppose the *vox populi* than the order of a ruler." See George Jellinek, *The Rights of Minorities* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1912), 33. Of use in this context is perhaps also Weber's distinction between political organizations, where order is maintained through "*physical coercion*," and hierocratic organizations, where it is maintained through "*psychic coercion*." See Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 54–55.