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July 28, 1952

Professo/A.E.G. ROBINSON,
The Marshall Library,
Downing Street,
Cambridge

My dear Robinson,

Please, find enclosed and somewhat belated
my review of Dr Wagemann's book, for which I do not even
claim 800 words!

With all best wishes

yours as ever

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From E. A. G. ROBINSON

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THE ROYAL ECONOMIC SOCIETY
THE ECONOMIC JOURNAL

R. F. HARROD

E. A. G. ROBINSON

} Joint Editors

26. 2.

1951.
194

Dear Professor Tinbergen,

I am sending you herewith the review copy of the following book, which you have kindly promised to review for the Economic Journal.

The review will probably be required for the **September** issue of the Journal. I should be very grateful if I might receive your manuscript by

1st June.

Owing to the great pressure on the space of the Journal it is necessary to restrict somewhat the length of reviews. I should be glad therefore if you could limit yourself to about 800-1000 words.

Yours sincerely,

E. A. G. Robinson

"Narrenspiegel Der Statistik - Die Umrisse
eines statistischen Weltbildes"

by ERNST WAGEMANN.

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1. The first part of the document is a letter from the President of the United States to the Congress, dated January 3, 1862. It is a very important document, as it contains the President's views on the state of the Union and the progress of the war.

2. The second part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated January 10, 1862. It contains a detailed account of the financial condition of the Government and the progress of the war.

3. The third part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Interior, dated January 15, 1862. It contains a detailed account of the land and mineral resources of the United States and the progress of the war.

4. The fourth part of the document is a report from the Secretary of the Navy, dated January 20, 1862. It contains a detailed account of the naval forces of the United States and the progress of the war.

ERNST WAGEMANN, Narrenspiegel der Statistik. Die Umriss
eines statistischen Weltbildes. 3rd revised
edition, A. Francke, A.G. Verlag, Berne, 1950;
Pp 253, 35 diagr.

Professor Wagemann undertook to write this book in order to restrict the influence of the well-known dictum that statistics represents the worse type of lies. He wanted to show that there is a rigorous system of statistical sins and hence a possibility to avoid them. He succeeded in supplying us with an amusing collection of errors taken from all classes of subjects where statistical methods have been used, though primarily from the economic field. He placed them in the framework of a systematic treatment, of which alternatively solemn scientific expressions and interesting and well-chosen every-day observations form the composing elements. The author did not want to include in his treatment the realm of mathematical statistics; it is qualitative rather than quantitative philosophy which he offers, even is the subject is figures.

Reminding the reader of the census effectuated by King David, which was considered a heavy sin, the author suggests that much of the aversion, even today, of statistics may be explained by the original uses made of them: military and fiscal. Mankind had to go a long way before she mastered the realm of figures, he adds. This is illustrated with the way in which certain primitive peoples formed their counting techniques. In his systematic treatment, professor Wagemann makes a sharp distinction between "the mathematical and the empirical figure, corresponding, respectively, with a promise of truth and one of probability only". His book is subdivided in three main chapters, about (i) the art and the difficulty of counting, (ii) ways and deadlocks of statistical comparison, and (iii) methods and errors in estimation. In a final chapter he develops a "statistical view of the world".

In his first chapter he deals, among many other topics, with the difficulties of a correct definition and delimitation of statistical populations and of the shifts in concepts that may slip in during the analysis; with the techniques of summation and averaging and with the computation of dispersions.

In the second chapter, it is statistical comparison that is discussed, with its technical expressions: statistical series, index numbers and correlation coefficients. It is primarily here that he offers a systematic survey of possible errors (p.108) with a large number of examples. The well-known difficulties of unweighted index-numbers that may show a rise both forward and backward are discussed extensively, as well as, e.g., the possibility that the two

ERNST WAGEMANN, *Narrative of the Statistics of the Empire*, 3rd revised edition, A. Francke, A.G. Verlag, Bern, 1920; pp 253, 35 diagr.

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subgroups of a statistical population may both show a rising mean with the general average falling, etc.

In the third chapter Dr Wagemann offers a system of estimation methods, in the following way:

Estimation of a total from a partial population:	"representation"
" a partial from a total "	:"inclusion"
" from one or more populations of the same type as the population to be estimated	:"generalisation"
" from a population of a different type	:"substitution",

where the latter two are subdivided in further methods of estimation. He rightly emphasises the growing importance of estimates in the practice of statistical applications and contributes much to their understanding. Of each of the types of estimation he distinguishes a correct and an erroneous application, taken from such different angles as marriages of German colonists, submarines, public-opinion samples. Germany's capacity to pay, consumption of fats and alcoholic beverages, demographic forecasts, etc.

The book is an elementary one, written for the persuasion of critics of statistical methods as well as for the training of statisticians. It derives its value before all from the very rich experience of its author, from his vivid style and his refreshing view on many aspects of human life.

J. Tinbergen.

This image shows a blank, aged, cream-colored page, likely an endpaper or flyleaf from an old book. The paper has a slightly textured appearance with some minor discoloration and faint, dark smudges or stains, particularly along the right edge and bottom. The overall tone is a warm, off-white or light beige.

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