



Presentation of The Life and Most Important Achievements of the Scientist Max Weber

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Abstract

This article aims to get acquainted with the life of the sociologist Max Weber and to identify his most important works and achievements in the field of historical sociology. His studies also dealt with rationality, which he divided into: practical, theoretical, objective, and formal. Logical foundations, traditional foundations, and charismatic legitimacy. Weber also dealt with Protestant ethics and the spirit of capitalism, which are considered among the mainstays of social studies, and divided austere Protestantism into three main forms: Calvinism, piety, and methodology. In 1905 Weber used the term iron cage, which is an integral part of the strong conclusion of Protestant morality In the context of capitalism, when discussing bureaucracy, Weber's contributions stand out. believes that bureaucracy is the most common example of legal domination.

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Introduction

Max Weber was one of the most prominent scientists, There are few like him today, and the influence of his work has spread to the most diverse branches of knowledge, transcending the borders of Germany to encompass almost all countries of the world. Max Weber's ideas and scientific legacy revealed the importance of this scientist and the diversity of his social theories. Weber's ideas were particularly distinguished by comparative analytical studies of the issues raised and the focus on the issues and problems of the era in which he lived. When news of Max Weber's death reached his colleagues in the summer of 1920, there was a widespread feeling among them that they had lost one of the most prominent minds working in the field of economics, although he began his life as a lawyer and not an economist. Their saying at that time was that we have lost the best of us. This was not limited to economists. The news was not limited to economists alone Max Weber's death with great regret and sadness, Rather, it includes representatives from all social disciplines in the broadest sense felt the loss at that time. Since Max Weber was one of the few who distinguished themselves as world-renowned scholars (in his time), whose teachings and works have influenced the most The influence of these diverse branches of knowledge extended beyond Germany's borders to encompass all enlightened na since he did not play a direct active political role, but he enriched literature with many discriminating political works.

Birth, upbringing, and death

Max Weber was born in 1864. His father came from a long-established family in the textile industry in western Germany (Bendix, 1977, 1) ^[1]. His father was an ambitious liberal politician whose quickly connected the “national liberals,” a movement more in line with Bismarck's ideas and loyal to him. His family moved from Erfurt to Berlin, where he served as the Prussian House member of Representatives (1868-1897) and the Reichstag (1872-1884). Weber Sr. established as a prominent figure in Berlin society, hosting elite politicians and scholars in his home. Weber's father achieved remarkable success in both business and politics, prospering greatly during this new era and leaving his son a considerable fortune allowed him to become an independent writer. The sociologist's mother was raised in Calvinist orthodoxy and although she gradually accepted a more tolerant theology, her Puritan morals never went away and as a result her husband's social activities alienated her from him, especially when he disapproved of her Max Weber's father suffered from deep and long-lasting grief following the death of two his sons.

He adopted a traditional authoritarian approach at home, requiring absolute obedience from his wife and children, including Max. It is believed that this gloomy home environment, characterized by constant conflict between Weber's parents, contributed significantly to the internal pain that haunted Weber throughout his adolescence. Weber spent most of the first 29 years of his life in his parents' home, which served as a prominent meeting place for liberal politicians and distinguished professors from the University of Berlin. (Bendix, 1977, 1) ^[1]

His wife, Marianne Weber (Schnitzer), was born on August 2, 1870, the daughter of a country doctor named Edward Schnitzer and his wife Anna, the daughter of a linen manufacturer. After her mother's death, Marianne moved in with her grandmother and aunt. At the age of sixteen, she was sent to Hanover to receive her education. In 1891, Marianne spent a lot of time with Max's mother, Helen, in particular. She and Max Weber married and settled together in Berlin. One of Marianne's most famous books was "Wife and Mother in the Development of Law.", she worked to document the legal, economic and social position of women until the modern era. (Tietz, 2017) ^[23]. When Max Weber died in 1920, Marianne Weber was president of the German Women's Union, the highest position within the extensive network of women's organizations at the time. However, unlike some of her friends, she had no direct political influence within or outside the women's movement. She maintained her status thanks to her reputation as an academic writer and died in 1954 at the age of 84 (Ruth, 1990, 64) World War II (Diehl, 1923) ^[8]. All this after the death of his father in 1897 Weber went through a period of nervous breakdown that made it difficult to complete his work, due to a serious quarrel that had occurred before his father's death, due to the After a heated argument with his mother, Weber's father died the next day, leaving his son feeling guilty that he might have inadvertently caused his death. This incident led to severe depression and anxiety, forcing him to quit his job. During this period, Weber remained largely silent at the university and spent two years (The Book of Life, 2019) confined to his couch.

In 1903, Weber resigned from his professorship to take up the position of associate editor of the Archives of Social Science and Social Welfare. While working there, he completed one of his most notable works in 1904, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Later, in 1918, Weber return to teaching, heading the first German department of sociology at the University of Munich. Two years later, in 1920, he died of pneumonia (Wæraas, 2018, 27) ^[27]

Weber's research was characterized by its diversity and exceptional breadth, making it difficult to limit his interests to one field. His multifaceted and intriguing intellectual spirit addressed all the issues that caught his attention with equal seriousness and depth. For example, Because he wanted to use original Russian references, he learned Russian in his studies, to gain insight into the Russian Revolution (Dehl, 1923, 88).

Rationality According to Max Weber

Rationality is defined as the ability of ideas to guide and control action. Weber believes that rationality is not merely a general intellectual development, but rather a distinct type of social action, specifically a unique relationship between thought and practice. Although manifestations of rationality

have emerged in various times and places, Weber believes that its essence lies in a particular pattern of social action that he considered a distinctive feature of modern capitalism (Swedler, 1973, 38)

Rationality is fundamental to Max Weber's thought and has been addressed by many commentators, albeit often within a narrow scope. The types of rationality in Weber's works can be classified as follows:

1. Practical rationality

Weber defines practical rationality as a way of life based on evaluating and judging worldly activities from the perspective of purely individual, genuine interests. In contrast to approaches that may, for example, guide everyday practices according to an absolute value system, the pragmatic rational lifestyle accepts facts as they are and is concerned with calculating the most effective ways of dealing with the challenges posed by these facts.

2. Theoretical rationality

The most important characteristic of this rationality is the conscious control of reality, i.e. the formulation of precise abstract concepts, rather than focusing on action. Theoretical rationality encompasses all abstract cognitive processes in their active and continuous forms (Kubel, 1980, 1151).

3. Substantive rationality

Objective rationality expresses the extent to which values are maximized by defining certain value criteria that are classified as "moral, political, utilitarian, hedonistic, feudal, egalitarian, or any other classification" (Eisen, 1978, 64) ^[10]. Like practical rationality, although it differs from Theoretical rationality and objectivity are concerned with organizing actions directly according to certain patterns. This organization is not based merely on calculating the means to achieve ends in solving everyday problems, but stems from a certain value assumption—whether that value is rooted in the past, present, or future.

The concept of value is not limited to one aspect, such as the estimation of wealth or the performance of duty, but it extends to include entire systems of values that are distinct in their scope., internal coherence, and content. Hence, This rationality represents a manifestation of the innate human ability to make decisions and take actions in accordance with rational values.

4. Formal rationality

Unlike the trans-civilizational and trans-historical nature of practical, theoretical, and objective forms of rationality, formal rationality is generally associated with areas of life and structures of control whose boundaries only became clearly defined with the advent of the industrial age. These spheres mainly include the economic and legal aspects, the scientific field, and the bureaucratic mode of domination. While practical rationality always refers to a widespread tendency to evaluate and solve everyday dilemmas through rational approaches based on the relationship between means and ends, relying on pragmatic self-interest, formal rationality, in essence, legitimizes a rational calculation similar to means-end rationality, But with reference to globally of rules, laws or regulations (Kalberg, 1980, 1158) ^[14]. Weber treated economic formal rationality as "the extent to which quantitative or accounting calculation is technically possible and actually applied"; economic formal rationality

represents the extent to which needs can be provided, and can be expressed in small rules of calculation, whether this calculation is in cash or in kind (Eisen, 1978, 64) ^[10].

Max Weber and Historical Sociology

Max Weber is a pivotal figure in the history of sociology. Indeed, his sociological approach can be said to constitute an example of historical research in the social sciences. (Turner, 2002, 3) ^[25]. Although sociology does not directly correspond to history—it aims to analyze causal relationships and identify activities, structures, and individuals of cultural significance, and seeks to develop general patterns and rules of development—there is a close overlap between the two. In formulating its concepts, sociology relies on relevant historical facts of behavior, drawing its basic material from them (Dehl, 1923, 104)

Weber believes that sound social analysis is not limited to accurately explaining the actual relationship, but also requires an understanding of the significance of the interpretation. This does not deny the causal explanation of main historical operations, but he does not see the purpose in exploring the social world in the same of the natural world. In Weber's view, it is the search for the motives behind an action that distinguishes the social sciences from the natural sciences. Even if social analysis provides a correct explanation of the relationship, it is not complete unless it is clarified in precise terms relating to internal meaning (Sass, 2014, 6) ^[11].

There is no question about Weber's ability as a historical sociologist, but his influence has been largely limited to methodological discussions in the social sciences and the origins of rational capitalism. According to William Hines' interpretation in 1988, Weber's sociology was clearly driven by a philosophical and ethical obsession with understanding human nature and lifestyles, i.e., how personality is formed as a result of specific social conditions. Weber's historical sociology represents a German philosophical tradition that divides human inquiry into an understanding of the mind and an exploration of the body and spirit. To understand Weber's comparative sociology of civilizations, it is necessary to return to intellectual roots that extend to Marxism and the critical philosophy of Nietzsche and his followers, such as Stefan George and Ludwig Klages. Weber's primary goal can be described as providing an ethical description of the modern era (Turner, 2002, 3) ^[25]. Weber planned to develop a comprehensive social system that would include, in addition to historical sociology, branches such as economic, legal, political, and religious sociology, but his death prevented him from completing this ambitious project (Dehl, 1923, 106).

Max Weber and Objectivity

Weber (1985) explored the issue of objectivity in depth, emphasizing the need to separate values and knowledge in the clearest. However, he also acknowledged that achieving this absolute separation is impossible, given the enduring influence of personal values and the general cultural values of the era on the work of scientists, which leads them to vary in their classification and evaluation of factors. Based on this, Weber proposed that scientists should publicly disclose their political affiliations and the values to which they personally adhere (Sass, 2014, 8) ^[17]

Objectivity is based on the fact that empirical data is always linked to evaluative ideas that alone give it epistemic value,

from which this data derives its significance. However, this data cannot form the basis for empirical proof—which is impossible—of the validity of evaluative ideas. The notion, held by all of us to varying extents, that ultimate values transcending experience ground the meaning of our existence, does not conflict with the ongoing evolution of specific frameworks through which empirical truth gains its relevance (Shiles, 1949, 111).

Legitimate domination According to Max Weber

Domination is defined as the existing possibility of a specific group of individuals obeying a system with a specific content (Swedberg, 2005, 64) ^[20]. In exploring the issue of political commitment and the necessity of compliance with state authority in his posthumously published *Economy and Society* (1978), Max Weber presented arguments that ran counter to the prevailing logic of the time. Weber did not see self-interest (material and economic), fear (usually of punishment), customs, or socialization as sufficient justifications for obedience to the state.

Weber, however, argued that obedience arises from the perception of legitimacy—that is, the belief that the state or authority is just, rightful, or appropriate. Individuals subjectively assess the state in a favorable light and, as a result, choose to comply with its directives. To analyze and categorize these subjective interpretations, Weber identified three distinct forms of legitimate authority: legal, traditional, and charismatic." (Ibley, 2015, 8), as follows:

1. Legal or constitutional authority

Legal or constitutional authority is defined as that which derives its legitimacy from belief in the validity of established rules and laws, and from the right of individuals who have assumed positions of authority in accordance with these rules to issue orders. This rational legal legitimacy is based on a system of laws and regulations that ensure the application of rational principles at all levels and structures of the system, based on the official rules set forth (Wiers, 2018, 6). Accordingly, individuals working within bureaucratic frameworks show obedience to authority not only because their positions grant them broad powers, but also because society recognizes laws and regulations as the ultimate and reliable source of authority (Hourani, 2011, 139) ^[13]

2. Traditional authority

Traditional authority is founded on a profound belief in the sanctity of inherited customs and long-standing traditions, as well as in the legitimacy of those who govern in accordance with them. This form of authority is perpetuated through continuous socialization, which fosters deep respect for these established norms. The structures of governance are guided by traditional rules and conventions that confer upon the ruler and their administration the legitimate right to exercise power. Provided that these traditions are collectively acknowledged and the ruler remains faithful to their principles, the system is generally regarded by the public as justified and legitimate."

3. Charismatic authority

Charismatic authority relies on the unique appeal and heroic inspiration emanating from a particular individual. This type of domination has been evident in the practices of party leaders, charlatans, and military leaders (Weber, 2011, 19). Charismatic authority is based on deep loyalty to the

exceptional personality of the leader. The regime derives its legitimacy from the perception of its leader as a unique person, treated as if he possesses supernatural powers or qualities, or at least very exceptional characteristics that exceed the capabilities of ordinary humans. These qualities

are considered to be of divine or ideal origin, and on this basis, the individual is seen as a “leader” (Waris, 2018, 7). The attached (or subsequent) table illustrates the mechanisms of administration, law, and economic regulations under these pure types of domination.

Table 1: Administration, law and economic regulations under pure domination types.

Legal	Charismatic	Traditional	
Rules are made according to logical criteria.	Individuals who are considered extraordinary and have exceptional powers.	Personnel appointed under traditional practices.	Obedience due
The origins of rational legislation. Every law is “made” through logical techniques by an authority established by law and acting according to legal rules.	The origin of the charismatic leader, every law is announced by the leader and is considered a divine judgment or revelation.	Origin in tradition All law is part of pre-existing rules.	The law is enacted by it
Those issues that are decided based on abstract rules and principles, and justified rationally and logically.	Orientation / Revelation. Concrete judgments for each individual case are justified as revelation.	Relying on traditional decision-making methods based on the characteristics of each specific case.	The nature of judicial proceedings and the method of reasoning in judgments.
Bureaucracy Highly structured administration by professionals in a hierarchical system	No management organization Selection of personnel on the basis of charismatic qualifications, with undifferentiated tasks.	Personnel recruited through traditional relationships. Assigned tasks at the discretion of the master.	The structure of the administration
Low	High	High	Governor's degree of appreciation

Trubek, D. M. (1972). Max Weber on Law and the Rise of Capitalism" Faculty Scholarship Series, P735.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism by Max Weber

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism stands as one of the most influential—and debated—works in the field of modern social science. Originally published in German in 1905, the book gained foundational status in sociological scholarship following its English translation by American sociologist Talcott Parsons in 1930.

In the opening pages of his book, Weber describes a world in which "From birth, individuals are embedded within a rigid capitalist economic system—one that operates independently of religious belief. This system imposes stringent demands on economic behavior, effectively rendering individuals subject to its market-driven logic. A factory that persistently disregards these rules will ultimately be driven out of operation, just as a worker who fails to comply—or deliberately resists them—faces dismissal and exclusion from the economic sphere (Binner, 2012, 52). This text underscores Weber's synthesis of economic sociology and the sociology of religion, illustrating his approach to theorizing the interplay between the cultural domain of values and beliefs and the economic structures within society. (Cole and Nicky, 2019) [7].

Historically, four main forms of ascetic Protestantism have been identified, according to Weber (1930, 53):

- 1. Calvinism:** This doctrine was at the center of major political and cultural conflicts during the 16th and 17th centuries in the most advanced countries of the time, such as the Netherlands, England, and France.
- 2. Pietism:** Pietism, or what is known as the doctrine of predestination, is considered the historical starting point of the ascetic movement, which remained firmly established within the Reformed Church for a long time.
- 3. Methodism:** The Methodist movement is characterized by its combination of a kind of emotional religiosity, which carries with it an ascetic aspect, along with a growing absence or denial of the doctrinal basis of Calvinist asceticism.

4. Denominations derived from the Baptist movement:

Like the Apostolic Community, which consists entirely of “born-again” believers, the followers of these denominations consider themselves to be the only brothers of Christ because, like him, they were created directly by God in spirit.

In recent years, Weber's hypothesis regarding the Protestant work ethic has garnered significant scholarly attention, particularly as articulated in his work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber (1904) contends that ascetic Protestantism played a crucial role in the emergence of capitalism by providing a spiritual incentive for diligent labor within one's vocation. He emphasizes that the 'spirit of capitalism' is defined by the belief that hard work and wealth accumulation are valued as intrinsic goals. Weber contrasts this spirit with the traditional work ethic dominant during his era and throughout much of human history, which he characterizes as rooted in tradition (Bastin and Petz, 2011, 10).

Max Weber's Concept of the Iron Cage

Few concepts in the social sciences have become embedded in the collective consciousness as quickly and deeply as the concept of the “iron cage.” This eloquent metaphor, which is an integral part of the central thesis of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, brilliantly and radically depicts the contemporary situation of human beings who find themselves trapped within a social and economic structure of their own making. Since its first publication in English in 1930, this concept has become a fundamental and versatile topic in the social sciences (Bayer, 2001, 154).

In other words, the “iron cage” refers to the increasing penetration of rationality into modern social life, particularly in the context of Western capitalist society. In this context, individuals are subject to strict systems and calculations based on instrumental rationality—a rationality that reduces the individual to a mere functional appendage until the end of

their life (Azharuddin, 2022, 122) ^[1].

Max Weber's concept of the iron cage remains more relevant today than it was when he first formulated it in 1905. Simply put, Weber believes that the technological and economic relations that were formed and developed by capitalist production have themselves become dominant forces in society. Consequently, an individual born into a society defined by such an organizational structure—with its division of labor and hierarchical social arrangements—finds themselves compelled to exist within this system. According to the concept of the 'iron cage,' an individual's life and worldview become so deeply shaped by this environment that imagining an alternative way of life becomes nearly impossible. Thus, those born into this 'cage' live in accordance with its imperatives and, in doing so, actively perpetuate its ongoing reproduction (Cole and Nicky, 2019) ^[7]. Weber describes these individuals as living in a “cold and dark polar night,” but he emphasizes that this is not an expression of cultural pessimism, but rather a strong call for realism, flexibility, optimism, and resilience in the face of the demands of the current world. On this basis, Weber considered the iron cage to be a major obstacle to the achievement of freedom (Bayer, 2001, p. 155).

Notable Publications and Books

- 2015, 1919. *Politics as a Vocation*.
- 2009. *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Routledge.
- 2009. *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*. Simon & Schuster.
- 2002. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Other Writings*. Penguin.
- 1994. *Weber: Political Writings*. Cambridge University Press.
- 1981. *General Economic History*. Transaction Publishers.

- 1978. *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. University of California Press.
- 1968. *On Charisma and Institution Building*. University of Chicago Press.
- 1968, 1953. *The Religion of China, Confucianism and Taoism*.
- 1958. *Science as a vocation*. *Daedalus*, 87(1), 111-134.
- 1958. *The Three Kinds of Legitimate Government* (essay)
- 1946. *Science as a vocation*. In *Science and the Search for Reality* (pp. 382-394). Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- 1946. *Class, Status and Party*.
- 1930, 1905. *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, translated by Talcott Parsons ... with an introduction by R. T. Tawney.
- 1924. *Collected Essays on Sociology and Social Policy* (Vliet, 2017)

Max Weber and Bureaucrats

Weber believes that the pure technical merit inherent in the bureaucratic apparatus acquires a continuity and development that transcends the role of its creator, whether that creator was Napoleon Bonaparte or Otto von Bismarck. The concept of “bureaucracy,” as a careful study of the nature and origins of modern institutions, is perfectly suited to both public administration and business management. It should be noted that Weber provided a sometimes lengthy description of the English legal system (Waters, 2015, p. 73). Weber focused on the rational aspects of bureaucracy, such as structure, rules, and precedents. However, this focus on rationality was criticized by some who emphasized, instead, the irrational factors and informal networks inherent within the formal bureaucratic structure (Lutzker, 1982, 125) ^[15]. Bureaucratic rationality in organizations, like the model of organizations within capitalist societies, is characterized by the features shown in Figure (1).



Fig 1: Characteristics of bureaucratic management

Serpa, Sandro & Ferreira, Carlos Miguel. (2019) "The Concept of Bureaucracy by Max Weber", *International Journal of Social Science Studies*, p14.

Weber was in his fifties when World War I broke out, and he spent a whole year managing nine hospitals around Heidelberg, which gave him direct practical experience in overseeing bureaucratic systems (Greenwood and Lawrence, 2005, 494) ^[12].

Weber sees bureaucracy as the most common form of legal domination, based on the following basic principles (Serpa and Ferreira, 2019, 14);

1. **Specific job specialization:** The existence of services and competencies that are precisely defined by laws and regulations, ensuring a clear division and distribution of jobs.
2. **Permanent job security:** Protection of employees while performing their duties. In general, those who join the civil service are considered employees for life, with public service becoming their primary occupation rather than just a secondary job.
3. **Strict hierarchy:** The administrative structure is organized in a clear hierarchy, with administrative levels organized from subordinate services to senior administrative positions.
4. **Competency-based recruitment:** Recruitment is based on objective criteria such as job applications, passing exams, or obtaining certificates, which requires specialized training for candidates.
5. **Fixed compensation and benefits:** Employees receive a fixed salary, in addition to a pension upon termination of their service to the state.
6. **Administrative and disciplinary oversight:** Authorities have the right to supervise and monitor the performance of their subordinates, which may be done through the formation of disciplinary committees.
7. **Objective promotion:** The possibility of promoting employees according to objective and clear criteria, away from personal assessment or the whims of authority.
8. Weber's articles on bureaucracy gained worldwide fame after Geertz and Mills published his book in 1946. Despite this delay, Weber's vision of bureaucracy sparked widespread research on the performance and shortcomings of bureaucracies (Greenwood and Lawrence, 2005, 494) ^[12].

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