Max Weber Matters

Interweaving Past and Present

Edited by

David Chalcraft, Fanon Howell,
Marisol Lopez Menendez *and* Hector Vera

MAX WEBER MATTERS

Rethinking Classical Sociology

Series Editor: David Chalcraft, University of Derby, UK

This series is designed to capture, reflect and promote the major changes that are occurring in the burgeoning field of classical sociology. The series publishes monographs, texts and reference volumes that critically engage with the established figures in classical sociology as well as encouraging examination of thinkers and texts from within the ever-widening canon of classical sociology. Engagement derives from theoretical and substantive advances within sociology and involves critical dialogue between contemporary and classical positions. The series reflects new interests and concerns including feminist perspectives, linguistic and cultural turns, the history of the discipline, the biographical and cultural milieux of texts, authors and interpreters, and the interfaces between the sociological imagination and other discourses including science, anthropology, history, theology and literature.

The series offers fresh readings and insights that will ensure the continued relevance of the classical sociological imagination in contemporary work and maintain the highest standards of scholarship and enquiry in this developing area of research.

Also in the series:

Karl Mannheim and the Legacy of Max Weber
Retrieving a Research Programme
David Kettler, Colin Loader and Volker Meja
ISBN 978 0 7546 7224 1

Vilfredo Pareto's Sociology
A Framework for Political Psychology
Alasdair J. Marshall
ISBN 978 0 7546 4978 6

Crossing the Psycho-Social Divide
Freud, Weber, Adorno and Elias
George Cavalletto
ISBN 978 0 7546 4772 0

For more information on this series, please visit www.ashgate.com

Max Weber Matters
Interweaving Past and Present

Edited by

DAVID CHALCRAFT
University of Derby, UK
FANON HOWELL
MARISOL LOPEZ MENENDEZ
HECTOR VERA
The New School for Social Research, New York, USA

ASHGATE

Contents

PART 3: THEORIZING RATIONALITY AND PROCESSES OF RATIONALIZATION

PART 4: THE CULTURE OF CAPITALISM: PAST AND PRESENT

PART 5: STUDIES IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF LEGITIMACY

This page intentionally left blank

List of Figures

This page intentionally left blank

List of Tables

This page intentionally left blank

List of Contributors

Brian C. Bartholomew is a Ph.D. student in sociology at the New School for Social Research. His work on contemporary nuclear weapons issues relates to a general concern with the problems of democratic versus imperial consolidation and distributive justice in the post-Cold War world. He is interested in economic and urban sociology and his dissertation will be focusing on begging as a redistributive institution.

Graham Cassano teaches social theory, race and ethnicity, gender, and the sociology of globalization in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Oakland University, Rochester MI, USA. He is an Associate Editor of the journal *Critical Sociology* and serves on the editorial board of *Rethinking Marxism*. He has published on the relationship between cinema and class formation, critical political economy, labor history, and social theory in the journals *Left History, Journal of Economic Issues, Critical Sociology*, and *Rethinking Marxism.*

David J. Chalcraft is Professor of Classical Sociology at the University of Derby and Head of the University Research Group in Society, Religion and Belief. He has long been associated with the interpretation of the life and work of Max Weber, being a co-founder (with Sam Whimster) of *Max Weber Studies*, co-editor (with Austin Harrington) of *The Protestant Ethic Debate: Max Weber's Replies to Critics 1907–1910* (Liverpool University Press) and recently edited *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances* (Equinox, 2007) in which he wrote three chapters developing a Weberian approach to the sociology of sects in historical societies. He is Editor of the Ashgate Series, *Rethinking Classical Sociology*.

Richard Cimino received his Ph.D. in sociology from the New School for Social Research in 2008. His dissertation was on the religious discourse of Hindu, Muslim and Sikh applied science professionals. He is Editor of *Religion Watch* newsletter and co-author of *Shopping For Faith: American Religion in the New Millennium.*

Maria Victoria Crespo is a Ph.D. candidate in the Sociology and History Departments at the New School for Social Research. She is a visiting researcher at El Colegio de México. She is writing a dissertation on the creation of presidential government in Latin America (1810–1860).

Joshua Derman is a Ph.D. candidate in modern European history at Princeton University, where he is completing a dissertation entitled 'A Legacy Transformed:

Max Weber in German and American Thought, 1920–1950'. In 2008–2009 he will be a Max Weber Postdoctoral Fellow at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy. He holds a BA in philosophy from Harvard University, and following graduation, worked for two years at the new Jewish Museum of Berlin, helping to design and develop interactive installations for the permanent exhibition.

Fanon John Howell is a doctoral candidate in the Sociology Department of the New School for Social Research and Associate Editor of the *International Journal of Politics, Culture and Society*. His dissertation is an institutional analysis of management culture within the New York City Department of Education.

Lutz Kaelber is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Vermont. His publications include *Schools of Asceticism: Ideology and Organization in Medieval Religious Communities* (Penn State University Press, 1998), an English translation of Max Weber's first book, *The History of Commercial Partnerships in the Middle Ages* (Rowman and Littlefield, 2003), and as co-editor with William H. Swatos, *The Protestant Ethic Turns 100: Essays on the Centenary of the Weber Thesis* (Paradigm Publishers, 2005). His current research is on dark tourism and commemoration at Nazi 'Euthanasia' centers.

Stephen Kalberg teaches political sociology, comparative sociology, and sociological theory at Boston University. A new edition of his translation of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Oxford), which includes many of Weber's writings on 'the rise of the West,' will be published in 2008. He is the editor of *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Blackwell, 2005) and the author of *Max Weber's Comparative-Historical Sociology* (Polity/ Chicago, 1994). Kalberg's *Max Weber's Sociology of Civilizations* is forthcoming. He writes also on German and American political cultures.

Marisol Lopez Menendez is a doctoral candidate in the sociology department at the New School for Social Research. Her doctoral research investigates the socio-historical conditions under which martyrdom arises and the several instances in which modern martyrdom is related to civil society and human rights movements.

Richard Lloyd is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Vanderbilt University. He is author of *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge, 2006). His research interests include the sociology of art, urban tourism and downtown redevelopment, and contemporary social theory.

James H. Mahon is Associate Professor of Sociology at William Paterson University in Wayne, New Jersey where he teaches courses in the sociology of religion, social demography, sociological theory, and social research methods.

His research deals with governance structures in religious organizations, Afro-Cuban religion in the United States, and teaching sociology of religion from the perspective of comparative religion. Recent publications include a Weberian analysis of distortions in Chinese sex ratios at birth, a review of the effect of McCarthyism on the labor movement in the American electrical manufacturing industry, and a study with two faculty colleagues of social distance on college campuses among ethnically diverse students. He received his doctoral degree in sociology from the Graduate Faculty of the Social Sciences at the New School for Social Research in New York.

Wilbur R. Miller is currently Professor of History, State University of New York, Stony Brook, and Faculty Director of the Honors College. Publications include: *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York City and London 1830–1870* (U. of Chicago Press, 1977; reprint with new preface, Ohio State University Press, 1999); *Revenuers and Moonshiners: Enforcement of Federal Liquor Laws in the Mountain South, 1865–1900* (University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Current research, 'Authority in America,' is a study of the development of combined public/private policing, including vigilantes, and why Americans have accepted often excessive police power.

Guenther Roth born 1931 in Germany, Ph.D. University of California 1960, Professor of Sociology (retired), Columbia University, New York. Books on Max Weber include, *Scholarship and Partisanship* (with R. Bendix), 1971; *Max Weber's Vision of History* (with W. Schluchter), 1979; *Political Domination and Personal Freedom* (in German), 1987; *Max Weber's Anglo-German Family History 1800-1950* (in German), 2001; editor (with C. Wittich), Max Weber, *Economy and Society* (1968); editor (with H. Lehmann), *Weber's 'Protestant Ethic': Origins, Evidence, Contexts* (1993).

Ahmad Sadri, currently Professor of Sociology and Gorter Chair of Islamic World Studies at Lake Forest College, obtained his BA and MA degrees from the University of Tehran and his Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research. He has translated two books from Persian and Arabic into English and is the author of four books including 'Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals' (Oxford University Press, 1992, 1994).

Mahmoud Sadri is Professor of Sociology at Women's University, Texas, and obtained his BA and MA degrees from the University of Tehran and his Ph.D. from the New School for Social Research.

Ritchie Savage is a doctoral student in the Sociology Department at the New School for Social Research. His dissertation analyzes the role of populism in American political consciousness from a sociolinguistic perspective.

Robert M. Slammon is a Ph.D. candidate at the University at Buffalo. His doctoral research explores the concept of "affect" in a study of corporeality in the global biotechnology economy.

Stephen Turner (born 1951) is Graduate Research Professor, Department of Philosophy, University of South Florida. He has written extensively on Weber's methodology, political ideas, and conception of values, including such books as *Max Weber and the Dispute Over Reason and Value* (with Regis Factor, Routledge, 1984), *Max Weber: the Lawyer as Social Thinker* (with Regis Factor, Routledge, 1994), and many articles and encyclopedia entries. He has also written on Weber and leadership and on Weber and international relations theory, the focus of much of his most recent work on Weber.

Hector Vera is a Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Sociology at the New School for Social Research. Author of *A peso el kilo: historia del sistema métrico decimal en México* (Mexico: Libros del Escarabajo, 2007). He is currently working on his Ph.D. dissertation, "The Social Life of Measures: Metrication in the United States and Mexico, 1789–1994".

Series Editors' Preface

This book has its origins in the conference "History Matters: The Legacy of Max Weber", held at the New School for Social Research in New York, in April 2006. We want to thank those people and institutions that made the conference possible, especially Keerati Chenpitayaton, Julia del Palacio, Elizabeth Ziff, Sarah Daynes, Eiko Ikegami, Robert Kostrzewa, the Sociology Student Association, the Department of Sociology (especially Jeffrey Goldfarb, the former chair), the Dean's Office, the Committee on Historical Studies, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Historical Studies Student Association.

The Editors would also like to thank Neil Jordan of Ashgate Publishing who has proved an able, patient and supportive editor throughout the preparation of this manuscript for the series, *Rethinking Classical Sociology*.

<div align="right">

David J. Chalcraft
Fanon John Howell
Marisol Lopez Menendez
Hector Vera
Cumbria, UK and New York, USA
2008

</div>

This page intentionally left blank

Introduction:
Interweaving Past and Present

David J. Chalcraft

This book carries the title *Max Weber Matters* and this is the case for a number of related reasons. The first reason is that it is obviously a book about Weber, about what he said and wrote and about how we might come to understand and make use of what he said and wrote: as such the book is full of material, 'of matters' relating to Weber. The second reason is that the book grows out of the conference, 'History Matters: The Legacy of Max Weber', held at the New School for Social Research and there clearly was felt to be continuity between the original conference and the volume that traces its origins to that event. The third reason, and this is perhaps the most significant one, is that all contributors argue, in various ways, for the continuing importance of Weber for their own enquiries: for contributors, Max Weber matters as an important figure in contemporary sociology.

The sub-title to our book, 'Interweaving Past and Present' draws out one of the major themes of the volume, to which all authors have contributed, sometimes explicitly and intentionally and sometimes more implicitly, bringing out some of the variety of ways in which past and present has been and can be interwoven in the history of our engagements with Weber to understand historical and contemporary social worlds.

Any encounter with the work of Max Weber (and indeed, any classical sociologist) involves the interpreter in both interweaving past and present and being able, at the appropriate moments, to disentangle themselves from the tapestry woven by previous interpretations. Hermeneutics operates with a conception of a distance between reader and text and this distance is pronounced where it is a temporal one of decades rather than years. Since Weber died in 1920 and his texts date from the 1890s to the early 1920s (including posthumous editions), it is fair to say that there is a temporal gap between contemporary readers and Weber's writings. Weber spoke a different language, lived in a historically different time and was concerned with issues that often were of great import in the local context. In such cases, Weber and his texts are from another time and place.

The past need not be seen as a foreign country if aspects of his context and aspects of his experience not only anticipate our own but were also of a comparable nature. In these situations, the past is not a foreign country: at most it is a strange land for which we have a map already provided not only by our own shared historicity of being but because of traits – call them traits of modernity – that we have in common. In those instances where Weber's texts do appear to come from a time and place from which we appear to be ineluctably separated hermeneutics

serves to help bridge the gap by suggesting methods and techniques to minimize the distance, to fuse the horizons and interweave past and present. In contrast, in those instances where there is more of a sense of continuity, past and present are already interwoven. In either instance, past and present interweave, either through the medium of the method or because of historical connections.

Interweaving of past and present also can be used as a metaphor for other processes that take place when contemporary scholars look to a sociological classic when engaged in the analysis of historical and contemporary societies. The metaphor also applies to the process of considering the interaction of the ideas of theorists from the past with the ideas of Weber, viewed from the contemporary perspective of the modern reader. On other occasions, a contemporary scholar utilizes Weberian ideas from the past to illuminate a present problem that would not have been in Weber's ken.

It must be observed however, that past and present in the case of Weber's work and the sociology which came after him, are already interwoven. The weavers at the loom of sociological interpretation include significant figures like Parsons, Adorno, Gerth and Mills, Habermas and Schluchter, but also every teacher and textbook in the history of sociology that have passed on the tradition of what Weber means to the social sciences. At no point is Weber's work approached by a reader, past or present, without some prejudice (positive and negative) as to the content and import of that work, nor its relation to the work of other theorists and scholars past and present. To be fair to the tradition, of course, the very fact that we are even considering how to approach Weber is because previous interpreters who felt there was value in his work have endeavoured to pass on the finding.

What matters in reading Weber's work then involves a growing sophistication in how to unravel the threads that make the tapestry of what Weber means today, subject them to critical scrutiny, and find new and satisfactory ways of interweaving past and present (or to understand clearly why and how past and present should be kept separate).

Our volume is not organized around a particular issue in Weber's ouevre – such as rationality, or anti-nomic thought, or disenchantment, or methodology; neither is it organized, as has been the wont recently, around a particular text. Rather this volume engages with a range of issues that have their origin in diverse contexts: these contexts include the biographical settings of authors, changing economic, social and cultural conditions which raise new questions to be posed to the legacy, familiarity with a body of past or contemporary social theory or a social theorist that challenges Weber, and a range of historical enquiries, often into areas where Weber has not previously been utilized. These contexts are what provide the life force for renewed work in which Weber matters. In all cases, what the volume seeks to convey is the energy of enquirers to comprehend and use Weber in their research and the depth of Weber's texts and ideas that render his work a continual source for concepts, questions and directions. The volume wishes to show case these encounters and capture some aspects of this energy.

What the volume illustrates in terms of the history of ideas is the realization of the role of history and social change in contextualizing our approaches to Weber, and where his work is deemed useful or otherwise, and to needing to utilize historical critical methods to comprehend Weber, just as we use Weber to help us comprehend history: the past, the present and some immediate futures.

In figurative terms, the volume does not subscribe to a notion of a linear reception history of Weber and his work that can be placed at any time into a limited problematic but rather that Weber is at the centre of a wheel whose spokes represent the range of issues, questions, figures and theories and methods brought to Weber by various scholars. Continuity with past scholarship is nevertheless established and this continuity is evidenced in the fact that the volume contains sections in which authors have drawn on Weber's concerns with processes of rationalization, of the nature of capitalistic culture and the types of legitimacy that characterize various social configurations.

The volume illustrates how each generation of scholars encounters the work of Weber not only in the light of the traditions they have received but also in the light of pressing contemporary issues, increasing curiosity about the past and previous historical formations, and through the reading of other significant bodies of thought that either complement or directly challenge the thought of Max Weber. The volume conveys the sheer relevance of Weber to contemporary sociological work and also the range of initiative and creativity that sociologists working with the classical tradition in mind achieve, which leads to new insights into social processes and the human condition. Surely, there could be no better way of demonstrating how Weber matters than by showing the degree to which many areas of historical and contemporary societies, and a number of methodological, conceptual and theoretical issues are still being considered from a Weberian and neo-Weberian perspective. Not only does Weber matter to the scholars writing in this volume, but his ideas are being put to productive use. The exercise in which scholars are engaged is not merely a paying of respect to a past master: on the contrary past and present interweave in more ways than that the interpreter is in the present and the texts being interrogated had come to us from the past – in some instances over a 120 years since their first publication. Weber's thoughts, constructed in the past, are illuminating contemporary matters. The insight and prescience of Weber's ideas serves to interweave past texts and current concerns.

The chapters collected here are concerned less with questions of paradigm, research programme, thematic unity, the biography of the work, issues of translation and the like, and more with using Weber to help interpret some substantive historical and contemporary social, political and cultural problems. In what follows, a brief summary is provided of each chapter within the six parts into which the book is organized.

Part 1: Setting the Scene

The first Part of the volume is intended to set the scene for the whole volume. Chalcraft's chapter serves as an introduction by placing the phrase, 'Max Weber Matters', into the context of current research in the field, and offering some general methodological reflections on what 'Max Weber matters' might be taken to mean. Chalcraft also raises issues about the importance of hermeneutics and the bibliographical history of Weber's texts for interpretation and for constructing a Weberian sociology. He argues that a central dilemma for all interpreters is the choice between working with a limited number of texts and concepts to conduct Weberian sociology or with attempting to arrive at a conception of the 'whole' as a prelude to sociological work. He recommends some exegetical procedures for interweaving past and present and for the reconstruction of the 'biography of the work' in relation to the development of Weber's ideas, concepts and substantive analyses. Chalcraft makes the case that it is important for progress in Weber studies to foreground these issues and make conscious operations that more often than not are carried out without comment. On the other hand, not all Weber scholars will subscribe to these types of procedures and there is of course a range of interests that direct attention to Weber's work for which some exegetical matters may appear quite remote. Hence Chalcraft's ruminations are not intended to serve as a methodological meta-commentary on the chapters that follow. On the contrary, the examples chosen to illustrate the methodological issues derive from his recently published work on developing a Weberian approach to the sociology of sects.

Guenther Roth, in the second 'scene setting' chapter, invites us, by drawing on his valuable personal recollections, to consider a period when Max Weber certainly did matter. Indeed, the 'storm over Max Weber' that characterized the 1964 centenary conference in Heidelberg, which followed less polarized discussion in Montreal, underlines that during that time Max Weber most probably mattered in a more intense fashion than he does today. Or rather, the conflicts over the interpretation of Max Weber were felt to be at the heart of not only political differences and disagreements about the role of values in sociology, but also went to the heart of the nature of social science. Roth's chapter is a reminder that each generation of scholars encounters Weber within their own political and cultural matrix and that each generation must come to terms with the legacy it inherits from the past. Roth's first complete English translation of *Economy and Society* marks a watershed in the reception history, and it is fascinating to learn more of the viscitudes of that project.

Whilst the proceedings of the 'History Matters' conference certainly did not evidence such polarized thinking as in Heidelberg in 1964, it certainly brought together scholars, older and younger, experienced and newer to the field, and these demographic factors indicated the living legacy of Weber and the ways in which all were connected through a fascination with Max Weber. The Diaspora, as it were, that now deals with Weber are more spread than was the case when many scholars fled Germany and established, in New York, the 'University in Exile'. It was this 'University in Exile' at the New School, that become known as, first, The

Graduate Faculty in Politics and Social Science, and then, as now, the New School for Social Research, that played a considerable role in bringing European social thought to an American audience. The University itself is now renamed, New School University, which makes clear that the New School for Social Research is the graduate wing.

Yet there is of course further connection and continuity between Heidelberg and the New School for Social Research. The current University web site, for example, reminds the visitor of the fact that Thomas Mann, speaking at a University in Exile convocation in 1937, remarked that a plaque bearing the inscription 'To the living spirit' had been torn down by the Nazis from a building at the University of Heidelberg. He suggested that the University in Exile adopt that inscription as its motto, to indicate that the 'living spirit' mortally threatened in Europe, would have a home in the USA. The motto, the web site informs us, continues to guide the New School for Social Research division in its present-day endeavours, and one way in which this is manifest is in the cosmopolitanism of its student body. Aspects of that cosmopolitanism (despite the fact that there is only one Englishman involved in editing the volume!), is reflected in this volume in so far as speakers at the New York conference, many of them past and present students of the New School, originated themselves, for example, from Argentina, Mexico, Iran, and Japan as well as coming from various parts of the United States. Indeed, chapters which follow include contemporary encounters with interpretations of Weber produced by former founders and faculty members or academic visitors at the New School such as Veblen, Adorno, Strauss and Habermas. Past and current students of the New School, including Howell, Sadri and Crespo, engage with these former members of the New School. As younger scholars find their voice the legacy of Max Weber will no doubt be further questioned by, and further illuminated through, the particular sets of experiences and issues that are brought to Weber's texts. Those approaches will reflect the way the world has changed since the 1960s. Guenther Roth, who studied at the New School in the mid 1950s, locates the Heidelberg conference in the beginnings of the cultural revolution of the sixties; younger participants at the New York conference began a process of rethinking Max Weber for themselves in the light of various social and cultural changes: from the emergence of new Bohemias (Lloyd), to nuclear arms policy post cold war (Bartholomew), to a debate about Weber's apparent privileging of the rationalization processes that characterized the Occident (Vera).

Part 2: Philosophical Dialogues

The second Part of the volume, 'Philosophical Dialogues' presents four studies that illustrate the complexities of dealing with the legacy of Weber in the present, since they mediate between Weber and significant interpreters. These interpreters, with the exception of Habermas, are no longer alive and hence their encounters with Weber are to be historically reconstructed by scholars working in the present. These

thinkers have become past masters for us and we engage with them through analysing their engagement with Weber, with similarities and differences in our contexts and purposes emerging in the process. Just as contemporary readers engage with Weber in the light of the inherited tradition and in the light of pressing philosophical, social, political and cultural questions, so too did the scholars discussed in this Part. Derman, Savage, Howell and Crespo, in many ways, therefore, are dealing with a double legacy: the legacy of Weber himself, and the legacy of a major interpreter of Weber, whether that is Jaspers, Merleau Ponty, Adorno or Habermas. It is instructive to be reminded of these encounters, especially in a sociological context where the reception history is, in comparison, relatively narrow, and often comes back to the problem of de-Parsonising Weber. They are instructive since their encounters simply highlight other possibilities of interpretation and use. They also document how major thinkers looked to Weber in considering significant issues: this underlines the sheer relevance, range, and insight of Weber's thought (especially of ideal typical methodologies) as well as the seriousness and the inventiveness of Jaspers, Adorno, Merleau Ponty and Habermas. Often these previous engagements with Weber provide the theoretical and temporal bridge between a present interpreter and past appropriations. Each of the thinkers inherited a version of Weber and they interrogate that version of Weber from the perspective of their own pressing philosophical, political and sociological issues.

With Karl Jaspers we are taken back to a thinker who was influenced not only by the texts and myth of Weber, but by the very man himself: Jaspers met Weber face to face on more than one occasion. Joshua Derman, in his contribution, points out that of all the twentieth-century intellectuals who looked to Max Weber for guidance or inspiration, none professed to be as deeply indebted to him as Karl Jaspers (1883–1969). Derman documents and interprets Jaspers' intellectual relationship to Weber, focusing on the formative years between their first meeting in Heidelberg, Weber's death, and, for Jaspers, the experience of the collapse of the Weimar Republic. He examines how Jaspers' existential conception of psychology, philosophy and finally politics emerged through an intellectual and personal dialogue with Weber. Whereas many contemporaries saw Weber as a tragically thwarted individual, Jaspers believed him to be 'the only philosopher of our time', an existential thinker who pushed the boundaries of reason in order to disclose a non-rational form of personal authenticity. This interpretation, Derman goes on to explain, heavily influenced the perception of Weber's significance in interwar Germany and continues to be studied today. The development of *Existenzphilosophie* illustrates how Weber's intellectual legacy could be mobilized in the service of philosophical radicalism – one of the defining cultural features of the Weimar Republic. As a work of intellectual history, the chapter illuminates both the origins of Jaspers' thought as well as providing a new perspective on the inherent tensions and challenges of Weber's legacy.

Ritchie Savage, in the next chapter, narrates Merleau Ponty's search for a non-totalizing approach to history. Merleau Ponty (1908–1961), that is, approaches Weber in the hope of a dialogue that would address, and even transcend, the

dilemmas of writing history that he found 'on his doorstep' given the prevalence and dominance of an Hegelian-Marxist methodology in the intellectual context . If meaning in history is not absolute, contrary to the Marxist position, perhaps it would be possible to consider the opposite view that there are multiple meanings in history which are contingent. Just such an approach to history Merleau Ponty finds in Weber. Merleau Ponty concludes, Savage argues, that Weber's application of ideal types to historical phenomena allows for a reading of history in which it is not subjected to a predetermined path and dogmatic meaning. Thus, for Merleau Ponty, Weber's historical work, especially in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, represents an important step towards exorcizing the Hegelian Spirit out of the Marxist dialectic.

In a somewhat similar fashion to Merleau Ponty, Adorno (1903–1969) too turned to Weber in an effort to find a mode of scholarly investigation and expression free of ideological underpinnings. Merleau Ponty was working within the French phenomenological logical tradition, as opposed to Adorno's location within the critical theory of the Frankfurt school. Fanon John Howell, in his contribution, scrutinizes Adorno's appeal to an aesthetics grounded in Weberian logic and the creation of ideal types. Howell demonstrates that Adorno's method is itself ideal typical, but not in a way that clarifies or, more importantly, not without entrapping himself in the very ideological cages he had felt imprisoned early historicism. Adorno, in his drive to denounce utopian vision, casts himself in yet a new paradox. Howell argues that Adorno in his affirmation of the semblance of truth-content in aesthetics mimetically exhibits the same drive for immanence that he chastised Enlightenment theorists for imagining.

Maria Crespo brings the coverage of the encounter of 'philosophers' with the letter and spirit of Max Weber up to the present, with a consideration of Habermas. Habermas of course provides a living link with the concerns of the Frankfurt school, and was a participant in the Heidelberg conference. For many interpreters, including Crespo, the main methodological assumptions underlying Habermas' theory of communicative action are inseparable from Weber's concept of rational action and his method of 'rational interpretation. In her chapter, Crespo concentrates on the interrelations between interpretation, understanding and explanation in Weber's and Habermas' methodological writings, and shows their overarching concerns as well as the continuities and ruptures between their methodological enterprises. Crespo shows that the issues they discuss are still in need of discussion. She also assesses the influence of Weber's methodology on Habermas showing how the work of the latter interweaves past and present in its encounter with Weber.

Part 3: Theorizing Rationality and Processes of Rationalization

Chalcraft's chapter mentions the fact that in contemporary Weber studies the interpreter is often faced with a choice between establishing a central theme in

Weber's oeuvre, working within a 'Weber Paradgima' or being content with making good use of a specific formulation found within his work. Even when the search for a central theme proves to be a chimera or scholars grow weary of exegetical debates, one does not have to be reading the Weber literature very long before a concern with rationality and rationalization processes present itself. The chapters collected together in this Part explore various dimensions of rationalization and they range from the consideration of the rationality of the Confucian examination system, the rationality of cultures of money and measures in pre-capitalist societies, to more contemporary settings in which the affinity between rational vocations and the rationalizing of Hindu belief systems is discussed, as well as the conflicts between formal and substantive modes of rationality found within US policies of nuclear armament and disarmament in the post-Cold War period.

Stephen Turner explores Weber's often neglected China study, and uncovers a potential misleading bias in Weber's conceptualization of expertise and specialization and their relation to rationality in general, and to the training and vocation of Chinese intellectuals in particular. In certain of Weber's works, the terms expert and specialist occur frequently, usually interchangeably, and are associated with rationality. Turner outlines that for Weber, in modernity, the age of the universal genius is past and intellectual progress now and in the future will depend upon relentless specialization. From this Weberian perspective, the expertise of past intellectuals or civil servants which was not based on specialization (for example, specializing in law, or education or medicine and so on) would appear to represent a fallacious type of expertise or at least an irrational one. However, Turner shows that Chinese bureaucrats occupied the position of a non-specialist expert, and that their expertise was based on a thorough training within and knowledge of, with relentless assessment, the Confucian tradition which, itself, was the expression of the common culture of the Chinese community. Turner asks therefore, whether Weber's identification of rational expertise with specialization meant that he misunderstood and too readily dismissed the purpose and the effect of the examinations Chinese bureaucrats and lawyers underwent. Implications of a non-Weberian reading of the role of common culture in providing legal norms, one that does not depend on specialization as such, are drawn out by Turner in relation also to the case of the British Civil Service and of Rabbinical 'law' in the Mishnah. In other words, one can consider the existence of rational non-specialized knowledge in diverse social and cultural settings.

Hector Vera, in his chapter, makes a valuable contribution to extending Weber's economic sociology through exploring the phenomena of money and measures (that is, the variety of means of weighing and valuing goods) as part of a larger process of rationalization. The chapter discusses the interconnection between money, weights and measures in pre-capitalist economies, and how this interaction changed radically when modern rational capitalism became the predominant reality in the West. Vera closes his chapter with some comments about the international expansion of the decimal metric system and the various limits that are associated with it within large-scale capitalism.

Richard Cimino explores the manner in which compromises between, from some perspectives, so called 'irrational' religious beliefs and so-called 'rational' scientific beliefs can occur and indeed whether there might be an elective affinity to be uncovered between the development of rationalized religious belief and the concerns of professionals whose vocations are within contemporary rationalized scientific occupations. Using engineers and computer scientists in Hindu communities in the USA as a case study, Cimino finds that these professionals are drawn to rationalized forms of Hindu faiths which reflect the practicality and inductive method of the scientific fields in which they work. Rationalized forms of Hinduism may be carried by this new 'knowledge class' yet given the manner in which ideas affine themselves with various social strata, this type of Hinduism can spread beyond the circle of scientific professionals to include other elements in the Hindu community who are not themselves closely involved in technological and scientific work.

Finally, Part 3 closes with the contribution of Brian Bartholomew who provides a critical exploration of contemporary nuclear strategic alternatives and draws on Weber's distinction between formal and substantive rationality to make sense of developments and, moreover, indicates in Weberian fashion the dynamic relationship that obtains between weapons innovation and socio-political formations. Bartholomew argues that while the 'achievement' in the twentieth century of humanity's capacity for nuclear self-destruction may be perhaps seen as the quintessential example of formal rationality's substantive absurdity, it may actually only be in today's post-Cold War phase of the nuclear age that the real crisis of formal rationality in the military realm has become manifest. From the perspective of formal rationality, Bartholomew argues, the logical response to the changes in nuclear strategic conditions, occasioned by the post-Cold War situation, would be to pursue nuclear multi-polarization and/or conventionalization, and both of these are associated with increased risks of a renewed episode of actual nuclear warfare. Under these same changed conditions, meanwhile, the substantively rational course of nuclear abolition is in danger of becoming increasingly remote. In accordance with the Weberian dialectic of weapons innovation and constitutional change, it is argued that nuclear weaponry relentlessly transcends the sovereignty claims of national-states and requires for its management the constitution of a post-realist international order – a characteristic definitive of both the passing bi-polar regime of mutual annihilation and any global regime of nuclear abolition to come. In these ways, Bartholomew presents a discussion that interweaves the past theorizations of Weber with the contemporary global risk of destruction through nuclear weaponry and the desire for cosmopolitan world order, and is of course of wider relevance to debates generated by, amongst others, Ulrich Beck.

Part 4: The Culture of Capitalism: Past and Present

In this Part chapters address various dimensions of the culture of capitalism drawing on Weber's life-long and profound interest in the nature of capitalisms that existed in various historical and contemporary societies. Alongside the analysis of rationality and processes of rationalization, Weber's engagement with the culture and workings of capitalism is a further theme that many scholars see running through Weber's work from the beginning of his career up to and including its premature close.

It is apposite that the name of Thorstein Veblen should appear in our book, and this is on account not only of his famous writings, but because of his involvement in the original founding of the New School for Social Research, alongside Dewey and others. Graham Cassano, in his chapter, whilst acknowledging the presence of political as well as conceptual and substantive differences between the work of Veblen and Weber, shows how they nevertheless appear to arrive at remarkably similar conclusions. They share, Cassano shows, a similar understanding of the fate of the 'bourgeois individual', who is envisaged, in both Veblen's and Weber's projections of the long term consequences of modern capitalist and bureaucratic culture, as becoming trapped within the cage of the acquisitive machine. Capitalism's last conquest, therefore, for both Veblen and Weber, was the conquest of the self.

Lutz Kaelber takes us back in time to the Middle Ages and back to the context of Weber's early writings. The purpose for doing so is to correct what Kaelber sees as some major mischaracterizations, and misunderstandings of Weber's treatment of religion, economic life and rationalism in the Middle Ages. In his chapter Kaelber presents a number of arguments to demonstrate that Weber addressed both rationalism and religion very early in his work and when doing so Weber was concerned to understand the interplay of religious ideas and economic behaviour. Drawing on his knowledge of recent scholarship of the Middle Ages Kaelber is well placed to assess how Weber's conclusions would be perceived, and he underlines that, by and large, religious asceticism and economic rationalization were not tied in the Middle Ages.

From considering the history of religion and economic rationalism in the Middle Ages, Richard Lloyd, in his contribution, brings us back to the contemporary period of global capitalism and reconsiders Weber's treatment, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, of the complex intersections between culture, subjectivity and instrumental labour. For Weber the nature of the interchange between the cultural and the structural is not fixed, Lloyd argues, but must rather be examined in terms of historically specific conditions prevailing in a given period and locale. Using Weber's argument as a point of departure, Lloyd critically examines prominent later attempts to deal with issues of culture and capitalist labour, as found particularly in Antonio Gramsci and Daniel Bell. Lloyd concludes, and interweaves past and present, by advancing the argument that a flexible reading of Weber's account, one which does not ahistorically reify either

the 'protestant ethic' nor the specific modalities of bourgeois capitalism, continues to be a useful means to orient analysis of cultural trends during the contemporary period of neo-liberal, global capitalism.

Part 5: Studies in the Sociology of Legitimacy

With this Part of the book we arrive at the third area of the work of Max Weber that one usually expects to find in any consideration of his legacy: namely, his sociological ideas about types of rulership, modes of legitimacy and administrative cultures. Alongside the themes of rationalization and of the culture of capitalism, the sociology of legitimacy has been a mainstay of Weberian sociological analysis, and they maintain their vibrancy for contemporary scholars. Three chapters in this volume address directly this legacy and they do so in innovative ways, interweaving past and present, as well as demonstrating once more the value of Weber's approach to the investigation of both contemporary phenomena, such as the recent controversies around Dan Brown's *The Da Vinci Code*, to historical phenomena as diverse as the social and cultural significance of martyrdom in classical times, to the nature of the governance of emergent systems of policing in nineteenth century London and New York. At the same time, engaging with Weber's work, and applying his ideas to new case studies, provides occasions to criticize and extend his ideas in fruitful ways.

   In the chapter written by Marisol Lopez Menendez, 'The Leadership of the Dead: Notes towards a Weberian Analysis of Charisma in Narratives of Martyrdom', Weber's typology of charismatic leadership, its routinization and the problems that charismatic movements face when the leader dies is placed into the fascinating context of the phenomena of martyrdom, largely within early Christianity. Lopez Mendendez demonstrates how Weber's emphasis upon the manner in which charisma is an interactional phenomena, and the challenge it presents to traditional and everyday life, including economic endeavours and family relations, can be applied to the growth of martyrdom within early Christian communities. Overall, the would-be martyr, the martyr themselves and the community that keep the narrative of the martyr 'alive' all share a sense of mission, that further underlines their charismatic qualities in Weber's sense. The chapter also shows how Weber's work needs to be supplemented to take account of the fact that the records of martyrdom are narratives that are written, treasured and transmitted by communities (or the priestly officers of those communities) and that this textual awareness also can illuminate the ways in which the death of the 'charismatic leader' – in this case the martyr – does not lessen the significance of charisma and cause a crisis of leadership, but may actually render specific members of the charismatic Christian community into charismatic leaders, celebrated in narrative and cult, precisely because of the nature and mode of their deaths.

   From considering nascent charismatic leadership in the Early Church, James Mahon, in his chapter, investigates the role of routinized charisma within the

bureaucratic structures of the Roman Catholic Church. Mahon considers the topical issue of *The Da Vinci Code*: a 'conspiracy theory' that has since spawned many imitators, as any visit to a bookshop will quickly confirm. Mahon explains how the Roman Catholic Church's critique of *The Da Vinci Code* focused largely on its purported distortions of history, its denial of certain constituent Christian dogmas, and on calumnies it spoke against Opus Dei. However, by framing the affair within Weber's understanding of the dynamics of legitimacy, Mahon additionally construes the Church's efforts in opposing *The Da Vinci Code* as a concerted bid to reinforce the ideological bulwark surrounding millennia-old structures of episcopal governance. Guided by Weber's concept of 'routinization of charisma', Mahon postulates that it was Church leaders' sensing a challenge to Roman Catholicism's traditional manner of organizing and exercising power in the form of depersonalized office charisma that provoked the criticisms they mounted worldwide against *The Da Vinci Code*. The chapter theorizes how the Catholic faithful submit to rule by a bureaucratic administrative authority, which is exercised under direction of the pope and bishops as bureaucratic masters, because they accept as an article of faith that the authority this hierarchy exercises descends from the apostles through the practice, unbroken over the centuries, of laying on of hands by those who walked and talked with Jesus. Were Jesus to have lineal descendants, these would have a claim to Jesus's charisma routinized through inheritance. And were Christians to accept that claim, Mahon concludes, it would provoke a controversy over the source of legitimate power in the Church similar to the one between the caliphate and the party of Ali in early Islam.

Wilbur Miller in his chapter undertakes a comparative analysis of the emergent police forces in London and New York City from 1830 to1870 making use of, and critically supplementing, Weber's models of legitimation. Miller describes how Weber defined legitimation as 'a *belief*, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige'. While Weber, Miller argues, was fully aware of mixed and evolving modes of legitimation, he was not focused on the *process* of legitimation. Namely, Weber did not ask: how do newly created institutions of the state acquire legitimation, and how do they work to encourage belief in their legitimacy? Miller addresses these questions by comparing the London and New York police in the mid-nineteenth century. Police forces are the most conspicuous institution of the state to ordinary people. As a bureaucratic agency responsible for law enforcement, they are an example of rational-legal legitimation. They are organized hierarchically, governed by formal rules, chosen by examination (at least since the earlier twentieth century), paid salaries, and have a career based on promotion by merit, and are subject to discipline and control. However, Miller shows the importance of the fact that all police officers have to exercise personal discretion when deciding when and how to act – on the beat, their legitimation is often influenced by *personal* rather than strictly institutional prestige. What Miller finds is that police forces differ in respect to how much personal discretion is allowed or assumed. Miller demonstrates therefore that the relative weights of bureaucratic powers and constraints compared to personal power and autonomy

of police officers offer a clear way to compare legitimation of police forces in the past and present. Studying development of the two police forces gives a dynamic element to Weber's concepts of legitimation.

Part 6: Consciousness, History, Relativism and the Interweaving of Past and Present

Stephen Kalberg's chapter carries in its title the notion of interweaving past and present that we have extended metaphorically to cover the whole enterprise of this book project. Kalberg of course is interested in demonstrating the manner in which Weber himself theorized and explicated the 'perpetual and the tight' interweaving of past and present. Our own attempts to interweave past and present, therefore, have something of a Weberian mandate, and, as has been emphasized throughout, our encounters with Weber, either directly through his texts, or indirectly through the readings of others in the history of reception, also involves the interweaving of past and present.

Kalberg concentrates on Weber's own emphasis on 'societal domains' and notes their important location in his various writings and then focuses upon the manner in which his stress upon domains provides the foundation for an understanding of the manner in which the past and the present are tightly linked in his sociology. Kalberg also investigates how Weber's rejection of organic holism, of all forms of unilinear evolutionism and of orthodox structuralism is grounded in his treatment of societal domains. Kalberg is not necessarily arguing for a central theme in Weber's work to be located in Weber's treatment of domains, and whilst there are clearly implications for how Weber's research questions might be conceptualized in the light of his own interests as reconstructed here, it is certainly the case, as Kalberg demonstrates, that any Weberian approach to social realities would need to keep in mind the close interlocking of past and present.

From Stephen Kalberg's enquiry into how we might today reconstruct and benefit from appreciating Weber's mode of interweaving past and present, the next chapter by Robert Slammon, invites us to consider the context of Weber's attempts, in the 'methodological' essays and critiques he wrote between 1902 and 1917, to formulate a basis for inquiry in the human sciences, in which questions of time and of historicity were prominent, and in which the consequences for moral issues and issues of value revolved around how we might be able to interweave past and present . Slammon describes how Weber's ideas took shape in the context of upheaval in German academic culture, marked by the 'crisis' of historicism, the reigning paradigm of German scholarship, and by feuds between competing schools in the academy. At the centre of the crisis was the question of time, or historicity, and the problems it posed for the separation and grounding of truth and value claims in the human sciences. Weber was among a group of thinkers who turned to Kant's critical philosophy for solutions to these problems. But the specific path Weber followed differed from those taken by his neo-Kantian

contemporaries. Whereas Wilhelm Windelband and Heinrich Rickert, for example, sought to ground the validity of facts and values in a transcendental order, Weber constructs his case for a critical social science around the avowal of temporality and finitude, as it is formulated in Kant's *Critique of Practical Reason*. Weber's concept of *Wertfreiheit*, often mistakenly interpreted as 'objectivity', expresses his view that only under the conditions of finitude can values and the value of facts be said to have any validity.

The Part, and our book, closes with the chapter by Ahmad Sadri and Mahmoud Sadri, both of whom completed their Ph.D.s at the New School and whose paper considers how Strauss, himself a one-time member of the faculty, criticized Max Weber's perceived relativism. For the authors, Strauss' criticism of Weber changed his (Strauss') status from philosophical hermit to conservative guru: in their chapter the political implications of Weber interpretation, and indeed some of the passion that breathes through the publications debating value freedoms and value judgements originating at the Heidelberg Weber centenary conference of 1964, can be felt. For these reasons it is apposite to close our volume with a chapter that takes us back to where we began in so far as the organization of the book invites the reader to compare today with 1964 and the differing ways, both before and after 1964, Weber has been interpreted and utilized. The legacy of Strauss' intervention, whilst regrettable, certainly became, the chapter argues, of considerable significance for debates about political correctness. Strauss' misgivings about a social science that was simply incapable of uttering the purportedly self-evident truth about the superiority of Western civilization inspired the crusade against 'political correctness', and was also of significance, the Sadri's argue, during other incarnations of conservativism during the Presidency of George Walker Bush and can still be felt today. In other words, if we might embellish the closing remarks made in the chapter, the presence of Weber can still be felt, and past and present is strangely interwoven, for when American social science is castigated for its relativism, and perhaps for its relative neglect of having a strong public voice in the wake of 9/11 or Hurricane Katrina, it is the apparent 'objective' sociological approach of Max Weber that is, implicitly and sometimes explicitly, also being critiqued.

PART 1
Interweaving Past and Present: Setting the Scene

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 1

Why Hermeneutics, the Text(s) and the Biography of the Work Matter in Max Weber Studies

David J. Chalcraft

1. In What Ways Does Weber Matter?

There is no question that Max Weber matters. No one, not even Weber's detractors, (e.g. Lewis 1975; Andreski 1984; Giddens 1984; Rosaldo 1993) would claim that his work has not been important for the foundation of the human sciences. Nor would anyone claim that his work was unimportant to the history of sociology. Neither would any one claim that his work is no longer relevant to contemporary students and practitioners in a range of subjects including sociology and history.

A distinction needs to be drawn, however, between Weber mattering as a founder and Weber mattering as a constant methodological, conceptual and theoretical partner in current work in everyday contemporary sociology. One needs to ask: is Weber both an historical and a contemporary figure, read for how the present as much as the past can be illuminated through his contributions or only of importance because sociology and its development cannot be understood without appreciating his ideas and their role in the history of the discipline ?

The question that matters, then, is *the way in which* Weber matters to contemporary work. From one quite common perspective, the enquirer wants to know which ideas of Weber's (if any) have stood the test of time, transcend their original contexts, and continue to inform, direct and exercise contemporary academics and policy makers. This sounds like a perfectly reasonable question to pose. It must be a reasonable question given the frequency with which it is asked, especially in sociological circles. Within historical circles it might be imagined that contemporary significance is only one reason why a body of work might be studied. Given sociological interest in the contemporary and the commitment of many carriers of the sociological vocation to seek to understand if not ameliorate contemporary problems it is not surprising that such a 'presentist' approach can dominate. However, as will become apparent, there are a number of assumptions entangled with approaching the sociological classics solely or mainly for the help they can offer us now which need unravelling. It is sensible to spend some time considering these assumptions so as to be able to retain a hold on the present situation whilst engaging with texts from the past. It is important to be clear on these hermeneutical issues if past and present are to be interwoven in successful fashion.

Of course, the past is not something with which sociology is completely unfamiliar. Sociology has always had its historical dimension: sociologists look back as well as forward in an effort to illuminate the specificities of the present. But more often than not, sociology has had its Janus-face turned towards the contemporary. The historical face of sociology is the dark side of the moon. Of those sociologists who did not 'retreat into the present', the work of Foucault and of Elias stands out. But the classical sociologist who stands out most impressively in this regard is Max Weber, whose interweaving of past and present is as much the subject of this volume as how contemporary scholars interweave past and present when doing sociology with his ideas in mind. The subject of this chapter is to consider some methodological issues of interweaving past and present ourselves whilst engaging with Weber's work, which is accomplished whilst engaging with central questions in the analysis of historical and contemporary social worlds.

The assumptions of the approach to sociological theories, concepts and analysis that associates scientific or educational value with only those ideas that speak directly to the present include the following notions which, when corrected of their vulgarity, do enable the reader of the sociological classics to keep a firm foothold in the shifting sands of the contemporary, as will be seen. The naïve presentist (Siedman 1983) approach suggests that there is a clear difference between ideas as carried in texts from a previous epoch and ideas that can address the present (contemporary interpretative issues, pressing social concerns, major social changes), and that the choice to be made between past and present is urgent. It suggests that it is possible to form more or less shared judgements on what is valuable and what is not from the perspective of the present. It suggests that it is possible to abstract without damage certain ideas from a wider textual or past historical context. It suggests that if nothing transcends from the scholarship of the past up to and including the present that those past ideas are to be forgotten. It suggests that what is found to transcend now has transcended in the past and may well so transcend in the future. All of these notions are open to question from the perspective of hermeneutics and the study of the history of ideas. Whilst it is essential to approach the texts of the past with interpretative questions, it is equally essential to hope that the past texts can offer assistance. This implies that an encounter with the texts of the past is rooted in the possibility of dialogue. When the continuing significance of a body of thought is reduced to the too simple formulation of an impatient contemporary reader bent on swift solutions to their empirical or theoretical conundrums, it seems to me the possibility of dialogue and transformation of understanding is under severe strain. There is value in engaging with all thinkers and texts in the classical canon irrespective of their current status in the discipline as a whole; and justifications for doing so, or the rewards that one might gain, vary depending on the case and the context in which reading is taking place. Taken together, all the rewards that can be derived from engagement constitute a rationale for reading the classics of sociological, political and cultural studies in general, and reading Max Weber in particular.

Before proceeding to consider in more depth some of the more recent developments in Weber studies that aid the effective interweaving of past and present, it is helpful to introduce some other distinctions to clarify the meaning of 'Max Weber matters'.

Whilst considering whether and how Max Weber matters it is advisable to appreciate that a scholar might agree that a Weberian tradition is considered the most fruitful without thereby uncritically accepting all that Weber wrote nor feeling that all answers were satisfactory or all research problems clearly formulated (e.g. Whimster 2007, 9). It is always important to distinguish fascination with Weber's work from advocacy of his position. Such a meaning underlies the distinction between Weberian sociology, on the one hand, and Weberology on the other: the latter is steeped in the scholarship but does not imply advocacy, although deep immersion in the texts of one perspective might make that perspective, after a time, almost second nature to the exegete. Within sociology it is more likely that scholars in the Weberian tradition have made conscious decisions to be 'Weberian' and do not justify their work by reference to an historical interest in Weber.

Indeed, some scholars do seem to subscribe to the notion that Weber matters largely on account of the failure of other 'systems' of thought. Other systems of thought have been shown to matter less to contemporary theorists or contemporary conditions on account of their inability to explain or predict, or on account of their own internal contradictions. In this somewhat zero-sum game, Weber 'wins' and comes to matter when other alternatives no longer have claims to stake, have not stayed the course of time or whose own formulations are somewhat lacking.[1] Of course it must not be forgotten that for many readers of Weber, the questions at stake are rather urgent and the interest in Weber is not merely an intellectual curiosity, as it might also legitimately be for others.

Often Weber has come to matter at a particular time on account of the work of a particular scholar or group of scholars who have through significant and powerful interpretations/presentations of his work, brought it to the attention of others (e.g. Parsons 1937; Gerth and Mills 1948, Bendix 1962; Giddens 1971; Habermas 1984; Schluchter 1981, 1989; Swedberg 1998; Hennis 2002a, 2002b). Weber is often thought to matter in the wake of a renascence inspired by particular readings of his oeuvre, which set the agenda for Weberian sociology for a period of longer or shorter duration. These readings of Weber of course are persuasive because they capture the current intellectual trends or developments in political, social and cultural life and make a major contribution to the interweaving of past and present. Scholars have continually brought contemporary questions and concerns to the house of Weber's texts, and their questions have provided a key to open the door. On so many occasions, however, on account of the diversity of Weber's work or account of the limitations of the interpreter, a door has been opened onto only

---

[1] In the introduction to Schroeder 1998 (x–xii), Weber is 'winning' in political sociology against Marxism, which has failed historically, and winning against both rational choice and social constructivism.

one or more of the rooms of that house; those rooms themselves may have not been visited for a considerable time, or ever before, and the treasures found within necessitate a close attention that does not permit dwelling in the entire building. Other sociological visitors to the house of Weber's texts, if I can continue to extend this metaphor, armed with this new introduction/interpretation, tend to dwell in the same rooms and marvel long and hard, getting every ounce of meaning and pleasure under the new vista, until such time as new events or theoretical fashions suggest that the coverings be placed back on the content and the door closed once again for the foreseeable future.

It is important, therefore, to distinguish which dimensions of Weber's *oeuvre* one has in mind when considering the degree to which his ideas and formulations continue to matter in the form of a legacy in contemporary social science. Weber's contributions – whether intentional or not – to the various branches of sociology and history, are so varied that it is conceivable that whilst he might be considered rather out of date in some quarters, his ideas appear fresh or have been freshly re-discovered, or discovered for the first time, in some other corner of the academic universe. And of course, in either of these situations, a consensus is unlikely to exist, with Weber always having his defenders and his detractors. It is important for all subject specialists to be able to distinguish between the enduring and the ephemeral and especially not to throw the proverbial baby out with the bath water. For example, whilst the India study suffers from the nature of its sources, from Weber's orientalism, from his question-specific enquiry into the rise of western rationalism, and, for readers of English from a translation in obvious need of replacement, it is still the case that a scholar can work creatively and productively within this field with a Weberian approach (Gellner 2001).

The proceeding discussion leads us to consider what is perhaps the central interpretative dilemma facing all Weber interpreters and which lies at the heart of the matter of the manner in which Max Weber matters to contemporary readers. It is also at the heart of the hermeneutical and practical issue of how to effectively interweave past and present. Namely, the interpretative dilemma is whether Weber matters as a central contributor to the demarcation and analysis of specific substantive areas of enquiry that may wax and wane, or that he/his work matters as the representative of a particular research paradigm or sociological project whose questions and rationale are shared by those contemporary sociologists who claim the label Weberian (e.g. Nelson 1974; Tenbruck 1989; Kalberg 1994; Hennis 2002a, 2002b).

The answer to the question whether Max Weber matters is, then, a complex one and it depends when (at what period in the history of sociology) it is being asked, to whom the question is posed, and about which aspects of Weber's overall legacy might actually be in mind. The manner in which Weber has mattered to sociology varies from place to place (Albrow 1993) and from time to time (Whimster 2001). So that some order can be placed on this diversity it is helpful to develop an ideal typical contrast between what can be called 'the older Weber studies' and the 'newer Weber studies'. Once this has been achieved, the chapter concludes

with an illustration of the importance of the text and the biography of the work for engaging with Weber's work in the spirit of the hermeneutical positions presented throughout and in the light of the need to interweave past and present.

2. Towards a New Weber Studies. Interpretative Choices and How Weber Matters

Whilst it is not possible to speak ideal typically of an 'older Weber Studies' and a 'newer Weber studies' without imposing too much order on a much more diverse and varied reception history, it is perhaps still helpful to outline such a contrast if only to provide some direction to the discussion, and some indication of the variety of ways Weber has or can matter. The main advantage is that it brings out elements of the choices with which many interpreters of Weber are faced: their solutions to these dilemmas, or indeed whether they recognize the need for choice at all, will be related to how, for them, Weber matters. Importantly, the main dilemma that I think is central to current practise, is between attempting to work within a so-called Weber Paradigm/Research Programme/Thematic Unity approach to Weber's life and work, and the more common and established 'golden nuggets' or 'greatest hits' approach to a selection of Weber's texts and to particular sections within those texts. This dilemma has emerged from a number of sources including the range of Weber's own work, the transmission history of his texts, the nature of the sociological appropriation of Weber's work, and the current institutional and disciplinary constraints sociologists working with Weber (consistently or intermittently) face.

To begin with, an impression gained when reading Parsons in the period from 1930 to the mid-1950s, and also Bendix in the early 1960s, is that there is a modernist confidence in having analysed and understood Weber, to have incorporated him into contemporary theoretical discourse and firmly established his importance. This confidence can also be seen in the myriad textbooks that now dominate the market whose treatment of Weber cannot be solely attributed to the needs of mass education. The interpretation of Weber and the confidence in that interpretation had to be constructed over time (Kaesler 1988, 197–216). In earlier decades there are examples of introductions to sociology in which the name of Weber, let alone any other 'classic', is totally absent (e.g. Reuter and Hart 1933).

It is in recent decades that it was appreciated that images of Weber and the interpretations they occasioned were contextual and contingent (Tribe 1988; Eliason 2002) and moreover that the earlier confidence was based on a relatively narrow range of Weber texts. Whilst some Weber interpreters today may speak of the 'essential Weber' (Whimster 2004) or a 'Weber Paradigm' (Albert et al. 2003) it is more in tune with the *Zeitgeist*, and with the evidence, to appreciate that interpretative practice is a hermeneutical rather than a scientific-cumulative enterprise. The new Weber studies evidence a more conscious hermeneutical practice than hitherto (Sica 1988; 2004).

If a Weber research programme or paradigm or thematic unity is to be uncovered it will depend on a highly sophisticated hermeneutical model of exegesis which may well have to resist the demands made on Weber's work by contemporary practitioners. 'Catch only what you have thrown yourself, all is mere skill and little gain' (Rilke in Gadamer 1985), would seem to be an applicable criticism to such presentist interests. At the same time the hermeneutical model and its users need to realize that the reason why Weber is worth such labours is precisely because his work can illuminate not only the sociological vocation but also the analysis of historical and contemporary social worlds. There is no understanding without pre-judgements. Reading Weber without a purpose is 'barking at print'.

One of the choices interpreters of Weber face is whether to concentrate their readings and uses of Weber on a particular text, or on a particular body of texts selected from the whole, or to attempt to uncover a thematic unity or research programme based on as many of Weber's writings as possible. Of course, sociologists might not be orientated to Weber in terms of discrete texts, even though specific texts have been championed as central at different times in the reception history. Rather interpreters may be orientated to specific concepts or the substantive analysis Weber carried out in their light. Indeed, there are other interpreters who express dissatisfaction with exegesis and clarifying Weber's intentions and prefer to 'actively' read Weber in the light of their pressing interests (e.g. Collins 1986; Gane 2004). Even in these cases, however, the hermeneutical choice of relying on the treatment of a concept or body of related concepts found in passages in one text or a number of texts remain. Indeed, in all cases, the choice of abstracting the concept from the context of either a specific text, a number of related texts or Weber's entire *oeuvre* and/or research project, needs to be made. Under what conditions, it is asked, is it possible to label these alternative approaches and applications 'Weberian', 'neo-Weberian' or 'post-Weberian'?

Considering Weber's writings as a whole involves including works published in the 1890's, the 'Weber before Weberian sociology' (Scaff 1989; Whimster 2007) as well as previously overlooked studies into ancient history or 'the psychophysics of industrial labour' (Schluchter 2000) and being, for example, sceptical of the *Hauptwerk* status of *Economy and Society* (Tenbruck 1989, Orihara 2003; Camic et al. 2005). Scholars alternatively will find the key or the most interesting dimensions of Weber's work in particular bodies of text such as the *Economic Ethics of the World Religions* series, or the 'Science and Politics as a Vocation' essays, or in the 'Protestant Ethic' writings (e.g. PE, PSects), or the *Wissenschaftslehre* (Bruun 2007). In the history of Weber scholarship, various individual texts, such as *The Protestant Ethic*, or *Economy and Society*, or 'the Objectivity essay' (McFalls 2007) and even the *General Economic History* (Collins 1986) have been concentrated upon and moved centre field, and the centenaries of their first publications also contribute to this process. The fact that Weber is associated with particular substantive sub-fields within sociology illustrates the manner in which sociologists have read and appropriated Weber's work, but also

reflects the manner in which Weber texts have been transmitted, particularly, in translation (Tribe 1989; Sica 1988; Chalcraft 2006).

Given the vast range of Weber's interests, however, even scholars who want to avoid the atomatization of Weber's legacy, have to be selective in their work at any one time. The newer Weber studies probably shares the opinion that a-contextual and atomistic reading of Weber's work is to be avoided wherever possible and an eye should always be kept on developing a Weberian approach to sociology (or the problem in hand) in general whilst concentrating on specific features of his work such as the sociology of legitimacy, stratification or methodological issues. The difference between an older and newer Weber studies therefore, is that the latter wants to avoid what has been called the 'tool-box' approach to Weber's texts, where Weber's ideas are more or less de-contextualized from their textual surroundings so as to offer a swift way of conceptualizing 'class, status and party' or 'bureaucracy' or 'protestant ethic'. In its place the newer Weber studies encourages placing these formulations and treatments within the wider textual context and, moreover, encourages the interpreter to ask how Weber's development of these particular ideas relates to Weber's wider concerns with, for example, the nature of modernity, *Lebensfuehrungen* and the analysis of cultural change. Even those scholars who felt that this contextualizing could be achieved through highlighting the integrative role of the theme of capitalism or of rationalization or disenchantment have had to defend their opinion against those who would place the unity elsewhere or who question whether there is unity to be found at all.

On the other hand, if value is found in Weber's formulations but there is the need to abstract the formulations from their role in Weber's overarching project for them to be useful in addressing new applications, the interpreter is faced with at least stating this clearly and at most distancing themselves from the overall research question. At a minimum I guess the theoretical advance could be called 'neo-Weberian'. For example, when considering the value of Weber's conceptions of sects for new applications it soon becomes clear that the ideal type Weber creates is designed with respect to his overarching question about the uniqueness of bourgeois life styles in western Europe: with such an overarching research question the application of the sect concept outside of western Europe is to privilege a formulation that can mislead in appreciating the cultural roles of the sect that Weber would not have seen (Chalcraft 2007a, b and c).

In reconsidering this wider context of Weber's ideas, the intellectual context in which Weber moved has become of increasing relevance. One example of this change has been to appreciate that Weber's work is not always best understood as a dialogue with the ghost of Marx but that other intellectual forces, such as Nietzsche's, have an equally important role to play (e.g. Turner 1992). The manner in which Weber was engaged with the cultural movements and questions of his day have also emerged forcefully in recent times (e.g. Scaff 1989a, 1989b, 2005; Whimster 1998; Chalcraft 1998). Hence in all cases, the newer Weber studies is characterized by a concern with context and milieu (Chalcraft 2002b) – textual, cultural, intellectual and biographical – that is significantly different from the

older Weber studies. Perhaps a transitional point that reminded everyone of the importance of historical research into Weber's context was Wolfgang Mommsen's 1959, *Max Weber and German Politics* (Mommsen 1984). This volume did for the political dimension what others are now seeking to do for the other equally important spheres of Weber's life and work. One consequence of the newer concentration on Weber's context, especially the biographical context and the manner in which the biography and the biography of the work interrelate (Roth 2001; Sukale 2002; Radkau 2005), is a much greater appreciation of the engaged and passionate nature of Weber's involvement in public and private life. Of course, there is now far more data to hand than ever before thanks to the release and publication of hundreds of Weber's letters. To say that Weber had an extra-marital affair with D.H. Lawrence's wife's sister Else Jaffe is not merely to draw attention to Weber in a sensationalist fashion; it is also an attempt to communicate that Weber, and sociology too, is not disembodied from its context nor from the life and the body of the sociologist herself. Even if the detached and impersonal image of Weber that had come to be presented was challenged seriously at the Heidelberg Centenary conference in 1964 (Stammer 1971), and again from a feminist perspective decades later (Bologh 1990) this image of Weber nevertheless persisted (e.g. Rosaldo 1993). In fact now the onus of defence is on those scholars who want to draw a sharper line between Weber's life and work, between Weber's value commitments and value distance and freedom as shown for example in the 1895 *Freiburg Address* (Weber 1989), in his disputes with Fischer and Rachfahl (Chalcraft 2001a, 2001b, 2005; Chalcraft et al. 2001), in his involvement in counter-cultural politics in Ascona (Whimster 1998), and in his contributions to the debates in the German Sociological Association.

In the wake of the on-going Weber *Gesamtausgabe* (MWG, collected works project), and the historical critical principles it is based upon (Schluchter 1981), far more attention it is now realized should be paid to the linguistic and literary features of Weber's writing than hitherto was the case. The older Weber studies either viewed his writing as classificatory and 'scientific' or at least considered that Weber held a rather blasé attitude to how he wrote. The newer Weber studies is far more attuned to his use of language, his rhetorical devices, and most significantly perhaps, his direct and indirect allusions to other literary and philosophical texts (Chalcraft 2002a; Sica 2004). In such circumstances, questions of translation have become of increasing significance – not just to provide readers with more accurate texts, but to highlight the interpretative significance to be accorded to language and its meanings in any engagement with Weber's work (Chalcraft 1994; Ghosh 1994, Kalberg 2001). Further (see below), if the texts themselves went through a number of editions and comparing versions indicates the omissions, replacements, additions and alterations that have taken place it is important to appreciate the hermeneutical ramifications. Whilst the MWG (Schluchter 1981a) will produce admirable genetic texts (in which the text presented is the last known form from which, through annotations, readers can reconstruct the earlier forms), it remains for Weber scholars to ruminate over the impacts on meaning that these factors occasion.

I illustrate in the last section the type of linguistic and textual matters that are generic to any enquiry into the development of a particular concept or body of ideas in Weber's texts when the general trend of the new Weber studies is kept in mind. The enquiry was generated by a present concern with developing a Weberian approach to the sociology of sects. I attempted to work with the linguist and textual evidence to trace the development of Weber's thinking about sects across his *oeuvre* as a prelude to engaging in a Weberian analysis of sectarian phenomena. Throughout therefore, I was attempting to interweave past and present to merge the horizons of the texts and Weber's sociological project with the active interests of a contemporary reader.

3. Why the Texts and the Biography of the Work Matter: The Example of Weber's Sociology of Sects and Sectarianism

Recently I was asked to consider the importance of Weber's typology of sects for the historical sociological analysis of religio-social movements in ancient Judaism. I turned to standard works in the sociology of religion to guide me, but I was immediately struck by the lack of help they provided and the manner in which, if anything, Weber's work was dismissed. Of more concern was the fact that Weber's contributions were hardly known and moreover, hardly understood. What was common was a summary of Weber's ideas based on a very limited textual base, an assumption that Weber's ideas were shared by Troeltsch, and that Troeltsch had presented and developed them much better than Weber had been able (Chalcraft 2007a).

The situation was but one example of where the reception history of Weber's ideas or concepts could not be relied upon (cf. Murvar 1983, Ahonen and Palonen 1999). In order to come to an appreciation of Weber's thought on sects it was necessary, especially if any independent and critical application and extension of Weber's idea was to be contemplated, let alone carried out, to return to Weber's writings.

After a close examination of the relevant texts (and relevant texts, as will be seen, were determined in the first instance by the presence of 'linguistic forms' relating to sects), it was found that there was far more discussion of sects and sectarianism, and far more sociological ideas of relevance to the topic than was commonly assumed. Moreover, it was apparent that Weber's work had developed across time – hence forestalling those interpretations that were critical of Weber on only a partial reading of the relevant texts.

In what follows I highlight what was involved in arriving at an appreciation of Weber's thought on sects in terms of an analysis of the texts themselves and their inter-relations. Many of the substantive findings, and the development of renewed Weberian approach to sects, are reported elsewhere (Chalcraft 2007a, b and c). In my view these principles of procedure involved in analysing Weber's thought on sects are generic to exegesis of Weber's work, whether it be establishing the

meaning and use of the concept of 'elective affinities', the definitions of 'Kultur' (and associated forms) utilized and their ramifications or coming to an opinion about the date, range and referents of Weber's notion of 'disenchantment' and so on. Even though Weber has mattered to sociology for so long and continues to do so, prolonged concentration on his work has not resulted in interpreters being fully aware of the career of concepts and linguistic formulations within the biography of the work. From the point of view of exegesis – the *sine qua non* of carrying out *Weberian* sociology – these questions of texts and the biography of the work matter greatly.

Enquiries into the development of Weber's substantive concepts and their applications within his own work need to be organized to include a number of related procedures. I firstly name these procedures before going on to describe in more depth what most of them involve, together with examples drawn from Weber's treatment of Sects.

Methods of approaching Weber's texts to trace the biography of concepts include: linguistic searches and analyses within the entire oeuvre; the carrying out of synoptic analysis; the undertaking of diachronic analysis of textual versions of the same 'work'; the consideration of the existence, for the reader, of the 'virtual' texts that exist 'in-between' the versions of one work when they are brought into a comparative relation; and, finally, always seeking to acknowledge the summaries and retellings that Weber provides in various places. In what follows I illustrate in more depth the first and third of the above procedures.

1. Linguistic Searches

It is one of the advantages of the electronic age that it is now possible to use search engines to locate, count and map Weber's linguistic uses. With this facility the beginnings of what might be called a Corpus-Linguistic approach to Weber's writings can be developed in which, through Boolean and other search techniques, the interaction between various linguistic elements in Weber's texts could be analysed (Kennedy 1988; Halliday et al. 2004). For the moment such searches in Weber studies are under-theorized, and are rather a glorified substitute for more detailed indexing and represent a desire for a lexical concordance for example. To begin with the basic aim is to come to an appreciation of the number of times a particular formulation is used and to learn of the places in Weber's *oeuvre* where they cluster. These contexts then can be subject to further linguistic and semantic analysis depending on the nature of the enquiry. Rather than focus on the linguistic pools of meaning that Weber may have fished in (Chalcraft 2001b) my analysis of Weber's 'sect-language' here is limited to noting in which passages they occur, in which texts and in which contexts.

A distinction needs to be maintained of course between the frequency with which a formulation is used and the qualitative role and importance of the formulation in Weber's work. It is not always the case that the frequency of use is

a predictor of how important the concept might be. However, it is unlikely for a concept to be of significance if it appears only very rarely in Weber's writing.

There are a considerable number of texts from the Weber *oeuvre* that in fact are relevant to the *direct* understanding of the development and meaning of his treatment of sects (see Figure 1.1). Taking the relevant works chronologically (beginning with the 'Objectivity Essay' in the left hand corner of Figure 1.1 and working from left to right around the circle) one would begin with the 'Objectivity Essay' (Weber 1949) and the comments on Russian Sects in the studies of the Russian revolution of 1905 (Weber 1995) and gradually work one's way through the essays on the *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (PE, Weber 1930; Weber 2002b) and *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism* (PSSC[2]) (including all versions and editions in their proper sequence, Weber 1906a, 1906b, 1948a), and the essays Weber wrote in response to the critics of the PE – the so-called Antikritiken (Weber 2001a, b, c, and d). Then the *Economic Ethics of the World Religions* series would need to examined, and this series includes

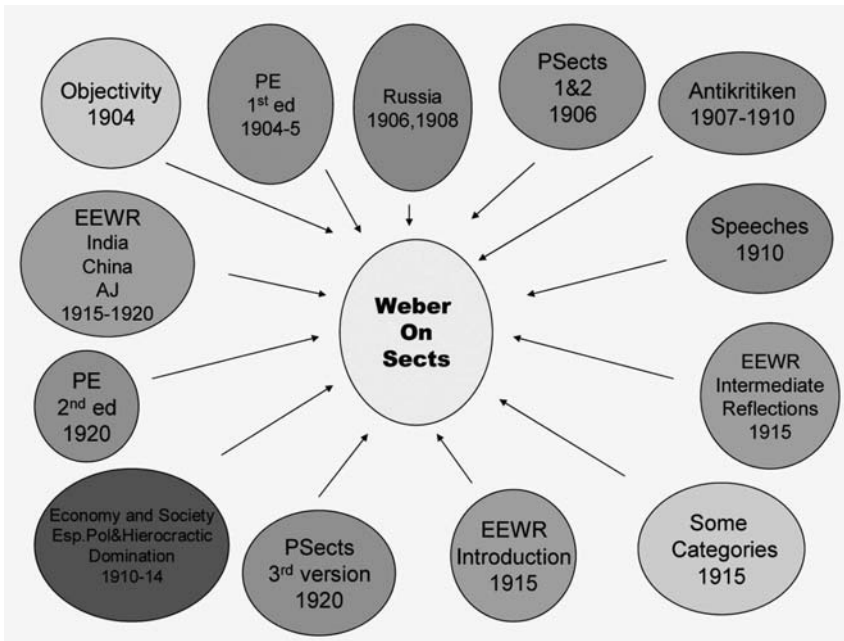**Figure 1.1   The Range of Texts Relevant to Weber's Discussion of Sects**

_____

2   To distinguish the final version of *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism* from the earlier forms of the essay, I abbreviate the former as PSSC, but speak of all three essays (Weber 1906a and b, and 1948a) as the PSects. This latter abbreviation is used in the Figures and Tables to this chapter.

individual studies of the religions of India (Weber 1958), of China (Weber 1951) and of Ancient Judaism (Weber 1952) as well as important theoretical overviews in the *Introduction* to the EEWR series (Weber 1948c) known in German as the *Einleitung* and the *Intermediate Reflections*' (Weber 1948b) known in German as the *Zwischenbetrachtug*). It is also necessary to include the speeches/reports Weber made to the German Sociological Association in 1910 (Weber 1924) and proceed to *Economy and Society* (ES) (Weber 1968) and its complex textual history, paying particular attention to the sociology of religion and the section on 'Political and Hierocratic Domination'. Chapter 1 of ES, the *Basic Sociological Terms* also needs to be included and needs to be compared with the earlier essay dealing with definitions (*Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology*) that was published in *Logos* in 1913 (Weber 1981).

2. Synoptic Analysis

Borrowing from New Testament studies and the examination of the synoptic Gospels (Sanders and Davies 1989) synoptic analysis relates to those texts in Weber's *oeuvre* that were composed simultaneously or in which similar but not exact discussions occur because Weber is utilizing the same material in a different context or providing a summary of work already published. Synoptic analysis is especially needed in relation to the connections, for example, between passages in the *Economic Ethics of the World Religions* texts and relevant sections in ES. Another example is the way in which Weber recapitulates, summarizes and extends the arguments of the PE and of PSSC in the replies to the critics of the PE (the Antikritiken), especially the two replies to Rachfahl. Synoptic analysis of these passages will establish the extent of repetition, reformulation and could postulate development between passages and may assist in placing the passages in some kind of chronological sequence (Chalcraft 2005).

3. Textual Versions and Diachronic Comparison

Diachronic comparison of textual versions is to be distinguished from synoptic analysis although they may overlap at times depending on the nature of the case: synoptic analysis is a more synchronic in approach. The aim of diachronic analysis is to appreciate the relation between different versions of the same work, and to understand what has been omitted, replaced, altered, added or moved from one context to another in the processes of revision. Such analysis is relevant to most of Weber's texts, but is especially significant for the analysis of the PE in its 1904 and 1905 version, compared with the 1920 version (Weber 1930; 2002a), and of course for the PSects essay in its three versions. What is especially interesting in such work is not only being able to map developments and changes but also to consider the manner in which variation in formulation serves to increase the data relevant to the interpretation of Weber's meaning and use of a concept and can serve as a check on interpretations based on only one version (Chalcraft 2001b,

2005). A further consideration, and one which draws on developments in textual scholarship (McGann 1983, 1988; Shillingsburg 2001) as well as on what Stanley Fish calls 'Affective Stylistics', is how the reading and interpretation of Weber's work is affected once it is known by the individual reader that there is more than one version (Fish 1980, 21–67). It is possible for the reader to be working with one or more virtual texts that do not exist in reality but are a conscious influence on interpretation because once known the reader cannot make statements without acknowledging the interface between versions. Such information could lead to the deconstruction of Weber's texts: the knowledge of the variants suggests possible fissures or locations where Weber is unsure of his formulations for example.

In relation to the two versions of the PE and the treatment of sects, comparing the versions indicates that Weber's thinking about sects is never developed within this text. A comparison of the treatments does show an increased frequency of the relevant linguistic forms but what has mainly altered is that in the first edition Weber promises to consider the role of the ascetic sects in future work whereas in the second edition that work has already been carried out. The beginnings of Weber's ideas about the sociological character of sects is to be found in the PE and there is no contradiction between the treatment and later developments, but it is only with the essays that became *The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism* that involved treatments are to be discovered.

From Table 1.1[3] can be calculated the number of times relevant linguistic forms appear in PE, in specific chapters and cumulatively, and the number of times they occur in the first edition and the number of times they occur in the second. Where the form appears both in the first edition and the second edition the occurrence is recorded once and it is noted that there has been no change; when the form only appears in either the first or second edition, it is noted that there has been a change. Of the 46 occurrences of 'sect linguistic forms' in both editions, nine are unique to the second edition, showing a slight increase in the space devoted to the discussion of sects. Of these nine new occurrences four use the singular noun *Sekte*, while five use the plural *Sekten*. The new uses of *Sekte* (4) all occur in Chapter 4. Three of the new uses of *Sekten* occur in Chapter 2, where previously, in the first edition, there was no direct mention of sects.

Table 1.2 provides the textual references for these uses of *Sekte*. The four new uses of *Sekte* in the second edition do not, in the event, have qualitative significance because, apart from 1 use the new occurrences relate to directing the reader to later discussions in the PSSC or bibliography. The use that is an exception (Instance 9 in the Table) occurs in the revised footnote discussion and is a clear indication of how Weber's thought has developed over time since the previous use of *Gemeinschaft* is now dropped in favour of a contrast of *Verein* (not used in this connection in

---

3   References are given to the version of the PE translated by Parsons. This use is based largely on convenience and should not be taken to imply that I uncritically accept this version as superior to any more recent version. All passages in the Parsons version should now be compared with Kalberg's edition (Weber 2002).

Table 1.1   Occurrences of 'Sect' Linguistic Forms in the Two Editions of
**   *The Protestant Ethic***

PE Chapter	Sekte	Sekten	Sektierer	Sektenbildung	1st/ 2nd Edition: Summary
1	0	3	0	0	1st and 2nd edition, no changes
2	0	3	0	0	All uses in 2nd edition only
3	0	2	0	0	1st and 2nd edition, no changes
4	12 (4 in 2nd edition only)	15	1	5	Four changes in the second edition in the use of Sekte
5	1	2 (in 2nd edition only)	2	0	Two new uses of Sekten in the second edition
TOTALS	**13**	**25**	**3**	**5**	**46**

the first edition) and *Anstalt*, which, as will be explained below, is a significant re-conceptualizing of the nature of 'church' and 'sect' (Chalcraft 2007a, 30). In this way, the second edition is brought 'up to date' with Weber's sociology of voluntary associations.

Diachronic Analysis of Inter-textual Relations[4]

Finally it is essential to understand how each text that discusses a concept in Weber's *oeuvre* relates to others, especially from the perspective of their date and the manner in which they may presume a previous discussion, or omit to discuss matters in a way expected because they have been or are about to be discussed elsewhere.

---

4   It is important to distinguish between the intra, inter and extra-textual dimensions of Weber's texts (Chalcraft 1994). In brief, the intra-textual dimension relates to the relationships between linguistic elements within any one text – e.g. if Weber uses the word Gehaeuse more than once in one work the meaning of Gehaeuse needs to be applicable to both uses; the extra-textual dimension is the relation of Weber's texts to other texts, not written by him, in the culture. Of course this dimension is almost limitless, but limits are placed upon it in terms of the works directly cited and indirectly quoted or alluded to by Weber within his own texts, in the first instance. The Inter-textual relation is the relation between one text written by Weber and another text written by Weber: hence, the relation between for example, *Science as a Vocation* and *The Protestant Ethic*.

Table 1.2   Comparison of the Uses of 'Sekte' in the Two Editions of *The Protestant Ethic*

Instance of Sekte (12)	Textual Reference	1st &/or 2nd Edition?
1	1930, 144–5 (cf. footnote 173)	1st and 2nd = unchanged
2	1930, 145	1st and 2nd = unchanged
3	1930, 150	1st and 2nd = unchanged
4	1930, 217, note 1	1st and 2nd = unchanged
5	1930, 253, note 170	1st and 2nd = unchanged but there are changes in the context
6	1930, 254, note 173	1st and 2nd = unchanged
7	1930, 254, note 173	1st and 2nd = unchanged
8	1930, 254, note 173	1st and 2nd = unchanged
9	1930, 255, note 173 (con)	2nd only = change
10	1930, 255, note 173	2nd only = change ('see next essay')
11	1930, 255, note 173	2nd only = change (bibliography)
12	1930, 255, note 173	2nd only = change (bibliography)

As such, it is essential to appreciate the chronological relationship[5] between texts and Weber's intentions concerning how they are meant to supplement or reinforce each other. These relations can be important when considering questions of why an alteration is made between versions of a work or in explaining why certain things may be left unsaid to the detriment of the argument being made by Weber. The analysis is of major significance also for the light it sheds on the way a concept can take on a different role depending on the context and the topic of discussion. In relation to Weber's treatment of sects what emerges from such comparative inter-textual work is the manner in which the central defining feature of the sect is maintained across all of Weber's writings; this definition is maintained and he rather explores in various other contexts within the *oeuvre* the

---

5   Of course there may be occasions where it is not known precisely how a Weber text might be dated on its own account or in relation to other texts – a question that is relevant to the chronological relationships between EEWR and ES for example – and the synoptic analysis might provide evidence to suggest probable priorities. As in New Testament Studies close analysis of comparative texts leads to the postulation of temporal priority of one Gospel, or passages in one Gospel, over another.

ramifications of the sect for the understanding of, for example, recruitment to a sect, the transforming work of the sect on character, of the relation of sects to charisma, to democracy and to types of leadership (Chalcraft 2007a).

In the case of the analysis of Weber's sociology of sects the inter-textual situation is typically complex. It is necessary to take up all the texts that we have established have something to contribute to the unravelling of Weber's treatment of sects, and consider them in their inter-textual relations.

The situation can be best clarified by considering the first edition of the PE as the point of departure and the second edition of the PE as one of the important terminal points in the inter-textual dynamic (see Figure 1.2). The central question is the manner in which the treatment of sects compares in the first and second editions of the PE, but in order to understand what is and what is not developed it is necessary to understand the way in which the first edition of the PE fed into the first and second versions of the PSects essays, which themselves, together with the second edition of the PE fed into the third and final version of PSSC. The third and final version of the PSSC was published alongside the 2nd edition of the PE in the first volume of the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*. As we have already seen the lack of specialized treatment of sects in the 2nd edition of the PE is explicable by the fact that Weber's main discussion of sects is within the essays which culminate in the Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism.
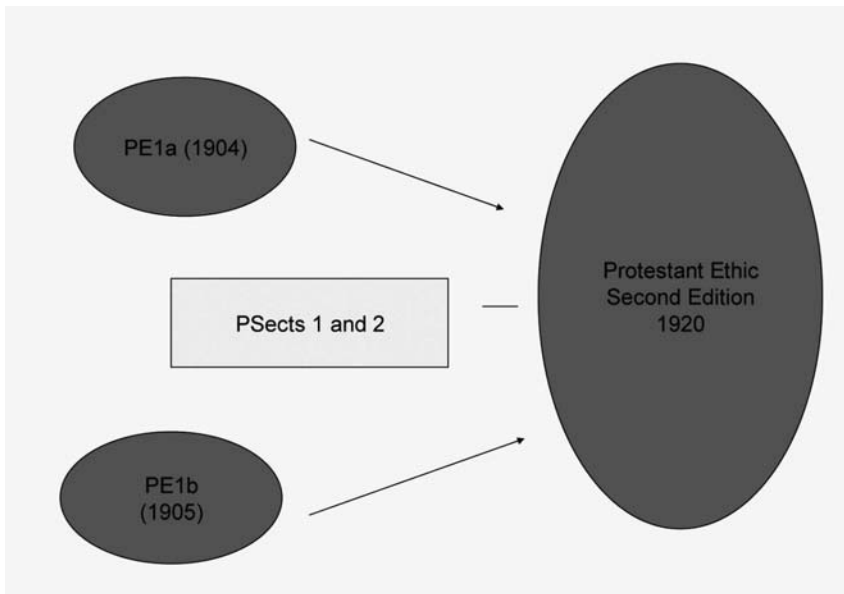
Figure 1.2   The Textual Relation between the Second Edition of *The Protestant Ethic* and its First Editions and the First Editions of the Protestant Sects Essays

Once these texts have been considered in their inter-textual relations, however, it is necessary to bring into account some other important discussions of sects that occur in Weber's writings (see Figure 1.3). Of especial importance here, and until quite recently, even in the German reception (with the notable exceptions of Winckelmann 1978 and Hennis 2002a), largely ignored, are Weber's replies to critics of the PE (Chalcraft and Harrington 2001) and also the speech/report Weber gave to the German Sociological Association in 1910 which again, has only recently been appreciated largely on account of Hennis' contribution (see now Kim 2002, 2004). When it is also remembered that *Economy and Society* also dates in part from 1910, and that there are a number of sections within this work which are directly relevant to the discussion of sects, the situation becomes even more complex since it is not possible to think of the influences on Weber's development of sects, and the expression of his ideas, to be traceable solely along the lines illustrated in Figure 1.3. It would appear that all accounts of Weber's sociology of sects that did not know about, or did not seek to incorporate, neither the Anti-Kritiken nor the German Sociological Association speeches made by Weber, would be inaccurate.

Yet the situation is even more involved than this, and this is on account of the textual history and organization of ES itself and the relation between this body of texts and *The Economic Ethics of the World Religions* series (see Figure 1.4). There are many relevant discussions of sects within the EEWR, both generalized and in relation to specific cultural and religious traditions. In order to ensure that all relevant texts are discussed, and their inter-textual relations built into the analysis,
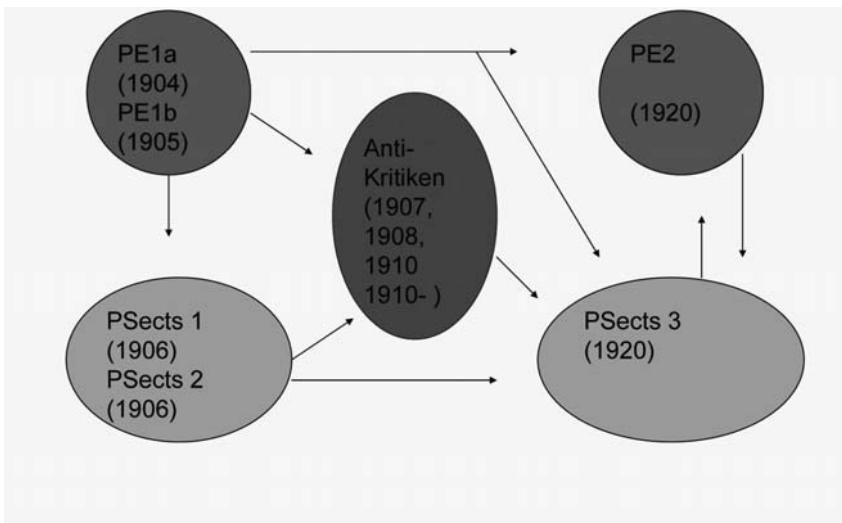
Figure 1.3   The Relation Between the Protestant Ethic Writings and the Protestant Sects Essays now Including the '*Antikritiken*'
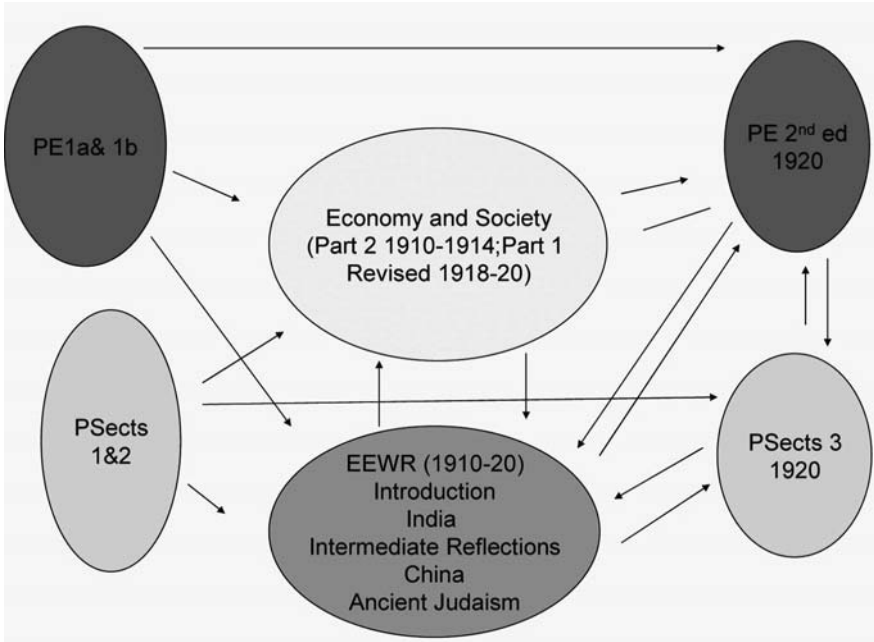
Figure 1.4   The Relation Between the Protestant Ethic Writings, *The Economic Ethics of the World Religions* Series and *Economy and Society*

it is necessary to consider not only the relation between ES and EEWR, but also between the specific treatments of sects within either and their treatment in the works we have already introduced. It needs to be asked to what extent they develop the beginning made elsewhere in the PE, the Antikritiken, and the PSSC and so on, and what to extent they take the sect concept into new directions. For example, the most significant application and development of Weber's thinking about sects takes place, not within the 'sociology of religion' sections of ES but within the 'Political and Hierocratic Domination' section of ES. This occurs in what is known as the earlier and unrevised part of ES, written 1910–1914, and hence its textual status in terms of Weber's final intentions are a little in doubt as is the case whether he would have revised the discussion still further in the light of the new editions of the PE and PSects texts. The earlier and revised sections of ES are also relevant to the consideration of Weber's classification of sect and church in his 'Basic Sociological Categories' and links the development of this dimension of Weber's thinking about sects, not only back to the 'Objectivity' essay, where we began, but also to the 1913 Logos version of what became the Basic Categories during 1918–20. Clearly there is much work still to report following such close comparative analysis of these texts, but these results must await a further occasion.

By Way of Conclusion

On the basis of the analysis of these texts it can be argued that Weber's concept of a sect, which can be characterized as *a religious community founded on voluntary membership achieved through qualification after examination*, remains constant throughout his work (Chalcraft 2007a). In various texts Weber explores different dimensions of the sect and its ramifications for various aspects of social and cultural life but this definition remains stable. It is also the case that Weber sought to universalize his conception of sect, and one important consequence of this was to subsume 'sect' and 'church' under broader categories of voluntary and compulsory organizations respectively; another consequence was to broaden the focus from dealing mainly with a particular group – namely, the predestined ascetic Protestants treated in the PE – to considering the latter as one example of virtuosity to be found in many traditions and in many 'walks of life'. Finally, Weber's concern with ways in which voluntary organizations in general both 'selected' and 'bred' types of (self-asserting) personality served to place his sociology of sects within a wider research concern with the development of particular *Lebensfuehrungen* and suggested that one of Weber's main contributions would be found less in the ideal typical contrast of church and sect, and more in the implications of that contrast for a cultural sociology concerned with personal and social transformation (Chalcraft 2007 a and c; cf. Hennis 2002a, 2002b; Kim 2002, 2004).

The reconstruction of Weber on sects that I arrived at is not the only plausible account that could be given. It is in the nature of the interpretation of texts and the differing weights to be given to various elements within those texts that any particular reading of Weber is unlikely to meet with universal support. Sometimes an interpretative interest is in systemizing the various treatments to arrive at a workable Weberian approach (which on this occasion was my approach); at other times, the developments, twists and turns, what is forgotten and what is not said and not developed, may provide the reader with data to deconstruct Weber's sociology and find a way into the tensions in the development of a particular concept, or tensions within 'the project' itself or even between the life and the work. What can be said however, is that any reconstruction or deconstruction of Weber's development of any conceptual idea or an analysis of his own application of the concepts, is unlikely to be accurate or hold water if it is not built upon a thorough close reading of all the relevant texts, analysis of the linguistic forms utilized, examining the appropriate intra-, inter-, and extra-textual dimensions and placing those dimensions in synoptic and diachronic perspective.

If the interpretation of Max Weber matters to contemporary sociology, and if it is essential to interweave current concerns and interests with the horizons of the classic texts from the past which carry the theoretical, conceptual, methodological and substantive insights we are wishing to comprehend, then the method of reading Weber's texts, and the biography of the work, also matter a great deal. We should, therefore, even in the hectic warp and woof of the pressures of doing sociology

today within various constraints, attempt to make time to interweave past and present.

References

Ahonen, P. and Palonen, K. (eds) (1999), *Dis-embalming Max Weber* (Jyvaskyla: SoPhi).

Albert, G. et al. (eds) (2003), *Das Weber-Paradigma: Studien zur Weiterentwicklung von Max Webers Forschungsprogramm* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck).

Albrow, M. (1993), 'Reflections on the World Reception of Max Weber', in Martins, H. (ed.), 79–98.

Andreski, S. (1984), *Max Weber's Insights and Errors* (London: Routledge).

Bendix, R. (1962), *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Anchor Books).

Bologh, R.W. (1990), *Love or Greatness: Max Weber and Masculine Thinking – A Feminist Inquiry* (London: Unwin Hyman).

Bruun, H.H. (2007), *Science, Values and Politics in Max Weber's Methodology. New Expanded Edition* (Aldershot: Ashgate).

Camic, C. et al. (2005), *Max Weber's 'Economy and Society': A Critical Companion* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Chalcraft, D.J. (1994), 'Bringing the Text Back In: On Ways of Reading the Iron Cage Metaphor in the Two Editions of "The Protestant Ethic"', in Ray and Reed (eds), 16–45.

Chalcraft, D.J. (1998), 'Love and Death: Weber, Wagner and Max Klinger', in Whimster (ed.), 196–213.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2001a), 'Introduction', in Chalcraft and Harrington (eds), 1–19.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2001b), 'The Lamentable Chain of Misunderstanding. Weber's Debate with H. Karl Fischer', *Max Weber Studies*, 2:1, 65–80.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2002a), 'Max Weber on the Watchtower. On the prophetic Use of Shakespeare's Sonnet 102 in "Politics as a Vocation"', in Rowland and Barton (eds), 253–70.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2002b) 'Milieu Analysis: A Plaque on All your Houses?' *Max Weber Studies*, 3:1, 7–14.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2005), 'Reading Weber's Patterns of Response to Critics of "The Protestant Ethic": Some Affinities in and between Replies to Felix Rachfahl and Werner Sombart', *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 5, 1, 31–51.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2006), 'Max Weber', in Scott (ed.), 2003–8.

Chalcraft, D.J. (ed.), (2007), *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological Advances* (London: Equinox).

Chalcraft, D.J. (2007a), 'The Development of Weber's Sociology of Sects: Encouraging a New Fascination', in Chalcraft (ed.), 26–51.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2007b), 'Weber's Treatment of Sects in Ancient Judaism: The Pharisees and the Essenes', in Chalcraft (ed.), 52–73.

Chalcraft, D.J. (2007c), 'Towards a Weberian Sociology of the Qumran Sects', in Chalcraft (ed.), 74–105.

Chalcraft, D.J. and Harrington A. (eds) (2001), *The Protestant Ethic Debate*: *Max Weber's Replies to Critics of the Protestant Ethic* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Chalcraft, D.J, Harrington, A. and Shields, M. (2001), 'The Protestant Ethic Debate: Fischer's First Critique and Weber's First Reply', *Max Weber Studies* 2:1, 15–32.

Collins, R. (1986), *Weberian Sociological Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Eliaeson, S. (2002), *Max Weber's Methodologies* (Cambridge: Polity).

Fish, S. (1980), *Is There a Text in this Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press).

Gadamer, H.G. (1985), *Truth and Method* (London: Sheed and Ward).

Gane, N. (2004), *Max Weber and Postmodern Theory: Rationalization versus Re-Enchantment* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan).

Gellner, D. (2001), *The Anthropology of Buddhism and Hinduism: Weberian Themes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (1948), *From Max Weber* (London: Routledge).

Giddens, A. (1971), *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Giddens, A. (1984), *The Constitution of Society* (Cambridge: Polity).

Ghosh, P. (1994), 'Some Problems with Talcott Parsons' Version of "The Protestant Ethic"', *European Journal of Sociology* 35, 104–23.

Habermas, J. (1984), *The Theory of Communicative Action. Volume 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (London: Heinemann).

Halliday, M.A.K. et al. (2004), *Lexicology and Corpus Linguistics: An Introduction* (London: Continuum).

Hennis, W. (1989), *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction* (London: Allen and Unwin).

Hennis, W. (2002a), *Max Weber's Central Question*. 2nd edition (Newbury: Threshold Press).

Hennis, W. (2002b), *Max Weber's Science of Man* (Newbury: Threshold Press).

Kaesler, D. (1988), *Max Weber. An Introduction to His Life and Work* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Kalberg, S. (1994), *Max Weber's Comparative Historical Sociology* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Kalberg, S. (2001), 'The Spirit of Capitalism Revisited: On the New Translation of Weber's Protestant Ethic' (1920), *Max Weber Studies*, 2.1, 41–58.

Kennedy, G. (1998), *An Introduction to Corpus Linguistics* (London: Longman).

Kim, Sung Ho. (2002), 'Max Weber and Civil Society: An Introduction to Max Weber on Voluntary Associational Life (Vereinswesen)', *Max Weber Studies*, 2:2, 186–98.

Kim, Sung Ho. (2004), *Max Weber's Politics of Civil Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Lewis, J. (1975), *Max Weber and Value – Free Sociology: A Marxist Critique* (London: Lawrence and Wishart).

McFalls, L. (ed.) (2007), *Max Weber's 'Objectivity' Reconsidered* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

McGann, J. (1983), *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

McGann, J. (1988), *The Beauty of Inflections. Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Martins, H. (ed.) (1993), *Knowledge and Passion: Essays in Honour of John Rex* (London: I.B.Tauris).

Mommsen, W. (1984), *Max Weber and German Politics 1890–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) [Originally published in German in 1959. Translation based on second edition of 1974].

Murvar, V. (1983), *Max Weber Today – An Introduction to a Living Legacy: Selected Bibliography* (Brookfield, Wisconsin: Max Weber Colloquia and Symposia at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee).

Nelson, B. (1974), 'Max Weber's "Author's Introduction" (1920). A Master Clue to His Main Aims', *Sociological Inquiry*, 44, 4, 269–78.

Orihara, H. (2003), 'From "A Torso with a Wrong Head" to "Five Disjointed Body-Parts without a Head": A Critique of the Editorial Policy for the Max Weber Gesamtausgabe 1/22', *Max Weber Studies*, 3:2, 133–68.

Parsons T. (1937), *The Structure of Social Action* (Glencoe: The Free Press).

Radkau, J. (2005), *Max Weber: Die Leidenschaft des Denkens* (Munich: Hanser).

Ray, L. and Reed, M. (1994), *Organizing Modernity: New Weberian Perspectives on Work, Organization and Society* (London: Routledge).

Reuter, E.B. and Hart, C.W. (1933), *Introduction to Sociology* (New York: McGraw-Hill).

Ritzer, G. and Smart, B. (eds), *Handbook of Social Theory* (London. Sage).

Rosaldo, R. (1993), *Culture and Truth. The Remaking of Social Analysis* (London: Routledge).

Roth, G. (2001), *Max Webers deutsch – englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck).

Rowland, C. and Barton, J. (eds) (2002), *Apocalyptic in History and Tradition* (London: Continuum/Sheffield Academic Press).

Sanders, E. and Davies, M. (1989), *Studying the Synoptic Gospels* (London: SCM Press).

Scaff, L. (1989a), *Fleeing the Iron Cage: Culture, Politics, and Modernity in the Thought of Max Weber* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Scaff, L. (1989b), 'Weber Before Weberian Sociology', in Tribe (ed.), 15–41.

Scaff, L. (2005), 'Remnants of Romanticism: Max Weber in Oklahoma and Indian Territory', in Swatos and Kaelber (eds), 77–110.

Schluchter, W. (1981a), 'Einfuehrung in die Max Weber- Gesamtausgabe', in *Prospekt der Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck).

Schluchter, W. (1981b), *The Rise of Western Rationalism: Max Weber's Developmental History* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Schluchter, W. (1989), *Rationalism, Religion and Domination: A Weberian Perspective* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Schluchter, W. (2000), 'Psychophysics and Culture', in Turner, S. (ed.), 59–82.

Schroeder, R. (ed.) (1998), *Max Weber, Democracy and Modernization* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Scott, J. (ed.) (2005), *Fifty Key Sociologists: The Formative Theorists* (London: Routledge).

Seidman, S. (1983), *Liberalism and the Origins of European Social Theory* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Shillingsburg, P. (2001), *William Makespeace Thackeray: A Literary Life* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Sica, A. (1988), *Weber, Irrationality and Social Order* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Sica, A. (2004), *Max Weber and the New Century* (New Brunswick: Transaction).

Stammer, O. (ed.) (1971), *Max Weber and Sociology Today* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Sukale, M. (2002), *Max Weber: Leidenschaft und Disziplin* (Tuebingen: Mohr Siebeck).

Swators, W. and Kaelber, L. (eds) (2005), *The Protestant Ethic Turns 100: Essays on the Centenary of the Weber Thesis* (Boulder: Paradigm).

Swedberg, R. (1998), *Max Weber and the Idea of Economic Sociology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Tribe, K. (1988), 'Translator's Introduction' to Hennis, 1–17.

Tribe, K. (ed.) (1989), *Reading Weber* (London: Routledge).

Turner, B. (1992), *Max Weber: From History to Modernity* (London: Routledge).

Turner, S. (ed.) (2000), *The Cambridge Companion to Weber* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press).

Weber, M. (1906a), '"Kirchen" und "Sekten"', *Frankfurter Zeitung* (in two parts) 13 and 15 April.

Weber, M. (1906b) '"Kirchen" und "Sekten"', *Die christliche Welt* (in two parts) 14 and 21 June

Weber, M., (1924), 'Geschaeftsbericht und Diskussionsreden auf den deutschen soziologischen Tagungen', in *Gesammelte Aufsaetze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik* (Tuebingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), 431–83.

Weber, M. (1930), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London Routledge)

Weber, M. (1948a), 'The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism' (German original, 1920) in Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (eds), 302–22.

Weber, M. (1948b), 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions' (=Intermediate Reflections/Zwischenbetrachtung), in Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (eds), 323–59.

Weber, M. (1948c), 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' (=Einleitung), in Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (eds), 267–301.

Weber, M. (1949), 'Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy', in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe: The Free Press).

Weber, M., (1951), *The Religion of China. Confucianism and Taoism* (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1952), *Ancient Judaism* (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1958), *The Religion of India. The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M., (1968), *Economy and Society*, 2 Volumes (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Weber, M., (1981), 'Some Categories of Interpretative Sociology', *The Sociological Quarterly* 22:151–81 [original published in German, 1913].

Weber, M. (1989), 'The National State and Economic Policy' (The Freiburg Address), in Tribe (ed.), 188–209.

Weber, M. (1995), *The Russian Revolutions* (Cambridge: Polity).

Weber, M. (2002a), 'Voluntary Associational Life' (Vereinswesen), *Max Weber Studies*, 2:2, 199–209.

Weber, M. (2002b), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 3rd Edition (Los Angeles: Roxbury) [New Translation and Introduction by Stephen Kalberg].

Whimster, S. (ed.) (1998), *Max Weber and the Culture of Anarchy* (Basingstoke: Macmillan).

Whimster, S. (2001), 'Max Weber: Work and Interpretation', in Ritzer, G. and Smart, B. (eds), 54–65.

Whimster, S. (ed.) (2004), *The Essential Weber: A Reader* (London: Routledge).

Whimster, S. (2007), *Understanding Weber* (London: Routledge).

Winckelmann, J. (ed.) (1987), *Max Weber: Die protestantische Ethik II, Kritiken und Antikritiken* (Guetersloh: Guetersloh Verlaghaus).

Chapter 2

Reminiscences of the Weber Centenary 1964, its Prehistory and Aftermath: Lessons in Academic Politics

Guenther Roth

For some of the events of the 1960s I am still a participating witness. This is also true for the legendary sociology convention in Heidelberg, where the basic ideological conflicts of the 1960s were first brought out into the open before a larger academic public. Whereas I attended the Montreal convention of the American Sociological Association (ASA) in September 1964, I could not attend the Heidelberg meetings in April but I knew some of the main actors and was in contact with them about the meetings before and after. I would like to give here some reminiscences, although I must overcome a good deal of resistance in facing some of my aging essays and old letters. I would like to reconstruct my own subjectivity as objectively as possible. In this way I can supplement, if anecdotally, Rainer Lepsius's skeptical evaluation of the Heidelberg convention, with which I fully agree:

> It is true that as late as 1964 Weber's sociology remained largely unknown. It is striking that all major speakers and many commentators came from abroad … Once again the fragmented nature of the Weber reception became clear … Since the properly sociological content was hardly discussed, the convention by no means increased interest in Weber but instead reinforced the notion that his work was irrelevant to contemporary sociology (Lepsius 1979, 52).

I would also like to supplement Uta Gerhardt's extensive account of the role of emigrants, re-migrants and American participants in Heidelberg, but set different accents (Gerhardt 2002). Gerhardt, who viewed the convention more positively than Lepsius, dealt with the more or less open conflicts in planning the centenary between Otto Stammer (1900–1978), president of the German Sociological Association (DGS) and René König (1906–1992), editor of the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, on one side, and Theodor Adorno (1903–1969) and Max Horkheimer (1895–1973), directors of the Institute for Social Research in Frankfurt, on the other. As early as 1959 there had been a confrontation between Horkheimer and König at the 14th Sociology Convention in Berlin, whereas at a closed meeting at the University of Tübingen in 1961 the so-called *Positivismusstreit*——'positivist' sociology versus Critical Theory——was still conducted with polite restraint. Since

the approaching centenary provided a special opportunity for both celebrating and disparaging Weber as a main inspiration of 'positivist sociology', the underlying political and philosophical conflicts were bound to erupt.

Gerhardt considered it a success on Stammer's part 'to have established an alliance with the interpreters of Weber's oeuvre' (Gerhardt 2002, 221). In elucidating the prehistory of Heidelberg, she pointed out that Stammer undertook some planning, within a small circle, at the meetings of the Fifth World Congress of the International Sociological Association (ISA) in Washington in September 1962. This included Talcott Parsons's agreement to deliver one of the three main speeches. She then continued:

> Two American scholars joined Parsons in his preparatory activities to safeguard the Heidelberg Conference as an occasion for celebrating, not castigating Weber. One of them [was Reinhard] Bendix … The other combatant poised for Heidelberg was Benjamin Nelson, who, at the time, was working on an edited collection of essays on Weber, and he planned to enter the various translations of parts of Weber's *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* in a complete English-language edition. [Footnote:] In 1968, Nelson's student and collaborator in the middle 1960s, Guenther Roth, was one of the editors of the complete English-language edition, entitled *Economy and Society* (Gerhardt 2002, 24, 34).[1]

The claims about Nelson and myself require a correction, for which I rely not only on my own recollections and correspondence but also on the Bendix papers in the German Émigré Collection in Albany, the Nelson papers at Columbia University and the Parsons papers at Harvard University. Nelson never seriously considered a complete edition of *Economy and Society,* nor was I ever his student or collaborator.[2] Here is the story as I see it. In 1960 Nelson and Bendix began work on an edited volume 'Max Weber and the Twentieth Century', for which the Free Press offered a contract at the end of 1961. With the centenary in mind, the editors hoped to secure the major American and German contributions that would be written for that occasion. The undertaking failed because of competing publication projects;

---

1   See also the parallel German essay (Gerhardt 2002, 216–143 in Krohn and Schildt).

2   From September 1962 to August 1965 I was a member of the small Sociology Department, headed by Benjamin Nelson, at the new State University of New York in Stony Brook. He took an interest in my editorial work, but we never collaborated. My relationship to Reinhard Bendix was older; from 1955 to 1958 I had been his graduate research assistant at the Institute of Industrial Relations at the University of California at Berkeley. I got my Ph.D. in 1960. In Berkeley I met visiting René König in 1957. In 1959 König asked Bendix and me to contribute an article on 'Max Weber's Influence on American Sociology' to his *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie*. The essay ended with the remark that 'by now more than half of Weber's *oeuvre* is available to American readers. But we must emphasize that in spite of its influence the work as a complex whole remains largely unknown. This is perhaps true even in Germany' (Roth and Bendix 1959, 53).

Bendix withdrew as early as April 1963. In the first half of 1962, I developed, together with my publisher and Columbia colleague Hans Zetterberg, a concrete plan to ready a complete edition of *Economy and Society* by the time of the centenary. Since the end of 1961 I had been translating chapters on domination from the older parts. The definite decision to undertake a complete edition was made in July 1962. We decided to combine the lengthy new translations required with revised older ones.[3] But it proved very difficult to reconcile the competing interests of previous translators and publishers, who in part had profited from the fact that into the postwar period the suspended German copyrights were still in the hands of the Alien Property Custodian.

When Parsons stayed at the University of California in Berkeley in the summer of 1962, he discussed with Bendix the invitations for the Montreal annual meetings of the ASA. The two men were conscious of their sharp theoretical differences—structural-functional systems theory versus comparative historical sociology—but collaborated as members of the program committee. George Homans, elected as ASA president for 1964, gave the committee a free hand because he had no interest in Weber whatsoever. Bendix and Parsons agreed at the time on the desirability of a complete edition of *Economy and Society*, which seemed to have become more feasible with Ephraim Fischoff's recent translation of the chapter on religion. Bendix foresaw: 'It will still be a mammoth job but no longer impossible.'[4] Parsons and Bendix agreed to meet Hans Zetterberg and Jerry Kaplan, head of the Free Press, at the 1962 joint Washington meetings of the ASA and ISA in an effort to resolve the conflicting interests. The disagreements, however, dragged on for several more years. It turned out to be unrealistic to produce a complete edition by the centenary, quite apart from the sheer editorial and translation effort involved for me and my coeditor and German schoolmate Claus Wittich.[5] It is almost miraculous that *Economy and Society* ever appeared.[6]

---

3   Hans Zetterberg published my first book, *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany. A Study in Working-Class Isolation and National Integration* (Totowa: Bedminster Press, 1963). For the decision on *Economy and Society,* see my letter to Zetterberg of 19 July 1962 (personal files) and to Nelson of 28 July 1962 (Nelson papers, box 62, Manuscript Library, Columbia University).

4   Bendix to Nelson, 26 June 1962 (Nelson papers, box 7).

5   Bendix informed me on 31 July 1962: 'Parsons and I are planning to have a conference in Washington together with as many interested parties as we can locate. We should certainly attempt to get Zetterberg and Kaplan together to avoid unnecessary work and straighten out the translation rights as well. My attitude would be to use as many of the existing translations as possible, but to leave the person in charge with complete responsibility as to which of these materials he wishes to use.' At the Washington meetings Zetterberg advertised his plans: 'A full translation is in preparation by the Bedminster Press.'

6   The editorial and translation work was finished in 1966, but the three-volume edition did not appear until 1968, with the proviso that no paperback edition could be made. It took

The German organizers of the centenary were eager to strengthen their international ties. As early as July 1961, Bendix met Johannes Winckelmann, editor of several editions of *Wirtschaft and Gesellschaft*, who told him about the plans he and Emerich Francis of the U. of Munich were entertaining for the centenary. Bendix recommended that Winckelmann contact Parsons and Nelson. In the same year Stammer invited Parsons and Bendix to Heidelberg for 1964. It is true, as Lepsius indicated, that all three main speakers came from abroad, including Raymond Aron (1905–1983) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979), but only at the latter's session was this true of four discussants. (Only one non-German commentator spoke after Parsons and Aron. Only in the special section on the sociology of religion was there a majority of foreigners.) The Heidelberg participants exchanged papers and comments beforehand. Thus, they knew what to expect. Parsons was disappointed with Aron's and Marcuse's papers and felt like Daniel in the Lion's Den, as he wrote Bendix, who replied: 'It is some irony, is it not, that the Americans (including this assimilated American) come to Weber's defense on this occasion, while the unreconstructed Germans from both sides of the Atlantic are fighting the old battles. That might be worth another comment. I doubt that the discussions will be worthwhile under these circumstances, but they will be interesting—sociologically!'[7] In Heidelberg Parsons openly expressed his disappointment in his final remarks (in English) concluding the discussion of his paper, delivered in German, on 'Wertgebundenheit und Objektivität in den Sozialwissenschaften' (Parsons 1965, 94f.). Later he wondered whether to write an essay against Marcuse.

The 15th German convention, the largest up until then, with many students in the audience for the first time, was reviewed extensively in the *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* (16: 404–424). After criticizing the overload of subjects and speakers in the plenary sessions, the first review ended with the collective judgments of the twelve contributors:

> The convention was marked by a peculiar sense of unease. At the end it was no longer clear why there had been a meeting at all, as an American participant observed … If Reinhard Bendix had observed some time earlier, quoting Goethe, that one should first

another ten years of resolving copyright issues before the University of California Press published the paperback edition (1978).

7   Bendix to Parsons, 9 April 1964 (Bendix papers, German Intellectual Émigré Collection, University Libraries, Albany, NY). Parsons had written to Bendix on 6 April 1964: 'I must say that I am somewhat disappointed, particularly in Aron. It seems to me that he might have put his treatment of Weber in a broader context than simply that of his place in relation to the problem of his own time. Weber was certainly one of the most important theorists of political power and there is much of his contribution Aron simply did not touch. Of course, I rather expected the general line that is taken by Marcuse which seems to me only one aspect of Weber's very complex attitude system. In general, I am afraid I will be something of a Daniel in the Lion's den in my much more positive note about both Weber's own contribution and the nature of industrial society.'

'acquire' [that is, seriously study] one's paternal heritage before one could 'possess' [that is, properly use] it, this certainly did not happen at this congress. We could ask, modifying Mark Antony's funeral speech: Did they come to bury Caesar or to praise him? (Aich et al. 1964, 423f.).

Bendix had cited Goethe in a review of Wolfgang Mommsen's highly controversial Weber biography (of 1959) and juxtaposed his own comparative-historical approach to Mommsen's political-historical one (Bendix 1961, 261). Before Heidelberg, Bendix had written to me on April 9:

> Generally I have just about reached the conclusion that it is impossible to get a balanced discussion of Weber in Germany, they are too *geschichtsbeladen* [weighed down by history] to approach the matter non-ideologically—which makes my book that much more pertinent as a counterweight. It will come out in German before too long. One could almost write a little essay on the very different meanings of my book in the context of American sociology and in the German climate of opinion.

This referred to the German postwar constellation, but the differences between Marcuse and Bendix as well as Nelson centered on the principal opposition of utopianism and empirical science. Marcuse's charge against Weber was: 'The value-free notion of capitalist rationality becomes a critical concept, but then the critique is suspended and accepts what allegedly cannot be changed and turns into apologetics, worse still, a denunciation of the possible alternative—a qualitatively different historical rationality' (Marcuse 1965, 166). Marcuse's address drew 'stormy applause among the students', as Ernst Topitsch (1973, 251) recalled.[8] Nelson vigorously defended Weber: 'Everyone who finds himself encumbered or inconvenienced by what I am tempted to call the "Social Reality Principle" will want to polemicize against Weber. Weber is both "stumbling block" and "scandal" to all who ardently quest for the total and the instant regeneration of self, society and culture' (Nelson 1965, 193). Since Nelson was the only major participant who could not speak German, his hostile student audience probably understood his anti-utopian emphasis more in gesture than in substance. Later, however, Parsons applauded him with an enthusiasm unusual for him.[9] Bendix characterized

---

8 Ernst Topitsch (1919–2003) gave the opening address in Heidelberg on 'Max Weber und die Soziologie heute'. On the student reaction, see his postscript of 1972 in Topitsch 1973.

9 Parsons to Nelson 13 February 1967: 'Somehow in the midst of a busy life I had put the Heidelberg Max Weber meeting behind and therefore never taken the trouble to read the written version of your contribution to this. However on the occasion of preparing for a special lecture on Weber at the University of Chicago tomorrow evening I went back to the volume proceedings of the meeting and read your contribution straight through. I cannot let the occasion pass without a word of congratulation which is strong enough so that if it were a concert I should shout "bravo". It is something that desperately needed to be said

Marcuse's utopian promise as 'cultural apocalyptics', more 'a kind of apotheosis of ideal-typical extrapolation than scholarly analysis' (Bendix 1965, 191).

Here a different generational experience came into play and influenced the experience of emigration. Bendix pointed out later that for Marcuse and Horkheimer the utopian promise of the Russian October revolution had been an early formative experience, whereas his own had been fascist and Communist totalitarianism, 'two versions of utopian mentality' (Bendix 1989, 48). It was exactly the anti-utopian implication of Weber's work that attracted Bendix and Nelson.

At this point it is proper to make a few general observations on the participation of the emigrants in Heidelberg. For convenience's sake I retain the label emigrant, although Norbert Elias (1897–1990) considered it an 'euphemistic and obfuscating ideological phrase' and preferred to speak of 'expellees and exiles' (see Rehberg 1996, 31). For that matter, younger refugees such as Bendix, who had not studied or taught in Germany, set themselves off as 'Chicago products' from the older generation. For Bendix emigrating at the age of twenty-two was 'a liberating rather than a wrenching experience' (Bendix 1993, 5).

Horkheimer and Adorno were established re-migrants, as was Arnold Bergsträsser, who was recruited as moderator. But he died just before the congress, as did the Russian-born Alexander von Schelting, who had been invited as another Weberian exile. Most of the foreign participants, however, were at the time unknown beyond a narrow circle or were invited only after some prominent scholars such as Robert Merton declined. Marcuse was not well-known in either Germany or the US before his sudden rise to fame. *One Dimensional Man* (1964) appeared after Heidelberg; *Reason and Revolution* (1941) was almost unknown until it was reprinted in 1954; *Eros and Civilization* (1955) was difficult to read. The German translation of 1957 received little attention until it was republished under a different title in 1965.

Also relatively unknown were Joseph Maier and Kurt Wolff, born in Germany in 1911 and 1912, who moved in the circles of the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research. Maier criticized Weber's theory of the Jewish pariah people (1965, 227–31); Wolff, who wrote to me ironically about the 'Weber festival', deplored Weber's 'existential' inability to distinguish the ethic of ultimate ends (*Gesinnungsethik*) from fanaticism and the ethic of responsibility (*Verantwortungsethik*) from opportunism (1965, 299). Norbert Elias, an old antagonist of Frankfurt Critical Theory, was perceived as unknown outsider and barely allowed to give a paper.[10]

---

and I think you have said it beautifully, fairly and extremely forcefully at the same time' (Nelson papers, box 84).

10   Karl-Siegbert Rehberg has recalled the episode: 'Very typical was the appearance of 67–year-old Norbert Elias, then professor in Ghana, in Heidelberg where he had studied sociology … now, 37 years later, he was not looked forward to and not given a prominent spot. That he could speak at all was owed to the intervention of Dieter Claessens … It seems to me that Elias never forgot the matter, even after he had advanced in later years to main speaker at the meetings of the German Sociological Association' (Rehberg 1996, 21f.).

Leaving aside Parsons, the two remaining (native) Americans, the young Norman Birnbaum (born 1926) and the older Benjamin Nelson were unknown to the audience.[11] Birnbaum, expatriate between 1952 and 1966, was a member of the European New Left and rebelled against his dissertation director Parsons.[12] The erstwhile medievalist Nelson, coeditor of the *Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, struggled with an ambitious synthesis of Weber, Freud and Parsons. (In Germany only an excerpt from his older work on usury had appeared.)

Only a few specialists recognized the Prague-born Karl Wolfgang Deutsch (1912–1992), who provoked the audience with his scientism and behaviorism. A translation of Bendix's *Work and Authority in Industry* (1956) came out in 1960 as *Herrschaft und Industriearbeit* (a title invented by Ralf Dahrendorf); the German version of his Weber biography appeared only after the congress but then made him widely known as a Weber expert. König, who had become friendly with Bendix in Berkeley in 1957, had reviewed the English text as early as 1960 in the *Kölner Zeitschrift* and urged a quick translation. Subsequently he gave Johannes Winckelmann an opportunity to review the German edition rather idiosyncratically (Winckelmann 1965).

In the US Bendix was established as a member of the ASA Council and as chairman of the sociology department in Berkeley. He became the convener of a Weber plenary session in Montreal, which remained, however, only a sideshow amidst the huge congress. Three interests were accommodated: structural functionalism, comparative historical sociology and quantitative social research. Parsons chaired the meeting and presented a short version of his Heidelberg paper. Edward Shils (1911–1995), Parsons's collaborator, offered an early formulation of his structural-functionalist interpretation of charisma, Bendix a comparison of Jakob Burckhardt and Max Weber. Paul Lazarsfeld (1901–1976) claimed Weber as precursor of his own quantitative social research. Hans Gerth (1908–1978), who felt excluded already in Washington in 1962, was not invited but took part in a Weber session of the Midwest Sociological Society in Kansas City.

Teaching obligations prevented me from attending the Heidelberg event—I had to take over Nelson's lectures at Stony Brook—but I went to Montreal. I interrupted my work on *Economy and Society* and wrote a paper on 'Political Critiques of Max Weber', which was a reaction to Marcuse, whose paper I had discussed in advance with Bendix. I wrote him on 5 April 1964: 'Marcuse's attack

---

Elias's *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation*, first published in exile in 1939 but ignored for a long time, made him famous only after its republication in 1969 (Bern: Francke).

11   The Heidelberg meetings were a male affair, given the few women in social science at the time. It's no accident that the only female presenter, Ursula Jaerisch, was a Adorno student; she gave a highly critical paper on Weber's sociology of education. American-trained Renate Mayntz chaired the session on organizational sociology.

12   Birnbaum recalled Parsons's 'search for redemption through theory' as a form of 'secularized Calvinism' on the occasion of his memorial speech for Lewis Coser on 1 November 2003 at the State University of New York in Stony Brook.

on Weber, which he will present at Heidelberg and which you will I hope attack in turn, was one factor in determining my decision. It is my intention to show that the major political attacks on Weber also affect the present rationale of political sociology.'

My essay, which appeared in the Weber issue of the *American Sociological Review* (Roth 1965), compared the Marxist critique by Georg Lukacs and Herbert Marcuse with the Nazi critique by Christoph Steding and the natural law critique by Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss. The latter had originally been invited to Heidelberg as discussant and would have articulated the natural law position there. I saw Wolfgang Mommsen, who once more presented Weber (in Heidelberg) as an 'imperialist thinker', as influenced by American moralistic liberalism. This provoked his later charge that I had naively assumed the separability of science and politics (Mommsen 1974, 446). But I was concerned with the rationale of the new field of political sociology, in which I was teaching. It presupposed the possibility of separating scholarship and partisanship (see Bendix and Roth 1971).

I presented my paper in Juan Linz's session on political sociology. Prior to that, on 26 July 1964, I let him know: 'I will now be better able to deal with the Heidelberg events, a scandal, as you know. The most difficult part of my essay will be to avoid the impression that the whole Weber debate is merely a quarrel between more or less arrogant Germans, old or young, emigrants or not. My argument will be that the attacks on Weber are mostly directed at social science and especially political sociology.' I obviously feared that in the US the 'storm over Max Weber', as Carl Cerny called it in the London *Encounter* magazine (August 1964), would appear merely as a 'tempest in a teapot'.

Uta Gerhardt has called attention to the fact that the Heidelberg controversy between Nelson and Marcuse had something of an epilogue in the letter section of the *New York Times Book Review* on 3 January and 28 February 1965. Nelson complained that the German convention had not received enough publicity in the US and provoked Marcuse, without naming him, with hyperbolic phrases. As director of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research and President of the German DGS Adorno wrote a letter of protest (the draft of which was discovered by Gerhardt in the Marcuse papers) to the *New York Times*, which chose not to publish it. But soon afterwards the editors asked Bennett Berger and me to write an essay on Weber, whom they wanted to neglect no longer. The essay, unusual because not a regular book review, appeared on 3 April 1966 under the title 'Max Weber and the Organized Society'. I observed in passing: 'It was perhaps inevitable that in 1964, almost twenty years after the end of World War II and more than forty years after his death, Weber symbolically had to stand trial before a sort of intellectual de-nazification court at the Heidelberg meetings of the German Sociological Association, supposedly dedicated to honoring the centenary of his birth.' My harsh analogy probably had to do with the fact that when I came to the US my first task was to complete a study of the failure of American de-nazification with Kurt Wolff (Roth and Wolff 1954).

The 15th German sociology convention in Heidelberg should be compared with the 16th in Frankfurt in 1968. It was opened by Adorno as departing president of the association under the theme of 'late capitalism and industrial society?' (I took part as a discussant.) Afterwards I wrote in the *Kölner Zeitschrift*: 'The trend toward a sociology convention without any real sociology continued in Frankfurt in 1968, where no serious research results or projects were presented … The few experts who dared to speak—they are denounced again as representatives of "liberalist" sociology—had no choice but to face the "loudspeakers" of a renewed, this time a voluntarist, Marxism' (Roth 1968, 429). In Heidelberg the currents first emerged that overflowed in Frankfurt and created a situation around 1970 where teaching and research became temporarily impossible, from Berlin to Berkeley, as I experienced it at both locations. This was the low point of Weber's reputation, and it also led to the demise of the hegemony of Parsons's structural functionalism. In the longer run Parsons's decline and Weber's 'deparsonification' furthered Bendix's comparative-historical approach and promoted the quick rise of the section on historical sociology in the ASA to second largest.

If at the end of the sixties the sociologists were overtaken by events, as Lepsius depicted it, the same soon happened to Adorno and Horkheimer, who seemed to fall behind as the (so-to-speak) 'traditional' representatives of Critical Theory. They were still on Marcuse's side when he began his triumphal championship of the student movement in Heidelberg. They parted company with Marcuse when he spoke ever more radically at the huge demonstrations from California to Paris and Berlin, attacking 'repressive tolerance'. But Marcuse's star also began to dim after a few years. This became obvious on the occasion of the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Institute for Social Research in 1974, which I attended (see Maschke 1974). The Marxist hegemony disintegrated. Some neo-Marxists searched for a combination with Weber. A large Marxist-Weberian literature emerged. Gradually interest in the specifically sociological understanding of Weber's *oeuvre* revived. Historical and contemporary research with Weberian concepts and categories advanced. In addition, there was a growing interest in biographical aspects.[13]

More than 55 years ago I began my career at the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research, then an empirical research institution without Critical Theory, where I was the youngest research assistant. In 1953 I came to the US, first to Kurt Wolff at Ohio State University in Columbus, then to the emigrants at the New School for Social Research in New York and finally to Reinhard Bendix at the University of California at Berkeley. Not until Columbus could I study the Institute's famous *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung*, which in Frankfurt had been kept locked up in the legendary box.[14] Adorno was displeased about my 'waste of time', since he

---

13   I followed this line of interest in my German book on 'Max Weber's Anglo-German Family History 1800–1950' (Roth 2001).

14   Winkler, W., 'Die Kiste bleibt zu. Neues zur Gründungslegende der Bundesrepublik. Horkheimer gegen Habermas, dazwischen Adorno', *Die Zeit*, 27 Sept. 1996 (international edition).

expected me to become a public opinion researcher.[15] Only once, as I was reminded by a fellow student only recently, did the librarian secretly put into my hands the 1937 volume with the essay on 'Traditional and Critical Theory'. Again, not until coming to the US did I seriously read Max Weber, known to me previously as a 'bourgeois relativist'. From this resulted my many years of preoccupation with work and person. Without anticipating it in those early years, I ended up joining the mediators of the American and the German Weber reception.

Of the emigrants who took part in the Heidelberg centenary no one is left alive today, and thus they can no longer agree or disagree with me. Joseph Maier and Kurt Wolffs died, over 90 years old, in 2003. I delivered a memorial speech for Kurt Wolff on 9 November at Brandeis University. Ernest Manheim, who participated in the Weber meetings in Kansas City, died in 2002 at the age 102. I deeply regret that in August 2004 Wolfgang Mommsen died, to whose presence and spirited reactions I looked forward at the Munich meetings on 'Das Faszinosum Max Weber' in September 2004, where I first presented an early version of these reminiscences.[16]

References

Aich, P. et al. (1965), '15. Deutscher Soziologentag', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 16: 404–42.

Bendix, R. (1960), *Max Weber. An Intellectual Portrait* (New York: Doubleday).

Bendix, R. (1961), 'Einige Bemerkungen zu einem Buch von Wolfgang Mommsen', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 13:2, 258–62.

Bendix, R. (1964), *Max Weber. Das Werk* (München: Piper).

Bendix, R. (1965), 'Diskussionsbeitrag', in Stammer (ed.), 184–191.

Bendix, R. and Roth, G. (1971), *Scholarship and Partisanship. Essays on Max Weber* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Bendix, R. (1989), 'How I Became an American Sociologist', in *Embattled Reason. Essays on Social Knowledge* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers), vol. 2.

Bendix, R. (1993), 'Intellectual Emigration from Hitler's Germany', in J. Bendix (ed.).

Bendix, J. (ed.) (1993), *Unsettled Affinities* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

Elias, N. (1969) [1939], *Über den Prozess der Zivilisation* (Bern: Francke).

---

15   Adorno in a letter to me,1 June 1954.

16   My essay is a revised and shortened version of my contribution 'Heidelberg und Montreal. Zur Geschichte des Weberzentenariums 1964', in K.-L Ay and K. Borchardt (eds), *Das Faszinosum Max Weber. Die Geschichte seiner Geltung* (Constance: Universitätsverlag 2006), 377–391.

Gerhardt, U. (2002a), 'Worlds Come Apart: Systems Theory versus Critical Theory. Drama in the History of Sociology in the Twentieth Century', *The American Sociologist* 33:2, 5–39.

Gerhardt, U. (2002b), 'Die Rolle der Remigranten auf dem Heidelberger Soziologentag 1964 und die Interpretation des Werkes Max Webers', in Krohn and Schildt.

Krohn, C.-D. and Schildt, A. (eds.) (2002), *Zwischen den Stühlen? Remigranten und Remigration in der deutschen Medienöffentlichkeit der Nachkriegszeit* (Hamburg: Christians).

Lepsius, M. R. (1979), 'Die Entwicklung der Soziologie nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, Sonderheft 21, *Deutsche Soziologie seit 1945*.

Marcuse, H. (1954) [1941], *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (New York: Humanities Press).

Marcuse, H. (1955), *Eros and Civilization. A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press); German translation (1957), *Eros und Kultur* (Stuttgart: Klett); re-issed (1965) as *Triebstruktur und Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).

Marcuse, H. (1964), *One Dimensional Man. Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press).

Marcuse, H. (1965), 'Industrialisierung und Kapitalismus', in Stammer (ed.), 161–80.

Maschke, G., 'Marcuses Vortrag in Frankfurt. Eine wehmütige Pilgerfahrt', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 1 July 1974.

Mayer, J. (1965), 'Korreferat: Weber's "Antikes Judentum"', in Stammer (ed.), 227–31.

Mommsen, W.J. (1974), *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik 1890–1920* (Tübingen: Mohr), sec. ed.

Nelson, B. (1965), 'Diskussionsbeitrag', in Stammer (ed.), 192–201.

Parsons, T. (1965), 'Wertgebundenheit und Objektivität in den Sozialwissenschaften'and 'Schlusswort', in Stammer (ed.), 39–67, 94–98.

Rehberg, K.-S. (ed.) (1996), *Norbert Elias und die Menschenwissenschaften* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).

Roth, G. (1965), 'Political Critiques of Max Weber', *American Sociological Review* 30:2, 213–223.

Roth, G. (1968), 'Das historische Verhältnis der weberschen Soziologie zum Marxismus', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 20:3, 429–47.

Roth, G. (2001), Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950 (Tübingen: Mohr).

Roth, G. and Bendix, R. (1959), 'Max Webers Einfluss auf die amerikanische Soziologie', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 11:1, 38–53.

Roth, G. and Berger, B. (1966), 'Max Weber and the Organized Society', *New York Times Book Review*, 3 April, 6, 44f.

Roth, G. and Wolff, K. (1954), *The American Denazification of Germany: An Historical Survey and Appraisal*, *Studies in German-American Postwar Problems 1* (Columbus: Ohio State University).

Stammer, O. (1965), *Max Weber und die Soziologie heute. Verhandlungen des 15. Deutschen Soziologentages* (Tübingen: Mohr).

Topitsch, E. (1973), *Gottwerdung und Revolution* (Pullach: Verlag Dokumentation).

Weber, M. (Roth, G. and Wittichs, C. eds), (1968), *Economy and Society* (Totowa: Bedminster Press; sec. ed. Berkeley: University of California Press 1978).

Winckelmann, J. (1965), 'Max Weber. Das soziologische Werk', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 17:3, 743–90.

Wolff, K. (1965), 'Korreferat: Webers Bildungssoziologie', in Stammer (ed.), 296–99.

PART 2
Philosophical Dialogues

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 3

Philosophy Beyond the Bounds of Reason: The Influence of Max Weber on the Development of Karl Jaspers's *Existenzphilosophie*, 1909–1932

Joshua Derman

Introduction

Of all the twentieth-century intellectuals who looked to Max Weber for guidance or inspiration, none professed to be as deeply indebted to him as Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), the pioneer of modern existential philosophy. 'Among my contemporaries,' Jaspers avowed, 'the actuality of human greatness, the standard for men historically distant, became embodied for me, in a singular, marvelous fashion, in the person of Max Weber. … His thought as well as his nature became as essential for my philosophy, even 'til today, as no other thinker' (Jaspers 1957, 29).[1] In addition to carrying Weber's intellectual torch, Jaspers has been one of his most influential interpreters. The two works that Jaspers wrote during the Weimar Republic about Weber—a commemorative address (1921) and a short monograph entitled *Max Weber: German Character in Political Thought, in Scholarship, and Philosophy* (1932)—have continued to inspire Weber scholars to the present day.[2]

Jaspers began his scholarly career as a psychiatrist, but it was in philosophy that he established his lasting reputation, a discipline that he had never formally studied and only began teaching when he was nearly 40.[3] Jaspers founded a new kind of

---

1   Jaspers kept a bronze bust of Weber in his study, and once recounted to a friend that 'when Thomas Mann sat here a few days ago, he was somewhat surprised to see my admiration expressed in this direction, and he asked whether this bust was that of a Caesar, an emperor. "That could well be the case," I said. "It is Max Weber"' (Hering 1970, 78).

2   Wilhelm Hennis is perhaps the most influential modern Weber scholar who has drawn on Jaspers's interpretations for his own work. 'In the summer of 1944,' he recalled, 'Karl Jaspers's short book from 1932 (*Max Weber: German Character in Political Thought, in Scholarship, and Philosophy*) fell into my hands. The circumstances were unique: hardly has a book so moved me since' (Hennis 1987, iii).

3   In its vicissitudes, Max Weber's professional path was strikingly similar to Jaspers's. Weber studied law, spent the majority of his brief scholarly career teaching political economy, and is best remembered today as a sociologist.

philosophy that he called *Existenzphilosophie* or 'existential philosophy.' Unlike neo-Kantianism or phenomenology, existential philosophy does not purport to be a *Wissenschaft* [science]; it does not provide us with objective truths that claim universal validity.[4] Nor is existential philosophy what Jaspers called a 'prophetic' philosophy, since it does not claim to have discovered the meaning of life or give us directives about what we ought to do. Instead, existential philosophy seeks the subjective truths that are constitutive of our deepest, personal Being, our *Existenz*. It encourages us to apprehend subjective truths through moments of autonomous decision in which we define ourselves on the basis of non-universalizable values.

Only a month after Weber's death in June 1920, Jaspers presented him to an audience of Heidelberg admirers as the embodiment of the modern existential philosopher. This struck many of Jaspers's contemporaries as a bold and even outrageous claim, especially since Weber—a professor of political economy—had never once called himself a philosopher. Heinrich Rickert, the reigning neo-Kantian philosopher in Heidelberg, angrily told Jaspers: 'That you construct a philosophy out of Max Weber may be your rightful privilege, but to call him a philosopher is absurd' (ibid., 33). To arrive at this controversial interpretation, Jaspers did not set out to explicate Weber's published writings, but rather to explain the puzzling nature of his entire life's work (Henrich 1988, 13).

Like many of his contemporaries, Jaspers was fascinated by what one could call Weber's 'dualism.' Weber loudly insisted that rational knowledge and value judgments are two heterogeneous spheres of human activity that must be kept free from cross-contamination. Science—and here Weber was thinking primarily about *social* science—can provide us with objective knowledge about the world, but it cannot yield norms or directives for practical action. He expressed this position in a number of writings throughout his life, perhaps most eloquently in his lecture 'Science as a Vocation' (1919): 'the growing process of intellectualization and rationalization … means that in principle, then, we are not ruled by mysterious, unpredictable forces, but that, on the contrary, we can in principle *control everything by means of calculation*. That in turn means the disenchantment of the world [*Entzauberung der Welt*]' (Max Weber 1919, 12–13). Weber believed that the march of science had eliminated the space for objective values or immanent ethical principles in the universe, and he considered it unlikely that prophetic figures would emerge any time soon to legislate new values (Weiß 1991, 13–15). When it comes to political judgments or any other kind of deeply personal decision, each of us must 'find and obey the demon who holds the strings of *his* life' (Max Weber 1919, 111).

Weber nonetheless believed that scientific knowledge possessed an inherent value beyond its purely technical applications. Science can help us lead more meaningful and purposive lives even if it is incapable of yielding universal norms

---

4   On the distinction between philosophy and science in Jaspers's work, see Schüßler 1995, 29–39. It is important to note that the German concept of *Wissenschaft*, translated here as 'science,' includes both the natural and human sciences.

to guide our actions. As we expand our rational knowledge of the social world, Weber argued, we become aware that the values for which individuals strive can rarely be harmonized in any given situation. Likening our values to warring 'Gods' and 'Devils,' he declared that 'if you take pure experience as your starting point, you will end up in polytheism' (ibid., 22). 'Life is about the incompatibility of ultimate *possible* attitudes and hence the inability ever to resolve the conflicts between them. Hence the necessity of *deciding* between them' (ibid., 26). Empirical scholarship can inform us of the likely consequences of our decisions and thereby reveal the potential value conflicts that our actions engender, and logical analysis can tell us which ultimate values are entailed or abrogated by any particular judgment we make. While this kind of objective knowledge cannot tell us what we ought to do, it is essential if we are to make our 'ultimate decisions' with clarity and responsibility.

In a key passage of his memoirs, Jaspers suggests that Weber helped him to understand how philosophy could affirm the value of scientific thinking *without being a form of science itself*:

> My philosophical endeavors proceeded under two presuppositions which—remembering Max Weber—had become clear to me in my discussions with [Heinrich] Rickert. First of all: scientific knowledge is an indispensable factor in all philosophizing. Without science no veracity is possible today. The accuracy of knowledge in the sciences is entirely independent of philosophical truth; it is, however, relevant for the latter, yes even indispensable. Science, on the other hand, cannot understand why it itself exists. It does not reveal the meaning of life, provides no guidance. It has limits of which it is itself aware insofar as it is clearly conscious of its methods. The second presupposition was: There is a type of thinking which, from the point of view of science, is not compelling nor universally valid, which, therefore, yields no results that as such could claim validity as forms of knowability. This type of thinking, which we call philosophic thinking, leads me to my very self: its consequences arise out of the inner activity of its own procedures; it awakens the sources within me which ultimately give meaning even to science itself.

On the basis of these distinctions, Jaspers concluded that science must be developed to the 'greatest possible purity,' whereas philosophy must pursue a kind of thinking that is 'always in alliance' with science but 'radically different' from it (Jaspers 1957, 38).

In what sense might scientific knowledge be necessary for philosophical truth without actually determining it? A central feature of Jaspers's existential philosophy is the idea that reason, by working at its utmost capacity, can 'overcome' itself by precipitating psychological crises that lead to non-rational forms of commitment (Jaspers 1919a, 64–65, 272). It is not the nature of reason to harmonize our experiences of the phenomenal world, Jaspers argues, but to reveal its antinomical structure. Once reason has demonstrated the inadequacy of all universalizing norms and world-views, we are truly free to assert our individuality as autonomous beings. This process of rational self-overcoming, followed by the disclosure of

individual *Existenz* and the apprehension of metaphysical truths about ourselves, constituted for Jaspers the task of existential philosophy.

In this chapter, I shall chart the development of Jaspers's thought as he made the intellectual transition from psychiatry to existential philosophy between 1909 and 1932, with the aim of explaining how Weber's personality and scholarship played a decisive role as catalyst. At the same time, it is important to keep in mind that other thinkers also exerted an influence on Jaspers's intellectual formation and helped to reinforce the same fundamental insights. In what Ernst Moritz Manasse has termed a relationship of 'repetition,' Jaspers saw elements of Kant, Nietzsche and Kierkegaard's philosophies mirrored in Weber's own approach to life and scholarship. Weber embodied many of the qualities that Jaspers appreciated in these other thinkers and thus demonstrated that a similar mode of philosophizing was possible in the modern age (Manasse 1957, 380).

In the central sections of this essay, I would like to call attention to an important instance of 'repetition' that Manasse neglects to mention, namely the analogy between Weber's 'philosophical existence' and the parable of the knight of faith in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843). By interpreting Weber on the model of Kierkegaard's knight of faith, Jaspers came to understand how Weber's resignation about the possibility of meaning in the objective world was in fact the precondition for his radical existential commitments. 'He could appear as the consummate relativist,' Jaspers said of Weber in his commemorative address, 'and yet he was the man with the strongest faith of our time' (Jaspers 1921, 40). Weber's scientific inquiries led him to the point where reason no longer seemed capable of providing meaning in the modern world, and yet this resignation was not a final resting state but rather a basis for his commitment to subjective truths inaccessible to rational knowledge. What makes Jaspers's Kierkegaardian interpretation of Weber so distinctive is the radicalism of its vision. As seen through Jaspers's eyes, Weber appears not as a teacher of resignation or renunciation but rather as a firebrand who aims to revolutionize our inner life.

Madness and Method

Jaspers was a young researcher at the University of Heidelberg's psychiatric clinic when he first met Max Weber in 1909, and it was on the basis of their shared interest in the methodology of the social sciences that they first developed an intellectual rapport. At the turn of the twentieth century, the field of psychopathology was dominated by different schools and teachers, and there seemed to be little consensus about what constituted its proper methodology or central questions. The dominant tendency, however, was to pursue psychopathology as if it were a natural science of the brain that would eventually yield deterministic laws (Saner 1970, 28–29; Schmitt 1983, 23–41). While Jaspers believed that clearer conceptual foundations were needed for psychopathology to qualify as a science, he doubted whether the natural sciences could supply all the necessary methods. Standard definitions for

mental illnesses [*Krankheitseinheiten*] seemed to be a prerequisite for scientific work in psychopathology, and yet neither anatomical observation nor brain physiology had so far yielded unambiguous criteria for classifying them (Jaspers 1913a, 257–262; Jaspers 1913b, 171). Could the social sciences provide tools of concept formation that would solve this fundamental difficulty? It was these kinds of considerations that first attracted Jaspers to Weber's methodological insights.[5]

Jaspers saw Max Weber for the first time in the summer of 1909 at a discussion evening at the Heidelberg psychiatric clinic (Jaspers 1928, 7–8; Jaspers 1961, 4; Jaspers 1957, 29). While it is difficult to pin-point the date of their first conversation, it seems clear that Jaspers was familiar with Weber by 27 February 1910, when he reported the following impressions to his parents: 'He is a rare "man" among learned scholars and completely enthusiastic about the value of reason as such. His talent is magnificent. At least, he is the most intelligent man to whom I have so far spoken, person to person' (Kirkbright 2004, 77). It was not just Weber's intellectual prowess but also the force of his idiosyncratic personality that fascinated Jaspers.[6]

The fruit of Jaspers's early encounter with Weber were visible in his textbook, *General Psychopathology* (1913), which aimed to promote conceptual clarity within the discipline and thereby establish its claim to be a science. The spirit of Weber's methodological writings can be detected behind many of his programmatic statements, especially in his insistence that psychopathology can only be encompassed through 'a number of points of view, a number of paths beside one another, that are justified in themselves and complementary but do not interfere with each other' (Jaspers 1913a, vii). Jaspers particularly emphasized the contributions that social scientific methods could make to psychopathology. Instead of attempting to locate the essential nature of mental illnesses [*Krankheitseinheiten*], he encouraged psychopathologists to identify complexes of symptoms in the form of Weberian 'ideal types' that 'at first have no empirical meaning whatsoever' but

---

5   On 23 January 1910, Jaspers wrote to his father: 'I very much hope that the planned evening with Max Weber, which Marianne also wants to attend, takes place. [The psychiatrist Hans] Gruhle and I want to discuss psychological and logical questions with him, in order to learn for our purposes. Max Weber is supposed to feel the need to help young people. Now I just need to be clever enough to get going with my work on the concepts of sickness and the unity of sickness [*Krankheitseinheit*]; I would certainly have the opportunity to talk them over with Max Weber. His suggestions would mean an enormous amount' (Jaspers 1910a).

6   On the occasion of the publication of one of Weber's controversial speeches at the German conference of university professors, Jaspers wrote to his brother on 24 November 1910: 'He is an exception. He's interested simply in the issues and he doesn't mince his words. I find it really interesting how other people react to him. Only a few are satisfied! Even if he might be wrong in individual points, the mere *fact* that a person today speaks *like that* has got to make one enthusiastic. One can become acquainted with characters and distinguish among people based on the fact that most *do not* understand this' (Jaspers 1910b).

nonetheless provide 'the standard against which we measure the actual individual cases' (ibid., 270).[7] In an article on schizophrenia published the same year, Jaspers described how the method of 'understanding' [*Verstehen*]—a concept inspired by Weber's methodological writings—enables us to perceive the meaningful connections between psychological phenomena on the level of consciousness, a service which cannot be rendered by the causal explanation [*kausales Erklären*] typical of the natural sciences (Jaspers 1913b, 159–170).[8]

In the years leading up to World War I, Jaspers developed a close intellectual rapport with Weber, even though their relationship never developed the hallmarks of an intimate friendship. 'A real principled discussion has gotten going with Max Weber,' he wrote to his parents on 22 May 1913. 'That gets me excited and makes me feel enthusiastic. To exchange opinions with an intelligent person without having to mince one's words, to discuss and not merely make claims, is a wonderful joy' (Jaspers 1913c). When Jaspers applied for a *Habilitation* in psychology at Heidelberg in 1913, Weber served as an intermediary and helped Jaspers find a teaching position on the university's *philosophische Fakultät*.[9]

Limit Situations

Jaspers's thought underwent a metamorphosis during World War I. The cultural and social crisis of the war years played a catalytic role, as did the intense study of Kierkegaard, Hegel and Nietzsche that he began during this time. It was also during the war that Weber's scholarship and political journalism acquired a new significance for him.[10] These wartime reflections culminated in *Psychology of*

---

7   Weber had advised him earlier that 'You will *only* be able to bring gradual *order* into the infinity of the manifold [phenomena of life]—since the system of direct construction of ultimate "elements" is out of the question due to the nature of the matter—through the method of "ideal type" formation, which we ourselves [i.e. political economists] use in an entirely different fashion,' and recommended his own article on '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Public Policy' (Max Weber to Karl Jaspers, 2 November 1912, in Max Weber 1998, 730).

8   Weber was so impressed by Jaspers's insights that he subsequently named his own approach to sociology, *verstehende Soziologie*, after the *verstehende Psychologie* outlined in *General Psychopathology* (Manasse 1957, 372).

9   Jaspers original plan to habilitate in psychology at Heidelberg was blocked due to the surplus of *Privatdozenten*. When he proved unwilling to leave Heidelberg, the clinic's director Franz Nissl tried to get him a position in psychology, a discipline that heretofore had not been taught at the university. Weber, who sat on a university commission for psychology and pedagogy, was interested in filling the vacancy and thought that Jaspers would be an ideal candidate to teach *verstehende Psychologie*. See Saner 1970, 35; Max Weber to Hans W. Gruhle, 28 July 1913, in Max Weber 2003, 285–286; 'Einleitung' in ibid., 8.

10   Jaspers first heard of Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904/05) when it was discussed at a sociological colloquium in February 1912—a rather

World-Views (1919), an unusual treatise that presents a typology of psychological standpoints from which an individual can comprehend the world. It is here that Jaspers first develops the central concept of his later existential philosophy, the idea of *Grenzsituationen* or 'limit situations.'

In the course of our lives, Jaspers argues, we are continually placed in situations that we manipulate to achieve our ends. There nonetheless exist four conditions of human life—conflict, death, chance, and guilt—that are impervious to our efforts to alter or make sense of them. What these limit situations have in common is that they shatter any world-view that tries to interpret or master life in a systematic manner. They make us aware of what Jaspers calls 'the antinomical structure of the world,' the fact that life is full of contradictions that cannot be subsumed by any one explanatory scheme (Jaspers 1919a, 203). In the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant had argued that the faculty of pure reason possesses no proper concepts of its own but only regulative 'Ideas' that encourage us to think of the universe as an ordered whole. Left to its own devices, pure reason has the tendency to mistake these Ideas for real existing entities, and the outcome is a set of contradictory metaphysical propositions or 'antinomies.' In developing the idea of limit situations in *Psychology of World-Views*, Jaspers extends Kant's notion of antinomies to include contradictions in practical life by drawing on examples of value conflicts culled from Weber's methodological and political writings.

Jaspers accepts that the formation of systematic world-views—or 'shells' [*Gehäuse*], as he calls them—is an unavoidable fact of human psychology. Man, no less than a mussel, needs a protective casing to survive (ibid., 248, 311). The danger of these rational systems, however, is that they tend to shield us from the therapeutic effects of confronting limit situations. 'What all shells have in common,' Jaspers argues, 'is that man is confronted in *rational form* with something universally valid, something necessary and ordered, a rule, a law that entails duty, prescription, and propriety. Common to all shells is their *rationalism*' (ibid., 270). Reason insists on grasping the world in terms of fixed definitions and formulae; it seeks universal principles and disdains the spontaneous, individual, and irrational characteristics of human life (ibid., 225). When Jaspers talks about 'rationalism,' it is important to keep in mind that this concept applies not only to intellectual theories but also to our modes of planning action in the world. A fully rationalized or systematic approach to human action is just as susceptible to becoming trapped within a 'shell' as a philosophical system.

Jaspers believes that the truly 'vital' individual derives strength from the limit situations, since they break down his ossified *Gehäuse* and enable him to define himself without recourse to universalizing norms. He attains a 'vital synthesis'

---

late date, considering that it was one of the few texts of Weber's that were known outside of his immediate scholarly milieu (Jaspers 1912). When Weber published his articles on the sociology of Chinese and Indian religions in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* during the war, Jaspers studied the reprints that Weber gave him and had them bound into a separate volume (Henrich 1988, 16).

[*lebendige Synthese*] of life's antinomies that 'does not deny reason [*ratio*], but at the same time cannot be sufficiently determined by reason with universal validity' (ibid., 213). By forsaking totality in the objective world, he binds himself—or, one might say, defines himself—through a finite action (ibid., 279–280). Such an individual is motivated by faith [*Glaube*], which Jaspers defines in a non-religious sense as 'the power to carry out valuations not simply theoretically but rather existentially,' and he compares its function in guiding human activity to that of Ideas in Kant's philosophy. Whereas knowledge can only grasp individual and finite objects in their relativity, faith is directed towards 'totality and the Absolute' (ibid., 298–299).

Jaspers's analysis of world-views drew heavily on Weber's sociology of religion as well as his methodological and political writings.[11] The different psychological types in *Psychology of World-Views* are presented in the form of Weberian ideal types, and when Jaspers characterizes world-views in terms of their rationalism, he explicitly refers to the model of rationalization developed in Weber's articles on the sociology of religion (ibid., 13–14, 271). Jaspers's thesis that interpersonal conflict is a limit situation was undoubtedly inspired by Max Weber, who regarded conflict as an ineradicable feature of social life. It is also very likely that Jaspers derived the concept of *Gehäuse* from Max Weber's sociological and political essays. Where Weber called attention to the dangers that institutional or socio-economic *Gehäuse* pose for visionary leadership, Jaspers instead examines the nefarious effects of what one might call *psychological* bureaucracy—the doctrines or ideologies that deprive us of the responsibility for making self-defining decisions.[12]

---

11   As Jaspers writes in the introduction to *Psychology of World-Views*, 'Max Weber's works on the sociology of religion and on politics contain a kind of analysis of world-views that is new with respect to the earlier versions [i.e. of Kant, Hegel, Kierkegaard and Nietzsche] due to its heretofore unimaginable combination of the most concrete historical research with systematic thinking. The systematically objectifying power, which expresses itself here finally in fragments and does not ossify into a system, is connected with a living vehemence, which takes hold of us in a way that only otherwise Kierkegaard and Nietzsche can. The separation between valuation of world-views and scientific observation, for which he—following earlier formulations [by others]—first brought the passion [*Pathos*], is also striven for in this work' (Jaspers 1919a, 13). It is unlikely that Jaspers could have been influenced by Weber's 1917 lecture, 'Science as a Vocation,' since Weber only sent Jaspers a copy of the book in early July 1919. See Max Weber 1992, 65. According to a letter written by Jaspers to his parents, the proofs of three-quarters of *Psychology of World-Views* had already been printed by mid-June 1919 (Jaspers 1919b). Jaspers could have nonetheless found similar formulations of the central ideas of 'Science as a Vocation' in earlier texts, such as in '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy' (1904), the 'Zwischenbetrachtung' (1916), and 'The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality' in Sociology and Economics' (1917).

12   On Weber's use of the term *Gehäuse*, see Chalcraft 1994. It is possible, however, that Jaspers also found the term in the work of Georg Simmel, whom he knew personally

In pointing out the dangers of rationalism and valorizing moments of subjective decision-making, Jaspers may sound at times like an irrationalist in *Psychology of World-Views*. What distinguishes his position from that of vulgar *Lebensphilosophie*, however, is its unwillingness to dismiss rational thought as existentially worthless.[13] Jaspers believed that existential decisions are impossible without the radical development of reason and empirical knowledge. 'Though every judgment and value-preference, every decision is irrational,' he asserts, 'this irrational moment is only present when rationality has achieved its greatest possible development. The rational provides the preconditions necessary so that a question can be put to the living instincts and the choice of the heart, which in themselves are nothing' (ibid., 199).

Jaspers emphasizes the difference between the type of person who is passive in his rational *Gehäuse* and the type who seeks to expand his rational understanding of the world in order to disclose its antinomical structure. The latter 'experiences the collisions and limit situations precisely through the rational,' rather than in naïve opposition to it. 'The consistent formation of principles allows the collisions to arise with new experience and ultimately leads to the self-destructions of the rational, which in turn allow new forces and principles to emerge. … The more consistently reason works to objectify the forces of world-views, the more a collision will be experienced with original force, and out of these crises of psychological life transmutations and new creations will emerge' (ibid., 276–277).

The Leap to *Existenzphilosophie*

At the time he wrote *Psychology of World-Views*, Jaspers conceived of philosophy as a 'prophetic' endeavor that claimed to legislate norms of conduct for all mankind on the basis of rational introspection.[14] Since the task of his book was not to tell its readers which world-view they should adopt, but only to offer them the 'means of self-reflection' for choosing their own, he chose to present it as a work of 'interpretive psychology' (Jaspers 1919a, v, 1–7; Jaspers 1954, x–xi). It was Max Weber's death on 14 June 1920, that finally made clear to Jaspers that

---

through the Weber circle. In his review of *Psychology of World-Views*, Heinrich Rickert notes the similarity between Jaspers and Simmel's use of *Gehäuse* (Rickert 1920, 57).

13   According to Wolfgang Stegmüller, 'Jaspers's philosophy, although not an irrationalism in the radical sense that it discards scientific truth, is nonetheless *irrationalistic* in that it goes beyond scientifically attainable truth, attempts from a 'higher' vantage-point to relativize all that is scientifically knowable, and locates the deepest accessible truth in the existential experience of the individual which itself cannot be communicated' (Stegmüller 1969, 212).

14   Jaspers almost certainly derived his concept of 'prophetic philosophy' from Weber's discussion of ethical prophecy in his articles on the sociology of religion, a fact that was not lost on his contemporaries (Cohn 1921/22, 198; Scheler 1921/23, 433).

Psychology of World-Views was the beginning of a new kind of philosophy—one that he was called upon to pursue.[15]

On the day after Max Weber's death, Jaspers wrote to Marianne Weber, 'The world of intellect, the German world, has lost its king, the man who alone guaranteed the immediacy of intellect, whom we followed when we felt weak and required a distinctive standard, who inspired us with ideas that make eyes see. With what hope did we look towards the coming years, which should have brought the great works of this man, who was and will be the only philosopher of our time' (Jaspers 1920a). Jaspers now wished to devote himself to philosophy, as he subsequently explained to his parents on 16 June 1920: 'When the flame is extinguished, the glowing sparks have to be kindled. … I have the feeling that [Max Weber] saw in me this sort of glowing spark and I want to strive with all my ability to achieve what I still can in philosophy—to use this general and vague word—and to try to explain in this field to the youth of today his ideas and works' (Kirkbright 2004, 85–86).

Jaspers's first attempt at articulating the meaning of philosophy in the modern age was simultaneously a meditation on the significance of Weber's intellectual legacy. The occasion was provided by a commemorative ceremony for Weber, organized by students at the University of Heidelberg, that took place on 17 July 1920. In his address, Jaspers hailed Weber as someone who sought to understand the world in rational terms, but who constantly broke through these frameworks in search of new syntheses and truths. As a result, the objective traces of his life work were fragments—unfinished articles, abandoned scholarly projects and failed political initiatives. 'Is it possible,' Jaspers asked, 'in light of this fragmentary character, to regard Max Weber as the intellectual peak of our time? Only if one is capable of seeing a positive meaning in the nature of the fragmentary itself, if one believes that greatness, insofar as it realizes its potential, necessarily has a fragmentary character' (Jaspers 1921, 33).[16] Jaspers was convinced that Weber's

---

15   There is some indication that Jaspers already regarded Weber as the prototype of the modern philosopher while writing *Psychology of World-Views*, but was unwilling to say so publicly. As Jaspers muses in the opening paragraphs of the book, 'It is perhaps characteristic of the modern world that the best philosophers are not always 'philosophers,' but rather individual, exceptional specialized scholars. … The best philosopher today is perhaps a specialized scholar who, so to speak, stands with his feet in one discipline but actually seeks comprehensive connections of knowledge—always concretely—and stands in interaction with reality as it is actually present. It could be that, in this age-old sense of philosophy, a political economist, classical philologist, historian, mathematician more than any other deserves to be called a philosopher' (Jaspers 1919a, 2).

16   Jaspers believed that the fragmentary nature of Weber's scholarly production was not simply a product of his lifestyle, but was rather intrinsic to his mode of thinking. Even had he lived to complete *Economy and Society*, Jaspers argues, these studies would have retained their fragmentary character, since they were 'constructed in such enormous dimensions that they seemed like a medieval cathedral, and like a cathedral it was in their nature to remain unfinished' (Jaspers 1921, 33).

fragmentariness belied an underlying coherence to his personality. 'Out of this collection of diverse fragments, there is no doubt that a unity is present,' Jaspers insisted, 'not rationally defined, but clearly there: the Idea of this philosophical existence' (ibid., 46).

As Ernst Moritz Manasse has argued, this characterization of Weber's philosophical existence suggests that Jaspers viewed him through a lens already provided by Kant's critical philosophy. Jaspers characterizes the 'demonic individual' [*der dämonische Mensch*] in *Psychology of World-Views* as the type of person whose frequent experience of limit situations enables him make a series of ever-ascending transitions from one 'fragmentary' world-view to the next (Jaspers 1919a, 313–317). Kant's is the only philosophy that Jaspers identifies as 'demonic,' but the fact that he describes Weber's thought in the commemorative address as 'demonic movement' suggests that Weber also provided a model for this personality type. In Weber's faith and passionate commitment, Manasse argues, Jaspers perceived something analogous to Kantian Ideas—ultimate principles that have no objective existence but which are necessary to regulate all human endeavor (Manasse 1957, 382–385).

But why did Jaspers believe that Weber's mode of thinking and willing constituted a form of *philosophy*? The essence of a 'philosophical existence,' according to Jaspers, is 'consciousness of the Absolute and a way of acting and behaving that is supported by the vital seriousness of the Absolute in its unconditionedness' (Jaspers 1921, 46). What made Weber so unique, according to Jaspers, is that he managed to address the Absolute without directly striving for it in the manner typical of traditional philosophy. Even though his scholarly investigations and political endeavors were consciously limited in scope, bounded as they were by the limits of what can be known or accomplished by systematic human activity, Weber still managed to imbue them with a sense of absolute commitment and passion. 'The absolute and unconditional was existentially present for Weber with unusual force,' Jaspers declared, 'but not as an object, formula or content, but rather expressing itself alone in concrete action in temporal situations and in limited, specialized knowledge. One could say that the whole was present for him in the finite, so that the finite appeared to take on infinite significance' (ibid., 40). Weber never claimed to know 'the final meaning of existence,' since for him the Absolute had purely a subjective significance and could not be prescribed to others. 'In his philosophical existence there was neither a prophetic faith to be proclaimed nor a philosophical system to provide a concept of the world as shell [*Gehäuse*], consolation, overview, and shelter' (ibid., 39).

In characterizing Weber's philosophical existence as a paradoxical combination of the Absolute and the relative, the finite and the infinite, Jaspers was making an allusion to the figure of the knight of faith in Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling* (1843). In *Psychology of World-Views*, Jaspers refers explicitly to the knight of faith as an illustration of the 'true absolutist,' the type of person who 'wins the absolute from the particular' (Jaspers 1919a, 354). Kierkegaard develops the allegorical distinction between the knight of faith and the knight of resignation in

order to comprehend Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Isaac. Abraham may outwardly resemble a knight of resignation who is capable of renouncing all that he loves dearest in the world, but this comparison in fact does little to explain Abraham's greatness. Abraham does not truly believe that sacrificing Isaac means losing his beloved son forever. Instead, he has faith that God will find some inexplicable way to halt the sacrifice or restore Isaac to life. Abraham experiences resignation about the objective possibility of Isaac's survival, but goes beyond this resignation to accept with infinite faith—'on the strength of the absurd'—that God's promise to give him a son will be fulfilled, and this makes him a knight of faith (Kierkegaard 1843, 65–82). 'Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith,' Kierkegaard explains, 'so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith; for only in infinite resignation does my eternal validity become transparent to me, and only then can there be talk of grasping existence on the strength of faith' (ibid., 75).

The philosopher Alastair Hannay has noted the similarity between Kierkegaard's account of resignation and Weber's notion of disenchantment [*Entzauberung*], the process by which transcendental values are divested of their legitimacy by the expansion of rational knowledge (Hannay 2003, 24). Given his attitude towards the possibility of meaning in the modern world, Weber did indeed resemble something like a knight of resignation to many of his contemporaries. He denied that science could answer the fundamental questions of human existence and held out no hopes for the emergence of new prophetic figures. What distinguished Jaspers from other interpreters of Weber, however, was his refusal to accept this resignation as Weber's final word on the subject.

In *Psychology of World-Views*, Jaspers had argued that the therapeutic experience of limit situations was impossible without the fullest expansion of our rational capabilities. We cannot make existential decisions before reason has done the preparatory work of illuminating the antinomical value choices that face us in every day life. Guided by his prior understanding of Kant and Kierkegaard, Jaspers came to see that Weber had removed the most fundamental truths about the meaning of life from the realm of objective knowledge and handed them over to the individual to decide for himself. Since these truths constitute the traditional subject matter of philosophy, Weber must have been the harbinger of a new and essentially *subjective* mode of philosophizing, one that did not legislate these truths for all individuals but rather enabled them to encounter the limit situations and thereby disclose their own *Existenz*.

It was 10 years later in his three-volume masterwork *Philosophy* (1931/32) that Jaspers finally dispensed with his psychologizing approach and presented a fully-fledged philosophy of existence. Weber's influence is most palpable in the first volume, *Philosophical World-Orientation*, where Jaspers explains how rational inquiry—when carried out with the proper spirit—can generate a springboard for existential philosophy. Philosophical world-orientation, as he calls this form of critical scientific investigation, illuminates the fault lines in our conception of the world and encourages us to make the leap to the non-rational 'illumination

of existence'. Here again we find the idea that scientific knowledge is a kind of exercise in ascetic self-renunciation that prepares the individual for absolute commitments of a non-rational kind. 'To evade necessary [truth] is a betrayal of the even deeper truth. … Knowledge provides no final satisfaction. But it is the path through which *Existenz* can come to itself' (Jaspers 1931/32, 1:145).

    Scheitern (a term that could be translated into English as 'failure' or 'running aground'), as Jaspers explains in the third and final volume of *Philosophy*, is a condition which befalls all philosophically truthful individuals (Jaspers 1931/32, 3:219–236). In the process of existential philosophizing, the individual is constantly thwarted in his attempts to expand his rational knowledge and disclose his *Existenz*, but these repeated efforts bring him asymptotically closer towards subjective truth. In a short monograph published the same year, *Max Weber: German Character in Political Thought, in Scholarship and Philosophy* (1932), Jaspers presents what might seem like a tragic feature of Weber's life—his failure to develop a total system, his fragmentary output, his unsolved wrestling with the problems of life—as a condition of philosophical fruitfulness: 'Max Weber was the richest and most profound embodiment of the meaning of failure [*Scheitern*] in our time. … The nature of Max Weber's failure is that through empirical knowledge that is limitless, certain and close to facts and objects, he positively registered that which is beyond knowledge [*das eigentliche Nichtwissen*] and thus opened the possibility of Being that is true Being and not merely known. Failure leads all the more deeply to Being the more encompassing that knowledge grows' (Jaspers 1932a, 8, 54–55). Despite its negative connotation, *Scheitern* is the positive heart of Jaspers's existential philosophy.

Points of Departure

Throughout his life, Jaspers was loathe to admit any deviation from Weber in his own philosophy.[17] There are, nonetheless, two major issues on which Jaspers consciously opposed Weber. The first concerns *Kommunikation* [communication], a central concept of Jaspers's existential philosophy. Inspired by Hegel's dialectic of master and slave, Jaspers believed that individuals require intimate communication with another person in order to apprehend their own *Existenz*. This, he realized, was ultimately incompatible with the agonism of Weber's methodological and political writings. In a letter to Alfred Weber written on 28 March 1945, Jaspers confided this fundamental difference: 'True philosophy is based on a limitless capacity for communication. That is why I contradicted your brother when he claimed that 'ultimate standpoints' are the limit of discussion' (Alfred Weber 2003, 129).

---

    17   When Marianne Weber asked him in 1928 whether he had 'stretched Max Weber over the framework of his own philosophy and thus somewhat altered him,' Jaspers insisted 'very seriously: "No, quite the contrary, I have oriented my idea of existential philosophy on Max Weber's character [*Gestalt*]"' (Marianne Weber 1948, 160).

The second issue concerns the value of mysticism for the individual's personality. In his sociology of religion, Weber distinguished between asceticism and mysticism as two different ways of dealing with the central conflicts and theodicies of life, and it is clear from his methodological writings and 'Science as a Vocation' that he personally favored the former (Max Weber 1920). Jaspers, however, was more sympathetic to mysticism in his existential philosophy.[18] In an unpublished lecture manuscript from around 1920 entitled 'German Character' [*Deutsches Wesen*], Jaspers declares that 'true mysticism is the unfathomable source of human life,' whose greatest exemplars can be found 'in German Protestantism and Pietism (in contrast to the fully rationalized Calvinism and Puritanism of the western nations), in German Catholicism, which is different from all other Catholicisms due to these German characteristics' (Jaspers 1920b, 14, 15). Moreover, when we consider that Jaspers conceived of rational thought as a kind of asceticism for the mind, an exercise in self-abnegation that results in heightened states of non-rational self-awareness, it appears as if asceticism and mysticism were conjoined in his conception of existential philosophizing.[19]

Finally, it is important to note that Jaspers's interpretation of Weber's greatness flies in the face of Weber's own personal aspirations. While Weber valorized charismatic leaders and entrepreneurs, and to some extent modeled himself after them, Jaspers asserts that his greatness was of a solitary and Sisyphusian nature. The only specific examples of existential heroes that appear in Jaspers's pre-1933 writings are the lonely German front soldiers of World War I, who fought on under desperate circumstances in order to 'save the soil of the fatherland in the last moment from destruction and establish in the German memory a consciousness of invincibility.' These are the first human specimens, he declares in *The Intellectual Situation of the Age* (1932), 'who in the moment of their doom [*im Untergang*], in the face of the void [*vor dem Nichts*], were able to realize their claim not in this world but in the coming one' (Jaspers 1932b, 183–184). This description is striking similar to Jaspers's characterization of Weber in the 1932 monograph: 'He was a man who took on the entire breadth of German culture [*Bildung*] and lived in the German state at a time when both were already in ruins; he did it with a spirit that not only suffered as a result, but also brought to illumination what had occurred—not with a calm skepticism that looks on from the sidelines, but rather in each present and unique moment with a faith in spite of everything, making a stand even in hopeless situations. He was a man who actively fulfilled his essence in the moment of doom [*im Untergang*]' (Jaspers 1932a, 8–9). For Jaspers, it was this existential commitment in the face of objective hopelessness that made Weber the greatest individual of modern times.

---

18   Kurt Salamun has diagnosed 'a tendency towards mysticism in Jaspers's conception of transcending thinking and his anti-dogmatic attitude' (Salamun 1996, 41).

19   It is interesting to note that Weber himself believed that religious asceticism was initially developed as a means for producing ecstatic experiences. See his remarks in Max Weber 1988c, 242–243.

References

Chalcraft, D. (1994), 'Bringing the Text Back In: On Ways of Reading the Iron Cage Metaphor in the Two Editions of The Protestant Ethic,' in Ray and Reed (eds), 16–45.

Cohn, J. (1921/22), 'Die Erkenntnis der Werte und das Vorrecht der Bejahung. Betrachtungen, angeknüpft an Max Webers Lehre von der Wertfreiheit der Wissenschaft,' *Logos* 10, 195–226.

Hannay, A. (2003), 'Introduction,' in Kierkegaard (1843) 2003, 7–37.

Hennis, W. (1987), *Max Webers Fragestellung. Studien zur Biographie des Werks* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]).

Henrich, D. (1988), 'Denken im Blick auf Max Weber. Eine Einführung,' in Jaspers (1988), 7–31.

Hering, G.F. (1970) 1974, 'Im Umgang mit Karl Jaspers,' in Piper and Saner (eds), *Erinnerungen an Karl Jaspers* (Munich and Zurich: R. Piper & Co.), 77–85.

Jaspers, K. (1910a), letter to his father, 23 January. Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Familienarchiv. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1910b), letter to Enno Jaspers, 24 November. Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Familienarchiv. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1912), letter to his parents, 13 February. Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Familienarchiv. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1913a), *Allgemeine Psychopathologie. Ein Leitfaden für Studierende, Ärzte und Psychologen* (Berlin: Julius Springer).

—— (1913b), 'Kausale und "verständliche" Zusammenhänge zwischen Schicksal und Psychose bei der Dementia praecox (Schizophrenie),' *Zeitschrift für die gesamte Neurologie und Psychiatrie. Originalien* 14, 158–263.

—— (1913c), letter to his parents, 22 May 1913. Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Familienarchiv. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1919a), *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* (Berlin: Julius Springer).

—— (1919b), letter to his parents, 13 June. Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Familienarchiv. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1920a), letter to Marianne Weber, 15 June. Ana 446: Depot Max Weber-Schäfer, Box 10. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich.

—— (1920b), 'Deutsches Wesen (ca. 1920).' Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Box 73. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1921), 'Max Weber. Eine Gedenkrede,' in Karl Jaspers (1988), 32–48.

—— (1928), 'Heidelberg Rede zur Feier vom 15.XII.1928 im Europ. Hof.' Nachlass Karl Jaspers, Box 102. Deutsches Literaturarchiv, Marbach.

—— (1931/32) 1956, *Philosophie*, 3 vols., (Berlin, Göttingen, Heidelberg: Springer).

—— (1932a), *Max Weber. Deutsches Wesen im politischen Denken, im Forschen und Philosophieren* (Oldenburg: Gerhard Stalling).

—— (1932b) 1999, *Die geistige Situation der Zeit*, 2nd ed. (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter).

—— (1954) 1971, 'Vorwort zur vierten Auflage', in K. Jaspers, *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*, 6th ed. (Berlin, Heidelberg, and New York: Springer), viii–xii.

—— (1957), 'Philosophical Autobiography', in Schilpp (ed.), 5–94.

—— (1961), 'Heidelberger Erinnerungen,' *Heidelberger Jahrbücher* 5, 1–10.

—— (1988), *Max Weber. Gesammelte Schriften* (Munich and Zurich: Piper).

Kierkegaard, S. (1843) 2003, *Fear and Trembling*, Alistair Hannay (trans.) (London: Penguin).

Kirkbright, S. (2004), *Karl Jaspers: A Biography. Navigations in Truth* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press).

Leonhard, J.F. (ed.), (1983) *Karl Jaspers in seiner Heidelberger Zeit* (Heidelberg: Heidelberger Verlagsanstalt und Druckerei).

Manasse, E.M. (1957), 'Jaspers's Relation to Max Weber,' in Schilpp (ed.) (1981), 369–391.

Owen, D. and Strong, T. (eds) (2004), *The Vocation Lectures*, Rodney Livingstone (trans.) (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).

Ray, L. and Reed, M. (eds), *Organizing Modernity: New Weberian Perspectives on Work, Organization and Society* (London and New York: Routledge).

Rickert, H. (1920) 1973, 'Psychologie der Weltanschauungen und Philosophie der Werte,' in Hans Saner (ed.), 35–69.

Salamun, K. (1996), 'The Concept of Liberality in Jaspers's Philosophy and the Idea of the University,' in Walters (ed.), 39–53.

Saner, H. (1970), *Karl Jaspers* (Reinbek: Rowohlt).

Saner, H. (ed.) (1973), *Karl Jaspers in der Diskussion* (Munich: R. Piper & Co.).

Scheler, M. (1921/23) 1960, 'Max Webers Ausschaltung der Philosophie (Zur Psychologie und Soziologie der nominalistischen Denkart)', in *Die Wissensformen und die Gesellschaft*, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 8 (Bern and Munich: Francke Verlag), 430–438.

Schilpp, P.A. (ed.) (1981), *The Philosophy of Karl Jaspers* (La Salle: Open Court Publishing Company).

Schmitt, W. (1983), 'Karl Jaspers als Psychiater und sein Einfluß auf die Psychiatrie,' in Leonhard (ed.), 23–41.

Schüßler, W. (1995), *Karl Jaspers zur Einführung* (Hamburg: Junius).

Speck, J. (ed.) (1991), *Grundprobleme der großen Philosophen*, vol. 4 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht),

Stegmüller, W. (1969), *Main Currents in Contemporary German, British, and American Philosophy*, A.E. Blumberg (trans.) (Dordrecht: D. Reidel).

Walters, G.J. (ed.) (1996), *The Tasks of Truth: Essays on Karl Jaspers's Idea of the University* (Frankfurt am Main, Berlin, Bern, New York, Paris, and Vienna: Peter Lang).

Weber, A. (2003), *Ausgewählter Briefwechsel*, .Demm and Soell (eds) (Marburg: Metropolis Verlag).

Weber, M. (1948), *Lebenserinnerungen* (Bremen: Johs. Storm Verlag).

Weber, M. (1919) 2004, 'Science as a Vocation,' in Owen and Strong (eds), 1–31.

Weber, M. (1920) 1988, 'Zwischenbetrachtung. Theorie der Stufen und Richtungen religiöser Weltablehnung,' in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. 1 (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]), 536–573.

Weber, M. (1998), *Briefe 1911-1912*, M. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen et al. (eds) (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]).

Weber, M. (2003), *Briefe 1913-1914*, M. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen et al. (eds) (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck]).

Weiß, J. (1991), 'Max Weber: Die Entzauberung der Welt,' in Speck (ed.), 9–47.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 4

Merleau-Ponty's Use of the Weberian Example: Avoiding Totalizing Meanings in History

Ritchie Savage

Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961) was a French philosopher and phenomenologist who, in the *Adventures of the Dialectic*, revealed his disenchantment with the Marxist conception of history due to its overly rational and deterministic logic. In order to move beyond this view of history, Merleau-Ponty points to Weber's historical writings and methodology as an important juncture in the philosophy of history—as a starting point for re-conceptualizing the nature of the dialectic in history. Through an analysis of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Merleau-Ponty argues that Weber avoids the teleological rigidity present in Marxism by employing flexible theoretical constructs, which, in their embrace of contingency, do not attempt to contain the whole of historical reality.

Merleau-Ponty's reading of Weber's work thus represents an important contribution to Weber scholarship insofar as it casts Weber's break with Marxism in a new and different light. It has almost become cliché to refer to how Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic*, argues for an understanding of the capitalist spirit that refutes the economic reductionism inherent in Marx's analysis of capitalism by contextualizing the emergence of capitalism within a set of cultural values. However, what Merleau-Ponty offers to students of Weber is an understanding of the way in which Weber avoids the historical determinism that plagues Marxism through his philosophical sensitivity to the complexities and contingencies inherent in historical processes.

In order to conceptualize Weber's position in Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of history and the rupture with Marxist historical determinism, it is essential to understand the nature of this determinism and its roots in Hegelian philosophy. In the Introduction to the *Philosophy of History*, Hegel writes, 'Spirit does not toss itself about in the external play of chance occurrences; on the contrary, it is that which determines history absolutely, and it stands firm against the chance occurrences which it dominates and exploits for its own purpose' (Hegel 1988, 58). One could argue that this quotation from Hegel sums up exactly what Merleau-Ponty seeks to critique in his *Adventures of the Dialectic*: the notion of absolute meaning in history. Merleau-Ponty argues that this notion of absolute meaning

in history is present in Marxism[1]. In Marxism, the absolute meaning of history is constituted in the form of the proletariat that will rise and lead to the future dissolution of all classes. It is only through this Hegelian, metaphysical conception of history that one can delusively attribute universal status to the proletarian class. The revolutionary class always represents itself as universal; however, as the revolutionary regime follows, the particular interests of the class are exposed. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty argues that this paradigm of history, which posits absolute meaning, does not seem to fit actual, historical reality. It is for this reason that Merleau-Ponty momentarily takes recourse in the Weberian model of history in the *Adventures of the Dialectic*. If meaning in history is not absolute, perhaps one could consider the opposite view—that there are multiple meanings in history, which are contingent. Following this line of reasoning, Merleau-Ponty examines Weber's notion of elective affinities in *The Protestant Ethic* and the *Spirit of Capitalism*.

Before delving into Weber's analysis of the relationship between the Protestant ethic and capitalism, one must first take into account his methodology—how he constructs ideal types out of Protestantism and capitalism. In the essay, *'Objectivity' in Social Science*, Weber defines an ideal type as follows: 'An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct' (Weber 2004, 90). In this sense, ideal types are described as conceptual abstractions or constructs in which particular aspects of a historical phenomenon are emphasized over others for the purpose of making a theoretical comparison. Thus, the following question is raised: Why do historical phenomena have to be reduced and certain aspects accentuated in order to render them perceptible and useful in a theoretical sense? Weber's justification for employing these reductive constructs is evident in his fundamental view of history as infinitely complex and irrational. Weber writes, 'Life with its irrationality and its store of possible meanings is inexhaustible. The concrete form in which value-relevance occurs remains perpetually in flux, ever subject to change in the dimly seen future of human culture' (Weber 2004, 111). In constructing ideal types, Weber reduces the irrational aspects of the historical event to a rational framework. For Weber, a historical event is the result of a complex and infinite array of causal relationships, implying a sense of chaos behind the event. In order to combat this chaos underpinning the event, the social scientist must isolate certain facets of the irrational event based on presuppositions about which aspects of the event are of cultural significance:

---

1   For a more comprehensive presentation of Merleau-Ponty's nuanced views on Marxism and absolute meaning and how these views altered through the course of his writings, see Miller 1976.

> Order is brought into this chaos only on the condition that in every case only a part of concrete reality is interesting and significant to us, because only it is related to the cultural values with which we approach reality. Only certain sides of the infinitely complex concrete phenomenon, namely those to which we attribute a general cultural significance—are therefore worthwhile knowing. They alone are objects of causal explanation (Weber 2004, 78).

Thus, Weber must construct ideal types out of capitalism and Protestantism by reducing these complex historical phenomena to certain key characteristics and accentuating these characteristics to distil their cultural significance for modern capitalism. Merleau-Ponty describes how Weber constructs these ideal types in the following passage:

> Let us, for example, attempt to understand the relationship between Protestantism and the capitalistic spirit. The historian intervenes initially by abstracting these two historical identities. Weber does not consider speculative or venture capitalism, which depends upon venture politics. He takes as his object an economic system within which one can expect continuous return from a durable and profitable enterprise, a system which therefore involves a minimum of accountancy and organization, encourages free labor, and tends toward market economy. In the same way he limits his discussion of the Protestant ethic to Calvinism, and more especially to the Calvinism of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, considered more as collective fact than in its original form as set forth by Calvin. These facts are chosen as interesting and historically important because they reveal a certain logical structure which is the key to a whole series of other facts (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 12).

As Merleau-Ponty suggests, Weber accentuates the aspects of capitalism in which it is portrayed as an economic system fueled by the reinvestment of profit and the aspects of Protestantism that emphasize a system of cultural values, which support this particular type of capitalistic economic endeavor. This becomes evident through an analysis of the central arguments that Weber makes in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Weber's development of the ideal type of capitalism signifies an epistemological rupture with the previously held, common sense notions of the essence of capitalism. This common sense notion is described by Weber as a prematurely conceived and ahistorical sense of capitalism in which it is associated with the sudden emergence of greed and the feverish acquisition of wealth. In the Author's Introduction (*Vorbemerkung*), Weber immediately dismisses this notion: 'The impulse to acquistion, pursuit of gain, of money, of the greatest possible amount of money, has in itself nothing to do with capitalism … One may say that it has been common to all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the earth … Unlimited greed for gain is not in the least identical with capitalism, and is still less its spirit' (Weber 1992, xxxi). On the contrary, Weber explains that, if anything, the spirit of capitalism is associated with the exact opposite of this conception involving greed; it involves a strict and rational control over this greedy impulse that manifests itself

in consumption. Weber writes, 'Capitalism may even be identical with restraint, or at least a rational tempering, of this irrational impulse' (Weber 1992, xxxi). It is at this point that Weber lays out his ideal type of capitalism as the continually renewed reinvestment of profit: 'But capitalism is identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise' (Weber 1992, xxxii).

Weber then sets out to construct a history of this spirit of capitalism marked by renewed reinvestment of profit, and in a manner analogous to the Nietzschean spirit of genealogy, Weber begins his inquiry with the end result by pointing to an aspect of Benjamin Franklin's philosophy, summed up in the following words: *Time is money*. For Weber, Franklin's words epitomize the spirit of capitalism insofar as they emphasize a very rational vision of the Protestant duty to always calculate every aspect of one's routine in daily life in terms of the greatest potential for profit. Weber connects Franklin's conception of the Protestant duty to Luther's notion of the 'calling', and it is with this notion that one encounters the first aspect of the ideal type of Protestantism. In order to stress the novelty and peculiarity of this concept of the calling, Weber situates this concept within the Reformation and describes the break with the central cosmology and theological tenants of the Catholic faith. Weber describes the movement from the world-view of Catholicism to that of Lutheranism as one from an other-worldly asceticism to a this-worldly asceticism—a theological transformation in which one no longer seeks to shut out this world tainted by sin and take refuge in one's future in God's kingdom; rather, one seeks to utilize one's role in this life as the fulfillment of God's plan. Weber writes, 'The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. That was his calling' (Weber 1992, 40).

Weber finds the other central aspect of his ideal type of Protestantism in Calvin's theory of predestination. Calvin's key theological innovation emphasized that every individual was either saved or damned *a priori* from the moment of God's creation: 'In what was for the man of the age of the Reformation the most important thing in life, his eternal salvation, he was forced to follow his path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him for eternity. No one could help him' (Weber 1992, 61). Thus, this conception of predestination refuted the commonly held belief in Catholicism that one could redeem one's soul through the Church, priests, sacraments and good works. However, the extreme uneasiness stemming from anticipation of one's predestined yet unknown worth in the eyes of God provoked Calvinists to search for signs that they were saved. In this sense, the Calvinist engaged in good works not to secure a place at God's side but to gain assurance that he or she was chosen: 'Thus, however useless good works might be as a means of attaining salvation, for even the elect remain beings of the flesh, and everything they do falls infinitely short of divine standards, nevertheless, they are indispensable as a sign of election. They are the technical means, not of purchasing salvation, but of getting rid of the fear of damnation' (Weber 1992, 69).

Given an explanation of the Lutheran and Calvinist dimensions of the ideal type of Protestantism, one can begin to understand how these two aspects of the ideal type merge to form a system of culture values and practices that intertwine with the economic practices in the ideal type of capitalism. Following the reasoning implied in the Lutheran notion of the calling, if God provides one of his chosen people with a chance to increase profit, one must take advantage of this opportunity because such an opportunity is a manifestation of one's calling, which one has a duty to fulfill. Weber describes this connection between the calling and the pursuit of profit in stating that, 'above all, in practice the most important, criterion is found in private profitableness. For if that God, whose hand the Puritan sees in all the occurrences of life, shows one of His elect a chance of profit, he must do it with a purpose. Hence the faithful Christian must follow the call by taking advantage of the opportunity' (Weber 1992, 108). And following Calvinistic reasoning, such a chance to increase profit is also a sign that one has been chosen and predestined to be saved by God. Thus, within the Protestant framework, the acquisition of wealth and profit is no longer morally prohibited as in Catholicism; rather, it is encouraged. The only prohibition that remains in place is that one must not sinfully indulge in one's wealth through consumption. In this sense, the Protestant ethic promotes a form of cultural activity, involving continuous reinvestment of profit due to consumptive restrictions, which mirrors the form of economic practice involved in the ideal-typical model of capitalism: 'When the limitation of consumption is combined with this release of acquisitive activity, the inevitable practical result is obvious: accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save' (Weber 1992, 116).

Merleau-Ponty makes an example of Weber's methodology in his study of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, because for Merleau-Ponty, Weber's work represents a way of analyzing history that does not attribute absolute meaning and a predetermined path to the movement of history. What Weber has shown is that there are multiple meanings in history, which the historian can never fully ascertain, that intersect with each other in time, simply by chance. Merleau-Ponty first hints at Weber's orientation regarding history in describing Weber's new form of liberalism:

> Weber is a liberal. His liberalism is brand new, because he admits that truth always leaves a margin of doubt, that *it does not exhaust the reality of the past* and still less that of the present, and that history is the natural seat of violence. Contrary to previous liberalism, it does not ingenuously consider itself to be the law of things; rather it preserves in becoming such a law, *through a history in which it is not predestined* (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 9, my emphasis).

Weber seeks to capture and depict these meanings, which intersect in history, through ideal types, or perhaps, as Merleau-Ponty suggests, these ideal types are the meanings themselves. Already, by introducing these conceptual apparatuses, Weber equips his methodology with a safeguard against conceptions of the ideal

type connoting metaphysical essences that unlock irrefutable meanings in history. Ideal types are ways of constructing meaning in history, or of injecting meaning into history in light of what history means for us in the present, not means of extracting a permanent meaning from history, which would somehow exist objectively outside of time. Thus, the ideal types are just as contingent as the historical meanings these constructs propose to link together. And Merleau-Ponty is certainly aware of this contingent quality of ideal types: 'The meanings, or, as Weber says, ideal types, which it introduces into facts must not be taken as keys to history' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 10).

For Merleau-Ponty, Weber's methodology, despite its embrace of contingency, stays true to the spirit of the dialectic. The linkage Weber makes between his ideal types may turn out to be an objective one, however paradoxically, insofar as this linking of historical meanings corresponds to our subjective perception of the present outcome of these meanings. Merleau-Ponty alludes to this in the following passage.

> If, in extending the work ethic back to its Calvinistic origins and towards its capitalistic consequences, Weber succeeds in understanding the basic structure of the facts, it is because he has discovered an objective meaning in them, has pierced the appearances in which reason is enclosed, and has gone beyond provisional and partial perspectives by restoring the anonymous intention, the dialectic of the whole (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 13-14).

This is why Benjamin Franklin's financially induced perspective of time forms the crux of Weber's study. This perspective reveals the dialectic of the whole; it represents the complete synthesis of the structures of the Protestant work ethic and capitalism—Franklin becomes the embodiment of the capitalist work ethic *par excellence*. Merleau-Ponty writes, 'Franklin's text presents us with a vital choice in its pure state, a mode of *Lebensführung* which relates Puritanism to the capitalistic spirit and enables Calvinism to be defined as worldly asceticism and capitalism to be defined as "rationalization"; and finally, if the initial intuition is confirmed, it enables us to discover an intelligible transition from one to the other' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 13). In this sense, Merleau-Ponty argues that Weber has found the dialectic in the elective affinity between the ideal types of Protestantism and capitalism. In this dialectic, notions of religious morality and economic activity momentarily combine to form one structure in which both ideal types exert a reciprocal influence on each other. The religious view supports the reinvestment of profit, and the reinvestment of profit serves as a sign that one is saved: 'There is thus a religious efficacy and an economic efficacy. Weber describes them as interwoven, exchanging positions so that now one, now the other plays the role of tutor. The effect turns back on its cause, carrying and transforming it in its turn' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 16).

It is in this interchangeability between the ideal types of Protestantism and capitalism that one begins to understand how capitalism eventually shed its

religious counterpart. At the point when the Protestant work ethic became synonymous with the economic practices of capitalism, the spirit of capitalism simply had no more use for its religious inhibitor. Merleau-Ponty makes this known in describing how each ideal type carried the whole of the other and how the ideal types of Protestantism and capitalism are simply two ways of expressing the same relationship between spiritual ideas and material practices:

> This relationship is supple and reversible. If the Protestant ethic and capitalism are two institutional ways of stating the relationship of man to man, there is no reason why the Protestant ethic should not for a time carry within itself incipient capitalism. Nor is there anything to prevent capitalism from perpetuating certain typically Protestant modes in history or even from displacing Protestantism as the driving force of history and substituting itself for it, allowing certain motives to perish and asserting others as its exclusive theme (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 18).

And Weber is clear in stating that this is actually what happened. In the course of history, the driving force of capitalism simply became too big for its Protestant britches and thus discarded them. Weber states,

> Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasingly and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. To-day the spirit of religious asceticism—whether finally, who knows?—has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer (Weber 1992, 124).

After Weber and Merleau-Ponty's depictions of capitalism's great escape, the mechanism by which this ideal type usurps the role of its Protestant counterpart becomes evident. It is because the religious ideology became so thoroughly imbedded in the actual material and economic practices that capitalism simply had no more use for the ideational content of the former.

The quality that Merleau-Ponty is attracted to in Weber's methodological application of ideal types is that these ideal types lack a certain historical rigidity. They are flexible analytic devices, which do not determine the path of history absolutely, and in the case of Protestantism and capitalism, each ideal type is open to a sort of penetration by the other. These ideal types do not exist in brackets; they are not isolated monads of historical meaning that fuse at some point in history due to a determined logic. It is by chance that each of these ideal types happens to carry some aspect of the logic of the other within it. And their momentary fusion resulting in cultural form of life, realized in the words of Franklin, is contingent on this undetermined logic. Merleau-Ponty lays out this conception of Weber's historical understanding:

History has meaning, but there is no pure development of ideas. Its meaning arises in contact with contingency, at the moment when human initiative founds a system of life by taking up anew scattered givens. And the historical understanding which reveals an interior to history still leaves us in the presence of empirical history, with its destiny and its haphazardness, and does not subordinate it to any hidden reason. Such is the philosophy without dogmatism which one discerns all through Weber's studies (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 16).

One could thus argue that Weber's conception of history oscillates between empiricism and play, between chance and necessity. On the one hand, Weber attempts to be empirically precise in his formation of ideal types. This empirical precision is evinced in the reductive character of the ideal types. As Merleau-Ponty has shown, Weber concentrates on a specific aspect of capitalism, in his formation of the ideal type, which is found in the economic practice of reinvestment of profit. And concerning Protestantism, he is only concerned with the theological notions of the calling and predestination, which facilitate the ethical dimension behind the reinvestment of profit. Weber is also clear about this need for empirical precision in his own description and justification of the use of ideal types as a historical methodology. This is evident in his argument for accentuating certain aspects of ideal types both for making theoretical comparisons and for isolating those characteristics that are of cultural significance. On the other hand, Weber's conception of history accounts for a certain dimension of play in the formation of ideal types. As said above, the ideal types of Protestantism and capitalism are fluid and interchangeable; they reverse roles, overcome each other at different points in time, and reciprocally influence each other.

Furthermore, there are also elements of chance and necessity in Weber's historical account. The fact that the theological conceptions of the calling and predestination appear at a particular moment in history and that a form of economic enterprise focused on profit arises as well are not the result of some logic guiding history, but rather chance. However, one must also consider the fact that these theological notions implying a this-worldly asceticism comprised of both a work ethic and a sense of frugality are necessary for the development of an economic system based on the reinvestment of profit and vice versa. In other words, this form of capitalism, which is contingent on Protestantism, the development of which is, in turn, contingent on the economic development of capitalism, taken together, seem the result of a type of historical destiny. This destiny is not defined by the fact that they each depend on the other, but rather by the fact that because they depend on each other, they necessarily combine at a point in history. Merleau-Ponty explains this nuanced understanding of Weber's historical work in suggesting,

it is a sort of historical imagination which sows here and there elements capable one day of being integrated. The meaning of the system in its beginnings is like the pictorial meaning of a painting, which not so much directs the painter's movements but is the result of them and progresses with them … Historians come to talk of 'rationalization'

or 'capitalism' when the affinity of these products of the historical imagination becomes clear. But history does not work according to a model; it is, in fact, the advent of meaning. To say that the elements of rationality were related to one another before crystallizing into a system is only a manner of saying that, taken up and developed by human intentions, they ought to confirm one another and form a whole (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 17–18).

This passage relates the delicate position in which historians find themselves. It is easy for historians, given their position in the present, to look back at a series of historical phenomena, such as the advent of Protestantism and the advent of capitalism, and declare that these two systems of life were destined to intersect from their inception. But as soon as historians refer to the past as history, they have already imposed themselves and their meanings on it. Walter Benjamin was certainly aware of this in his *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.

A puppet in Turkish attire and with a hookah in its mouth sat before a chessboard placed on a large table. A system of mirrors created the illusion that this table was transparent from all sides. Actually, a little hunchback who was an expert chess player sat inside and guided the puppet's hands by means of strings. One can imagine the philosophical counterpart to this device. The puppet called 'historical materialism' is to win all the time (Benjamin 1968, 253).

Just as the hunchback guides the puppet's hands with strings, philosophers and historians guide history with their dogmatism and notions of absolute meaning. But the past, in itself, contains no such meaning. As Jean-Paul Sartre writes in *Nausea*, 'Every existing thing is born without reason, prolongs itself out of weakness, and dies by chance' (Sartre 1975, 180). One could argue that Merleau-Ponty would make this distinction between the past and history because of how the historian reifies meaning into the past. This is why Merleau-Ponty refers to history as the advent of meaning, for it is the historian who invents history as meaning and meaning as history in his interpretation of the past. Weber's strength, from Merleau-Ponty's perspective, is that he is aware of this: 'The historian cannot look at the past without giving it a meaning, without putting into perspective the important and the subordinate, the essential and the accidental, plans and accomplishments, preparations and declines … One cannot avoid the invasion of the historian into history' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 10).

Just as one cannot avoid the invasion of the historian into history, one also cannot avoid the invasion of theories of history into politics. In this sense, Merleau-Ponty argues that there is an intrinsic connection between one's political philosophy and philosophy of history. This is why Merleau-Ponty describes Weber's conception of history in relation to his political orientation as a new liberal. In Merleau-Ponty's view, this new liberalism breaks with notions of absolute truth and predestined history. This new type of political orientation represents an important step in the 'adventures' of the dialectic, because for Merleau-Ponty, the traditional Marxist notion of the political is caught in a viscous circle. Merleau-Ponty maintains that

it is not the dialectic itself which is problematic; rather, the problem resides in how the dialectic is conceived of within a historical framework by Marxist thought: 'What then is obsolete is not the dialectic but the pretension of terminating it in an end of history, in a permanent revolution, or in a regime which, being the contestation of itself, would no longer need to be contested from the outside and, in fact, would no longer have anything outside it' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 206). The problem with this type of historical contextualization of the dialectic is that it betrays the notion of the dialectic itself; it implies the dissolution of the dialectic.

Merleau-Ponty argues that this paradoxical undoing of the dialectic is present both in Marxist notions of the end of history and permanent revolution. In the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, Marx modifies Hegel's notion of the end of history, embodied in the liberal Prussian State, to represent the proletariat as the vehicle of its own end in the dissolution of all classes.

> When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstances, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of classes generally, and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class (Marx 1978, 490-491).

In Marx's projection, once class antagonisms dissolve, society loses its political quality, insofar as the political is conceived of in terms of class opposition. Thus, Marx posits an end to history, which is the end of classes and the end of political opposition. But one must attribute a universal status to the proletariat as the driving force behind history (as class struggle) in order for it to end history (as class struggle). Merleau-Ponty argues that Marxism falls victim to the same Hegelian mistake of describing the dialectic *as history* instead of *within history*. For if the unfolding of the dialectic *is history*, then surely, the end of history will result in the final synthesis dissolving all previous oppositions. However, Merleau-Ponty suggests that the dialectic 'is a thought which does not constitute the whole but which is situated in it' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 204). Because the dialectic is a methodological construction for understanding the nature of the event *within* history, it follows that political oppositions have no certain end.

Even Trotsky's notion of permanent revolution, which seems to transform this conception of the end of history into the infinite struggle of internal oppositions within the revolutionary party, carries on a disguised sense of this end of history (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 207). Although the concept of permanent revolution is forged in order to relativize the proletariat, to strip it of its absolute meaning and connection to the end of history, this conception still clings to absolute meaning by

constituting the proletariat as the true seat of power. In the concept of permanent revolution, no power exists which can overthrow the proletariat; there is no power outside of it, no external oppositions. With no oppositions except for those within the proletariat itself, there is no force to undo the proletariat, and thus, it still represents the end of history, even if this end is marked by an infinite struggle.

Because both these notions of the end of history and permanent revolution posit an end to external oppositions, Merleau-Ponty argues that these conceptions are in opposition to the dialectic. Merleau Ponty writes, 'There is no dialectic without opposition or freedom, and in the revolution opposition and freedom do not last for long' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 207). Opposition and freedom are transient forces insofar as they are present only during the moment when the old regime is toppled by the revolution. As soon as these revolutionary forces begin to construct the new revolutionary regime from the ground up in place of the old regime, the revolutionary party seeks to put an end to the opposition inherent in the dialectic and contradicts the spirit of the revolution by constituting a new elite in the form of the dictatorship of the proletariat, which attempts to systematically dismantle any forces that would oppose it. Merleau-Ponty suggests this in questioning 'whether the revolution does not by definition bring about the opposite of what it wants by establishing a new elite, albeit in the name of permanent revolution' (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 207). The revolutionary party justifies this tyrannical action through its view of itself as absolute, as representing the universal interests of the proletariat in a perpetual revolution, which paradoxically carries on this feigned temporal sense of itself as constituting the end of history insofar as it maintains that no forces opposing the party could ever represent the *true* interests of the proletariat.

Merleau-Ponty is wary of this Marxist political polemic and the Hegelian view of history contained within it, for he is well aware of the potential atrocities that can be committed under the guise of the universal interests of the proletarian class, resulting in the undermining of the dialectic itself. Merleau-Ponty thus points to Weber's *oeuvre* as it represents a break with this Marxist notion of the universal interests of the proletarian class. This is perhaps best exemplified in the essay, 'Class, Status, Party,' in which Weber writes,

> That men in the same class situation regularly react in mass actions to such tangible situations as economic ones in the direction of those interests that are most adequate to their average number is an important and after all simple fact for the understanding of historical events. Above all, this fact must not lead to that kind of pseudo-scientific operation with the concept of 'class' and class interests' so frequently found these days, and which has found its most classic expression in the statement of a talented author, that the individual may be in error concerning his interests but that the 'class' is 'infallible' about its interests (Weber 1946, 185).

The talented author that Weber is critiquing in this quotation is clearly Marx. Weber's point is that the concept of class itself is an ambiguous one, and he is

suspicious of this notion that the individual interests of a group of people can some how converge into a general interest of a class—this notion of an interest which is common to every individual in the class and which is somehow beyond any doubt or opposition.

This is why Merleau-Ponty exalts Weber's new liberalism as a potential way out of this political dialectic plagued by Hegelian spirit: it represents a type of political position that can conceive of an opposition outside of itself:

> If we speak of liberalism, it is in the sense that Communist action and other revolutionary movements are accepted only as a useful menace, as a continual call to order, that we do not believe in the solution of the social problem through the power of the proletarian class or its representatives, that we expect progress only from a conscious action which will confront itself with the judgment of an opposition. Like Weber's heroic liberalism, it lets even what contests it enter its universe, and it is justified in its own eyes only when it understands its opposition (Merleau-Ponty 1973, 226).

Whereas the Communist party represents itself as absolute and universal, perceiving itself as the dialectic of the whole and the end of history, thereby denying the possibility of any legitimate external opposition, Weber's liberalism embraces its relativism and its historical contingency, and without any glorified sense of its necessity and inevitability, it can only legitimate itself through the recognition of its external opposition, an opposition which must always be tolerated and understood. In this sense, perhaps Merleau-Ponty is justified in connecting Weber's historical sociology to his political views, despite Weber's insistence on the need for 'value-free' sociology detached from politics, insofar as the philosophy of history inherent in *The Protestant Ethic* and this new liberalism bears the same sense of historical contingency.

This impression that Weber has made on Merleau-Ponty as a type of dialectical thinker who can account for historical contingency and political opposition reveals not only the extent to which Weber was ahead of his own time but also the extent to which he still has something to say to us today. From Merleau-Ponty's perspective, Weber went to great lengths to avoid injecting absolute meaning into history in his careful construction of ideal types. This heightened sensitivity to the problems and dangers inherent in metaphysical conceptions of history, which Weber exemplifies for Merleau-Ponty, puts Weber on par with the Foucaults, Derridas and Lyotards of our own era. In showing how totalizing views of history are incompatible with progressive politics, Merleau-Ponty is able to juxtapose the Weberian position, which, in its toleration of contingency and opposition, places Weber on the horizon of liberal democratic theory. If Weber's work, as a moment in the philosophy of history, represents a rupture with absolute meaning and historical determinism, it also represents a transformation into a type of politics, which can conceive of something outside of itself—a type of politics, which speaks to our present concerns. In interpreting Weber's work in the context of what is of cultural

significance for us today, perhaps we can forge ideal types out of his historical and political perspectives.

References

Benjamin, W. (1968), *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books).

Gerth, H. and Mills, C. (eds.) (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Hegel, G. (1988), *Introduction to the Philosophy of History* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company).

Merleau-Ponty, M. (1973), *Adventures of the Dialectic* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).

Miller, J. (1976), 'Merleau-Ponty's Marxism: Between Phenomenology and the Hegelian Absolute', *History and Theory* 15:2, 109–132.

Sartre, J. (1975), *Nausea* (New York: New Directions Paperbook).

Tucker, R. (ed.) (1978), *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company).

Weber, M. (1992), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Routledge).

Weber, M. (2004), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press).

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 5

Adorno's Paradox Weber's Constructionism: Scrutinizing Theory and Method

Fanon John Howell

In this chapter I approach Theodor Adorno as a theorist and social scientist concerned with finding an epistemological and methodological mode of scholarly investigation that was free of ideological underpinnings and value judgments. I do not attempt to invalidate, but scrutinize his appeal to aesthetics by considering Weberian rationalism, the conceptual process involved in the formation of 'ideal types' and their application. The analysis shows that Adorno's paradox—fleeing Enlightenment ideology and becoming embedded in aesthetic ideology— falls victim to a double bind and leaves social researchers and theorists in a methodological limbo. It is meant to exhibit the efficacy of Max Weber's ideal type technique by highlighting its ability to assemble a mode of verifiability useful across the social sciences. I seek to contribute to contemporary interpretations of Adorno, which may miss the ideal-typical nature of his work as well as the body of Weberian scholarship emphasizing his methodological prowess. The exercise itself is ideal-typical … what I attempt here broaches an ideal of intersecting discourses—of rationalism and aesthetics, of subjectivity and truth, of method and objectivity—in a fashion that seeks greater coherence in social theory.

The essay begins with Adorno and Max Horkheimer's critique of Enlightenment reason and traces this critical thread through the historicism of Hegel and Marx to introduce reasons why Adorno's conception of history is negative in relation to their positivistic determinism. It then introduces Weberian rationalism in contrast to this reason and probes Adorno's critique of Enlightenment thought, outlining his technique of disassociating phenomena to debunk this grand narrative. Taking into account Weber's contention that the social psychology of the investigator is instrumental in assessing the product of their labor, I apply this supposition by examining Adorno's career as a music critic/theoretician and his academic pursuits in Frankfurt in an effort to segue into his aesthetics. After explaining Weber's rational for this biographical take, I go into a more detailed explication of Adorno's aesthetics, its paradoxical nature, and the problematic that ensues. I preliminarily present Weber's methodology by way of comparison to Seymour Papert's concept of constructivism and Jean Piaget's explication of constructionism, then his notion of ideal types takes center stage as I show exactly why this mode of analysis holds utility by applying it to Adorno's aesthetics, arguing that its accounting for

both the investigator's subjectivity and empirical objectivity allows for greater assessment, validation and falsification.

Enlightenment Critique

More hegemonic discourses of Western academia aver that the age of Enlightenment catapulted reason, progress, and advanced civilization. Adorno's contention, however, was that opposed to the prevailing belief in this enchanting reason, civilization was born out of a barbarity that had its origin in the constructs of administrative and bureaucratic institutions developed after the Enlightenment's dawning. In their late 1960s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Adorno and Frankfurt School colleague Max Horkheimer make the case that industrialists of this age used reason as an instrument of domination over nature. This nature 'refers to the cultural forms which result from a specific mode of social interaction [i.e., capitalism], while the domination of nature refers to the mode of domination of men structured by the same mechanism.' (Rose 1978, 79–80) In sync with their Marxist leanings, Adorno and Horkheimer argued that the foundation for this mode of interaction had its root in the ideological contentions of modern bourgeoisie intellectuals who conceived social freedom as necessarily entailing Enlightenment thought. The latter's foundation rested upon the notion of progress, but Adorno argued that it also possessed the seed of anarchy: 'progress and barbarism are matted together in mass culture,' he posits in *Minima Moralia*. (Adorno 1974, 50) This conception of progress compels the necessity for positivist explanations of nature and perpetuates a social Darwinian ethic amid social relations.

   Adorno maintained that post-Enlightenment historicists (here we reference specifically Hegel and Marx) misconstrued history, introducing mythical illusions of a naturally progressing narrative. Hegel's *Philosophy of History* indeed begins proclaiming, '… the Idea is in truth, the leader of peoples and of the World; and Spirit, the rational and necessitated will of that conductor, is and has been the director of the events of the World's History.' (Hegel 1956, 8) It is this 'Idea' that is the Enlightenment's momentous undercurrent. It catapults the conceptualization of progress and dons 'Spirit' as its self-perpetuating machine, actualizing history as it records it. What Adorno's argument points to is the fact that our burden as beings within this macrocosmic 'Idea' is to vindicate reason as an *a priori* truth. Damned, we create strategies of investigation, normative methodologies and, more subliminally, principals for social relations. Adorno, in counter-distinction, rejects Hegel's de-emphasis on subjectivity for the worth of a whole:

> The primacy of totality over phenomenality is to be grasped in phenomenality, which is ruled by what tradition takes for the world spirit … The world spirit is; but is not a spirit. It is the very negativity, rather, which Hegel shifted from the spirit's shoulders upon the shoulders of the ones who must obey it, the ones whose defeat doubles the verdict that the difference between them and objectivity is what is untrue and evil … The reflexive

concept 'world spirit' is disinterested in the living, although the whole whose primacy it expresses needs the living as much as they need it to exist. (Adorno 1973, 303-304)

In presenting the generalized notion of a 'world spirit,' Adorno argues, Hegel illustrates the Enlightenment's potential toward domination. This foundation cultivated the seed of totalitarian rapture while tranquilizing and simultaneously oppressing the means of its perpetuation—the human cohort—with duping ideologies that can be witnessed in the panning out of Marxism in the twentieth century.

Staging capitalism as a moment in history, Marx presented the Enlightenment with its socialist derivative. He reconfigured Hegel's lord/bondsman dialectic in his illuminating portrayal of the proletariat/bourgeoisie, and challenged the hegemony of industrial capitalism by way of its ideological core: commodity fetishism.[1] In 1846 Marx and Engels proclaimed that 'the production of ideas, of conceptions, of consciousness is directly interwoven with the material activity and relationships of men; it is the language of actual life.' (Engels and Marx 1967, 414) In this state of economically induced paranoia the working classes become an alienated people. Their labor produces for a power-contrasted other, the bourgeoisie, who own all means of production and radiate as signifiers in history. Marx's narrative, however, tells of a different progression where the proletariat becomes history's 'Spirit' in the Hegelian sense, overcoming alienation by revolution. However as the *Manifesto* itself spells out, the proletariat class is a complex and multi-layered matrix. Many of its dynamos are individuals whose social status borders both the bourgeoisie and proletariat. There is not, therefore, a pure proletariat, and self-interest still drives the leaders of their movement. In the end, Adorno maintained that what this divided mission accomplishes is yet another path dependent arrangement where, like capitalism, a utopia is proclaimed, but not actualized. This is why the historical events that transpired from Marxism (e.g., the Maoist saga, the Russian Revolution, east European blocs[2]) faltered, Adorno would argue. They were doomed from their premise, fabricated by the Enlightenment's aggressive and incessant desire for dominance, order, and myth of progress.

---

1   In *Phenomenology of Spirit* Hegel illustrates an ideal-typical construction in the model of lord/bondsman. In his state, the lord sees himself as free, but Hegel proclaims that it is the bondsman who is free because he is the one that creates labor. He eventually comes to realize this direct relation to labor. It is not external to him, yet he comprehends the terror and fear he feels during its production due to the presence of the lord and must overcome this subjection. (Hegel 1977, 115-117)

2   By bloc here I am referring to the Gramscian notion. Gramsci holds to the contention that a collective revolutionary will and the establishment can be brought to synthesis. It is what he calls a 'hegemonic bloc,' a fabric of plural particularity. (Gramsci, 2005: 366)

Weberian Rationalism

Adorno's pessimistic approach to the determinism of modern historicism, however, is interestingly countered if we consider the nature of Weber's methodological approach to nineteenth and early twentieth century developments in the modern West. As opposed to the Enlightenment notion of reason to which Adorno held contempt, I argue that Weber's explication of rationalism has relation to the 'subjective' or 'true' reason explicated by Horkheimer in *Eclipse of Reason* (Horkheimer 1974). Both concepts attempt to give explanations by ordered inferences, but while Weber's rationalism avoids value-laden assessments and takes into account situations and norms, Enlightenment reason posits universal truths and justifications for grand narratives. Both methodological positions are associated with the ability to formulate concepts that exist in abstraction, but Enlightenment reason based their validity on the *a priori* and is a direct derivative of Platonic idealism. The central problem with this notion relates to the hermeneutic, socially constructed state of individuals. Objective truths were oft times delusional and inconclusive with the subjective reason of individuals, leading critics like Adorno to question Enlightenment reason's connection to the interests of dominant groups. Weber's explication of rationalism, in contrast, is grounded in the real and is connected to the reason of the subject. Rather than seeking truth, his rationality championed the task of constructing justification—a procedure that can be challenged, debunked, or approximated in a dialectical fashion.

According to Weber, there was a process of rationalization that took place in all spheres of the West as it gradually shed the husk of old world traditionalism and entered the modern era. This transition was marked by the rise and expansion of rationalism as an ideal; the shifting away from rule under religion; and an increase of people pursuing their own values. In 'Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions' he declares,

> The rationalization and the conscious sublimation of man's relations to the various spheres of values, external and internal, as well as religious and secular, have pressed toward making conscious the *internal and lawful autonomy* of the individual spheres; thereby letting them drift into those tensions which remain hidden to the originally naïve relation with the external world. This results quite generally from the development of inner- and other-worldly values towards rationality, towards conscious endeavor, and towards sublimation by *knowledge*. (Weber 1946, 328)

This process for him was not motivated by any single social factor, nor was it a phenomenon that was associated with one idealistic movement or enlightened shift in thought. Weber differs from Adorno in this respect as it was not against the ills of an age—that of the Enlightenment—but from a subjective state and position within history that he depicted social institutions, forces, and relations of modern society. In agreement with Marx, Weber maintained that material conditions do influence society, but he argued that these conditions were not the only factors that

sway human action. Applying a rational approach to the multidimensional nature of society, Weber understood that one cannot deduce the motivations leading to various cultural phenomena from materialist means alone. Additionally, against his predecessor Durkheim he argued that values and beliefs are not the source of solidarity, but the origin of conflict. The human/social dynamic for him was a convoluted problematic that disallowed any one factor as the sole explanation for a given phenomena, nor any natural social cohesion to be assumed. This dialectical approach stands in contradistinction to the totalizing trend in Enlightenment thought. Rather than constructing a grand narrative, his rationalism attempts to account for shifting cases; nevertheless, it still maintains a causal principle that seeks to explain social action from one viewpoint. Weber understood that just as the things that move humans to action are motivated by ideals that are constantly in flux, so the social scientist must always approach the social sphere from multiple and shifting perspectives in search of coherence. This distinguishes him from the paradoxical nature of Adorno's negative approach to history—the latter purposefully sought points of severance over causal approximations and connections.

Adorno: Epistemic and Methodological Cultivations

In perpetuating the nescient tradition of the Enlightenment, its subsequent dialectic fell to the depth of affirming what Adorno terms the 'positive' over the 'negative.' Central to his methodology, these expressions embody his analytical formula. Rather than emphasizing symmetry between phenomena, associating identities, and revering continuities within nature in order to devise a positive regard for the world as a system, Adorno accentuated points of severance and contrariety. As Susan Buck-Morss explicates, Adorno's writings were

> … constructed according to principles of differentiation, nonidentity, and active transformation. Differentiation as a compositional procedure meant articulating nuances which pinpointed the concrete, qualitative differences between apparently similar phenomena. The assumption which underlay this principle was that reality was itself contradictory, that its elements formed no harmonious whole. (Buck-Morss 1977, 128)

In opposition, Adorno claimed that the Enlightenment embodied positive constructions of nature from which systemized methods of association posed myth in the guise of rational truth. Taking itself at face value, the Enlightenment exhibited a naïve self-conscious. Disassociating from this paradigm, Adorno's attempt is to inquire into the supersensous—that in between space of sublime phenomenality. His point of reference was the illusory and what better place to find this essence but through the contingency of aesthetics.

Frankfurt Groundings

It is necessary here to consider Adorno's early university training and career as an editorial music critic and theoretician in Frankfurt during the 1920s and early 1930s as this had a profound impact on his epistemological and methodological positioning. Completing his first dissertation at the Johann Wolfgan Goethe University in 1924 on the problematic relationship between reality and consciousness in Husserl, Adorno spent much of the remaining decade writing for a music journal: the *Musikblätter des Anbruch*, later to be known simply as *Anbruch*. His take on contemporary music was particularly philosophical and sociological, holding, in the mid-20s, to a 'maxim that truth in music is possible only when a composition is thoroughly structured.' (Müller-Doohm 2005, 120) However there was a paradoxical rationalization involved in this maxim. On the one hand he advocated for a proper structuring of a composition, on the other he argued for a necessary freeing of the work of art from traditional authority. 'Adorno reconstructs the history of music as a process of disintegration … first the fugue and the sonata, and then tonality, along with its harmonic structures and cadences, cease to be sacrosanct frames of reference.' (Müller-Doohm 2005, 115) The compositional paradigm he championed was one of atonality, *structured* by an undetectable use of the 'twelve-tone technique,' a position which he later recognized as paradoxical. In the 1930s he conceded, 'Twelve-tone technique today is nothing but the principal of motivic elaboration and variation, as developed in the sonata, but elevated now to a comprehensive principle of construction, namely transformed into an *a priori* [original emphasis] form, and, by that token, detached from the surface of the composition' (Müller-Doohm 2005, 115). This inconsistency became a defining characteristic in Adorno's epistemology; it served to illuminate the illusive, but at the expense of transparency and at times arguably escaping the intentionality of Adorno himself.

With passion for both music and academia, he moved between these two worlds during the late 20s, composing music and fraternizing in circles of composers like Alban Berg, while simultaneously working on his *Habilitation* on the transcendental nature of the unconscious in Freudian psychoanalysis, which was rejected by his advisor, Hans Cornelius, for being too closely aligned with his own work. Resolute and confident, Adorno continued publishing writings on, and composing, music; and he soon took up a second *Habilitation* under the direction of Paul Tillich and Max Horkheimer, which reinterpreted and critiqued Søren Kierkegaard's philosophy of aesthetics. Centrally questioning whether aesthetics was the sphere where truth revealed itself, Adorno launched an in-depth critique of what he gleaned as Kierkegaard's idealistic depiction of aesthetics, '… a term describing the realm of art in its totality, a personal attitude, and a subjectively intended mode of communication.' (Müller-Doohm 2005, 126) Rather than affirming the autonomy of the aesthetic object, a temporal position that allows for textual expression, Adorno argued that Kierkegaard placed emphasis on the gaze of the artwork's viewer. This subject's gaze transitions the beautiful, the

expression of the aesthetic object, into a universal model. It works on behalf of an internalized Hegelian universality that impresses itself upon the subject whose 'interior' position is one of alienation, of otherness in relation to the conceived world of universals. 'Kierkegaard's work subjectively has no weight of its own' Adorno concluded, 'because it is simply the stage on which the universal structures of existence are enacted … "[he] did not overcome Hegel's system of identity; Hegel is inverted, interiorized"'. (Müller-Doohm 2005, 126)

It was in this dissertation that Adorno began to synthesize his methodological approach. Blending allegory and dialectical analysis with sensitivity for the 'inwardness' of individual existence, he averred a direct correlation between social and artistic developments. Tillich and Horkheimer approved *The Construction of the Aesthetic*, Adorno's self-defining title for the *Habilitation*, admirably; and its revised book version was published on the very day that Hitler took power in March of 1933. Fleeing from Nazi Germany to London in 1934 and then to the United States in 1938, Adorno understood the reality of home not being home—the oft times contradictory nature of nature. It is given this historical backdrop, and indeed construction, that Adorno and his aesthetic methodological positioning must be considered. As Weber makes clear, this is a necessary mode for assessing and interpreting an individual's rational and irrational inclinations. It provides the groundwork for an expedition into the social psychology of individuals, allowing for an advance toward the subjectivity of the subject.

Rationality/Irrationality and the Individual

Weber was not only interested in the society itself, but in an individual's social psychology and how the two interfaced and constructed one another. His focus was not only action and its motivations, but how people interpreted meaning to their actions, taking into account values, norms, and the influence of charismatic leaders. These influential themes prompt both rational and irrational modes of action. Rational action, according to Weber, was primarily defined as 'instrumental,' that is, motivated by expectations of success and involving strategic thinking and the calculation of ends and means. The pursuits of 'economic man' embody this mode of action. 'Value-rational' actions, in opposition, are committed to ideals that involve no calculation of success, e.g., aesthetics or religion—the pursuit of the goal is the value in and of itself.

Irrational forms of action, however, are also important in Weber's analytical model. Typical forms include 'affectual' actions associated with one's sentiments and emotive inclinations, and 'traditional' actions, which result from habitual conditioning. (Weber 1978, 24–25) Thus while Weber was occupied with rationalization he can also be viewed as a theorist of irrationality. The two allowed him to investigate more acutely the pursuits of humans in the public sphere as well as speculate on the significance of scholarly pursuits and the implications involved in the craft of social science. His task was inquisitively oriented towards

individual's motivations and the societal truths they pointed towards. It is with this mediating rationality/irrationality approach to action and individual's social psychology that I interrogate Adorno and his aesthetic contentions. Why is it that one is interested in certain ideals and pursues them at other costs? Why is it that as social scientists we choose to study one thing or another? Weber argued that the fact that scholars do choose their subject of study gives these subjects significance. They become meaningful because they relate to cultural values. This is an argument against positivism, which withdraws from the subjectivity of the scientist. Weber avers that as investigators we select facts that are meaningful; these facts do not present themselves to us with a demand to be studied, but through purposeful investigation one comes to understand the meaning and significance of phenomena in and for society. The work of art was a nexus of unspeakable truisms for Adorno. This was very much influenced by his musical career; and with a Marxist concern about the relations of society and the ideological untruth that commodity fetishism perpetuates, he envisioned Nazi Germany as exhibiting the quintessential outcome of this untruth. He therefore turned to a medium that mirrored this untruth in search of truth.

On Adornian Aesthetics

Adorno affirmed that a hinting veracity, *truthfulness* so to speak, is to be found through the inner dynamics of artworks. Because it is withdrawn from and rejects the empirical world, yet expresses it through a gaze other than its own—more translucent than empirical immediacy—art authors reality. In *Aesthetic Theory* he states, 'Artworks are afterimages of empirical life insofar as they help the latter to what is denied them outside their own sphere and thereby free it from that to which they are condemned by reified external experience.' (Adorno 1997, 4) Escaping a deterministic world, artworks, he contends, shed a greater light on the product of social labor. Yet art itself is productive labor. It is a mirroring of externality that goes beyond just reflection to replication and resolution:

> Art's double character as both autonomous and *fait social* is incessantly reproduced on the level of its autonomy. It is by virtue of this relation to the empirical world that artworks recuperate, neutralize what once was literally and directly experienced in life and what was expulsed by spirit … They are real as answers to the puzzle externally posed to them. (Adorno 1997, 5)

Emphasizing the primacy of art over philosophy in bearing historical truth, Adorno maintains that art exhibits a non-conceptual logic that is missing in discourse, yet the two need each other to explicate experience. As Albrecht Wellmer notes, 'Aesthetic experience does not understand the semblance to which it succumbs. For this reason philosophical reflection must come to the aid of aesthetic experience.' (Wellmer 1997, 113) It is the function of discourse, the act of philosophizing, and

the way it is done that is primary for Adorno. This was a trait that he admired about Kierkegaard's prose and embraced in his own writing.

Further, Adorno holds firm to the position that art has a valued role in the deconstruction of ideological notions of knowledge. It is a skeptical tool that is abstracted from the real and has a nihilistic predisposition that allows it to escape objective claims to truth. It is therefore worth more than truth because it illuminates the untruth of truth. However for Adorno this autonomy is always threatened by the imminence of the 'culture industry,' which at every moment confronts the work of art with ideological paragons of what is considered great or valuable, and the artist is always subject to inadvertent mimesis. This reaches the heart of Adorno's plight. Rejection of the status quo and objective analytical devices mark his endeavor. His critique of social ontology is based upon what it opposed—what it condemned through its prototypical voice and how we become subjectively alienated by adhering to it. In this context history debates limitations with metaphysics and evolution entertains creationism. The result is intended not to present a boxed methodology, but to affirm symmetry within change and mutability.

The Paradox

Adorno's affirmation of an aesthetically oriented analysis presents the paradox of his work. At once he exaggerates the inherent social cohesion of advanced industrial societies and declares the uncontrollable naiveté and impotence that individuals concede to dominant ideologies while affirming aesthetics as an immanent and empowering vessel; as the ideal site for illuminating this state of domination. It is the integrative power of Adorno's confirmation of aesthetic analysis that prompts ubiquity. Its valorization limits the theoretician to an abstract form of social inspection and disallows any critique of its affectivity or universality. The inconsistency lies in trying to free analysis from ideology by imbedding it in another ideology. It creates a fracture between the methodological subjectivity of the theorist and what is considered ideal when broaching social analysis.

It is in the vein of rationality/irrationality that I argue for a revisiting of Adornian aesthetics. My first point of contention has to do with the macroscopic nature of Adorno's approach. Adorno's aesthetic analysis disallows a fully deconstructing analysis of the social sphere because it sees it as a dominated whole rather than a fragmented construction. I argue that Adorno's approach was to a degree structural in two senses: 1) assuming the reality of one power-embodying superstructure functioning under a dominating capitalist ethos;[3] and 2) devising an ideal-typical

---

3   In his fifth lecture of *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity* Jürgen Habermas explains the problem of Adorno and Horkheimer's uninhibited skepticism of reason in the *Dialectic*: 'Inasmuch as it turns against reason as the foundation of its own validity, critique becomes total.' (Habermas 1987, 118–119) The problem with a totalizing critique

method of symptomatically examining and critiquing this inclusive matrix in aesthetics. My second point of contention lies in the methodological limits of aesthetics. It leaves the theorist in limbo, working through particular works for glimpses of the real. The outcome of every analysis can only be one of subjective affirmations that cannot be weighed for approval or disapproval. Aesthetics too cannot be a device for explanation and the source of objectively valid truths for the social theorist. All that is true for the asthetitician has the possibility of getting lost in translation and/or confronted by interpretation when validity is argued. In response to Adorno's paradox I therefore turn to Weber. I am obligated to provide an alternative methodological tool for the social scientist and for this I appeal to his notion of ideal types.

On Weber and Method

Weber's methodological approach champions the mutability of aesthetics, but he also understood that there are limits to all social scientific knowledge and argued that it cannot provide answers to what our ultimate values should be. Social science can tell one about the means and consequences of certain phenomena as well as ultimate ends they entail, but normative claims are not objectifiably sustainable. However, as opposed to Adorno, Weber argues that this does not mean that value judgments should be removed from scientific practice. He sees a connection between values and meaningful action, and holds that these contentions must be derived from objective truths, not normative claims. To say that the social sciences achieve objectively valid truths indicates that there is a process to attaining knowledge. Weber maintained that for all investigation of phenomena there should be an analytical ordering of empirical social realities involved. His contention is that the cultural products of human society have to be interpreted for their particular meaning and significance; and from multiple and shifting vantage points. This is how one comes to understand the social world.

Constructivism/Constructionism

I associate Weber's methodological mode with the psychologist Seymour Papert's concept of constructionism, which branches off from the earlier constructivism of Jean Piaget. Weber's explication of 'ideal types,' which I will explore further, has a close similarity to these psychological notions on individual development. Through a cumulative assembly of knowledge structures, Piaget argues that children cognitively construct understanding and a position in the world from within. According to the late psychologist Michael J. Mahoney, there are five

---

is that it has the sole outcome of exposing and condemning—of essentially highlighting the irrational at the expense of the rational. The *Dialectic* therefore utilizes the Enlightenment's own tools to critique it.

thematic, and I argue overlapping, ways that constructivism has been approached in the field of psychology: 1) as active agency; 2) with regards to an ordering process; 3) with emphasis on the self or bodily experience; 4) in light of social-symbolic relatedness and influences; and 5) with consideration of one's lifespan development. (Ryder 2006) Respectively, Weber's mode of analysis and reflexive social science accounts for: 1) the agency of the social scientist, disallowing path-dependence or determinism; 2) the scientist's active ordering of experience and production of meaning; 3) a phenomenological sensibility that prompts a reflexive consideration of self, interactions and the recognition of one's biases; 4) acknowledgement of one's embeddings in a social situation and the symbolic influence and potential limitations this presents to the topic of study; and 5) the dialectical development of individuals—their inevitable change over time as a result of obstacles, conflicts and realizations.

Papert's constructionism takes constructivism a step further, focusing on the formation and transformation of a child's ideas as exhibited by different media *made* by the youngster, influenced by and operating within different contexts and settings. It attempts to account for practices developed as a result of individual preference and the socializing transitions that transpire in the process. 'Constructionism … shares constructivism's connotation of learning as "building knowledge structures" irrespective of the circumstances of the learning. It then adds the idea that this happens especially felicitously in a context where the learner is consciously engaged in constructing a public entity, whether it's a sand castle on the beach or a theory of the universe.' (Harel and Papert 1991, 1) Weber's explanation of the process involved in the formation of 'ideal types' exemplifies this practice-oriented theory of knowledge building. They have an epistemological quality that is uniquely constructed by and connected to the rational outlook and intimate knowledge base of the social scientist.

The Ideal Type

Weber was concerned with the objects of social science—social facts—and how best to reach them. He sought to understand social facts from an external, but also from an internal perspective. Thus we approach his methodological positioning on how objective or valid truths are produced. Individual phenomena, he maintained, disallow generalizations; they have to be looked at in their unique configurations. Weber argues for getting at this aim through the use of what he calls 'ideal types.' In 'Objectivity' he explains the construction and use of these conceptual tools:

> An ideal type is formed by the one-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified *analytical* construct. In its conceptual purity, this mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*. Historical research faces the task of determining in each individual case, the

extent to which this ideal-construct approximates to or diverges from reality. (Weber 1954, 90)

Causal conditions and particularity are the key points here. Ideal types are a way to compare different cases while remaining sensitive to the inimitability of each individual instance. The investigator's one-sidedness is inescapable; just as constructivism acknowledges the cognitive history of the child and its fundamental relation to his/her social outlook, so the investigator has an intimate backdrop similar to the 'inwardness' that Adorno appreciated about Kierkegaard's portrait of the human subject. The charge for the investigator is a well-formed one sidedness that recognizes that every phenomenon has multiple sides. The constructionist nature of Weber's ideal types lies with this task. The investigator is *making* a utopia, 'constructing a social entity' through discourse. An empathic understanding of qualitative phenomena is what Weber holds at issue here. For instance, capitalism is an analytical construction the features of which include labor, exchange, and the investment of private capital. These factors are externally consistent, but there are multiple capitalisms—American, German, Japanese—which are never the same. Capitalism is the utopia, the ideal-type that is not substantive, but allows one to broach comparison. We cannot abstract from many different cases what capitalism is; the comparison is how individual cases appropriate the ideal-type.

Ideal-Typical Applications

Weber exhibits this mode of constructionism most prominently in his thesis on the spirit of modern capitalism and its rise in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [hereafter *PESC*]. He historicizes the practical-ethical motivations that underlie capitalist activities by outlining the predominant interests and affirmations developed during the Protestant Reformation, and exhibiting their affinity with how Protestants perceive their economic activities. The core argument is that Protestants monitored their economic activity closely because of their religious beliefs—they acted morally and methodically to avoid sin given the doctrine of predestination and the open-ended question of their fate. Weber contends that this rationalization led to a spirit of capitalism that condoned the pursuit of continuous profit using rational, not greedy means. Thus the spirit of modern capitalism in Weber's ideal-typical construction is connected to a mode of worldly asceticism that advocates pursuing profit, but not enjoying it. There is an ethical injunction to do this, a 'calling' in the Lutheran sense, to live prosperously, yet morally. He therefore argued that Protestantism redirected asceticism back into everyday life.

Exhibiting the objective affectivity of ideal types, nonetheless, this ideal-typical construction is subject to criticism and indeed has been proven fallible given the trajectory of capitalism since he put forth this thesis.[4] Contemporary

---

4   More recently, Boltanski and Chiapello's *The New Spirit of Capitalism* affirms that capitalism cannot be understood apart from the critique of capitalism and its adjusting to,

capitalism sustains itself as a giant machine where our economic activity does not have an evident moral connotation. It is meaningless from the standpoint of salvation. Thus given socio-historical dynamics we are able to approximate Weber's ideal type. It should be noted, however, that Weber foresaw this shift, himself witnessing transitions of modern capitalism in the early twentieth century. He therefore accounted for this in *PESC* by issuing the metaphor of the *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, which Talcott Parsons translated as 'iron cage' in his English version of the work, but which Peter Baehr, following Chalcraft, more appropriately renders as 'shell as hard as steel.' (Grosack 2006, 21). This metaphor posits what I argue to be Weber's own critical theory of modern capitalism. 'Weber asserts that the constraints of the rationalized capitalist world are virtually ineluctable … the era of modern capitalism and the institutional constraints it brought with it make up an iron cage … [and] Weber laments the effects of this imprisonment on human choices and identity.' (Grosack 2006, 21). This component of the *PESC* exhibits the utility and mutability of ideal types. While situated in the present, they allow for hindsight, foresight and speculation.

Let me reiterate that ideal types are about realizing that a conceptual pattern can be arrived at by an analytical investigation of common elements among multiple phenomena. It is a utopia abstracted from particular phenomena, not a general law. For instance, Adorno's aesthetics is an analytical construction the qualities of which include non-identity, mimesis, illusion and expression. These factors are on the whole consistent in Adorno, but there are multiple considerations and approaches to aesthetics as exemplified by Kierkegaard whose ideal-typical construction of the aesthetic was the very source that prompt Adorno's own counter-construction—recall the title of his *Habilitation*: *The Construction of the Aesthetic*.[5] We cannot abstract from individual explications what aesthetics is, nor can we point toward truth via any one contingent. Comparison is how individual cases appropriate the ideal type, aesthetics. It is the construction of ideal types that I argue to be a model for the social scientist. It allows for subjectivity in that the theorist involved must devise her own theoretical tool based on independent factors she deemed relevant and universal, yet it is objective in that this concept is fashioned from multiple cases of a given empirical phenomena. There is thus a natural connection between subjectivity and objectivity in ideal types; others must agree with this theoretical claim to truth, which forges a professionally warranted system of validation.

---

and establishment of legitimacy from this process.

5 The *spectacle* in Guy Debord's *The Society of the Spectacle* is another example of an ideal type aesthetic model. The spectacle arises when social relations are mediated by images that have become atomized, a sort of dictatorship of images. It is the materialization of ideology and capitalism grounds its historicity.

References

Adorno, G. and Tiedemman, R. (eds) (1997), *Aesthetic Theory* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Adorno, T. (1973), *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press).

— (1974), *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life* (London: New Left Books).

— and Horkheimer, M. (1998), *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company).

Bauer, K. (1999), *Adorno's Nietzschean Narratives: Critiques of Ideology, Readings of Wagner* (New York: State University of New York Press).

Boltanski, L. and Chiapello, E. (2006), *The New Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Verso).

Buck-Morss, S. (1977), *Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: Free Press).

Debord, G. (1995), *The Society of the Spectacle* (New York: Zone Books).

Easton, L. and Guddat K. (eds) (1967), *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* (New York: Anchor Books).

Finch, H. and Shills E. (eds) (1949), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press).

Gerth H.H. and Mills, C.W. (eds) (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Gramsci, A. (2005), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International Publishers).

Grosack, M. (2006), 'Revisiting the Iron Cage: New Insights in Institution Theory from Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*' http://repository.upenn.edu/curej/25.

Habermas, J. (1987), *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press).

Harel, I. and Papert S. (eds) (1991), *Constructionism* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation).

Hegel, G.W.F. (1956), *The Philosophy of History* (New York: Dover Publications).

— (1977), *Phenomenology of Spirit* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Horkheimer, M. (1974), *Eclipse of Reason* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group).

Kalberg, S. (ed.) (2005), *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd).

Müller-Doohm, S. (2005), *Adorno: A Biography* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

Parsons, T. (2002), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd).

Pensky M. (ed.) (1997), *The Actuality of Adorno: Critical Essays on Adorno and the Postmodern* (New York: State University of New York Press).

Rose, G. (1978), *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Roth, G. and Wittich, C. (eds) (1978), *Economy and Society* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Ryder, M. (ed.) (2006), Constructivism http://www.constructivism123.com/What_Is/What_is_constructivism.htm.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 6

The Elusiveness of Meaning: From Max Weber to Jürgen Habermas

Maria Victoria Crespo

This chapter deals with the problem of understanding meaning in Max Weber's and Jürgen Habermas' methodological enterprises. For this purpose, it focuses on the interrelations between interpretation, understanding and explanation in their respective methodological writings.[1] The objective of this inquiry is thus twofold. First, it aims at reinvigorating the debate on Weber's and Habermas' conceptions of explanation and understanding meaning and their respective role in the social sciences (Dallmayr, McCarthy 1977; Habermas 1980, 1988).[2] Such discussion intends to show that understanding of meaning and textual interpretation have a secondary role in Weber's and Habermas' methodologies. Therefore, the task is to uncover the limitations of developing a sociological method for textual interpretation and understanding of meaning based on Weber's and Habermas' methodological enterprises. Second, this paper seeks to assess Weber's methodological influence on Habermas' theory of communicative action. It shows that the main assumptions underlying Habermas' theory of communicative action are rooted in Weber's concept of rational action and his method of rational interpretation. I argue that Max Weber matters to Habermas, but both Weber and Habermas matter less for a social science that seeks to engage in understanding meaning and textual interpretation as its primary goals.

In their long historical trajectory, debates on the method of the social sciences have been expressed through a succession of dualisms. First, it was the epistemological dichotomy between natural and human sciences, the former concerned with explanation and the latter with understanding. This divide was followed by a second epistemological dualism that established a split between the

---

subject, on the one hand, and the object on the other. More recently, philosophical hermeneutics have introduced a new opposition, now between ontology and epistemology. In this context, Weber's and Habermas' methodological projects are meant to be reconciliatory. Weber attempts to overcome the classic dualism between explanation and understanding by introducing new categories integrating both methodological forms to the methods of socio-historical sciences. He leaves behind Wilhelm Dilthey's (1988) distinction between *Verstehen* as the method of the spiritual, human or cultural sciences, and causal explanations, typical of natural sciences. To Weber, socio-historical sciences are not different from natural sciences because of their singular subject matter or because they proceed through understanding cultural meanings rather than through causal explanations. Weber abandons Dilthey's position, but he reproduces the dualistic view of science as he stresses the particular logical structure of socio-historical sciences: while natural sciences are oriented towards generality, cultural sciences study individual phenomena.

Philosophical hermeneutics, specifically through the work of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1998), radically breaks with the dualism between subject and object. Gadamer draws from (and reformulates) Martin Heidegger's notion of the hermeneutic circle, which implies a commonality between the interpreter and the text, between subject and object. For Gadamer (1998, xxi) understanding is a matter of the subject that experiences the text. Truth is not something objective that has to be proven following a method, but derives from the hermeneutic experience itself, from ongoing interpretation. Thus, understanding meaning involves a 'fusion of horizons' between text and interpreter (Gadamer 1998, 306). However, Gadamer recreates the dualism between understanding and explanation by conceiving understanding as an experience that occurs on an ontological level, and circumscribing explanation to an epistemological sphere.[3] It is in the context of this dualism that Habermas raises the fundamental question of the reconciliation between the hermeneutic claim to universality and a critical socio-scientific project, and intends to bring 'understanding' back into an epistemological level (see Dallmayr, McCarthy 1977; Habermas 1977; Harrington 2001). However, I intend to show that Habermas' attempt is not entirely successful.

The questions that I address here are the following: What type of understanding is at stake in Weber's and Habermas' respective methodological projects? Does understanding meaning emerge as the main purpose of their methodological enterprises or is it subordinated to something else? What is the role of explanation? I argue that neither Weber nor Habermas has a satisfactory theory of meaning and thus understanding and text interpretation are relegated to a secondary methodological place in their respective methodological projects. I argue that ultimately both Habermas's and Weber's conception of *Verstehen* acquires an explanatory character. Understanding meaning remains elusive in their respective methodological enterprises.

---

3   For a critique and a response to Gadamer, see Bourdieu, 1995, 'Preface.'

The chapter is structured in four sections. Section 1 addresses Weber's and Habermas' notions of understanding and interpretation. I maintain that Weberian rational interpretation is the key methodological link between both authors, as Habermas finds in this procedure the foundations of the performative attitude of the interpreter of communicative action. The problem of explanation is explored in Section 2 where I discuss Weber's method of individual causal imputation and the 'explanatory' logic of the Habermasian model of communicative action. In the explanatory instance, rationality also appears as the main continuity between their methodological projects. In section 3, I analyze Weber's ideal type methodology in relation to understanding and explanation. I also discuss to what extent the Habermasian model of communicative action can be considered or used as an ideal type. Section 4 is entirely dedicated to the method of text interpretation. I should clarify that I do not intend to establish a sharp distinction between text and action. Along with Paul Ricoeur (1991) I believe that the object of the human sciences, 'meaningful action' as defined by Weber, conforms to the paradigm of the text. However, in this last section I consider Weber's and Habermas' methodologies for the interpretation of texts understood in a conventional fashion, such as writings, works of art, documents, literary works, etc.

1. Understanding

In *Economy and Society*, Weber (1978, 8) observes that understanding can be of two kinds: 'the first is the direct observational understanding of the subjective meaning of a given act.' This type of understanding refers to the level of language and meaning, to actual understanding of an utterance.[4] The second type is explanatory understanding, which is a 'rational understanding of motivation [of social action], which consists in placing the act in an intelligible and more inclusive context of meaning.' Since Weber privileges this second moment, he moves from the level of language to rational interpretation; or as Habermas (1984, 98) puts it, 'Weber parts company with a theory of communicative action' that could potentially lead to a theory of meaning.

Weber's (1978, 4) notion of 'meaning' refers to something that is subjectively defined as an action intention. He offers a tautological definition since intentions are defined as the subjective meaning that acting subjects (or the interpreter) can connect to their purposive activity. Meanings are intentions, and intentions are subjective meanings. Thus meaning is an obscure category in Weber's methodology. However, it is possible to extract some elements that indicate what he means by this notion: Interpretative sociology focuses on intentional actions oriented to other acting subjects (social action) and the 'subjective meaning' of action, which is *socially* rather than *psychologically* defined. Weberian understanding implies

---

4   This is based on Weber's distinction between 'understanding' and 'interpretation' already stated in Weber [1906] 1975, 152—154.

grasping the subjective intelligibility of action, but from a social rather than a psychological perspective. This means that understanding the meaning of social action presupposes understanding dimensions such as interests, norms, values, beliefs, lifestyles, etc. Such categories are socially constructed and recognized and are the bases of purposive—rational action.

In terms of methodological procedures, Weber (1978, 5) says that the ability to reproduce an action, to recapture an experience, is not necessary for understanding: '*one need not have been a Caesar in order to understand a Caesar.*' What is at stake is the ability of the interpreter to carry out a mental construction to achieve the highest degree of clarity in the interpretation of that action. Interpretation can be either rational, emotionally emphatic, or of artistic appreciative quality (Weber 1978, 5). Weber expresses his preference for rational interpretation, since it has 'the highest degree of verifiable certainty.' To achieve a rational interpretation, the interpreter reconstructs the rational course of action, given a strictly purposive–rational choice of ends and adequate knowledge of all the circumstances: 'Given a certain intention x, and in view of established empirical generalizations, it is '*necessary*' for the actor to select the means y— e.g. one of the means y, y´, y´´— for its attainment' (Weber 1975, 187). Thus, by contrasting the actual action with the ideal type of rational action it is 'possible to understand the ways in which actual action is influenced by irrational factors of all sorts, such as affects and errors, in that they account for the deviation from the line of conduct which would be expected on the hypothesis that the action were purely rational' (Weber 1978, 6).

In Weber's methodological framework, interpretation is constituted by the synthesis of direct understanding and explanatory understanding.[5] Sociological interpretation is based on two premises a) explanatory understanding is not possible without a previous direct understanding at the linguistic level, and b) explanation and understanding are complementary, as they both configure the interpretation of action. *Explanatory understanding* implies interpreting the motives of action (subjective meaning), which are the hypothetical causes of the action. It allows the scientist to observe an adequacy at the level of meaning and to formulate hypotheses that will still have to be verified through the method of causal imputation (Weber 1978, 9). The observations achieved through understanding and explanatory understanding always remain in a hypothetical level. An interpretation, no matter how evident, it is still not a 'causally valid interpretation.' A 'meaning adequate' relation can become a causal explanation through the method of causal imputation (Weber 1987, 10). One of the keys to Weber's methodological project is to renounce the idea of incompatibility between understanding action and *individual* causal explanation. The category of *explanatory understanding* is the link between these methodological principles, and between the interpretative sociology proposed in *Economy and Society* and the historical method of causal imputation of Weber's

---

5   This definition of 'Interpretation' is already stated in Max Weber 1975, 125.

earlier methodological essays that deal with historical research (see Weber 1949 [1904], 1949 [1905]).

To sum up, Weberian 'causal interpretation' entails three prerequisites: 1) direct understanding of meaning of social action, which takes place in a concrete socio-historical context; 2) rational interpretation of the intentions which constitute the hypothetical causes of the action. This is attainable, for example, by utilizing the ideal type of purposive-rational action; 3) verification through the counterfactual method of causal imputation.

Weber ultimately privileges the second requisite, rational interpretation, which presupposes direct, immediate understanding. However, direct understanding, which involves the problem of understanding meaning on a semantic level, is taken as a given in Weber's methodological framework. It is considered something direct, practical, immediate, which requires a merely descriptive observational procedure, and which does not seem to deserve further methodological discussion (Weber 1987, 8). Therefore, in *Economy and Society*, Weber shifts his attention from the problem of understanding meaning to a more explanatory account of action. As Habermas notes, there is an official and unofficial Weberian theory of action. In his account of 'the official version' of Weber's theory of action, Habermas (1984, 279–286) observes that Weber relies on a theory of intentions and consciousness of the acting subject rather than on a theory of meaning related to language as a medium of possible understanding. Yet, 'the unofficial version' also indicates that the distinction between *strategic* and *communicative* modes of action is already contained—although the latter is underdeveloped—in Weber's theory of social action.

Habermas' model of communicative action makes the analysis of language crucial for laying the foundations of social theory. Therefore, Habermas claims to focus on the first level of understanding, i.e. Weberian direct understanding. However, within this level, Habermas also ends up shifting from understanding meaning *per se* to a more explanatory model. This emphasis on explanation is rooted in Weberian rational interpretation, which is central in Habermas' model of communicative action.

In Habermas' (1983, 254) framework, action is also the object domain of the interpretative task: 'hermeneutics looks at language while it is at work.' The use of language entails communication and action**,** and it is this pragmatic dimension that matters (Habermas 1984, 98). Habermas (1984, 75–101) examines four concepts of social action—teleological, normatively regulated, dramaturgical and communicative action—and points out that only communicative action fully incorporates language as a medium for reaching understanding. According to his model, when we engage in communicative action we raise validity claims of truth, normative rightness and sincerity. This model of communicative action as redeeming validity claims and the 'ideal speech situation' (this concept is not in his *Theory of Communicative Action* but cannot be separated from it) entail formal–pragmatic presuppositions of communication, which is something that we always must assume once we start speaking.

But what are the implications of the Habermasian model of communicative action for the hermeneutic task? In other words, what are the methodological corollaries of his model for understanding and interpretation? In the interpretative task, validity claims have to be uncovered by the interpreter in order to understand communicative action. To achieve this, describing communicative action is not sufficient; instead the interpreter has to virtually participate in the processes of communication. The interpreter has to assume a 'performative attitude' and sacrifice her superiority or privileged position as a 'third person' observer. The interpreter takes part in the communicative action and thus has to take a position on validity claims. Then, according to Habermas (1984, 112), the *Verstehen* problematic can be posed in the following terms: 'How can the *objectivity of understanding* be reconciled with the performative attitude of one who participates in a process of reaching understanding?' He points out that the only plausible claim to objectivity derives from the rational and reflective quality of the interpreters' virtual participation in communicative action.

This 'performative attitude' proposed by Habermas, is in sharp contrast with Weber's Kantianism. A fundamental element of Weber's works is the idea that the researcher constructs a socio-historical narrative to make sense of reality, which by nature is chaotic. This presupposes a dual conception of reality based on a split between subject and object (Wuthnow 1987, 23–36). However, Habermas shows that rational interpretation constitutes a methodological instance in which Weber abandons the 'third person' position and assumes a 'performative attitude.' Habermas observes that in Weber's methodological scheme the interpreter goes beyond the *subjective* purposive–rational orientation (the empirical action) and compares it with the constructed case of a corresponding *objectively* purposive-rational course of action, i.e. contrasting it with the ideal type of rational action (a concept). According to Habermas (1984, 103), this procedure constitutes an explanation by intentions. But he also stresses that this counterfactual method requires a performative attitude from the interpreter to uncover the underlying structures of communicative action, which constitutes the basis for understanding.

Rational Interpretation

At this point, Habermas seems to have abandoned the task of understanding semantic meaning. However, Habermas claims the contrary since, in his view, a strict separation between questions of meaning and questions of validity is not possible. The interpreter cannot become clear about the semantic content of an expression independently of the action contexts in which participants react to yes or no, or abstentions, to validity claims (Habermas 1984, 119). Interpreters will understand the meaning of the text insofar they see why an actor felt entitled to put forward (as true) certain assertions, to recognize (as right) certain values and norms, and to express (as sincere) certain experiences. In order to understand an

expression, the interpreter must *bring to mind the reasons* with which a speaker would defend its validity. The interpreter is drawn into the process of assessing validity claims and needs to reconstruct the reason(s) for its claim to provide grounds (Habermas 1984, 115).

This procedure is also at stake in Weberian rational interpretations. As schematized in Table 6.1, the step from Weber to Habermas regarding rational reconstructions is the passage from understanding meaning and rational interpretation conceived as two separate stages in Weber to the integration of understanding communicative action and rational interpretation through the 'performative attitude' and the virtual participation of the interpreter in the Habermasian model of communicative action. As Habermas (1984, 116) succinctly puts it:

> There is then *a fundamental connection between understanding communicative actions and constructing rational interpretations.* This connection is fundamental because communicative actions cannot be interpreted in two stages—first understood in their actual course and only then compared with an ideal-typical model. Rather, an interpreter who participates virtually, without his own aims of action, can descriptively grasp the meaning of the actual course of a process of reaching understanding only under the presupposition that he judges the agreement and disagreement, the validity claims and potential reasons with which he is confronted, on a common basis *shared* in principle by him and those immediately involved.

However, for Habermas this is not a merely descriptive procedure, 'the *description* of reasons demands *eo ipso* an *evaluation* … One can understand reasons only to the extent that one understands why they are or are not sound …' (Habermas, 1984, 116). Still, the Weberian counterfactual procedure remains central in the task of understanding communicative action. Another aspect that remains similar to Weber's conception of rational interpretation is that Habermasian 'rational

Table 6.1   **From Rational Interpretation to Understanding Communicative Action**

	Weber		**Habermas**
Step 1	Direct, immediate understanding	Integration of both steps	Performative Attitude (assessing validity claims gives access to meaning)
Step 2	Explanatory understanding		
Integration of Both Moments	Rational Interpretation		Understanding Communicative Action

reconstructions' are not conclusive, and like all other types of knowledge, they only have a hypothetical status: 'They may very well start from a false sample of intuitions; they may obscure and distort the right intuitions; and they may, even more often over generalize particular cases. They are in need of further corroboration …' (Habermas 1983, 261). However, Habermas does not discuss any methodological procedure for this purpose.

Habermas' (1984, 106) claims that access to the object domain of social action through the understanding of meaning itself makes the rationality problem unavoidable. He focuses on the rational infrastructure of action oriented to reaching understanding. McCarthy (1984) rightly points out that this inseparability of meaning, intelligibility and understanding from validity, rationality and assessment, involves a Habermasian shift from semantics to pragmatics. However, the question of the methodological implications of this move from understanding meaning to interpretation of the rational infrastructure of action is still unanswered. By proposing a model for interpreting the rational infrastructure of action Habermas locates his methodology at the level of explanation rather than of understanding. Habermas ends up offering a model that explains *why* speech acts are meaningful or distorted.

2. Rationality and Explanation

Weber's conception of causality of socio-historical events requires identifying the causes of individual phenomena through the method of causal imputation. His conception of explanation involves explaining the *individual* causes of *individual* phenomena, taking into account their specificity, rather than using a system of general laws. The causal explanation of an individual configuration is done through the procedure of causal imputation, which requires a *selection* from multiple empirical facts and a mental construction of the possible relations between them. Through this *isolation* of certain elements of social reality, explanation is restricted to a finite series of elements, determined in each case, by the particular point of view that guides the research (Weber 1949, 78). But how can we know that certain elements and not others have led to the occurrence of the phenomenon we intend to explain? Weber responds that verification can be achieved by constructing a mental–hypothetical historical process different from the one under study by excluding one or more of the supposed causal elements. Then, through his 'general knowledge' and by utilizing 'rules of experience' the researcher has to imagine what would have happened under those different circumstances. If the exclusion of those elements leads to a process that is more or less different from the actual one, then the causal efficacy of those elements can be presumed. This counterfactual procedure allows imputing an event to a certain number of causes (plural causality), and distinguishing different causal degrees between two poles: 'adequate causation' and 'accidental causation' (Weber 1949).

In his 1904 and 1905 methodological essays, Weber criticizes the model of causal explanation through general laws. With respect to laws and empirical uniformities in socio-historical sciences, according to Weber (1949, 78), 'the knowledge of causal *laws* is not the end of the *investigation* but only a *means.*' Laws are cognitive instruments for interpretation and casual imputation of individual phenomena. To indicate what would have happened if one or more conditions of the phenomenon are modified, the researcher does a 'probability judgment.' At this point, the interpreter needs some kind of nomological knowledge—'general knowledge,' 'rules of experience,' but also 'laws'—to visualize what would have happened if certain elements are modified. This does not mean that the researcher has to positively reconstruct what would have actually happened, he only has to make sure that the course of events would have been different.[6]

However, in *Economy and Society*, Weber (1978, 18) assigns a different status to laws since he claims that social action can show regularities, just as any phenomenon of nature. The epistemological foundations of this turn towards sociological laws can be traced back to the essay 'Knies and the Problem of Irrationality,' (1975[1906], 96–97) where Weber confronts the romantic tradition, which emphasizes the individuality of historical processes and their organic interdependence as parts of a whole. This tradition's point of departure is a strict separation between natural and human world. The former is a world of 'necessity,' where phenomena are predictable and calculable, while the latter is a world of 'freedom of will' that has a background of irrationality that excludes the possibility of discovering general laws of human action. Weber rejects this distinction, moreover, he claims that natural events are not as calculable and predictable as the romantic tradition suggests, nor are human actions less assessable than any other individual process of nature. Weber analyzes that societies and institutions rest on the rational (and therefore predictable) character of action. He disagrees with the romantic interpretation that freedom implies irrationality and incalculability and believes that free will is rationally oriented, while irrational elements limit free will. Through this argument, Weber offers a 'rationalistic' justification for including laws in socio-historical sciences.

In the context of his debate with Gadamer, Habermas also offers a rationalist justification for the validity of the hermeneutic claim to universality. He claims that language has a structure of rationality and that there are universal conditions of communication that are context-independent. His conception of 'critically enlightened hermeneutics,' 'connects the process of understanding to the principle of rational discourse, according to which truth would only be guaranteed by *that* kind of consensus which was achieved under the idealized conditions of

---

6 Weber includes various concepts under the category 'nomological knowledge:' 'laws,' which he defines as empirical uniformities that allow generalizations; 'rules of experience' and 'general knowledge,' which are conceived as a form of practical knowledge rather than a scientific one. Weber's understanding of this type of knowledge is similar to Popper's (1942) notion of the 'triviality' of laws in history.

unlimited communication free from domination and could be maintained over time' (Habermas 1980, 205). At the methodological level, Habermas proposes what he calls 'Meta-hermeneutics' or 'depth hermeneutical analysis of language' which follows the regulative principle of rational discourse, and allows to develop a theory that would enable us to deduce the principle of rational discourse form the logic of everyday language, however distorted it may be. Of course, Habermas is making a case for his theory of communicative action and his concept of communicative rationality, however, like Weber, Habermas thinks that rationality is what makes objectivity possible in social sciences, and that any systematic attempt at understanding communicative action has to be based on this presupposition. Interpretative sociology can claim objectivity only if hermeneutic procedures can be based on general structures of rationality.

Habermas' model of communicative action involves the formal-pragmatic reconstruction of the possibilities of communication, of the presuppositions of redeeming validity claims. It is pragmatic in the sense that it entails the reconstruction of the presuppositions of communication, of the rational foundations of knowledge, action and language. It is formal in the sense that it involves an abstraction from the semantic content of social action and it focuses on the conditions of communication. Habermas' enterprise is ultimately driven by the question of the conditions for the emergence of rational discourse and mutual understanding, which enable democratic public life.

Methodologically speaking, Habermasian 'understanding' entails the performative ability of the interpreter to uncover the structures of everyday life communication. However, Habermas abandons the question of *how* to understand the semantic substance of action. By detaching the content and focusing on the *conditions* of communicative action, Habermas shifts from hermeneutic understanding of meaning to explaining the conditions of communication. In other words, Habermas gives us an explanation of how understanding happens. He offers an explanatory model of speech acts, which explains how something becomes meaningful, but not for understanding meaning. The Habermasian model of communicative action allows explaining *why* and under what conditions something makes sense, *why* something becomes intelligible or not. But, by putting together questions of meaning and questions of validity, the question *what* (i.e. What is being said? What is the meaning of the text?) is *explained* in terms of an answer to the question *why* (i.e. Why did communicative action succeed or fail? Why is communication distorted? Why did an author make certain assertions?) Habermas offers a methodology for understanding communicative action that is explanatory rather than interpretative.

3. Ideal Types and Interpretation

Weber (1949, 90) defines ideal types as conceptual patterns that bring together certain relationships and events of historical life into a complex, which is conceived

as an internally consistent system. This means that ideal types are conceptual constructions done by the researcher. Since they are used for interpreting individual historical phenomena, ideal types are meant to reveal singular aspects of the phenomenon rather than general ones. In opposition to laws, ideal types methodology does not subsume the phenomenon under a general formulation, but allows contrasting empirical realities with the ideal type, showing not only the elements that are covered by the ideal type but also the distinctive ones. But what is the relationship between ideal types and the principles of explanation and understanding?

Weber (1949, 90) stresses the relationship between ideal types and casual imputation. Ideal types can be helpful in the process of identifying the possible individual causes of a phenomenon: 'The ideal type concept will help to develop our skill in imputation in research: it is no 'hypothesis' but it offers guidance to the construction of hypotheses.' They can also be helpful at the moment of the hypothetical 'mental construction' of an alternative historical sequence done by the researcher when she uses the method of causal imputation. Weber assumes that in this construction it is necessary to apply some kind of nomological knowledge. In *Economy and Society*, Weber (1978, 20–21) observes that ideal types can also be used for this purpose.

However, ideal types are also related to understanding, particularly to two specific kinds of ideal types: the 'ideal types of social action' and the 'ideal types of ideas.' Weber's (1978, 24–25) four ideal types of social action are useful in reconstructing the purposes of action and in formulating hypotheses on the casual significance of these purposes. The 'ideal types of ideas of an epoch' (Weber 1949, 97–98) are the result of the accentuation of certain aspects of the thoughts and ideals of a number of persons living in a certain time. These ideal types (i.e. an ideal type of Liberalism or of Christianity) can be constructed through what Weber calls 'philological analysis,' which in Weber's framework is the only methodological instance for hermeneutic interpretation of texts.

Now, can the Habermasian model of communicative action be considered an ideal type? The model of communicative action is not conceived following the Weberian procedure for the construction of ideal types, which has an empirical basis since ideal types are formulated through a process of abstraction and one-sided accentuation of certain processes of historical reality. Although we know that they do not exist empirically, that they cannot be found in the social world, the starting point for constructing Weberian ideal types is in fact empirical. Ideal types are not pure abstractions but interpreted realities. The model of communicative action does not exist empirically either. The question is whether Habermas conceives his model considering everyday life communication, concrete speech acts, and concrete communicative actions or if it is a purely formal construction. The answer is that the origins of the model are formal instead of empirical. Habermas' concept is not the product of observation of (or participation in) social life, of empirical communicative acts. Instead, it refers to formal properties that discourses must exhibit so rational consensual agreement can occur within

them. It entails *counterfactual* assumptions that keep real discourses and factual agreements open, in principle, to possible reasons and counter reasons. It involves a formal pragmatic reconstruction of the conditions under which arguments of theoretical and practical discourses can be understood and accepted. Unlike Habermas' ([1962] 1989) earlier heuristic construct of the public sphere, the model of communication is not the product of ideal-type methodology. However, Habermas does claim that the process of assessing validity claims, of evaluating what claims are justified by the best reasons, is embedded in everyday life. In its applicability, the model does have a methodological dimension that resembles an ideal type. By assuming a performative attitude, the interpreter can uncover the reasons why certain communicative action succeeded or not. Similarly to an ideal type, it can be used to uncover the structures of everyday communication, to assess why something makes sense or not (distorted communication); to identify those elements that adjust to the model and those that do not, and to explain why.

4. Text and Interpretation

Weber (1949, 160) describes a methodological procedure related to the interpretation of texts, which he calls 'value analysis' or 'philological interpretation.' He observes that historical interpretations can be of two types: 1) philological interpretation, namely interpretation of 'linguistic meaning,' 'which analyzes "interpretively"' what is characteristic of the particular features of certain 'cultural epochs' or certain personalities or certain individual objects (such as works of art or literature). Weber considers this type of interpretation 'a technical task' preliminary to 'proper' historical work, that is, 2) Historical interpretation, which seeks for casually significant facts and the abstraction of 'typical' elements which can be useful for formulating those connections. Weber rejects arguments that are strictly related to semantics and he is suspicious of arguments purely based on textual evidence (Chalcraft 2001, 6, 14). Thus, Weber subordinates philological interpretation to historical interpretation, since he considers the former relevant insofar it assists the interpreter in the process of identifying casually relevant facts or orients conceptual constructions (Weber 1949, 146,160).

In this context, E.D. Hirsch's (1967, 4–5; Gadamer 1998, 90) distinction between meaning and significance can be clarifying. According to Hirsch, 'meaning' is an affair of consciousness, not of words. Against the notion of 'semantic autonomy' (Gadamer 1998; Ricoeur 1991), Hirsch wants to 'bring the author back in' and—in a very Weberian fashion—defines meaning as 'the author's intended meaning.' The original author of the text is the determiner of meaning and this is the 'only normative principle that could lend validity to an interpretation.' Significance is defined by Hirsch as 'any perceived relationship between construed verbal meaning and something else.' This relationship can refer to our relevant knowledge, to history, to the author's personality, to other works, etc.

Although it has been introduced in the context of literary theory, E.D. Hirsch's insight applies to the question of understanding meaning in the social sciences, since presumably they are more concerned with significance than with meaning. In the case of Weber, it is clear that significance is the 'aim' of research. Yet, to what extent does '*judging*' *the significance* of a historical event presuppose *understanding its meaning*? Is this not Weber's fundamental methodological claim? One possible answer to this is that for Weber social reality is not exhausted by meaning objectified in texts (i.e. social action, written documents, etc.), and that these texts matter not only in terms of their inner logic but to the extent that they can be related to other texts or historical events. In other words, meaning does not matter *in itself*; rather it is significant in *relation to something else*.

Weber's 'philological interpretation' is similar to Habermas' conception of *Verstehen* in earlier works such as *The Logic of the Social Sciences*, where Habermas ([1967]1988, 12–13) conceives it as 'hermeneutic understanding of meaning that appropriates the significance objectivated in works or events.' According to Habermas (1983, 253), 'Any meaningful expression—be it an utterance, verbal or nonverbal, or an artifact, such as a tool, an institution, or a scripture—can be bifocally identified, both as an observable event and as an understandable objectification of meaning.' Thus the object domain of the social sciences includes everything that falls under the description 'element of the lifeworld.' When describing these elements, the interpreter 'must understand them; in order to understand them, he must be able to participate in their production' (Habermas 1984, 108). The question is if it makes methodological sense to use his later model of communicative action to understand a conventional text; if it is possible to use it to interpret the meaning of 'sedimentations' of speech acts. The main obstacle here emerges from *what* the interpreter seeks to understand, since as Habermas focuses on speech acts and assessment of validity claims, text and meaning are left behind. The text ceases to have a life of its own. In Habermas' model it is hard to conceive the text and its meaning as an autonomous semantic entity—i.e. independent from the author/actor and the socio-historical context of production—and in the sense proposed by Gadamer (1998) and Ricoeur (1991).

Conclusion

In this paper I have discussed how Weber grants methodological primacy to rational interpretation. This method presupposes direct, immediate understanding, which refers to the level of language and involves the problem of understanding meaning at a semantic level. However, this direct understanding is either practically taken for granted in Weber's methodological framework or it is subordinated to causal interpretation. In contrast, Habermas' model of communicative action makes the analysis of language crucial for laying the foundations of social theory. Habermas claims to focus on the first level of Weberian understanding. However, Habermas does not offer a theory for understanding meaning either. By shifting from

semantics to pragmatics, by assuming a performative attitude, the interpreter is entitled to uncover the underlying rational structures of communicative action. But Habermas seems to be more concerned with the counterfactual *conditions* for distortion—with free communication rather than with hermeneutics. His model provides us with a context—an independent framework to assess *why* communication succeeds or fails, *why* something becomes meaningful. Understanding the meaning of utterances ceases to be the focus of the hermeneutic task, which is reformulated by Habermas as the interpreter's assessment of the validity claims raised in the communicative action. I have argued that Habermas ends up offering a model for understanding communicative action that has a rather explanatory logic. Both Weber's and Habermas' interpretative enterprises are in line with Ricoeur's ([1971]1984:51, 185) model of text-interpretation, in which 'Understanding is entirely mediated by the whole of explanatory procedures which precede it and accompany it.'

Even though Weber subordinates 'philological interpretation' or 'value analysis' to 'historical interpretation,' text interpretation is at the heart of his socio-historical research. Weber's task is not to establish causal relations but to provide an interpretation of such relation (Chalcraft, 2001, 8); and he frequently refers to texts for that purpose. For example, in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* 'philological understanding' is used to understand certain written documents, which are the entry point to the values and ethics of an epoch. Through this methodological procedure Weber constructs his most famous 'ideal type of ideas,' the ideal type of 'the spirit of capitalism' (Weber 1958). However, Weberian philological interpretation is too underdeveloped and inconsistent to be the foundation for a sociological method concerning text interpretation (see, Chalcraft 2001, 13, 14).

In the case of Habermas, the question is to what extent the model of communicative action retains aspects of his earlier conception of *Verstehen* (Habermas [1967] 1988). Habermas' emphasis on pragmatics precludes him from considering the text as a given, instead, he seeks to see the text in action. The interpreter can *bring to mind the reasons* with which a speaker (or an author) would defend its discursive validity. The interpreter seeks to understand *why* the author made certain assertions in the text or *why* the author respected or violated certain conventions. However, the text is neither emancipated from the communicative act nor from the author.

Weber's and Habermas' conceptions of meaning are quite unsatisfactory in terms of defining meaning as an autonomous entity, since in both cases meaning inevitably refers to something else. On the one hand, in Weber's methodology, meaning cannot be detached from the actor's intentions. On the other hand, for Weber, understanding meaning matters insofar it assists the interpreter in identifying a meaningful causal historical interpretation. In Habermas' work, meaning cannot be separated from the process of assessing validity claims raised by the participants of communicative action. Weber's and Habermas' theories of meaning are methodologically inadequate for a social science that seeks to engage

in interpretation of meaning as its primary aim. In spite of what they claim, meaning is ultimately elusive for both Max Weber and Jürgen Habermas.

References

Bellah, R. et al. (eds) (1983), *Social Science as Moral Inquiry* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Bleicher, J. (ed.) (1980), *Contemporary Hermeneutics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Bourdieu, P. ([1992], 1995), *The Rules of Art, Genesis and Structure of the Literary Field.* [Translated by Susan Emanuel] (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Chalcraft, D. (2001), 'Introduction', in Chalcraft and Harrington, *The Protestant Ethic Debate: Weber's Replies to His Critics 1907-1910* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Dallmay, F. and McCarthy, T. (ed.) (1977), *Understanding and Social Inquiry* (Notre Dame, London: University of Notre Dame Press).

Dilthey, W. ([1923], 1988), *Introduction to the Human Sciences: An Attempt to Lay a Foundation for the Study of Society and History* [Translated with an introductory essay by Ramon J. Betanzos] (Detroit: Wayne State University Press).

Gadamer, H. ([1960], 1998), *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum).

Geertz, C. (2000), *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books).

Habermas, J. ([1962], 1989), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere, An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press).

—— ([1967], 1988), *On the Logic of Social Sciences* [Introduction by Thomas McCarthy, translated by Shierry Weber Nicholsen and Jerry Stark] (Cambridge: MIT Press).

—— ([1970], 1977), 'A Review of Gadamer's *Truth and Method*', in Dallmay, F. McCarthy, T. (eds).

—— (1980), 'The Hermeneutic Claim to Universality', in Bleicher (ed.).

—— ([1981], 1984), *The Theory of Communicative Action*, *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Volume 1, [Translated by Thomas McCarthy] (Boston: Beacon Press).

—— (1983), 'Interpretative Social Science Vs. Hermeneuticism', in Bellah, et al. (ed.).

Harrington, A. (2001), *Hermeneutic Dialogue and Social Science: A Critique of Gadamer and Habermas* (London, New York: Routledge).

Hirsch, E.D. Jr. (1967), *Validity and Interpretation* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

McCarthy, T. (1984), 'Translator's Introduction' in Habermas (1984).

Popper, K. (1942), *The Open Society and its Enemies.* Vol. II. (London: Routledge).

Riceour, P. ([1971], 1984), 'The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as Text', *Social Research, 50th Anniversary*, 51:1, 2, 185–218.

—— (1991), *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).

Weber, M. ([1904–1905], 1949), *The Methodology of the Social Sciences* [Translated by Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch] (New York: The Free Press).

—— ([1904], 1949), 'Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy', in Weber, 1949.

—— ([1905], 1949), 'Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences, A Critique of Eduard Meyer's Methodological Views', in Weber (1949).

—— ([1904—05], 1958), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [Translated by Talcott Parsons, introduction by Anthony Giddens] (New York: Charles Scriber's Sons).

—— ([1906], 1975), 'Knies and the Problem of Irrationality' in Weber (1975).

—— ([1906], 1975), *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics* [Translation and Introduction by Guy Oakes] (London: The Free Press).

—— (1978), *Economy and Society. An Outline of Interpretative Sociology* [Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich] (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).

Wuthnow, R. (1987), *Meaning and Moral Order: Explorations in Cultural Analysis* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

PART 3
Theorizing Rationality
and Processes of Rationalization

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 7

Blind Spot? Weber's Concept of Expertise and the Perplexing Case of China

Stephen P. Turner

When Weber talked about the problem of the role of knowledge in society, he used a vocabulary in which the terms 'experts' (*Experten*) and 'specialists' (*Spezialisten*) are more or less interchangeable. His normative ideas on this subject were central to 'Science as a Vocation', where he argues that:

> only by strict specialization can the scientific worker become fully conscious, for once and perhaps never again in his lifetime, that he has achieved something that will endure. A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment. And whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders, so to speak, and to come up to the idea that the fate of his soul depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjecture at this passage of the manuscript may as well stay away from science. ([1919]1946, 135)

This reflected his attitude toward literary intellectuals peddling *Weltanschauungen*, but it was continuous with his hostility during the value-freedom debate in the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (cf. Simey 1966, cited in Turner and Factor 1984, 57–58) toward the claim of the economists of the historical school to provide 'scientific' policy advice and his hostility to professorial prophets, both of whom, he claimed, mixed value choices, which were inherently non-rational, with the claims they could legitimately make as 'scientists'. When these texts were written the ideal of universal knowledge and of intellectual leaders such as Goethe who could claim universal knowledge was dying a painful death. It was still upheld in literary circles and in the thought of such philosophers such as Heidegger. An underlying theme of these texts is scorn for literary intellectuals' ambitions to be political guides. These struggles of his last decade provided the highly fraught context for Weber's writing on China ([1920[1]]1951).

In Weber's discussion of Confucianism in historical Chinese society, he was faced with a bureaucracy and a judiciary which was produced by a system of examinations on what he characterizes as literary subjects. His repeated use of the term 'literary' is revealing. In a sense, the Confucian tradition represents the fulfillment of the fantasies of his literary critics: a stable functioning order ruled by

---

1   Original publication 1915. Gerth translation is of revised 1920 version.

the *literati* on the basis of literary expertise. For Weber this model was necessarily one which could not achieve or eventuate in rationality, and the non-rational character of this tradition and of Chinese civilization became his theme in the text. There are many peculiar issues around his conclusion which raise questions about the status and meaning of the notion of expertise itself. The issues are whether the category of expertise and the category of expert knowledge are categories with a kind of universal significance or rather merely socially variable categories for which there are fundamental possible alternatives, and whether 'specialist' and 'expert' are interchangeable concepts. The Chinese case represents a powerful example through which these questions can be considered.

'Western Rationality'

Weber, in the series of studies of which his book on China was a part, was concerned with the problem of the development of modern western capitalistic economic rationality that resulted in the rationalization of the world of work, which then carried over into the rest of life. There is, however, a strong element of circularity in Weber's general account of this problem, because of his growing insistence in his last writings, especially his lectures on world economic history ([1927]1961), that the rational organization of works was a wholly distinctive historical phenomenon. Circularity arises because the various forms of rationalization that Weber argued are the conditions for modern capitalism are not quite what they might appear. In this text they are presented as 'conditions' or causes:

> In the last resort the factor which produced capitalism is the rational permanent enterprise, rational accounting, rational technology and rational law, but again not these alone. Necessary complementary factors were the rational spirit, the rationalization of the conduct of life in general, and a rationalistic economic ethic. ([1927]1961, 260)

But Weber speaks of them also as 'the distinguishing characteristics of western capitalism', and even follows this with 'and its causes' ([1927]1961, 232), thus confirming the muddle.

The issue, however, runs even deeper than this particular confusion over causes and definitions: it reappears at the core of his project, in relation to rationalism itself. In his late introductory essay to the *Religionssoziologie*, which Gerth and Mills titled 'The Social Psychology of World Religions' ([1915]1946), Weber wrote that the sources of modern rationality in the West turn out to be distinctive elements of rationality that were always there in the West and were either absent or very incompletely present (and consequently never fully developed) elsewhere (1958, 13–15). There is a strong sense that Weber in this project never in fact found the differentiating causes that led to western rationalism, but merely found fundamental differences reaching back to prior differences of more or less the same kind.

He could enumerate these differences, but not explain their appearance in history. It is striking that when he attempted to do so, he was caught up in problems over the rationality of the actions to be explained. His explanation of the relative unimportance of magic in the West, which is crucial to his comparison with China, was given in his discussion of ancient Judaism in the same series of studies. There he argued that more or less accidental peculiarities of the Jewish use of oracles resulted in the absence of magic and the development of 'rational methods':

> The Levitical oracle required something quite different: the question had to be correctly put in order that the facts and God's substantive will be determined simply by lot. Everything depended on the way that the question was put, thus, the Levite had to acquire a rational method to express problems to be placed before God in a form permitting answers of 'yea' and 'nay'. Complicated preliminary questions had to be settled before they could be placed before God and, in many instances, this arrangement hardly left anything to be determined by oracle. ... Particularly for private needs, the oracle inevitably became less and less important as against the rational case study of sins, until the theological rationalism of Deuteronomy (18:9-15) in substance discredited lot casting altogether, or at least ceased to mention it. ... The oracle by lot is mentioned by Ezekiel (21:21) for Babylonia, but it had, as far as is known, long since disappeared from priestly technique. It was not replaced by rational Torah teaching but by the collection and systematization of the *omina* and by *expert* priestly interpretation. (1952, 179, 180)

The idea that small events have large consequences is not unique to Weber. But in this case the explanation seems to presuppose the rationality it purports to explain: Without a 'rational' or non-magical attitude to these rituals, in this case a kind of literal legalism, the Levites would not have 'had to acquire a rational method to express problems'. Nor would they have extended the rituals in a non-magical way, and would not have excluded alternative 'magical' rituals from their religious practice, as they apparently did. So rationality comes first, before the thing that explains it, here and generally.

This becomes especially apparent in his discussion of China, in which one particular form of thought produces difficulties for Weber. The form is Confucianism, especially Confucianism in its role as the basis of the conduct of officials in the classical Chinese bureaucracy. In the face of this Weber was reduced to something that looked suspiciously like name calling with a series of references to nonrationality. Thus he says:

> There was no rational science, no rational practice of art, no rational theology, jurisprudence, medicine, natural science or technology; there was neither divine nor human authority which could contest the bureaucracy. Only an ethic congruent with bureaucracy could be created and this was limited solely by consideration of the forces of tradition in the sibs and by the belief in spirits. Unlike Western civilization, there were no other specifically modern elements of rationalism standing either in competition or in support of bureaucracy. Western culture in China was grafted upon a base which, in the

West, had been essentially overcome with the development of the ancient polis. Hence, the culture of this bureaucracy can be considered an experiment which approximately tests the rationalism of government by office prebendaries and its effects. Orthodox Confucianism resulted from this situation. (1951, 151–2)

His explanation for this form of thought is that it is an ideology, an ideology of what he could only characterize in western terms as a body of prebends, that is to say a body of appointed officials.

But what sort of ideology was it? It was difficult for Weber to locate this system within his standard scheme of forms of legitimacy. Weber's three types of legitimizing belief, each characterizing a form of rule, were traditional, charismatic, and rational legal. In spite of the fact that the Chinese bureaucracy assumed normal judicial functions, it was not rational-legal in the sense that it was based on law that was codified in the sense constitutive for the West through the Roman legal tradition. That is to say, a body of law which could then be reasoned about and reasoned from independently by trained lawyers to produce predictable legal outcomes. Nor was Confucianism 'traditional' in its function as a guide to bureaucratic action for the simple reason that once a basis for authority is written it is, almost by definition, no longer 'traditional' because it now constitutes an independent potential basis for action no longer connected to the authoritative interpretation by its elders for the community. And by definition, since written texts begin with historical authors, it is no longer believed in by virtue of having the prestige of having been adhered to since time immemorial. Nor is Confucianism charismatic in the normal sense. There is no guru with special supernatural powers demonstrated through the performance of miracles, which is the paradigm for nonmilitary charismatic leaders.

Weber was nevertheless compelled by his scheme of types of authority to identify the nonrationalism of Confucianism with something 'legitimating' simply by virtue of the fact that it *is* a legitimating doctrine, a set of claims about the basis and propriety of authority that was in fact used to justify authority. His solution was to find charismatic elements in it, but this reasoning extended the notion of charisma in problematic ways, though at the same time revealing the kinship of Confucian education to other practices. He said, for example, that there is a charismatic moment in the form of education in which the teacher awakens the charisma within the student, a phenomena he also suggested is characteristic of certain forms of noble education (1951, 119).

The charismatic procedure of ancient magical asceticism and the hero trials, which sorcerers and warrior heroes have applied to boys, tried to aid the novice to acquire a 'new soul,' in the animist sense, and, hence, to be reborn. Expressed in our language, this means that they merely wish to *awaken* and to test a capacity which was considered a purely personal gift of grace. For one can neither teach nor train for charisma. Either it exists *in nuce*, or it is infiltrated through a miracle of magical rebirth – otherwise it cannot be attained. (1951, 119-20, italics in the original)

This solves the puzzle of how a form of knowledge ruled by a rigorous system of written exams could be 'charismatic'. But Weber's characterization of the Confucian bureaucratic ideology remains essentially a list of negatives and paradoxes.

Expertise and Specialism

Although the China study appears in a series dedicated to the economic ethics of the world religions (and Weber does also discuss Buddhism and Taoism in this volume), we begin with classificatory problems. Confucianism is not in any usual sense a 'religion'. Nevertheless the role it plays in Chinese society as well as the practice of Chinese bureaucracy is in many critical respects the same as the role played by religion in Christian or Islamic societies, namely as both supplying an explication and justification of social practices and institutions as well as serving as the moral and political *lingua franca* or scheme of moral justification for members of that society.

In this respect, Confucianism is like a religion, and, moreover, its structure of interpretive authority is not so different from religions. This further muddles the issue about expertise. Interpretation of religious doctrine often involves religious specialists, persons whose interpretations are in some sense authoritative, whether it is through their possession of divine revelations or their scholarly mastery of the religious text, or through some special genealogical connection which granted special authority over these texts, as in the case of the Brahmins in the caste system or the Cohens and Levites of the Jewish tradition.

Weber's more fundamental problem, however, involves the association of bureaucracy and expert or specialist knowledge. It is a curious feature of Weber's writings that the terms 'expert' and 'specialist', which Weber used more or less interchangeably throughout his texts, nowhere appear in the concentration that they do in the text on ancient China. Weber was justifiably fascinated and disturbed by the anomaly of a 'bureaucracy' which does not rely on specialists. Yet, as Weber made clear, the system depended on a rigorous system of examinations on a specific and coherent body of Confucian literature, subject to extensive scholastic interpretation. In superficial respects this knowledge is similar to other bodies of expertise. Yet the attitudes of the bureaucrats (whom he characterized as prebends!) are hostile to the kind of specialized knowledge that is the hallmark of bureaucratic organization in its Western form.

> The position of the office prebendary appears in ethically hallowed form. It is the one position becoming to a superior man because the office alone allows for the perfection of personality. Mencius reasons that without permanent income the educated man can be of constant mind only with difficulty, and the people not at all. Economic, medical, priestly income represent the 'little path.' This leads to professional specialization, a very important point and closely connected with what has been said above. The cultured

man, however, strives for that universality which in the Confucian sense education alone provides and which the office precisely requires. This view characterizes the absence of rational specialization in the official functions of the patrimonial state. (1951, 160)

And again,

The Confucian aspirant to office, stemming from the old tradition, could hardly help viewing a specialized, professional training of European stamp as anything but a conditioning in the dirtiest Philistinism. This was undoubtedly the locus of much of the important resistance to 'reform' in the occidental sense. The fundamental assertion, 'a cultured man is not a tool' meant that he was an end in himself and not just a means for a specified useful purpose. (1951, 160)

The contrast to his ideal-type definition of bureaucracy, in *Economy and Society*, is unmistakable:

Office management, at least all specialized office management – and such management is distinctly modern – usually presupposes thorough training in a field of specialization. This, too, holds increasingly for the modern executive and employee of a private enterprise, just as it does for the state officials. (1968, 958)

The anomaly is not really addressed by Weber, because in one sense there is nothing to address. The Chinese bureaucracy had many elements of bureaucracy as an administrative form and had them to such an extreme extent, for example, the centrality of written examinations for employment, that there was little question about the type of administrative form it was. The problem arose with respect to the question of knowledge, that is to say the type of knowledge that the examinations tested.

For Weber, the idea of testing bureaucratic applicants on the knowledge appropriate to a literary elite is on the face of it essentially arbitrary because the knowledge is not directly connected to the actual tasks of the bureaucrats. Nor is it connected to an ascending hierarchy of specialization in which the knowledge of beginners is built on by the knowledge of the specialist as it is in western administrative law. So the problem of expertise, and particularly the problem of expertise as used in the bureaucrats political and legal capacities, becomes Weber's focus. What he immediately discovered is that legal enactment and particularly law finding, that is to say, identifying the relevant applicable laws, is in the Chinese system, irrational. The laws are not organized nor was there an impulse to organize them, contrasting radically with the Roman legal tradition and the Justinian rationalization of law precisely through this process of codificational organization (1951, 149). Nor was there a kind of specialist legal discourse, such as that of the European law professors who interpreted Roman law after its 'reception' in the Renaissance, that would accompany a process of judicial appeal to higher and more legally authoritative courts. It was this feature of *de facto* finality of the

bureaucratic judges' legal judgements that Weber argued could be understood in terms of the ideal type that he had constructed in connection with Islamic law, what he called Cadi justice.

Unfortunately, this characterization explains one mystery by substituting another, because Weber's characterization of Cadi justice, which he admits is an ideal type that is quite unlike the actual historical institution of the Cadi (who was constrained by divine sanction to rule on very narrow cases), but was rather a figment of the western legal imagination that depicted the Cadi as a judge sitting under a palm tree bound by no law book or appeals court and thus free to rule as he pleased. The opposite was in fact closer to the truth, and the position of the Cadi was the undesirable one of enforcing divine law without discretion or human consideration. And this leads one to suspect that the ideal type of Cadi justice is not a possible, practical form of adjudication, but only a hypothetical limit case, and consequently was not the actual form of adjudication in Chinese law either (1968, 1115).

Nevertheless Cadi justice, as Weber depicted it, is in some sense an element of all law, a point which Weber's sometime student Carl Schmitt elevated into a radical account of discretionary adjudication that is relevant here, at least in part because of Schmitt's interesting conclusion. Schmitt argued that there is always a gap between the generalities of the law and the peculiarities of cases, and that the role of adjudication or even of bureaucratic ruling was to use discretionary power to determine the application of principles ([1922]1985, 31). Current philosophy of law has shed this view and its implications, claiming, in Ronald Dworkin's famous phrase, that there is always one right solution to legal questions. Schmitt argues what is in effect the exact opposite, namely that there is no rational-legal consideration that bears on the application of the law to particular cases. The gaps between the law and the particular is intrinsic to legality as such and ineliminable by any sort of legal enactment or principle of interpretation because any new law or principle faces the problem of application in new form without eliminating it. This led Schmitt to the view that the only source of consistency in the judicial process of applying the law was cultural rather than legal, that is to say that the shared prejudices of judges are made for legal consistency rather than anything 'rational' or 'legal'. This appeal to culture is revealing because it suggests that culture might in some sense be, as it was necessarily for the discretionary situations that Schmitt described, a more or less sufficient basis of adjudication on its own.

This point bears in a peculiar way on Weber's problem of understanding the relevance of literary examinations on Confucius for bureaucrats and judges. It is at least an interesting hypothesis that the function of literary examination was precisely to produce something analogous to what Schmitt believed had been accidentally produced in Germany by the extra-legal selection of judges from a particular social class, namely a strong cultural similarity which made it possible for legal and bureaucratic decision making to be coherent and to an extent sufficient

to produce and sustain a form of bureaucratic and judicial rule despite the apparent lack of codification.[2]

With this the pieces begin to fall into place. If literary examinations perform the function of testing for the possession of the shared culture necessary for bureaucratic adjudication and for the predictable carrying out of bureaucratic directives, then the system of examining and training becomes the mechanism for reproducing the particular kind of knowledge necessary for and appropriate to the bureaucracy. The knowledge in question would then not be expert knowledge in the specialist sense, but expert knowledge in a 'cultural' sense that also happens to be sufficient for and appropriate to the particular legal task of exercising judicial and bureaucratic discretion in a manner that is consistent with the decision of others and hence predictable.

What remains somewhat mysterious about this solution to the problem of the nature of Chinese bureaucratic knowledge is the question of the content of this knowledge. Schmitt says little about the content of the similarities between German judges that enabled them to make sense of the rules in the same way. But the impression one gets is that they are employing their discretion as conservative upholders of the existing social order and that their predictability takes the form of bias against particular groups and ideas, and toward resolutions to conflicts that favor particular kinds of people. In the Chinese case, however, the interests are created by the bureaucratic structure and the common ground is a result of the system of intense literary examinations itself. So the exams seem to function in the manner of bar exams for lawyers, but have non-legal, 'cultural' content.

 Schmitt's nonlegal solution to the problem of legal indeterminacy depends on the idea that there is a radical disjunction in kind between a legal consideration and the discretionary considerations and prejudices that inform the application of the law or bureaucratic decision-making. And it is this disjunction that does not hold in the case of China, though Weber strives to make it appear that it does by insisting on the 'literary' character of the exams. Confucianism, however, is neither simply a literary culture, nor a religion, nor a bureaucratic ideology, nor specialist expertise, but something that is all of these things and perhaps much more. So we are faced with a problem of elaborating an explanation of a systematically different nonwestern phenomenon through the multiplication of western intellectual distinctions, a process which ends in defining problems rather than explaining them.

A better analogy might be made to some accounts of American constitutional law, which suggest that there is a background doctrine that is not legal in the narrow sense but rather a kind of political theory that evolves along with adjudication and is relied on by the courts (Barber 1993). Knowledge of this body of thought, which takes the form of interpretations of the deeper significance of precedents, is not legal knowledge in the technical sense, and not specialist knowledge either, but rather something shared by the most profound thinkers in the community of

---

2   This case has been made *in extenso* in a persuasive paper by Xiangyang (2006).

constitutional interpreters. It is at the same time, in a sense, also the philosophy of the community– but it is a deeper understanding of this philosophy than the man in the street possesses. It is not the same as a *Weltanschauung*, which is supposedly 'shared', but rather it is something understood more deeply by some than by others who also live in accordance with it.

Where Weber Went Wrong

If we grant that Weber's interpretation went wrong, it is appropriate to ask why it did. There seem to be two reasons, one of which is conceptual, the other a failure of scholarship. I will consider these briefly. Weber, as we have seen, operated with a disjunction between rationality, embodied in expertise which is specialized, and the category of the nonrational. The way the distinction is applied has the effect of excluding the possibility of rational non-specialized knowledge. As I have noted, this was the point of contention in the dispute that became the 'crisis of the sciences', which followed his speech 'Science as a Vocation' ([1919]1946), which dismissed various justifications and characterizations of the pursuit of knowledge and denied there was any sort of modern knowledge that was not the knowledge of specialists. In that text it is somewhat ambiguous as to whether he thinks that comprehensive cosmological rationality and knowledge is merely an absurd present aspiration or whether it was always a false aspiration, but the implication is that it was always an illusion. Thus the Platonic idea of knowledge of the forms as the highest and controlling form of knowledge is a model of possible expertise, which happens to have been based on epistemic error.

In the essay on China there is also a reference to Plato, which on the face of it is quite odd. 'The Platonic ideal was established on the soil of the *polis* and proceeded from the conviction that man can attain fulfillment by being good at only one task' (1951, 161). This would make it seem that philosophy, or that which corresponds to knowledge of the forms, is itself a form of specialized knowledge wrongly given political significance by Plato: an interpretation which would help Weber preserve his image of rationality as distinctly western and his own picture of western intellectual history as summarized in 'Science as a Vocation' ([1919]1946, 140–43). But of course Plato's image of the guardians was that they would be trained in an extended hierarchy of the non-manual forms of knowledge and that on reaching the top of the hierarchy they would have the highest and most comprehensive knowledge, knowledge of the forms, which included knowledge of the form of the good. Thus the guardians were not, for Plato, specialists in ethical theory, the 'one task' at the top of the hierarchy of knowledge, but generalists, or at least masters of a hierarchy of types of knowledge.

In one sense, Weber's argument is persuasive: no one now thinks that there is general knowledge of the Platonic kind: today, even the philosophers concerned with the heirs to Plato's forms, perhaps logicians or metaphysicians, are specialists. The last flirtation in the West with the idea of philosophical leaders – Heidegger's

idea that he could be 'the leader of the leader', that is to say Hitler, ended in catastrophe. And the revival of the Platonic sense of philosophical rule by neo-Conservative followers of Leo Strauss, portrayed in Saul Bellow's *roman à clef* about Allan Bloom, *Ravelstein*, has led to its own difficulties. Knowledge here seems indistinguishable from ideology– a point to which I will return shortly.

As a sociological claim applied to the past, however, it is misleading. One can identify a large number of cases in which bodies of learning that were highly general served as the basis of community life. The rabbinical governance of Jews after the fall of Jerusalem under the Mishnah, for example, is a clear case in which a body of thought was developed to ethically regulate life and to serve juridical purposes that applied to many domains, from economics to purely religious questions, and we can retrospectively construct the 'theory' behind these regulations (cf. Neusner 1990, 1991). Rabbinical learning was 'specialist' and 'expert' only in a sense that does not fit the Weberian model very well. The knowledge of Torah was specialized in the sense that it was knowledge of a text. But the realm of application was decidedly non-specialized. Moreover, it fits the model of the philosophy of the community. A similar claim could be made for Islamic jurisprudence.

Weber seems to be skeptical about the idea that these philosophies were an actually effective basis of rule. His model of philosophically grounded rule appears to be natural law. He listed natural law as a source of legitimacy rather than as a form of legitimacy, meaning that natural law or a coherent body of ethical belief could serve as a buttress for the claim of the state to authority, but that it was insufficient in itself to constitute a form of rule. In an important sense the skepticism is justified: rabbinical rule was a matter of communal self-governance under a secular, separate state, rather than an effective blue-print for an actual form of political and juridical authority. Islamic law, similarly, ordinarily did not suffice, but rather co-existed with the law of the state (cf. Coulson 1969, 58–76).

Justified or not, this proved to be something of a blind spot for Weber's followers in the period of Communism. Hans J. Morgenthau, one of Weber's most successful admirers, analyzed the dictatorship of Stalin in terms of the categories of charisma conjoined with bureaucracy. This characterization had the effect of omitting the role of ideology. Of course, there is a question, historically, about the significance of ideology in Communist regimes. But the problem here is different: it is rather that Weber's categories of legitimate authority, which are the basis for his classification of functioning political forms, do not include a form of authority that is ideological, and tend to treat ideological matters as though they had no political significance beyond the role of legitimating authority.

In short, neither Weber's sociology of authority nor his conception of genuine knowledge had a place for comprehensive philosophies of the community. China is a case in which Imperial authority was closely tied to the bureaucracy run by literati who gained office through the examination system. Weber struggled to describe this in terms of European categories. He did not see that the 'literary' tradition as a community philosophy is binding on all the participants, including the Emperor – as with the ideological state, and that the mechanism of examinations served

the purpose of inculcating and giving prestige to this philosophy and its adepts. Instead, he saw it as an arbitrary method of securing offices for life, prebends, with no rationality of its own.

One reason for this perception was scholarly. The examination system was criticized by Chinese modernizers 'who questioned whether memorizing the classics and writing poems and essays were really relevant to the tasks of government, charged that the system merely tested men's classical education, and asserted that the examination net failed to capture men who possessed genuine abilities and high moral character' (Miyazaki [1963]1976, 124–5). Weber echoed these criticisms. But the system as it functioned, especially in the five centuries of the last imperial period when it stabilized (Elman 2000a, xvii), was not quite as Weber and the critics portrayed it.

The exams were not, however, limited to poetry, calligraphy and the classics. Questions of policy and legal reasoning were an important part of the examination procedure (Elman 2000a, 42). The essays, in any case, were not mindless classicism. Elman discusses the rhetorical structure of one of the most famous of the essays (which were published and used as study guides and models) based on a passage from the *Analects* of Confucius which read 'When the people have enough, how can the ruler have too little?' which deals with the 'ruler's responsibilities to provide a livelihood for his people' (Elman 2000b, 381). To be sure, these essays were constructed according to complex formal rules. Nevertheless they contained chains of argument that are not unrecognizable in western terms, and which were both sophisticated and relevant to governance. In this case, he notes, the argument was designed to show 'how low taxes would increase the overall wealth of the realm, if it remained in the hands of the people' and also benefit the dynasty. The effect of the argument, as he puts it, was to lead to a conclusion that was counter-intuitive, and 'channeled into a literati discourse built around Confucius's vision of a polity pegged to the interests of the people' (Elman 2000b, 386).

The exams were not limited to a small group of office seekers, something that Weber's account does not make clear. Huge numbers of aspirants studied for these tests, and thus were educated in this vision of the polity, and in much more. Elman estimates that by the nineteenth century, when the population had grown over 300 million, there were three million candidates for every biennial exam (2000a, 237). Few succeeded. But the experience of studying for the exams was very widespread. And the intensity of study, along with the uniformity of the topics, must have had an unusually uniformity-producing effect.

When it is considered in detail, the examination system seems less irrational, less medieval, and less alien. Exams in the West have the same fetishistic quality, from the SAT, which is a major determinant of college admission in the United States, to the Baccalaureate in France, and the same arbitrariness of content. Weber, himself educated in one of the most arbitrary and rigorous systems of literary education in history, should have recognized the similarities. The fact that he saw the exams primarily in terms of the power of the literati is perhaps a result of his commitment to conceptual categories for which Confucius was a poor fit.

As a western academic he did not see the absurdities of the Chinese system as a mirror for the absurdities of the academic rituals and distinctions of the West; if he had, he could have written a new *les Lettres persanes* to mock them. But although Weber was alleged to have had a sense of humor (Swedberg 2005, 119), this was not his style.

A deeper question of a more 'philosophical' kind also emerges in connection with Weber's judgments of the irrationality of Chinese practice. Weber used the notion of rationality in multiple ways, which sometimes conflict: sometimes the notion is normative, as in 'Science as a Vocation' and elsewhere, in contexts where he is making judgments about forms of knowledge or action, such as the return to religion in an age that has eaten from the tree of knowledge; sometimes it is used as an interpretive instrument, as when he describes the task of making sense of the military decisions of Moltke, in which the problem is to explicate as rational decisions that might not on the surface appear to be rational and to show what remains to be accounted for in terms other than rationality; and descriptively as a classification device, used in causal contexts to identify causal conditions.

The classificatory use can be comfortably regarded, within Weber's own methodology, as necessarily ethnocentric – it is an audience of westerners who are being helped toward understanding – and of no significance beyond its uses in making causal sense of the social world as described from an Occidental point of view. But in the China volume Weber repeatedly seems to go beyond this, a problem that becomes obvious when we come to the question of whether the body of Confucian thought represents genuine knowledge. If it does not, as Platonic knowledge of the forms does not, Weber can dismiss the idea that these bureaucrats are experts rather than literati whose selection for bureaucratic office through examinations is merely an arbitrary procedure. If it is real knowledge, it presents a problem. As an interpreter, Weber would have an obligation to make rational sense of it, rather than simply labeling it irrational. If he says that it cannot be made sense of, he raises the question of whether he has understood it. The judgment in this case has to be that Weber stopped short of fully understanding Chinese thought even within the limitations of the Occidental perspective he brought to it.

The solution to this conundrum is not to be found in Weber. Indeed, the question of whether his own methodology was founded on a choice that was irrational by his own lights has persisted as the major philosophical issue with his thought. Leo Strauss himself, of course, made this point with respect to 'Classical Political Philosophy', by which he meant Plato and Aristotle, and argued that Weber had illegitimately ruled out the possibility of knowledge of the good ([1950]1971, 36–78). The ruling out was illegitimate because to ground it would have required Weber to engage philosophically with the claims of classical philosophy, which is to say to make himself into a philosopher, rather than to presume that this kind of philosophy was now superseded.

There is another problem, however, that goes to the heart of Weber's notion of expertise. The doctrines Weber was keen to reject as failures to specialize and therefore develop were doctrines which aspired to comprehensiveness. But

comprehensiveness is not merely a bad goal, an illusory end rooted in literati nostalgia for the universal intellectual, as Weber seems to suggest. It is a practical imperative. There is a need to aggregate the knowledge of the specialists in order to make rational decisions. Narrowing may lead to achievement, but achievements need to be made usable for the non-specialist, or for the ruler. One aspect of the kind of intellectual mastery that the Confucians sought, and which Plato sought in his account of the ideal city, was the capacity to stand at the top of the pyramid of knowledge and decide wisely. Whether one thinks of this as specialist knowledge – whether one can be an expert about expertise – is an interesting question, but here it is beside the point: someone must use the specialist knowledge of the expert and make it into a whole. And one suspects that one source of Weber's inability to see the point of Confucianism is connected to his failure to acknowledge the problem of aggregating knowledge.

References

Barber, S. (1993), *The Constitution of Judicial Power* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press).

Coulson, N.J. (1969), *Conflicts and Tensions in Islamic Jurisprudence* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Elman, B. (2000a), 'Classical Reasoning in Late Imperial Chinese Civil Examination Essays', *Journal of Humanities East/West* 20 and 21: 361–420.

Elman, B. (2000b), *A Cultural History of Civil Examinations in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Gerth, H. and Mills, C.W. (eds) (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Miyazaki, I. ([1963]1976), *China's Examination Hell: The Civil Service Examinations of Imperial China*, trans. Conrad Shirokauer (New York: Weatherhill).

Neusner, J. (1990), *The Economics of the Mishnah* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Neusner, J. (1991), *Rabbinic Political Theory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Schmitt, C. ([1922]1985), *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press).

Simey, T.S. (1966), 'Max Weber: Man of Affairs or Theoretical Sociologist?', *Sociological Review* 14: 303–27.

Strauss, L. ([1950]1971), *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Swedberg, R. (2005), *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press).

Turner, S., and Factor, R. (1984), *Max Weber and the Dispute Over Reason and Value: A Study in Philosophy Ethics, and Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd.).

Weber, M. ([1915]1946), 'The Introduction to the Sociology of Religions', in Gerth and Mills (eds), 267–301.

Weber, M. ([1919]1946), 'Science as a Vocation', in Gerth and Mills (eds), 129–156.

Weber, M. ([1927]1961), *General Economic History*, trans. Frank H. Knight (New York: Collier Books).

Weber, M. ([1920]1951), *The Religion of China* rev., trans. Hans Gerth (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1952), *Ancient Judaism* (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1958), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

Weber, M. (1968), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (eds) (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Xiangyang, Q. (2006), 'Comparative Lawmaking, Legal Rationality and Weber' unpublished paper, The Law School of Sichuan University, China.

Chapter 8

Economic Rationalization, Money and Measures: A Weberian Perspective

Hector Vera

Shortly after the decimal metric system was officially adopted in India, a couple of Indian scientists mourned that 'in India, where the concept of and the symbol for zero, and the decimal place-value notation for writing numbers had been invented, the merits of the metric system took a long time to be officially appreciated' (Verman and Kaul 1970, 15–16). It was in the West where the decimal systems for divisions and subdivisions for coinage and measures was first systematically employed, mainly because it offers multiple advantages for rational calculation. Why did Western societies take advantage of these mathematical instruments for their metrological and monetary systems instead of India where they were invented? The work of Max Weber can shed some light on this question.

I attempt to frame the phenomena of money and measures as part of a larger social process of rationalization, using Weber's writings on economic sociology as a conceptual reference. The chapter discusses the interconnection between money, weights and measures in precapitalist economies, and how this interaction changed radically when modern rational capitalism became the predominant reality in the West. Finally, there are some comments about the international expansion of the decimal metric system and its limits within large-scale capitalism.

Even though the global expansion of the decimal metric system—with the process of rationalization behind it—has not been studied by sociologists, there are numerous theoretical insights in sociology (such as Weber's) that can illuminate this process which is an earlier and complex manifestation of what we call today globalization.

Economic Rationalization

As is well known, the concept of *rationalization* means for Weber that social action is disciplined, systematic, rigorous, and methodical. In this sense, rationalization implies areas of social life that are directed by reason, logic, regularity, calculability, and coherence (Albrow 2005, 353). In Weber's analysis of modernity, rationalization has permeated different spheres of social life in Western

societies: religion, law, science, art, philosophy, politics, economy, and etcetera. This paper will primarily deal with economy and economic actions.

In Weber's words, 'a system of economic activity will be called "formally" rational according to the degree in which the provision for needs—which is essential to every rational economy—is capable of being expressed in *numerical, calculable terms,* and is so expressed' (Weber 1978, 85 emphasis added). Thus, the main aspect of rationalization in economy is *calculability:* money, technology, free labor, capital accounting, and double entry bookkeeping are all social practices and institutions that helped the development of rational capitalism.

In this context, Weber was particularly interested in money and in what he called 'the sociological consequences of money'. For him the most significant of those consequences was precisely the *possibility of calculation.* Money makes possible the assignment of numerical values to goods and services that are involved in economic exchanges (Weber 1978, 81). And in his words, 'Everywhere it has been money which was the propagator of calculation' (Weber 1978, 107).

Calculation is then the key element in Weber's idea of economic rationalization. And calculation has to be based on quantitative and impersonal systems. Here lays the importance of using numerical terms which are 'unambiguously and without a wholly subjective valuation' (Weber 1978, 101) for economic activities.

Market itself is based in these numerical and impersonal characteristics. For Weber, a market situation is confined to the exchange of money because money allows 'uniform numerical statements' about social relations (Weber 1978, 83). At the same time, instead of evaluating goods exclusively in terms of their importance for the present moment, monetary calculation makes possible the systematic comparison of future opportunities of utilization of those goods (Weber 1978, 81).

However, I want to argue that calculation in economic activities in precapitalist economies went beyond monetary terms. Here the role of weights and measures is crucial.

Weber clearly saw how weights and measures were important for the development of the routine of quantified calculation. For example, Weber dedicated an entire subsection of his 'categories of economic action' to *calculation in kind* (see Weber 1978, 100–107). And he observed that, for example, bars of bullion that were weighed instead of coined, were treated as money, i.e., they were used for payment and exchange. Furthermore, for him the fact that these bars 'were weighed has been enormously important for the development of the habit of economic calculation'. As we can see, for Weber—as for Simmel—money was a central instrument for the expansion of calculation; but weights and measures in many ways opened the way to that *habit of calculation.*

Weights, Measures and Money in Precapitalist Economy

As the polish historian Witold Kula noticed, the functions of measures and money in pre-capitalist economies varied considerably from the functions they have today (see Kula 1986). Some of those functions are: the relation between money and measures in terms of prices, the way in which land was measured, and the problem of interests.

Money and Measures

In modern economy, as every contemporary consumer knows, the relation between the quantity of money and the quantity of a commodity is this: the quantity of money is variable while the quantity of the commodity is fixed. For example, when the cost of gasoline changes, what varies is the price of a fixed quantity of gasoline; so a litre of gasoline that today costs 92 pence, six months later may cost 93 pence. Variable money for a fixed quantity of a commodity. We are very familiar with this formula.

However, in pre-capitalist economy this relation was exactly the opposite: the quantity of the commodity was variable while the quantity of money was fixed. In this sense, prices were fixed and could not be altered; so, when the cost of a commodity raised or dropped what varied was the quantity of the commodity. The most common example was bread. The prices of bread in virtually all Europe (and in the European colonies in the Americas), up to the eighteenth century, did not change. Consider the case of New Spain,[1] where the oscillations in the price of bread were regulated by modifying the weight of the loafs. The loaf always cost half a *real,* but the weight of the loaf could vary; so, the higher the price of wheat and flour, the smaller the loaf of bread. Sometimes half a *real* bought an 18-ounces loaf, others a 13-ounces loaf (see García Acosta 1994), and the same happened with other products, such as butter and cheese. In other words, *prices were expressed in the quantity of the commodity, not in the quantity of money.* In Kula's words, the price as a mechanism that reduces to a common denominator all factors in a given commercial operation is a relatively recent phenomenon.[2] Money actually became the *universal commodity equivalent* only after the advent of capitalism.

---

1   New Spain was a viceroyalty of the Spanish empire from 1521 to 1821, it included what is today Mexico, the southwest United States, and Central America.

2   To see a more detailed description of the function of measures in pre-capitalist economy see Kula 1986*,* 102–110.

Measures of Land

Modern systems of measurement are based on an entirely *quantitative* conception of measure. However, old systems were not the same, because *qualities* were also considered in determining measures.

This qualitative element in measurement was present, for example, in the measurement of land. Today, all hectares are geometrically equal. A hectare is always 10,000 square meters, and an acre is always 4,840 square yards, no matter if that land is in a desert or in a cornfield. On the contrary, pre-metric measures of land were not defined exclusively by geometrical standards, but also by their productivity (i.e., by their quality). For example, one of the most common units to measure land in medieval Europe was determined by the 'amount of seed'. In some provinces of France, for example, the *setier* was a measure for dry products like corn and wheat (similar to the English bushel), but *setier* (or *seterée*) referred also to the necessary amount of land required to sow a *setier* of seed. Obviously, a *setier* of fertile soil was geometrically smaller than a *setier* of a less fertile soil. With this, 'two plots of unequal area might thereby be 'equated', that is, shown to have virtually the same productive potential' (Kula 1986, 31).

Thus, one of key features of modern methods of measurement is its abstract and quantitative character, embodied in the idea that reality can be grasped as a series of uniform units, like meters, litres, and grams (or by that matter, as seconds, power horses, watts, Fahrenheit degrees, etcetera).

Another category of land measure in pre-modern Europe was derived from the relation between *time* and *labor*, i.e., the 'labor-time for plowing'. In Spain and its colonies the *huebra* was defined as the land that a single person can plough in one day; and the *yugada* was the land that can be ploughed in one day using a pair of mules or oxen. Here again, the geometrical extension was not the prevailing factor to measure land. 'What mattered was the general emphasis on the relation of man to land' (Kula 1986, 30).

Again these practices of measurement survived until the origins of capitalism. In England, for example, the change occurred after Henry VIII expropriated the land of the Catholic Church and sold that huge amount of land. Also in the sixteenth century the enclosures of land started. These two processes completely changed the practices that gave sense to the ancient systems of measurement. Once land was exchanged for cash, its quality, its relation with 'labor-time for plowing' and its ability to support people became less important than how much rent it could produce (see Linklater 2002, 21–28).[3]

---

   3   As we can see, it is not an accident that the changes in how land was measured coincided exactly in time and space with the 'primitive accumulation of capital' described by Marx in *Capital*.

Interests and Measures in Precapitalist Economies

In his *General Economic History,* Weber dedicated a brief chapter to the problem of interest in the precapitalist period (Weber 1979, 267–271). Weber described the relative novelty of the phenomenon of interest and how the religious prohibition of usury inhibited the practice of charging interest. In the Middle Ages this problem was partially solved with the practice of money lending by the Jews. It was allowed for Jews to lend money to the Christians, since the prohibition was limited to the lending of interest money only among Christians. And Weber also noted that Protestantism broke up the prohibition against usury in the seventeenth century.

There were, however, some other ways to charge interest on a loan that involved the use of measures that were not considered by Weber. Typically, measures of grain were very 'irregular' (not standardized). These measures of capacity had actually three variations: heaped, striked, and shallow. Heaped meant that the measure contained grain above its rim; the striked measure did not exceed above the rim; and the shallow measure did not get to the rim (Zupko 1990, 20). This basically meant that the same measure could have three different magnitudes or amounts of grain.

A common trick for charging interest was lending grains in shallow measures and receiving the payment of them in heaped measures. In other words, 'loans would be made and then repaid using different measures, the difference serving to conceal the element of interest' (Kula 1986, 109–110). Formally, interest was not charged in these transactions because the same number of 'measures' were paid back as had been originally lent and thus the prohibition was avoided.

We can see here again that some economic functions—which involved detailed calculation— were practised beyond money through the use of measures.

Modern Systems of Measurement and Modern Rational Capitalism

The economic milieu in which premetric measures were used is similar to what was described by Clifford Geertz as the 'bazaar economy': there was not product standardization (neither fixed standards of money and measures), rather a 'system where little is packaged or regulated, everything is approximative, [and] the possibilities for bargaining along *non-monetary dimensions* are enormous' (Geertz 1978, 29). And when these economic conditions changed, so did measures.

Contrary to the variability, inexactness and lack of standardization that characterized premodern measures, modern systems of measurement, in particular the decimal metric system (which was invented during the French revolution in the 1780s) are fixed, exact, and standardized throughout the world. The expansion of these systems and the development of monetary economy, made impossible economic practices like the ones described above.

Capitalist economy and its necessity for rational and standardized institutions made easier the global expansion of a rational system of measurements like the

decimal metric system (a system that today is used in all countries except for three: Burma, Liberia, and the United States).

In this connection, the decimal metric system of weights and measures was a complete novelty in history, and it is (like many institutions analyzed by Weber) a particularity of the West.

Only in the West a rational system of weighs and measures was developed. Only in the West appeared a system of measurement with systematic interconnectedness like the one that characterizes the metric system (where all the measures are based on a single unit of length, from which the units of volume and weight were created); only in the West a system of measures uses an arithmetic system based on ten (i.e. a decimal system); only in the West was developed a system of measurement with the level of exactness that the metric system has achieved; and even more important, only in the West a system of measurement has reached an international standardization and acceptance capable of eliminating local variations in the units and magnitudes of measurement. Not even the highly sophisticated systems of measurement of Egypt and China were able to achieve *all* these goals. The global expansion of the metric system has meant the rationalization of the metrological activities in the entire world.

Weber saw clearly how the mechanisms of counting and calculation used today in the West were not used in the same way by other cultures. As he stated in the Author's Introduction (*Vorbemerkung*) to his *Essays on the Sociology of Religion*:

> Calculation, even with decimals, and algebra have been carried on in India, where the decimal system was invented. But it was only made use of by developing capitalism in the West, while in India it led to no modern arithmetic or book-keeping. Neither was the origin of mathematics and mechanics determined by capitalistic interests. But the *technical* utilization of scientific knowledge, so important for the living conditions of the mass of people, was certainly encouraged by economic considerations, which were extremely favorable to it in the Occident. But this encouragement was derived from the peculiarities of the social structure of the Occident. We must hence ask, from *what* parts of that structure was it derived, since not all of them have been of equal importance? (Weber 2001, xxxvii-xxxviii)

This question is waiting for answers. To see the origins of how we use the decimal system can shed some light on the problem. Why did people in the West and not in India take full advantage of the decimal system for organizing social activities? Why did past societies not develop our compulsion for calculation and measurement?

There is something radical in the metric system that is related to its revolutionary origin. The metric system was part of a larger project to introduce a rupture at all levels of collective life, to create a 'new man', to initiate a new era in history, and to rationalize social life as a whole. The seed of rationalization has lived in the metric system since its creation (Baczko 1948, 55).

Since the creation of the metric system in the French revolution, the scientific and political elites conceived the decimal metric system to be a universal language for the modern mechanisms of economic exchange. A single and rational system of measurement was an effective means to undermine the power of local authorities and local markets and to facilitate economic interconnections among different parts of the country (see Adler 1994).

At the same time, the level of exactness achieved by the metric system and its highly quantitative character connected very well with a series of other developments in modern Western societies where objectivity and quantification were greatly appreciated. In the words of Bruce Carruthers 'Quantitative measurement connotes objectivity and precision, and this aura encompasses monetary valuation as well. […] With quantitative information decisions appear less "subjective" or "arbitrary"' (Carruthers 2005, 358). Besides, quantification in economic processes helps to connect local transactions with larger circuits of exchange; quantitative measurement is facilitated by the immediacy of the market exchange.

Quantification and standardization in economy (embodied in institutions such as monetary economy and metrological unification) facilitate action at larger distances (see Curtis 1998, 547–549). It was with the development of capitalism that a series of institutions started a process of standardization at the same time that they increased their presence in social life. Complementary to this process, 'the social preconditions of large-scale capitalism involved the destruction of the obstacles to the free moment of economic transfer of […] goods' (Collins 2001, 384). It is in this context that we can understand better the standardization of currencies and measures, with the subsequent demolition of local and regional currencies and measures in favor of national and international standards of value and measure—think for example of the 'gold standard' used in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries for currencies and in the metric system, both spread throughout the world in the 'era of capital', the second half of the nineteenth century.

In this period, international initiatives (like the creation of the international standard time, the International Telegraph Union, the Universal Postal Union, and the International Meteorological Organization) were also developed. In a broader perspective, the metric system was part of this series of projects that helped to build international and interlinguistic mechanisms of standardization and coordination in a context when the world became increasingly unified (see Hobsbawm 2004, 64–87).

In this light we can consider the metric system among several institutional supports for large-scale capitalism. The unification of measures facilitated the calculation of economic exchanges, and eliminated the considerable problems for international commerce that the multiplicity of measures produced. As we have seen, in the premetric era it was common that different measures were used by producers, intermediaries and consumers, which produced considerable confusion and risk of fraud (it was common that customs brokers in ports with international commerce had to use tables with dozens of equivalencies with the measures

of every country in order to determine the quantities of every commodity they received).

The international expansion of the metric system and the international expansion of capitalism occurred simultaneously in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. And also in this period virtually all western countries witnessed a twofold process of unification of measures: on the one hand, the unification of measures within every national-state; and, on the other hand, a growing international coordination that created a global system of measurement.

In a word, the development of capitalist economy was helped by more exact and rational systems of measurement that facilitated commercial activities, not just among different countries, but also among diverse regions within those countries. For Weber, one of the peculiarities of modern, rational capitalism is that it is methodical and predictable, 'reducing all areas of production and distribution as much as possible to a routine' (Collins 2001, 381). The international standardization of measures was part of this process.

Three different groups of carriers or social actors drove the process of expansion of the metric system around the world. First, political elites that wanted to unify their states with a single system of weights and measures. Second, industrialists and merchants involved in long-distance trade, who sought to simplify the technical barriers in international commerce. And third, scientists who supported the idea of an exact and universal language of measurement for science and technology (Cox 1958). All these groups coordinated their actions through international conventions and associations (like scientific conferences, world fairs, and international treaties).

On the contrary, the groups that opposed the metric system were peasants and street citizens who did not want to alter their customs. Small merchants and local producers also resisted the introduction of the metric measures because switching was too expensive for them in relation with the possible benefits of the change. Finally, in some countries (primarily in England and the United States) scientists and intellectuals got organized to oppose the metre (Cox 1959).[4] Except for some isolated cases, these groups were defectively organized, poorly financed, and only had influence at local level. For the most part, they were defeated all around the world.

How the Metre Expanded Through the World

The creation at the end of the eighteenth century of the decimal metric system, by revolutionary France, signified the greatest transformation in the history of

---

4   One example of this was Herbert Spencer, who wrote lengthy articles against the metric system and in defense of the English and traditional systems of measures and coinage based on 'the experience of centuries' and useful for the purposes of daily life (Spencer 1914).

metrology. The metric system was more exact and rational than any previous system of measurement. Since the early nineteenth century it started to gain acceptance among some countries in continental Europe. Belgium, Luxembourg and the Netherlands were the first ones to voluntarily adopt the French system (in other parts of Europe the metre was first imposed by the Napoleonic Empire).

The second half of the nineteenth century saw the first boom in the global expansion of the metre. In Latin America 13 countries adopted the metric system during this time span: Colombia, Mexico, Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Puerto Rico, El Salvador, Argentina, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Paraguay. In Europe Monaco, Spain, Italy, Austria, Germany, Portugal, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland among others also went metric. And to this list we have to add Cuba and Algeria, colonies of Spain and France, respectively.

In 1875 the Convention of the Metre was held in Paris. There was created the first international organization for metrological unification. Thus, at the beginning of the twentieth century there was a truly international system of measurement, used in three different continents and with an international agency that regulated modifications and additions to the system.

By 1950, except for the majority of Africa, the United Kingdom and the former British colonies, the rest of the world had officially adopted the metre. At this point, the entire globe used only two mayor systems of measurement (the metric and the English customary). The last push towards global metrological unification was in the 1960s and 1970s when the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada started their processes of metrification.[5]

And this process of global metrification is still on the march; mainly by completing the installation of the metre in those countries where premetric measures are used concurrently with the metric ones. For example, in January 2005 the speed limits in Ireland were converted from miles per hour to kilometers per hour. Besides, economic integration in supranational regions is pushing forward standardization in the use of measures (as in the use of currencies like the Euro). Thus, in 2009 all products sold in the European Union will be required to have only metric units on their labels and dual labeling will not be permitted any more; this disposition will force countries like England to stop labeling their products using English customary units.

This panoramic look at the long processes of metrological unification of the metric systems shows a clear tendency. We can see here a lengthy process with an unmistakable direction towards global interconnection and standardization.

---

5   Just before the incorporation of the English speaking countries to the metric sphere, they had worked on their own metrological unification. In 1958 a conference was held to unify standards of length and mass (defining them in terms of metric measures); the inch, for example, became the same in England and the United States (2.54 centimeters) after that reform. Nevertheless, the measures of volume were not standardized and the U.S. customary units of bushel and gallon are different than those used in the United Kingdom.

Up to the eighteenth century several attempts were made to create metrological unification, but were limited to the territories of singular states (the most illustrative case is the United Kingdom, were a relatively high level of standardization was achieved). These were transitions from local and provincial measures to standardization measures in an entire national state. The case of the metric system, on the other hand, shows the transition from national measures to a globally accepted system of standard measures, a process that has taken place from the eighteenth century up to the present.

Money and Measures: Parallel Paths

The process followed by weights and measures was in many ways similar to what happened with money. It consisted in a change from very local systems, to state standard, and from there to increasing international coordination.

Sociologists such as Norbert Elias have noted that in feudal Europe most communities were 'autarkic', dedicated to self-maintenance, and with scarce economic exchanges. Rural regions were self-sufficient and with almost no means to participate in larger economic processes. In such 'barter economies' there were almost no intermediaries in the transfer of goods between those who produced and those who consumed.

This panorama changed at the end of the Middle Ages, 'slowly do the various districts become interconnected, are communications developed, are the division of labour and the integration of larger areas and population increased; and increased correspondingly is the need for means of exchange and units of calculation having the same value over large areas: money' (Elias 2000, 206).

The pacification of larger territories and the monopoly of violence facilitated the interconnection among people from distant places. Money economy started to increase its significance. Gradually more people began to step into 'the middle' of economic exchanges, between producers and consumers. In this extension of the chains of exchange money played a crucial role.

Weber called the Middle Ages a period of monetary irrationality because any single feudal lord was able to impose a monetary monopoly within the limits of his territory and multiple coins coexisted at any given time (Weber 1979, 247). As happened with metrological unification, money started to be standardized within larger regions, where central administrative powers tried to eradicate local currencies and unify the entire territory in the use of a single currency.

Some times these two efforts of unification (metrological and monetary) were fused into a single political and bureaucratic attempt to standardize the economic and social practices.

Decimalization of national currencies and the adoption of the decimal metric system happened almost at the same time in many countries. It is not an accident that in England the decimalization of the sterling pound in the 1970s only occurred after the adoption of the metric system in the England[6] (Weber noticed that the English monetary system—based on pound, shilling, and pence—was a last expression of the Carolingian monetary system (Weber 1979, 245)). The standardization of money and measures required also a 'mental standardization' to simplify the mental operations required in the use of money, weights and measures (see Kula 1986, 82–86).

Since 1857—with the Vienna Coin Treaty—the adoption of the decimal system for coinage started its process of global expansion. Just between 1861 and the beginning of the twentieth century, Italy, Germany, Japan, Egypt, Tunis, Russia, the Ottoman Empire and almost all Latin America adopted the decimal system for the subdivision of their currencies (see Weatherford 1997, 144–147).

Thus, with money we can see a parallel process as that of weights and measures. A process or rationalization and expansion that went from the very local to the global; from autarkic economies, with local currencies and measures, to standardized instruments of exchange in larger territories (typically imposed and regulated by the national states), and finally to the linkage among nations, when virtually all of the nations have adopted a decimal system for their currencies as well as for weights and measures.

Final Observations

The metric system has become a universal and rationalized language. Its universality is based on exactness, abstraction, quantification, and standardization. Today it is difficult to conceive a world without standardization in weights and measures. But pre-capitalist societies differed greatly from ours in this respect. Three hundred years ago the world lived in a metrological disorder. Today, one person can travel from one continent to another and always use the decimal metric system. In eighteenth-century Europe travelers found different measures in every region—and some times in every town. The metric system bolsters the interdependence of nations.

---

6   It was common in several other countries that the same law that introduced the metric system of weights and measures also imposed the decimalization of the currency, as happened in Mexico in 1857, just to mention one example. The United States is, again, an exception to this process, since it was the first country to have a decimal currency—at the end of the eighteenth century—but has not adopted the metric system as its official system for weighing and measuring.

But the metric system spread throughout the world one nation at a time. National-states were the effective force that imposed the metric system, although rational capitalism created the conditions that made the unification of weights and measures necessary.

In the 1960s, the United Nations registered almost one thousand different measures used at that moment in the world (see United Nations 1966, 103–130). Slowly but constantly all these measures have been replaced by only two systems of measures: the decimal metric system and the English customary system.

In a rationalized world there is no place for arbitrary and inexact measures, like those used in medieval Europe. The modern world has demanded more and more precise systems of social reference and integration. Hence, the need for exactness has transformed measures, as has occurred with coinage (the unification of currency within the national states, and the international monetary system). The global expansion of the metric system has to be framed as part of this general transformation that occurred, mainly, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Modern systems of measurement are abstract, impersonal, exact, quantitative, based on a decimal system that is useful for calculation, and standardized in a global scale (instead of local, regional, and national standardization); in other words, they have became rational. The global decimalization of money was part of a parallel trend of unification and simplification to facilitate pecuniary calculations.

Finally, I want to say a word about the conventions of time reckoning, which have not been rationalized nor decimalized. The French revolutionaries tried to reform the Gregorian calendar, the week, the day, the hour, and the minute using a decimal base. In sharp contrast with money and measures, these plans to reform and rationalize time were unsuccessful. Their failures show that the processes of rationalization are historically contingent and not necessary consequences of predetermined and inexorable laws of history.

References

Alder, K. (1994), 'A Revolution to Measure: The Political Economy of the Metric System in France', in Wise (ed.).

Baczko, B. (1984), 'Rationaliser revolutionairement', in Institut D'Historie Moderne et Contemporaine (ed.).

Carruthers, B.G. (2005), 'The Sociology of Money and Credit', in Smelser and Swedberg (eds).

Collins, R. (2001), 'Weber's Last Theory of Capitalism: A Systematization', in Granovetter and Swedberg (eds).

Cox, E.F. (1958), 'The Metric System: A Quarter-Century of Acceptance (1851–1876)', *Isis,* 13, 358–379.

—— (1959), 'The International Institute: First Organized Opposition to the Metric System', *Ohio Historical Quarterly*, 68:1, 54–83.

Curtis, B. (1998), 'From the Moral Thermometer to Money: Metrological Reform in Pre-Confederation Canada', *Studies of Science*, 28:4, 547–570.

Elias, N. (2000), *The Civilizing Process: Sociogenetic and Psychogenetic Investigations*, revised edition (Oxford: Blackwell).

García Acosta, V. (1994), 'Weights and Prices of Bread in Eighteenth-Century Mexico', *Cahiers de Métrologie*, vols. 11–12, 45–57.

Geertz, C. (1978), 'The Bazaar Economy: Information and Search in Peasant Marketing', *Supplement to the American Economic Review*, vol. 68, 28–32.

Granovetter, M. and Swedberg, R. (eds) (2001), *The Sociology of Economic Life* (Cambridge: Westview Press).

Hobsbawm, E. (2004), *The Age of Capital. 1848–1875* (London: Abacus).

Institut D'Historie Moderne et Contemporaine (ed.) (1984), *Les mesures et l'histoire* (Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique).

Kalberg, S. (ed.) (2005), *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell).

Kula, W. (1986), *Men and Measure* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Linklater, A. (2002), *Measuring America* (New York: Walker and Company).

Marin, A. (2005), 'The Date Protection Act: A Case of Rationalization', in Kalberg (ed.).

Smelser, N.J. and Swedberg, R. (eds) (2005), *The Handbook of Economic Sociology*, 2nd Edition (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Spencer, H. (1914), 'Against the Metric System', in *Various Fragments* (London: D. Appleton and Company).

United Nations (1966), *World Weights and Measures: Handbook for Statisticians* (New York: United Nations).

Verman, Lal C. and Jainath Kaul (eds) (1970), *Metric Change in India* (New Delhi: Indian Standards Institution).

Weatherford, J. (1997), *The History of Money* (New York: Crow Publishers).

Wise, N. (ed.) (1994), *The Values of Precision* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Weber, M. (1978), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Weber, M. (1979), *General Economic History* (London: Transaction Books).

Weber, M. (2002), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London: Routledge).

Zupko, E. (1990), *Revolution in Measurement: Western European Weights and Measures since the Age of Science* (Philadelphia: The American Philosophical Society).

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 9

Applied Science and Rationalized Hinduism—An Elective Affinity?

Richard Cimino

For Max Weber knowledge is to a certain degree autonomous and yet he also argued that various social strata have often been the bearers of specific interests and ideas. The apparent contradiction between these two positions is resolved particularly in Weber's sociology of religion. It is in his writings on the historical patterning of the world religions where both concepts are in play: those with certain economic and social interests may produce and convey specific kinds of religious knowledge. But this knowledge can also find receptivity among those of other social strata or ways of life. It is Max Weber's concept of 'elective affinity' that best illuminates the relationship between interests and knowledge and can thus serve as a tool for understanding how ideas are socially shaped and yet move in non-deterministic ways.

The most well-known example of this relationship is found in Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In the Author's Introduction (*Vorbemerkung*) he writes of the importance of determining 'elective affinities between certain forms of religious belief and a vocational ethic' (Weber 2002, 49). Weber was interested in how these elective affinities between belief, such as the doctrines of Calvinism, and a social ethic (economic rationalism) may play a role (among other factors) in the development of economic culture (Weber 2002). This essay seeks to explore the elective affinities between the professions of applied science and Hindu religious discourse shaped by rationalization. Just as Weber found that the spirit of capitalism spread beyond its base in ascetic Protestantism to influence the broader economic culture, I will seek to show, on a far more modest scale, how the rationalized religious discourse of Hindu applied scientists may have wider influence on Hinduism in the US. My research on the religious discourse of applied scientists provides a case study of how religious knowledge can be shaped but not necessarily monopolized by or embedded within certain interests and social strata.

The mysticism and ritualism of Hinduism seems a world apart from such precise and pragmatic precincts as engineering and computer science. Yet the diffuse and diverse religion of Hinduism has long adapted itself to new forms of knowledge. The Hindu entrance into the scientific and technical professions may be seen as another stage in a process of rationalization. In rationalization, value systems and the questions of meaning are increasingly challenged by utilitarian thinking. Weber writes that the 'tension between religion and intellectual knowledge definitely

comes to the fore whenever rational, empirical knowledge has consistently worked through to the disenchantment of the world and its transformation into a causal mechanism ... In principle, the empirical as well as the mathematically oriented view of the world develops refutation of every intellectual approach which in any way asks for a 'meaning' of inner-worldly occurrences.' (Weber 1946, 22). Monika Wohlrab-Sahr (2004, 1–3) writes, 'In Weber's theory, religion and science do not follow an evolutionary pattern, according to which science some day is going to take over the position of religion.' She adds that Weber did take the view that religion would be increasingly be seen as irrational and confined to its own sphere with less influence on the whole. While I question the thesis that involvement in science and technology inevitably leads to the loss of religious vitality, the thrust of my research does affirm how work in these fields challenges and influences traditional religious beliefs.

My research is based on interviews with 15 Hindu applied scientists in the engineering and computer science fields, and content analysis of websites where these 'technoscience' professionals interact and discuss Hinduism. The interviews, conducted between October, 2005 and June, 2006 in the metropolitan New York area, were based on open-ended questions regarding these professionals' work, religious lives, and how they relate the two spheres. Throughout this research I have been especially concerned with addressing two questions: What impact does work in technology and the sciences have on Hindu discourse and practice in the US? The second question addresses how these particular forms of technical knowledge and discourse are reproduced by these professionals within their religious communities. The latter question is important since these professional members' high status and income may give them considerable influence within their respective communities, comprising a 'new knowledge class' (Gouldner 1979). Thus, the style and contours of applied scientific thought may shape the religious discourse and practices within American Hindu temples even when only a minority of members work in these fields.

Hard Science And Strong Religion

Whether as students, immigrant workers or second generation Americans, Hindu engineers, doctors and other applied scientists have emerged as a significant force in their religious communities. The entrance of Hindus into the fields of engineering, medicine and computer science is not a uniquely American occurrence. Both sending and receiving nations are influential in channelling immigrant career trajectories among Indian Hindus. In the case of the latter, many of the migrant workers arriving in the US after 1965 (when immigration law was expanded to include many non-Europeans) were born into India's urban, professional middle classes, preparing themselves for 'out-migration years in advance by seeking out particular kinds of higher education, professional training, or investment opportunities that will maximize their access to student or immigrant visas …

By this time, prospective arrivals can tap into well-established employment and educational networks both in India and the United States' (Lessinger 2001, 167).

The software boom in India and the growth of the applied sciences in general have been associated with the new Hindu consciousness as well. Thus in Bangalore, India's Silicon Valley, it is not unusual for even Hindu rituals to be carried out in software firms (Tulasi 2002). The enormous growth of the software industry in India in the 1980s moved beyond the usual pocket of elite schools and educational professionals in the major metropolises (mainly on the coasts) and reached into the hinterlands. The form of Hindu religiosity more prevalent in small towns and villages was joined with 'neo-Hindu ideology' and hi-tech culture, providing a way for these workers to become modern while still holding on to familiar signs of authority (Rajagopol 2000).

Apart from Hinduism or India, the political and religious attitudes of applied scientists have continually stood out in comparative studies of those in other academic fields. In particular, engineers have registered a higher rate of belief than those both in the natural and social sciences (Zinsmeister 2005; Wuthnow 1985; Vaughan, Sjoberg, Smith 1966). There are various explanations for the higher religious belief of applied scientists, usually involving the theory of boundary maintenance among professions. A study of Texan Petroleum engineers (Constant 1989, 466–467) found that they were largely drawn from ranks of the sons of oil workers. Even after their university educations, these engineers shared in the values and lifestyles of the surrounding oil culture in which they worked, including a preference for 'fundamentalist' Christian denominations. The pattern of affiliation with Baptist and Methodist churches was higher among the engineering graduates from the University of Texas than that of the student body in general. Thus, these engineers truly represented 'science in society'—on one hand, working with a body of highly codified, sophisticated, 'differentiated and stratified knowledge', while, on the other hand, 'sharing remarkable localite and homogenous cultural origins'. This finding is in line with the theory that a highly codified scientific field has no need of differentiating itself from surrounding society by cultivating different lifestyles and/or beliefs as found in the social sciences (Wuthnow 1985). Wilensky and Ladinsky (1967, 557) posit that engineering is the weakest in professionalism—compared with lawyers and professors—and the strongest in careerism. Thus, the work of engineers has little to do with the 'transmission or mediation of core values,' nor do they share the sense of a 'calling' as a professor or lawyer might, which can serve as a secular substitute for religion.

From this brief overview, one can see how sociologists have been hard pressed in categorizing engineering as a profession or career, not to mention capturing its liminal nature existing between science, industry, craft, and management (most engineers move to management levels in the second half of their careers). Things are complicated further when considering computer science; some programmers, especially those working for small software firms, can be considered entrepreneurs, while lower status computer technicians have been viewed as the new working class (Keefe and Potosky 1997; Thornton 1999). Weber categorized engineers as

part of the intelligentsia; much of the practical science and knowledge they deal in is also found in the lower level intellectuals in the civic strata. This stratum has a penchant for an ethically rationalized religion that eschews asceticism and mysticism (Sadri 1992, 52–59, 110). All of these complexities make it difficult to draw a straight line between profession and religious outcomes.

Much of the above research suggests that religious engineers and computer scientists are more like laypeople in religion and other areas of life than other science professionals. While not specifically focusing on the applied sciences, there have been other studies showing close relationships between scientific and religious discourses, beliefs and practices. In his study on Puritanism and Pietism and science, Robert Merton argues that the empirical and rational approach of these streams of Protestantism lent themselves to the newly emerging technological and scientific outlook. Merton views the impact of Protestants upon the emerging scientific outlook in a similar way to that of Weber's study of early Calvinists and other sects' role in shaping the ethic of capitalism. He notes that, like Weber's Protestant ethic, there is not a straight line between Puritanism and science. Luther, Calvin and other early Protestant leaders did not support many of the scientific discoveries of their times. Calvin's theocratic Geneva, and strongly conservative forms of Calvinism that later emerged (the Baptists) in fact, impeded the development of science. Yet a scientific ethic emerged as these Puritan and Pietist values encouraged the utilitarian motives of empiricism and rationalism (Merton 1962).

The most recent studies of the religious discourse of scientists, and the scientific discourse of religions, have usually concerned new religious movements and fundamentalism. In a study of Scientology, Bryan Wilson found that leader L. Ron Hubbard used scientific (and pseudoscientific) language and concepts to legitimize the movement. He viewed Hubbard as 'rationalizing the faith as the member's access to the supernatural sphere is disciplined, routinized and regulated'. Wilson wrote that 'Scientology provides technical devices [such as the '"E-meter," which measures spiritual and psychological progress in the religion] by which to increase the production of salvation: to reduce mystery to formulae' (cited in Locke 2004, 111–131).

Other works suggest a high degree of involvement of applied scientists, particularly engineers and physicians, in evangelical and fundamentalist movements. Steve Bruce cites one history of the evangelical campus ministry, InterVarsity in Britain which found that most of its patrons were doctors or engineers. Bruce adds that the cognitive style of conservative Protestantism, with its stress on both an orderly universe and biblical text that yields knowable facts, converges with the inductive method of the applied sciences, which he characterizes as a 'mundane science' as opposed to the 'advanced science' of biology and physics (Bruce 2002, 106–117).

While acknowledging that 'fundamentalist' Muslim students are 'in a majority in the scientific institutions' in Arab-Islamic countries, Chafri (2004, 118–123), like Bruce, doubts whether these students have developed an authentic scientific

mindset. Chafri claims that it is science reduced to 'technique,' as found in engineering and applied sciences, that is in sync with these students' religiosity; in contrast, a proper understanding of the 'exact sciences' would encourage modernization and eclipse the appeal and claims of fundamentalism. Other scholars have made a direct connection between the linear, exacting work of engineering and the rule-based and literal-minded nature of fundamentalism (Bruce 2002).

Technoscience Discourse and Hinduism

In my interviews with Hindu applied science professionals, I found a persistent concern to relate their faith to scientific progress. Most stressed that Hinduism is the most scientific religion since it involves the continuous search for truth. A recently retired computer science professor said that in Hinduism 'the mind is always evolving. In Christianity and Islam, either you accept it or you don't; you can't ask questions. They have the Bible and Koran complete and don't add anything. Hinduism is open to knowledge. In Hinduism they're always writing new [sacred texts].'

Some of the respondents described their faith as more suitable to modern American society and its high valuation of science than that of evangelical and fundamentalist Christians. The retired computer science professor said the US is renowned for its science and if 'that's lost, everything is. I'm worried about the growth and influence of evangelicals,' and how that they may reverse the scientific and technological advances in the US. With few exceptions, most saw the growth of technology as largely beneficial, even on controversial issues involving biotechnology, such as stem cell research (although there was some concern among more orthodox Hindus that cloning may violate God's design). This tendency to be tolerant and flexible on bioethical issues surrounding technology is not unique to these Hindu applied scientists in the US. In fact, India's emerging role as a center of biotechnology research and therapy has been attributed to its Hindu culture and its non-dogmatic, pragmatic approach to such issues (Sachdev 2006, 24–25).

In some cases, the science valued by these professionals took a number of detours from conventional science. Science derived from the Vedas (for example, Vedic mathematics) was seen as complementing and making more comprehensive Western science. During my interview with a 51–year-old computer programmer, he showed me a painting of a Hindu saint and told me that he has lived for 300 years, and that there were some saints that reached a state of perfection and have lived for as much as 3,000 years. When I said that most scientists would have problems with that claim, he first replied that many of the techniques and 'sciences' of Hinduism, such as Ayuveda, have since been confirmed by Western scientists. But he added, 'You have to use reason; reason brings you to the edge of the springboard and then you have to take the leap of faith.'

But this programmer was educated in business and was a true autodidact both in science and religion. Those trained in the applied sciences were more likely to

stress the congruence between their religion and Western science. A small number claimed that Hinduism is strictly a spiritual system that had nothing to do with science. More typical was the retired New Jersey systems engineer who said that he values Hinduism because 'logic is not shunned and discouraged. Science and religion are both the same—it's the search for truth … What the saints did 5,000 years ago, science is doing now. It's the same track'. The retired computer science professor explained this concept further when he spoke of Hinduism as a philosophy that served as a 'cover' for science throughout the ages. For instance, the scientific theory of the big bang, when all the chemical elements emerged from Hydrogen, was foreshadowed by the Hindu concept that the world is one and everything came from a divine source and is returning to that source. 'Religion is full of science but in an abstract way', he added.

A 42-year-old computer programmer at a chemical plant in New Jersey viewed the existence of supernatural spirits and miracles in this light. He has been taught that there are three ways of knowing the truth—scriptures, the guru, and experience. 'If experience goes against the other two then it's not truth for me', he said. 'For example, I have doubts about the spirits. The scriptures [teach about them], but I still doubt. I'm skeptical about claims for miracles. These things we don't understand … have to be reconciled through science—that's how we'll understand it; that's God's mechanism of truth'.

The account of a 62-year-old engineer and consultant suggests the attraction of a rationalized and scientific approach to Hinduism among these professionals. He was raised in a family that he said was 'spiritual but not religious'. In India 'the problem is that most Hindus are more religious than spiritual; they're following rituals blindly without knowing what they're doing'. In middle school in India he started studying the Bhagavadgita and throughout his engineering studies and career, he has remained 'knowledge-driven … I don't practice anything blindly; I have an insatiable desire to learn and decipher things. I don't need priests [to explain Hindu teachings]. I have a clear understanding'. Today, he is more conventionally religious, occasionally attending temple, keeping in touch with a guru, and practicing rituals, such as reciting morning prayers and chanting, mainly because he 'understands their meaning'. He said that a 'knowledge of science helps people understand spirituality more than such fields as the arts and commerce … In the material life, science is helpful in understanding spirituality faster. You can't accept theologies blindly or believe for belief's sake. But people coming from other backgrounds, such as the arts, may accept certain doctrines blindly. This is what's happened in the rest of the world's religions'.

But he added that those scientists who 'follow the material life' and discount such occurrences as miracles are 'ignorant.' Those scientists, however, who have both 'material knowledge and spiritual knowledge can see things more clearly'. In a similar way, he called the theories of Darwinian evolution 'all humbug' because they deny the universe's infinite existence. He is certain that such theories will eventually be disproven from a 'logical' perspective.

The engineers I interviewed particularly viewed the practical and applied nature of their science as challenging—independent of their Hindu faith—the theoretical sciences. An engineering professor criticized scientists for their tendency to do research without being responsible for their results. 'In engineering you have to know the possible results beforehand. For instance, will [the results of the research] be biodegradable? Many scientists don't take responsibility and see religious people as obstructing [their work]'. A computer programmer who was trained as an engineer in India expressed his doubts about Darwinian evolution from an engineering perspective. He said that 'Scientists deal with probability, saying something like evolution has a probability of taking place. For the engineer, it would be a very minute possibility, but it's not likely. I don't care if it[works] on a piece of paper, the engineer has to make it happen'. He added that he is more inclined to accept 'intelligent design' (though he has never read intelligent design literature), mainly because the concept of design makes more sense to an engineer's mind. In the same way, he argued that such advances in biotechnology as cloning violate nature's original design.

During my interview with a 51-year-old Hindu computer programmer from Westchester, he reached into his bag and produced an article from a website in order to explain the teachings of his faith. But what was most revealing was how the essay was framed around an applied sciences and technological mindset. It stated that the 'world is becoming more digital in all respects. Everything needs to be presented in black and white for acceptance. Grey is no more an option in many cases. In olden days, such clarity was required only in scientific matters. But today no one is willing to accept anything that is illogical and insipid. Matters of faith are no exception. People are looking for clear definitions and meanings in all rituals and beliefs … the distinguishing pillars of each faith need to be highlighted in this highly competitive field. Each of us have [sic] to list out the USP (Unique Selling Propositions) of our faith to satisfy others and ourselves'.

The author then proceeds to describe Hinduism as only an engineer can. 'Hypothetically, we are building up a structure on the firm ground of reason to reach a certain point in space. The most stable structure is a dome and that is what Hi-Faith [the author's term for Hinduism] is. It can be said that a dome has an infinite number of pillars but here we will search for the salient pillars that distinguish it from others.' After listing five pillars for Hinduism, he concludes that the 'most progressive feature of Hi-Faith is its 100 per cent compatibility with Science, especially the modern variety wherein we reach the conclusion that everything is just Maya and the truth is only one …' (Kumar 2005).

The interactive nature of the Internet itself adds to the democratic yet standardized discourse produced by technoscience professionals. Thus, directly after this article, another writer adds several 'additional pillars' to delineate his conception of 'authentic' Hinduism. The attempt to categorize or 'pillarize' Hinduism in the US may not be entirely unique to applied scientists. In a religious tradition as diffuse and complex as Hinduism that has been transplanted into a society with little knowledge of its teachings and practices, it is not surprising to

find several attempts to craft a simplified articulation of the religion in order to explain it to outsiders (Eck 2000). But the very act of categorizing and simplifying bears a special affinity to scientific and rationalized methods of thinking common to technoscience professionals.

Gyan Prakesh (1999) notes that the reliance on empirical science to establish and explain the truth of Hinduism, an endeavor that first flourished in late nineteenth century India, conflicts with the older Sanskritic traditions asserting that Vedic truths are transcendent and need no confirmation. This form of scientific Hinduism was clearly espoused by a 32-year-old mechanical engineering professor from a technical university in Brooklyn. Unlike the other Hindu professionals I interviewed, this professor saw no value at all in Hindu rituals and has been largely uninvolved in Hindu institutional life since arriving in the US for graduate study seven years ago. For him the religion began and ends in science. 'Hinduism started from science. The first question in the Vedas is 'Where Does the earth come from?' A lot of our knowledge in mathematics, physics and astronomy come straight out of the Vedas. Later on, the priests started dominating and the religion became corrupt. Religious leaders took control of society. Natural powers [came to be seen] as gods. The gods were made by the priests … Until science gives us explanations, we tend to call [unexplained phenomenon] God.' This professor admitted that eventually all supernatural beliefs may be explained by science. Yet he says he is strong believer in God and values Hinduism for teaching the 'purity of body and thought and that one should remember God in good times, not only in bad.'

The above accounts clearly demonstrate how these professionals' discourse on Hinduism has become highly rationalized and subjected to the standards of meaning, practical logic, and empiricism. The tendency of separating Hindu spirituality from its rituals and communal expressions (expressed in the maxim, 'I'm spiritual but not religious') and the distilling of the vast body of Hindu tradition and scriptures into basic 'pillars' are modern innovations that are found across the religious spectrum from East to West. Thus there is a strong affinity between this rationalized Hindu discourse and these applied science professionals. Just how such an affinity may be 'elective' and not bound to this professional strata will be discussed in the next section.

Hindu Applied Science Professionals in their Religious Communities

There is a clear autodidactic tendency when it comes to religion among most of the Hindu applied science professionals I interviewed. There was variation in the level of religious observance and practice among the interviewees; some never went to the Hindu temple and had a low rate of religious practice (such as meditation and enacting rituals), while others showed a good deal of communal, ritual, and personal religious commitment. Yet there was an emphasis on learning and exploring Hindu teachings for oneself without the mediation of religious

authorities. The retired New Jersey systems engineer writes and speaks often on Hindu topics, but the only times he enters a Hindu temple is to teach a class of children. 'I go [to the temple] to teach and do social work. I tell the priests, "you guys do what you do and I'll teach."' He is particularly critical of the swamis who seek to transmit Hindu teachings to Americans. 'About 99 per cent of them don't know English [and] can't relate to [children] … I want to speak to the children from what I know. I want to create the curiosity for them to learn on their own. I feel a responsibility to impart their heritage to them and then leave them free to believe what they want.'

Only a small number agreed that they would consult a priest or guru if they had a particular dilemma or question regarding Hinduism. One computer programmer did say he regularly consults his guru at the Hindu temple, but his guru is an engineering professor who translates many of his teachings into scientific lingo. A computer science professor said he would like to ask authorities questions but the problem is that they usually don't know as much as he does about the faith.

I originally approached this research thinking that Hindu engineers and computer scientists represented an elite that held most of the positions of power within Hindu temples and organizations (Zaidman 2000). While such organizational clout may be the case in some temples, particularly on the West Coast (in Silicon Valley, in particular), in the New York-New Jersey area the boards of directors and other leadership positions were usually occupied by medical doctors and those working in finance. One computer science professor I met had just lost the temple elections for a seat on the board and complained that doctors typically gained such positions because they were more adept at publicizing themselves and campaigning in the community.

Very few of the applied science professionals I interviewed were in positions of temple leadership, but most taught classes (both to adults and children) and several lectured on Hinduism outside the temple (such as to interfaith groups), as well as discussing and writing on Hinduism on the Internet. Thus these applied scientists have considerable impact on the representation and dissemination of Hindu teachings to fellow members (as well as to those outside the community), if not through the organizational and ritual dimensions of Hinduism.

The influence that these professionals have on an intellectual and educational level may well serve to generalize their rationalized discourse to the wider Hindu community. As Weber noted, the religious content produced by one social strata can be adopted to meet the needs of other strata. It is true that Weber holds that intellectuals are able to transcend their class interests more than other social stratas and tend to produce knowledge for those of other classes (Weber 1978). But these technoscience professionals' work in practical rather than theoretical knowledge, which, as mentioned earlier, could place them in the civil strata. This would make for a unique case, with these professionals possibly extending their influence in several directions—among the 'masses' as well as among intellectuals. The rationalized discourse of these Hindu professionals is evident in the national and international Hindu media, such as the magazine *Hinduism Today*, with its frequent

references to the scientific and practical nature of the religion. The emphasis one finds on Hindu principles of management and instilling a Hindu work ethic in such literature can be found among both applied science and financial professionals (see, for example, Rao 2005, 9).

In my fieldwork, the influence of such professionals was not very evident in the large and pluralistic urban temple in New York, which tended to feature orthodox devotional literature based on the Hindu scriptures, for children as well as adults, in its bookstore. But such influence was more visible at a smaller temple I visited in a New Jersey suburb. After attending a class on Hindu teachings taught by an engineering professor, I was told that I should stay for a lecture by a renowned swami, who also happened to be an engineer before he renounced his secular life and took up monastic vows.

Book tables in the social hall where the lecture was to take place were stacked with copies of the Vedas and the Bhagavadgita alongside glossy booklets and tracts with such titles as 'Personnel Management', 'Action and Reaction', 'Need for Cognitive Change', and 'Freedom from Sadness'. The lecture was likewise aimed at professionals who were seeking spiritual solace and practical direction amidst their busy lives. 'You can have all the knowledge about the world and have two degrees', the Swami intoned, switching between English and Hindi. 'Having all knowledge is great but it doesn't solve the basic problem … You are the cause of your problems with other people'.

Conclusion

The Indian Hindu community shows sharp cleavages between middle and upper class professionals (mostly doctors, engineers and computer scientists) and lower-status recent immigrants, such as cab drivers and service industry workers (Lessinger 2001). The professional class, with its greater access to travel and business connections, have maintained ties to India that have also exposed them to transnational movements, such as Hindu revivalism and nationalism. Because applied science professionals exert much of their influence outside of the formal temple structure and its rituals and primarily shape the educational and intellectual currents of Hinduism in the US, such discourse is unlikely to influence the more recent immigrants. But as Indian Hindus seek to assimilate they are more likely to encounter rationalized religious discourse, such as in suburban temples, the Hindu media, and Hindu student groups at the universities. This is especially true because the main-Indian Hindu path to assimilation into American society has been through highlighting the religion's rational and scientific outlook and how such a spiritual approach is congruent with modernity. The same pattern has been noted in a recent study of Buddhist immigrants to the US who translate their faith into scientific and rational terms, partly as an attempt to counter the inroads of evangelical Christianity in their community (Chen 2006).

In conclusion, Weber's concept of elective affinity and the relative autonomy of knowledge helps illuminate the close relationship between applied science professionals and rationalized religious discourse. The concept allows for the relatively autonomy of knowledge and thus can show how such discourse can find a broader appeal and currency within the wider American Hindu community. However, it remains to be seen whether the recasting of a mystical and ritual-based religion into rationalized forms will mean its revitalization or secularization and disenchantment.

References

Barber, B. et al. (eds) (1962*)*, *The Sociology of Science* (New York: The Free Press).

Barley, S. et al. (eds) (1997), *Between Craft and Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

Berger, P.L. et al. (eds) (2002), *Many Globalizations* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Bruce, S. (2002), *God is Dead: Secularization in the West* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing).

Chafri, F.F. (2004), 'When Galileo Meets Allah,' in *New Perspectives Quarterly,* Fall.

Chen, C. (2006), '"True Buddhism is not Chinese": Taiwanese Immigrants Becoming Practicing Buddhists in the United States,' unpublished paper presented at the meeting of the Association for the Sociology of Religion, Montreal, Quebec, August.

Constant, E. (1989), 'Science, Society & Texas Petroleum Engineers,' in *Social Studies of Science*, August, Vol. 19, No. 3, 439–472.

Coward, H. et al. (eds) (2000), *The South Asian Religious Diaspora in Britain, Canada, and the United States* (Albany: State University of New York Press).

Eck, D. (2000), 'Negotiating Hindu Identities in the US,' in Coward, et al. (eds), 219–237.

Gouldner, A. (1979), *The Future of Intellectuals and the Rise of the New Class* (New York: Seabury).

Hammond, P. (ed.), (1985), *The Sacred in a Secular Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

Keefe, J. and Potosky, D. (1997), 'Technical Dissonance: Conflicting Portraits of Technicians,' in Barley, et al. (eds), 53–81.

Kumar, J.A., 'Highlights of Hi-Faith' on the website, http://www.boloji.com/opinion/0119.htm, accessed 17 September, 2006.

Lessinger, J. (2001), 'Class, Race and Success: Two Generations of Indian-American Americans Confront Their Dream,' in Smith. et al. (eds), 166–190.

Locke, S. (2004), 'Charisma and the Iron Cage' (2004) in *Social Compass*, 51(1), 111–131.

Merton, R. (1962), 'Puritanism, Pietism, and Science,' in Barber et al. (eds), 33–66.

Rajagopal, A. (2000), 'Hindu Nationalism in the US,' in *Racial and Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, May, 467–496.

Rao, N.N. (2005), '"Workship" with "Grattitude,"' in *Hinduism Today*, October/November/December, 2005.

Sachdev, C. (2006), 'A Pragmatic Culture,' in *Science & Theology News*, March.

Sadri, A. (1992), *Max Weber's Sociology of Intellectuals* (New York, Oxford University Press).

Sahr, M.W. (2004), 'Religion and Science or Religion Versus Science?' unpublished paper presented at the conference, *New Perspectives on the Study of Religion in Modern Societies*, April 2–4, 2004, New York University, New York.

Smith, R.C. et al. (eds) (2001), *Migration, Transnationalism and Race in a Changing New York* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press).

Thornton, P. (1999), 'A Sociology of Entrepreneurship,' *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 1, No. 25, 19–46.

Tulasi, S. (2002), 'A Tryst with Destiny,' in Berger et al., (eds), 89–116.

Vaughan, T.R., Smith, D.H., and Sjoberg, G. (1966), 'The Religious Orientations of Natural Scientists,' in *Social Forces*, Vol. 44, No. 4, June, 519–526.

Weber, M. (2002), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, 3rd edition. (Los Angeles, Roxbury Press).

Weber, M. (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Wilensky, H.L., and Ladinsky, J. (1967), 'From Religious Community To Occupational Group,' in *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 32, No. 4, August, 541–561.

Wuthnow, R. (1985), 'Science and the Sacred,' in Hammond (ed.), 187–203.

Zaidman, N. (2000), 'The Integration of Indian Immigrants to Temples Run by North Americans,' in *Social Compass*, Vol. 47, No. 2, June, 205–219.

Zinsmeister, K. (2005), 'Case Closed,' in *American Enterprise*, Jan./Feb., 42–45.

Chapter 10

Rationality and Nuclear Weapons: Weber's Pertinence in the Post-Annihilatory Age

Brian C. Bartholomew

Max Weber's Intellectual Legacy and the Nuclear Predicament

In the following critical exploration of nuclear strategic alternatives after the Cold War, I will try to work with three themes adapted from the thought and approach of the great Max Weber: the disjuncture between 'formal' and 'substantive' rationality, the dynamic historical relationship between weapons innovation and sociopolitical formation, and the autonomous validity of the historically based, hermeneutical approach to social-scientific inquiry. Let us very briefly consider these ideas before discussing their application to the subject.

The distinction between 'formal' and 'substantive' rationality is arguably one of Weber's enduring contributions to the analytic repertoire of the social sciences. Tersely defined, the first type is oriented to the efficiency or integrity of means to given ends; the second, to the concrete realization or critical evaluation of the ends themselves (see Weber 1978, 85–6). It was in fact only the formal, abstractly calculating type of rationality that Weber was referring to in distinguishing modern Western capitalism from other historical varieties as peculiarly 'rational,' and in calling bureaucracy the most 'rational' form of organization. He did not take rationality itself to have an ultimate meaning that was identical with this peculiar orientation that had become so preponderant in the modern West and, as Randall Collins (1980, 927, n. 4) points out, he even made 'it clear that formal and substantive rationality can diverge widely[.]' Thus, for example, he described how the formally very rational character of modern capitalism, involving the subordination of human wants to capital accumulation as an end in itself, a 'reversal of what we should call the natural relationship' between the two, was substantively quite absurd relative to the value of individual happiness (Weber 1992, 53). The potential for disjuncture between what is 'rational' according to formal criteria and substantive criteria applies in both directions, of course, so that *each* is potentially irrational or immoral in terms of the other. Subsequent applications of Weber's analytic distinction can and have been fruitfully carried out, and I will here attempt to follow in this tradition with the case of nuclear strategy after the Cold War.[1]

---

1   The tension between formal and substantive rationalities in the juridical sphere, for example, might be illustrated in the acquittals of criminal defendants whose prosecution may

Collins (1980, 940) remarks that Weber's 'theory of the development of the state is to a considerable extent an analogy to the Marxian theory of the economy.' The underlying principle of sociopolitical organization and change in this analogy is the mode of warfare instead of economic production. From the war-fighting capacities of medieval knights to those of mercenary armies and then disciplined troops, military innovations 'brought forth the modern state by requiring an organized system of finance and administration in order for societies to defend themselves' (Bobbitt 2002, xxii; see also Giddens 1987, 103–16). I will further adapt and oversimplify from Philip Bobbitt's adaptation of Weber and posit a 'Weberian dialectic' of weapons innovation and sociopolitical formation in discussing the constitutional implications of nuclear weaponry's advent.

The third theme I will try to bring to bear here has to do with Weber's affirmation of the interpretive nature of the social sciences. While not so much interested in the polemic against the inaptitude for social studies of the natural sciences' inductive approach, I think it important in the case of our contemporary nuclear predicament to emphasize the hermeneutical perspective's autonomous validity relative to that predominant approach. For while the search for transcendent causal regularities surely offers much to knowledge and even practical action, the interpretive orientation to social phenomena as subjectively meaningful (Weber 1978, 4), i.e., humanly created and contingent, has an irreducible epistemological validity and moral value that is particularly pertinent in a situation of momentous historical *crisis*. With regard to our present nuclear situation, an historically informed self-understanding and sense of responsibility is indispensable. Now on to an overview of our subject.

Twentieth-century humanity's achievement of the capacity for nuclear self-annihilation may perhaps be seen as the quintessential example of formal rationality's substantive absurdity: in a drive for military supremacy and national security, modern science and military strategy collaborated to bring about an infeasible kind of warfare and a condition of universal vulnerability. However, it may actually only be in today's post-Cold War phase of the nuclear age that the real crisis of formal rationality in the military realm has become manifest, as

---

rest on insufficient evidence according to abstract judicial rules but who are nevertheless undoubtedly guilty according to less rule-bound and more situationally attuned standards of proof. In such cases, compelling evidence of guilt may be formally inadmissible or vitiated through its relation to a universalistic standard of proof abstracted from social realities on the ground, as, for example, has arguably been generally characteristic of the formal adjudication of cases of police violence against blacks in the United States. In the other direction, purely discretionary forms of 'justice' and 'law' can and certainly have lead to morally quite repugnant as well as formally unsystematic outcomes, as has been brought out in analyses of the Nazi regime (as by Hannah Arendt, Ian Kershaw and others) which counter the thesis of its supposedly bureaucratic nature. See Weber (e.g. 1978, 976–80) on the tensions between formal and substantive justice.

nuclear weapons start to lose the historically specific underpinnings which had rendered their possession provisional and their use absurd.

As Jonathan Schell (2001) has pointed out, the end of the Cold War has meant the end of nuclear weapons' extraordinary and provisional status as an exigency of the global contest with fascist and communist totalitarianism. At this critical turning point, the nuclear powers, and particularly the United States as at least the militarily dominant if not ideologically hegemonic power, are forced to decide the question of whether to permanently institutionalize these weapons as legitimate expressions of national sovereignty, a course with problematic implications for proliferation and deterrence, or follow through on their complete dismantlement and abolition as part of the conclusion of the great twentieth-century conflict in whose name they had been built. It seems apparent, as the years pass and the weapons remain in a seeming strategic and moral limbo, that these powers are opting for the first course, the path of nuclear *multipolarization*, whether deliberately or by default. Indeed, nation-states might seek in a formally rational way to maximize their autonomous destructive capacity without effectively connecting this activity to the substantive goal of maximizing their autonomous military *power*, which nuclear weaponry seems not to enhance but rather to undermine. The Cold War's bipolar regime of annihilatory deterrence had actually transcended the limits of national sovereignty in its ideologically legitimated nuclear duopoly, and it is doubtful whether a multipolar regime of autonomous nuclear states could reconstitute a deterrence order comparably able to prevent the use of nuclear weapons.

In addition to this potential normalization of the weaponry leading in the direction of multipolarity, I will argue that the post-Cold War period also threatens its strategic *conventionalization*, since it becomes once again freed from the function of species-annihilation imposed under the regime of bipolarity and thus 'feasible' to use. I believe that this course of conventionalization, as opposed to an intentional or, as Schell argues, unwitting policy of multipolarization through strategic inertia, is the one that the US is actually and deliberately pursuing at the present time. This is evidenced by its new doctrine of preemption, development of antinuclear and 'mini-nuke' technology, and virtual achievement, as argued recently by Keir Lieber and Daryl Press (2006), of a nuclear first-strike capability *vis-à-vis* today's much deteriorated and outstripped Russian arsenal. This strategic course would seem more problematic and repugnant than even intentional multipolarization as a radical reorientation away from the principle of nuclear deterrence to that of actual nuclear warfare.

At the same time, the strategic structural shift that is undermining nuclear weapons' terroristic function and promoting their tactical feasibility is also undermining the Cold War abolitionist consciousness of their absurdity. The post-Cold War official rhetorical pattern of duplicitous reassurance about existing arsenals and redirection of anxieties to mere nuclear aspirants has been abetted by our increasing distance from the era of species-annihilation and its immanent absurdity-based critique of nuclear weaponry. Abolition, the substantively most

rational course for achieving nuclear security today, is thus in danger of becoming more remote.

Time would also not seem to be on nuclear abolition's side relative to its institutional, as well as public-mobilizational, requirements, for continued realist normalization of the weaponry is undermining the institutional supports for its supranational status, as the dissension and dilatoriness of the last nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference in 2005 demonstrate. In accordance with the Weberian dialectic of weapons innovation and constitutional change, however, nuclear weaponry relentlessly transcends the sovereignty claims of nation-states and requires for its management the constitution of a post-realist international order—a characteristic definitive of both the passing bipolar regime of mutual annihilation and any global regime of nuclear abolition to come. What had hitherto been maintained in a de facto way now needs to be formally ratified through the good-faith observance and development of nuclear agreements which already exist, but to which the major nuclear powers are only as yet still compelled to pay lip service.

The interpretive historical perspective Weber prescribed for the social sciences, finally, is particularly needed to promote the increasingly urgent abolitionist cause, as it alone can clarify the momentous discontinuity with the past of our present nuclear situation: one where the weaponry is acquiring a realist normalcy at the same time that it is being loosed from its species-annihilating function and thus becoming less adequate or limited to the purpose of deterrence. Cognizance of the historically contingent and reversible nature of nuclear conventionalism's eclipse by deterrence doctrine, and of the current jeopardy to a course of nuclear abolition that is not only institutionally viable but indeed consummative, might combat an unreflexive march further towards an ominous future.

The Post-Cold War Crisis in Nuclear Strategy and Formal Rationality

For all its existential dangerousness and moral absurdity, indeed because of these qualities, it may be appreciated in retrospect how effective was the strategic arrangement of 'mutually assured destruction' (MAD) worked out during the Cold War for preventing the actual use of nuclear weapons. Nuclear war-fighting capacities were organized in terms of a single global confrontation between two great ideologically constituted adversaries. This meant that these capacities were duopolistically consolidated and magnified to ensure that universally annihilatory retaliation would follow upon an act of nuclear aggression, making such aggression maximally irrational and thus relatively improbable. This annihilatory strategy depended not merely on the unprecedentedly destructive potential of the new weaponry, but crucially on the peculiar political moment reflected in bipolarity. The nuclear duopoly necessary to generate the credible threat of mutual and universal annihilation, i.e., annihilation of both the adversaries and the human species as a whole, was an ideologically legitimated arrangement transcending

the limits of national sovereignty. The superpowers' extended nuclear 'protection' to ally and satellite states meant both the annihilatory vulnerability of these states and the extension of the superpowers' own vulnerability, not just their power. In effect, all these nations staked their very existence on the global maintenance of nuclear peace. While MAD may have supported a relatively high probability of nuclear nonuse, then, it was not a strategy that could have been undertaken by autonomous nation-states, and it thus required an historically peculiar political configuration more than any ostensibly innate exterminatory quality possessed by nuclear weapons themselves.

With the end of the Cold War, this essential political condition has been eliminated, leading to a fundamental crisis in nuclear strategy. Without a semi-global adversarial counterpart to reciprocate it, species-threatening nuclear overkill loses its rationality, legitimacy and credibility as a response to nuclear attack, and thus its effectiveness as a deterrent to such attack. The capacity of annihilatory deterrence has been irretrievably lost along with the bipolar strategic arrangement upon which it was actually based. On the other hand, the dissociation of nuclear weaponry from the function of species-annihilation potentially restores its tactical feasibility and thus opens the door to deliberate policies of nuclear conventionalization, the reconversion of nuclear weapons into means of actual warfare.

Indeed, I believe it is just such a policy that the United States has been pursuing, one that seeks to overcome the limitations of nuclear vulnerability and tactical infeasibility imposed under the regime of mutually assured annihilation. It has responded to the post-Cold War loss of annihilatory deterrence by positively seeking to fulfill and exploit that very fact. It has reduced the size yet steadfastly improved the lethality of its arsenal in the face of Russia's nuclear decline to have today achieved a prospective nuclear primacy over its former adversary, a first-strike capability to preemptively overwhelm all its nuclear forces beyond the possibility of retaliation (Lieber and Press 2006, 45–8). I would argue, however, that it has actively sought this massively destructive type of first-strike capability less as something to be actually exercised than as a tangible trump over MAD's former capacity to limit its nuclear options, a means of ensuring acquiescence in the movement *away* from the function of species-annihilation to which nuclear weaponry had previously been starkly restricted. Indeed, the US is radically reorienting its strategy away from the principle of nuclear warfare's absurdity to that of its feasibility, focusing on measures like counter-proliferative preemption, the development of antinuclear missile systems and low-yield, high-precision nuclear weapons,[2] as well as the attainment of large-scale nuclear primacy, that are responsive to the dangers and opportunities associated with such a feasibility.

---

2   The Pentagon has called for the development of these streamlined nuclear weapons as part of a counter-proliferation arsenal, potentially to be used against the mass-destructive facilities of 'rogue' adversaries. Critics of the plan have noted that it would effectively reverse the historic purpose of nuclear policy, the prevention of the use of nuclear weapons,

While the basis of opposition to this strategic investment in the practicability of actual nuclear warfare would seem obvious enough, and is indeed the basis of my own opposition to it, the recollection that the threat of species-annihilation associated with MAD was historically contingent and not simply attributable to the inherent nature of nuclear weaponry per se carries an implicit challenge to the notion of nuclear warfare as self-evidently taboo. Indeed, whereas formal reasoning had previously coincided with and reinforced the substantive goal of nuclear nonuse, its historic crisis may now have been reached in its dissociation from that ultimate end.

Another of the nuclear implications of the bipolar era's end might be described as the weaponry's potential *normative*, as opposed to strategic, conventionalization. Schell (2001), while far from seeing any loss of annihilatory deterrence in the Cold War's passing, makes the keen observation that with it nuclear weapons have lost their extraordinary and provisional status as an exigency of the ideologically charged and constitutionally significant global contest with fascist and communist totalitarianism. Continued retention of these weapons into the post-Cold War era by the existing nuclear powers would thus serve to institutionalize them as legitimate instruments of ordinary national sovereignty, a consequence which would in turn promote nuclear proliferation for reasons of prestige and security, as non-nuclear nations sought both to attain full membership in the community of sovereign states and to secure themselves against the new danger of asymmetrical use inherent in the possessor nations' nuclear autonomy (cf. Schell 2001, 45–50, 69–73). This analysis is consistent with Bobbitt's (2002, 679) observation that the post-Cold War international order must revisit the constitutional question of whether 'the right to deploy the weapons of its own choosing' is an attribute of a state's sovereignty because of the invention of nuclear weapons during the long conflict from which that order has emerged. To continue to retain these weapons—as indeed the nuclear powers have done, with the United States leading the way—would be implicitly to answer that question in the affirmative, and so to establish nuclearization as the new touchstone of national autonomy. Thus, Schell (2001, 9) cites the 1998 protestation of Indian foreign minister Jaswant Singh that the exclusion of the Third World from the 'nuclear paradigm' established by the First and Second Worlds would amount to a system of 'nuclear apartheid.' This underlying constitutional issue, and the nuclear powers' unspoken realist decision of it, would also seem to explain the significance of Iran's recent assertions that its contentious nuclear energy program is its 'irrefutable right' to pursue.

According to Schell's analysis, then, the US and other nuclear powers have in effect been following a policy course of nuclear multipolarization in the post-Cold War period by deciding to indefinitely retain the weaponry rather than abolish it. While he probably correctly views this as an unintended consequence of their nuclear retention policies, the existence of theoretical arguments in favor of

transforming such weapons from means of deterrence into means of actual warfare (see Gordon 2002).

proliferation suggest that deliberate multipolarization could also someday be a possibility. Indeed, such a course would merely be the positive strategic expression of the current realist trend, affirming that nuclear weapons indeed have the military utility that nations jealous of the jurisdiction over these weapons assume. Thus, in the view of 'proliferation optimists' like Kenneth Waltz, the US–Soviet deterrence relationship could be replicated among nuclear-possessing nations in general owing to the presumably intrinsic exterminatory quality of nuclear weapons (see Karl 1996–97, 90–91). Thus this hypothetical strategic course would be based on a fallacy of dehistoricization. It would represent an application to nuclear weaponry of the nation-state's familiar formal logic of destructive maximization that would actually be unprecedented and thus at best uncertain to meet the putatively corresponding substantive goal of enhancing the military basis of its sovereignty claim. The deterrence capacity ordinary nations thought they were appropriating from the old ideologically constituted superpowers might in fact be qualitatively different from and weaker than that peculiar type demonstrated during the Cold War, being based merely on the threat of retaliation against nationally specific targets rather than that of the human species' total annihilation. Perhaps the post-Cold War nuclear crisis could also be described in terms of a shift from 'annihilatory' to 'retaliatory' deterrence, then, a weaker barrier to nuclear weaponry's (theoretically) more limited, but actual, use.

Thus I would argue that the deterrence oriented terms of the contemporary proliferation debate are misplaced: the more fundamental issue facing a projected multipolar nuclear order would be the manageability of nuclear conventionalization rather than the diffusibility of deterrence. But the empirical case seems anyway to be that the current tendency toward multipolarity is rather an unintended—or perhaps we should more accurately call it begrudged—consequence of the post-Cold War policies of indefinite nuclear retention, considering for example the Group of Eight leaders' formal designation of nuclear proliferation 'the pre-eminent threat to international security' at their annual summit in 2003 (Tagliabue and Bumiller 2003). But what, then, is the meaning of these problematic policies of nuclear retention? Do they merely signify the complacent continuation of deterrence policy into a post-Cold War period in which it is actually being rendered obsolete, or rather a more responsive and audacious *change* of strategic direction? Is counter-proliferation a mere tilting at the consequences of such an underlying nuclear complacency, or rather reflective of new terms of conflict being positively established by those committed to the perpetuation of an *asymmetrically structured* nuclear order?[3]

---

3   We might recall here Bobbitt's (2002, xxiii-xxv) dictum, that international peace settlements do not merely end past conflicts but also set the terms of those to come. The discrete focus on the suddenly emergent security threat of nuclear proliferation obscures the issue of its relationship to the policies of the existing nuclear powers, to the type of international constitutional order they are pursuing.

According to Schell (2001, 57), the US has so far been trying to avoid the politically unpalatable choice between proliferation and abolition that post-Cold War circumstances have actually forced upon it, continuing to maintain its Cold War-tested strategy of deterrence while vainly trying to stop proliferation at the same time. This interpretation rests, however, on the same error of dehistoricization that was cited with regard to the logic of a hypothetical deliberate multipolarization policy. Because he does not dissociate nuclear weaponry from the historically abstracted function of species-annihilation, Schell necessarily interprets America's post-Cold War policy of indefinite nuclear retention to mean its indefinite continuation of the strategy of annihilatory deterrence. This dehistoricization is implicit in what seems to be the Cold War abolitionists' basic premise of nuclear weapons' inherent moral absurdity—one that was ironically shared by MAD's opponents and practitioners alike. Because that strategy constituted a great gamble with the survival of our very species, the nuclear abolitionist movement of the time could cogently appeal to a humanitarian rationality transcending the realm of geopolitical calculation. On the other hand, for the advocates of annihilatory deterrence it was precisely nuclear weapons' exterminatory potential that formed the basis of their paradoxical benignity. What was perhaps lost on the Cold War abolitionists was that these strategists did not deny, but *sought to guarantee* the possibility of human extinction. There was thus an underlying complicity between these guarantors and opponents of annihilation in upholding the principle of nuclear absurdity; in both the strategic and moral realms, formal rationality was effectively linked to the substantive goal of nuclear nonuse.

Notwithstanding Schell's interpretation, there are several reasons to think that, rather than amounting to a mere 'doing nothing' with momentous consequences in a changed international political context (cf. Schell 2001, 70), US nuclear retention after the Cold War has instead marked a positive change of strategic direction from nuclear deterrence to nuclear warfare. The US decision to deploy antinuclear missile defenses, for example, makes the *least* sense in the old policy context of deterrence, destabilizing deterrence relationships based on mutual vulnerability and jeopardizing the cumulative accomplishments of decades of arms control negotiations, while being highly unlikely to yield an adequate defensive substitute for deterrence *vis-à-vis* even the greatly reduced offensive capacity of today's Russian arsenal (see Lieber and Press 2006, 45–7, 52). Just as Schell (2001, 69) notes, however, that such missile defenses would be far more sensible in the very different policy context of international commitment to nuclear abolition, where they could theoretically provide a measure of insurance against cheating, so too would they make more sense in a policy context of preparedness for, rather than prevention of, actual nuclear war-fighting. They could not only potentially respond in sheer defense to the contingency of a small-scale 'rogue' state or terrorist aggressive attack, but be *offensively combined* with the US nuclear arsenal to provide effective protection against the weakened retaliatory capacities of even major nuclear actors like Russia after a devastating American first strike, as Lieber and Press (2006, 52) observe. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that the actual nuclear

strategic context within which missile defense is currently being pursued is the one where it constitutes the more rather than less consistent element, the context of conventionalization rather than deterrence.

Another reason for doubting Schell's 'complacent' interpretation of current US nuclear policy lies straightforwardly in the fact that nuclear deterrence has become explicitly rejected as an insufficient strategy—even a weakly compromising one—in the rhetoric of some contemporary American politicians. At the 2004 Republican National Convention held in New York City, for example, Senator John McCain (2004) defended the new doctrine of preemption's exhibition in Iraq in terms of the disempowerment of nuclear deterrence *vis-à-vis* terrorist actors who would wield weapons of mass destruction: 'the central security concern of our time is to keep such devastating weapons beyond the reach of terrorists who can't be dissuaded from using them by the threat of mutual destruction.' Former New York Mayor Rudolph Giuliani (2004) seemed to go even further in belittling the policy of mutually assured destruction as, more than irrelevant today, weakly defensive and compromising historically, a characterization then implicated in his subsequent praise of the shift from a defensive to offensive security policy that he said George W. Bush was carrying out, like the visionary Churchill and Reagan before him.

> Before September 11, we were living with an unrealistic view of our world, much like observing Europe appease Hitler or trying to accommodate the Soviet Union through the use of mutually assured destruction. President Bush decided that we could no longer be just on defense against global terrorism, we must also be on offense…. One of my heroes, Winston Churchill, saw the dangers of Hitler while his opponents characterized him as a war-mongering gadfly. Another one of my heroes, Ronald Reagan, saw and described the Soviet Union as 'the evil empire,' while world opinion accepted it as inevitable and even belittled Ronald Reagan's intelligence. President Bush sees world terrorism for the evil that it is.

One wonders whether such an historical reappraisal of MAD might not be used to prepare the political ground for a radical abandonment of deterrence doctrine, to unshackle nuclear weapons from longstanding norms of nonuse for coercive and offensive purposes.

Still another reason for inferring the current policy's discontinuity with the past ironically lies in the continuity of one of its elements, the continued refusal to eschew a nuclear first strike, which was justified during the Cold War as necessary to deter a conventional Soviet attack on Western Europe, but which now, in view of that mission's obsolescence and the United States' emergent nuclear advantage, 'take[s] on a new, and possibly more menacing, look' (Lieber and Press 2006, 53).

Whether America's ongoing retention of nuclear weapons reflects inertia or an ominous nuclear imperialism, however, I would agree with Schell that we have arrived at a critical juncture in the weapons' history, where such retention carries

new and unacceptable dangers of proliferation and actual use, and where abolition thus affords the only route to nuclear security.[4]

Historical Reflexivity and the Nuclear Abolitionist Cause

The nuclear complacency Schell describes may in fact be more a characteristic of the United States' civil society today than of its strategic community, a complacency that is perhaps due to a combination of increasing distance from the era of MAD and deliberate manipulation by officials.

   The farther we get from the Cold War terror of species-annihilation, from the bipolar strategic regime of annihilatory deterrence with its immanent absurdity-based critique of nuclear weaponry,[5] the less resolute our abolitionist movements may become. The longstanding abolitionist premise of nuclear weapons' inherent moral absurdity has been losing the historical foundation of its formally rational cogency, when the distinction between the danger flowing from an adversary's nuclear arsenal and from one's own was effectively blurred. Indeed, government officials have certainly seemed eager to quiet the American public's anxieties

---

   4   Schell and Bobbitt both cite the newly salient threat of transnational terrorism as a contributing factor to the dangerousness of the current nuclear situation, one that we could also adduce in addition to the loss of bipolarity and the folly of a new nuclear realism. For both, the issue is the peculiar undeterrability of this new nationless and elusive organizational form (cf. Schell 2001, 75; cf. Bobbitt 2002, xxiv). While continued nuclear retention only increases the chances of the weaponry's eventual acquisition by such undeterrable terrorist groups (Schell 2001, 74–5), it also carries the increasing risk that the existing nuclear states will actually use their own arsenals to deal with that danger preemptively (cf. Bobbitt 2002, xxiv). The strategy of nuclear deterrence would thus seem to have become *doubly* ineffective today, as the undeterrability of new forms of organized violence *vis-à-vis* nuclear weapons promotes the same quality in the old. But this adventitious path to nuclear conventionalization via the emergence of terrorist organizations would only constitute, again, an additional reason to anticipate this development; its likelihood is more basically built into the post-Cold War nuclearized policies of states *vis-à-vis* each other.

   5   This absurdity-based critical tradition is expressed, for example, in films like *Dr Strangelove* and *The Day After*. Considering film as symbolic of existing strategic conditions, *Terminator 3* (2003) is interesting in its differing conclusion relative to its predecessor that humanity's task is not to prevent nuclear war but to *survive* it. In *Terminator 2* (1991), 'judgment day' had been finally prevented by destroying every last bit of the technology responsible for the impending cataclysm, even though this meant sacrificing the beloved last computer chip contained in Arnold Schwarzenegger's head. In the third movie, however, such 'abolition' was deemed impossible in an age of the technology's hopeless ubiquity, and a starkly contrasting depiction of the scenario of mass nuclear detonation, accompanied by a relatively serene musical score and the human protagonist's transcendent narration rather than, as in the previous movie, a nightmarish portrayal of her body's immolation, was now set forth. The utility of film for analyzing changes in the symbolization of nuclear issues is suggested by Beckman (1992).

about its *own* arsenal, with every post-Cold War president from George H. W. Bush on proclaiming the imminent or already accomplished end of the era of mutual annihilation, the threat from mere aspirers to nuclear status meanwhile coming to the fore. This pattern of reassurance and redirection, along with the government's duplicitous handling of the country's existing nuclear disarmament commitments,[6] has probably served to finesse the assumption that America's own nuclear-armed status was contingent on the Soviet confrontation, and to gradually bury that assumption in the forgotten past. The net result appears to be that the rise of US nuclear dominance has been associated with a decline in its general population's nuclear reflexivity. The simple truth has become strangely elusive, 'that nuclear peril flows from the nations that possess nuclear weapons, not from those that don't' (Schell 2001, 89).

The institutional foundations of a global regime of nuclear abolition are still in existence, however, so that it may be necessary to remind oneself that abolition is actually not (yet) a utopian proposal: it is still the ostensible goal and obligation of the US and other nuclear signatories to the NPT—which, however, they get closer to renouncing formally the longer they defy it in fact. Under the terms of the 1970 treaty, China, Russia, France, Britain and the United States have agreed that their nuclear-armed status is a provisional privilege, to be progressively negotiated away in exchange for the other 182 non-nuclear signatories' agreement to forgo the pursuit of nuclear weapons. While the quinquennial treaty review conference of 2000 had yielded a strong statement of the nuclear parties' steadfast commitment to the goal of disarmament (Schell 2001, 59), the 2005 session bogged down in a cynical bickering that left the status of this commitment in doubt and promising nonproliferation proposals by the wayside (see Sanger 2005). The underlying issue here is a constitutional one: effective measures towards both disarmament (for example, a ban on all further production of weapons-grade nuclear material and testing of existing weapons systems) and nonproliferation (such as restricting civilian nuclear reactor fuel production to supervised multinational centers) would be measures to enforce a consensus on the supranational character of nuclear sovereignty, and the NPT is currently fraying because the nuclear powers remain reluctant to perform the necessary abdication. But this reluctance, increasing the strategic and normative pressure on other states to claim their own autonomous nuclear rights (and indeed the number of those states that have already done so is continuing to increase, most recently with North Korea's confirmed nuclear test in October 2006),[7] actually reflects an alarmingly discontinuous and regressive movement away from the main trend of our nuclear history. The abolitionist

---

6   For example, the US has finally dismantled its highly lethal MX missiles in formal compliance with such obligations, but only to recycle their warheads and reentry vehicles in upgrades of Minuteman ICBMs and possibly also submarine missiles (see Lieber and Press 2006, 45, 51).

7   North Korea has thus joined the ranks of Israel, India and Pakistan as nuclear states outside the NPT's regulatory scope.

course built into the terms of the embattled NPT, on the other hand, perhaps increasingly dismissed as fantastical, is actually the one that is continuous with that menacing history, following in and fulfilling a post-realist institutional tradition of nuclear weapons' extraordinariness, their species-annihilatory and supranational significance. While these weapons have indeed been a military innovation of the epochal sort activating our Weberian imperative of sociopolitical adaptation, it needs to be appreciated that the regime of their species-annihilatory absurdity has actually been a conditional *mode of their regulation*, a mode of precisely such adaptation that is now endangered.

The ironic continuity between the era of species-annihilation and course of abolition is embodied in the person of Robert McNamara, who decisively established and formalized MAD as US Defense Secretary in the 1960s against nuclear conventionalist opponents, whose orientation to military success in nuclear combat he portrayed as fancifully denying inexorable nuclear realities that were not a question of policy (see Bundy 1988, 546), and later became a staunch advocate of nuclear abolition. The bipolar order of annihilatory deterrence, however, *was* a contingent arrangement resting on historical circumstances and policy choices rather than inexorable requirements of nuclear weaponry per se, and this hermeneutical attunement to its socially constructed, subjectively meaningful nature can foster a galvanizing appreciation of the profound regulatory crisis now reflected in the current conventionalist machinations to displace its rightful abolitionist successor. An historically frustrated but dormant nuclear conventionalism (cf. Beckman 1992, 18; cf. Lieber and Press 2006, 42, 44–5) is now moving to seize history at this moment of regulatory succession, and its chances of burying the principle of nuclear absurdity seem strengthened by that principle's loss of its former strategic foundations.

Indeed, a new, post-annihilatory abolitionism may be needed today, one based on the clear recognition of the very contingency of the function of species-annihilation that the insinuators of a new nuclear conventionalist policy seem otherwise to be using to their advantage. Rather than delivering humanity from nuclear peril, the end of MAD has merely traded one kind of peril for another in eliminating the formally rational barriers to nuclear weaponry's use. The abolitionist cause thus acquires a renewed cogency in recognizing the impending era of nuclear conventionalization.

Conclusion: Formal Rationality's Historic Crisis in the Post-Annihilatory Age

I believe Weber's critical view of modern Western civilization's path of formal rationalization has become singularly pertinent today in view of developments in the nuclear strategic sphere. Indeed, each of the three analytically possible post-Cold War strategic courses I have considered, multipolarization, conventionalization and abolition, manifests in its own way a new and momentous Weberian disjuncture between formal and substantive rationality occurring in that sphere.

An unappreciation of the gravity of the strategic and constitutional issues facing national governments in the wake of the bipolar order's dissolution seems to be fundamentally involved in the case of multipolarization. Here an error of historical imagination occurs and the nation-state either implicitly assumes or positively claims an autonomous right to and capability for nuclear deterrence that it has hitherto never actually possessed. Thus, with the passing of the bipolar regime of annihilatory deterrence, the nation-state's formal logic of jurisdictional monopolization and destructive maximization becomes at best uncertainly linked to the substantive goal of enforcing its sovereignty, at worst directly contradictory of it. Then there is the more audacious course of conventionalization, which seeks both to exclusively possess and potentially use nuclear weaponry at this moment of crisis in its jurisdictional and strategic status. Attempting to ensure and exploit the weaponry's post-Cold War dissociation from the function of species-annihilation, this policy manifests formal rationality's current crisis of dissociation from the principle of nuclear nonuse, which it increasingly regards as a purely ethical shackle. This last point makes it clear that abolition, too, manifests a Weberian disjuncture of rationalities that is occurring in the other direction, as it becomes more formally irrational or 'idealistic.' While post-annihilatory abolitionists who recognize the danger of conventionalization may indeed rally themselves around the still cogent principle of nonuse, they must also deal with the fact that this principle is becoming truly its own ultimate end in being disconnected or less surely connected to the former ultimate justification of the human species' very survival.

I have adapted the idea of an historically observable dialectical relation between modes of warfare and sociopolitical organization so as to supply an argument of historical necessity in favor of following the strategic course of nuclear abolition as the one most consistent with the supranationally transcendent character of nuclear weaponry. Nevertheless, as we take a hermeneutical stance and appreciate nuclear weapons' annihilatory absurdity to actually be a socially constructed, subjectively meaningful phenomenon, we see that it has amounted to a fragilely institutionalized way of regulating the nuclear problem that may be lost, and that a comparatively regressive mode of strategic adaptation may ultimately win out. In Weber we find conceptual means but not ready-made solutions for dealing with the most urgent predicaments of our time.

References

Beckman, P.R. (1992), 'Sociology and Nuclear Weapons: A View from Outside', *Sociological Forum* 7:1, 7–27.

Bobbitt, P. (2002), *The Shield of Achilles: War, Peace, and the Course of History* (New York: Anchor Books).

Bundy, M. (1988), *Danger and Survival: Choices About the Bomb in the First Fifty Years* (New York: Random House).

Collins, R. (1980), 'Weber's Last Theory of Capitalism: A Systematization', *American Sociological Review* 45:6, 925–42.

Giddens, A. (1987), *The Nation-State and Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press).

Giuliani, R. (2004), 'Text: Remarks by Former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani', <http://www.yuricareport.com/Campaign2004/RudyGiulianiSpeechtoGOPConvention.html> last accessed 21 September 2006.

Gordon, M.R. (2002), 'Nuclear Arms: For Deterrence or Fighting?' *New York Times* 11 March.

Karl, D.J. (1996–97), 'Proliferation Pessimism and Emerging Nuclear Powers', *International Security* 21:3, 87–119.

Lieber, K. and Press, D. (2006), 'The Rise of U.S. Nuclear Primacy', *Foreign Affairs* 85:2, 42–54.

McCain, J. (2004), 'Text of McCain's RNC Speech', <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/ 2004/08/30/politics/main639572.shtml> last accessed 21 September 2006.

Sanger, D.E. (2005), 'Month of Talks Fails to Bolster Nuclear Treaty', *New York Times* 28 May.

Schell, J. (2001), *The Unfinished Twentieth Century* (London and New York: Verso).

Tagliabue, J. and Bumiller, E. (2003), 'G-8 Leaders Talk Tough on Spread of Nuclear Arms', *New York Times* 3 June.

Weber, M. (1978), *Economy and Society* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press).

Weber, M. (1992), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London and New York: Routledge).

PART 4
The Culture of Capitalism: Past and Present

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 11

The Acquisitive Machine:
Max Weber, Thorstein Veblen, and the
Culture of Consumptive Individualism

Graham Cassano

Introduction

At first, Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen appear to be scientific adversaries. On the one hand, at several points in *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber endorses some of the notions found in Veblen's *The Theory of Business Enterprise*; and in his discussion of classes and status groups, Weber may well have had *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899) in mind when he wrote, 'one might … say that "classes" are stratified according to their relations to production and acquisition of goods; whereas "status groups" are stratified according to the principles of their *consumption* of goods.' (Weber 1946, 193) On the other hand, Weber's knowledge of Veblen's work appears to be limited to the latter's early writings and Weber would hardly have approved Veblen's subsequent appeals to and for the so-called 'common man.' At the same time, while it does not seem that Veblen knew Weber's work, the Peircean-pragmatist would probably have little use for Weberian methodological norms. Nonetheless, in their narratives concerning the construction and fate of the 'bourgeois subject,' Veblen and Weber arrive at remarkably similar conclusions; leading these political adversaries to corresponding calculations of the probable arc of modern pecuniary culture, and to commensurate theories about its consequence for the structures of the self. For both Veblen and Weber, the cloak of the bourgeois subject became the cage of the acquisitive machine. Capitalism's last conquest was the self.

Max Weber emphasized the impact of ideas upon the emergence of the 'capitalistic economy of the present day' as 'an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things.' (1958, 54) But his emphasis did not amount to an idealist interpretation of history. Rather, Weber studied the manner in which 'ideas become effective forces in history.' (1958, 90) More than that, however, he argued that ideas become effective only within the context of a group or cultural formation. The ethos that drove capitalist development 'had to originate somewhere, and not in isolated individuals alone, but as a way of life common to whole groups of men.' (1958, 55) By 'way of life', he meant specifically disciplinary and pragmatic

sanctions that structured behavior. This pragmatism (and I mean the term in the technical philosophical sense) in Weber's historiography opens a path to a dialogue between his ideas and those of his American contemporary, Thorstein Veblen.

In a sense, this convergence of Veblenian and Weberian thought would be hard to deny, were it not for the repression of Veblenian Institutionalism by Talcott Parsons and his followers. As Camic (1992) has argued, in his selection of the antecedents that constituted *The Structure of Social Action*, Parsons willfully excluded Veblen and the entire American Institutionalist economic tradition. This exclusion, of course, had a profound impact on mainstream American sociology in the mid-twentieth century. On the other hand, C. Wright Mills' oppositional work represented an authentic synthesis of Veblenian and Weberian thought. But on those few occasion that Mills directly discussed his reception of Veblen (see for instance, Mills 1992), he never offered a thoroughgoing discussion of the connection between the two thinkers. More recently, Veblenian scholars in particular have taken up this challenge. Some offer parenthetical remarks concerning the similarities in the two thinkers. (see Patsouras 2004, 211) But the most sustained attempt to connect Veblen to the European intellectual tradition, and, in particular, to Weber and Marx, can be found in Diggins' (1999) influential intellectual biography. And the intellectual historian Rick Tilman (2004) offers what is perhaps the best discussion in the literature about the continuities that bind these two seminal figures. In what follows, I hope to continue the dialogue initiated by Diggins, Tilman, and, in fact, by Weber himself.

Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* described the historical and social construction of what the Frankfurt School used to call the 'bourgeois subject.' In a related, though independent, inquiry, Thorstein Veblen also sought the sources of the modern self in materialized practices based upon a kind of spiritual ethos. Weber's ethos was, of course, ascetic Protestantism as it emerged from Calvin's reinterpretation of Luther's notion of the 'calling'; while, for Veblen, the notion of the modern individual could not be separated from the natural rights tradition spawned by the handicraft era.[1] Whatever differences they

---

1   The natural rights tradition, as Veblen understood it, began with Locke's theory of value and found its way into the classical political economics of the eighteenth century. Part of this tradition was the labor theory of value associated with early political economy; and this value theory reveals something about the early modern conception of the individual. The political scientists Ellen Meiksins Wood and Neal Wood offer this description of Lockean value theory: 'Self-ownership, and the property that every man has in his own labour, then becomes the source of property in things and land. Anything in which a man "mixes his labour," anything which, through his labour, he removes or changes from its natural state, anything to which he has added something by his labour, becomes his property and excludes the rights of other men.' (Wood & Wood 1997, 123–124) This labor theory of value was only one aspect of a broader 'point of view' that understood the 'individual' as a pre-given centered subject and not the product of social forces. Veblen rejected the premises of this theory, arguing instead that it was an historically located 'point of view' bound up with the technological, material and symbolic practices of the early modern era.

present in specific historical insights, however, Veblen and Weber offer striking methodological similarities in their respective styles of thought. But central to this argument is the fact that Veblen provides a necessary *supplement* to Max Weber's point of view. While Weber described the emergence and social construction of the modern 'individual', this construction remained a group-based category. It first arose among the early ascetic Protestants. But, in a society still dominated by a categorical individualism, if we are to continue to take Weber's theory of the origin of this modern construct seriously—as I believe we should—we need to extend that ascetic Protestant construction to other social classes and status groups. Thorstein Veblen not only described the group-based origin of the modern individual, but also offered important suggestions concerning its diffusion across class and status lines. For Weber, the self became an iron cage (or, in an alternative translation, a 'steel-hard casing (*stahlhartes Gehause)*' (Weber/Kalberg 2002, 123)), an intellectual construct that continued to structure human experience after losing its original spiritual supports. But according to Veblen, individualism depended upon continually reinforced pragmatic training, and its survival served as a necessary precondition for the survival of contemporary capitalism.

Weber and the Ethical Disciplines of the Self

In her study of the origins of capitalism, Ellen Meiksins Wood takes square aim at what she calls the 'commercialization model' of economic development. This model posits the emergence of market forces as a necessary and inevitable process, and implicitly assumes an inherent propensity in human nature to 'truck, barter, and exchange.' 'People, it assumed, given the chance, have always behaved according to the rules of capitalist rationality, pursuing profit and in its pursuit seeking ways to improve labor-productivity.' (Wood 2002, 16) Consequently, this model emphasizes impediments to market development, as if such development must naturally occur through history. Wood's criticism of the commercialization model in Marxian and non-Marxian discussions of the origin of capitalism are quite powerful; but she makes a fundamental mistake when she argues that Max Weber 'always tended to talk about the factors that *impeded* the development of capitalism in other places … as if the natural, *un*impeded growth of towns and trade … would by definition mean capitalism.' (Wood 2002, 17) True, Weber argued that 'traditionalism' acted as a check on capitalist development. But there was nothing particularly 'natural' about the evolution of the market, just as there was nothing particularly abnormal about traditionalist resistance. After all, Weber

---

(see Veblen 1919, 85 foreword) As the Veblenian economist, Adil Mouhammed argues, for Veblen 'the net product (surplus) is generated by a joint (social) contribution of all factors of production; consequently, no single factor can claim the full product, including labor; no Natural Rights.' (Mouhammed 2003, 109) For a full discussion of Veblen's theory of the origin of natural rights and its relation to early handicraft production, see Cassano (2005).

wrote: 'A man does not 'by nature' wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose.' (Weber 1958, 60) No, capitalism was not the necessary and inevitable result of history, but a contingent evolutionary development based upon particular disciplinary practices.

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber took as his task to come to an 'understanding of the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history.' (90) But that process is not only ideal. In his investigation, Weber acknowledged that he was less 'concerned with the question of what was theoretically and officially taught' than in those 'psychological sanctions' originating in 'the practice of religion.' In short, Weber considered the ascetic Protestant religions as systems of material techniques in the form of 'psychological sanctions' that disciplined and directed subjectivity by giving a 'direction to practical conduct.' (97) These disciplinary practices gave rise to a new form of subjectivity—a new individualism—that, in its turn, had a practical effect on re-shaping the socio-economic world. 'Thus', wrote Weber, 'the capitalism of to-day, which has come to dominate economic life, educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest.' (55) Again, this system of education and selection had a pragmatic foundation. Originally, according to Weber, 'What happened was … often no more than this: some young man from one of the putting-out families went out into the country, carefully chose weavers for his employ, greatly increased the rigor of his supervision of their work, *and thus turned them from peasants into laborers*.' (Weber 1958, 67. Emphasis added.) Again, the spirit of modern capitalism requires a new form of subjectivity. But this new subject was not a natural and inevitable product of history. Rather, it emerged through specific disciplinary practices in a specific historical context. On the other hand, once this new form of cognitive activity took root, it produced systemic imperatives, becoming an autopoetic structure that ensured its own dominance over all other forms. 'There was repeated what everywhere and always is the result of such a process of rationalization: those who would not follow suit had to go out of business. The idyllic state collapsed under the pressure of a bitter competitive struggle …' (68) Weber's argument concerning the origin of capitalism underscored the fact that the emergence of this new economic system both depended upon and reproduced a new form of disciplinary subjectivity.

While I cannot recapitulate the entire argument of Weber's text in this context, I would like to place special emphasis upon this transition from 'peasants into laborers', and the corresponding transformation of the 'person' into the modern 'personality.' Weber defined the structures of modern individualism through a negative illustration: 'the normal medieval Catholic layman lived ethically … from hand to mouth … his good works did not necessarily form a … rationalized system of life, but rather remained a succession of individual acts.' (1958, 116) Not that this peasant lacked the capacity for basic self-awareness; rather, in the peasant's attitude toward himself, there was absent the systematic cohesion and persistent supervision present in the modern 'personality.' Furthermore, within this

traditionally oriented community, the Catholic priest served as a mediator between the sacred and the profane. The priest interpreted the Word of God and provided absolution for sin. When Calvin, following Luther, dispensed with the priest and made every believer the ultimate arbiter of her destiny, a necessary psychological consequence followed. 'That was a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual.' The individual became her own mediator, her own translator, and external supervision gave way to an internalized self-observation. 'The moral conduct of the average man was thus deprived of its planless and unsystematic character and subjected to a consistent method for conduct as a whole.' (117) Perpetual self-regard now produced a systematic structure of action. 'Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature. Descartes *cogito ergo sum* was taken over by the contemporary Puritans with this ethical reinterpretation.' (118) The isolated self-observer of Descartes dictum faded into the mechanically reflexive person whose new sense of inner discipline turned her into a *personality*. 'The Puritan … tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself … In this formal psychological sense of the term it tried to make him into a personality.' (119)

In effect, this new self-surveillance turned the individual into her own accountant. Since the 'conscientious Puritan continually supervised' her 'own state of grace,' self-surveillance meant the keeping of 'religious account-books' that tabulated the consequences of sin and grace. 'The process of sanctifying life could thus almost take on the character of a business enterprise.' (1958, 124) Methods of mathematical accountancy and rational bookkeeping structured the individual's psychological structure.

What began with Luther's translation of the 'calling'—subsequently reinterpreted by Calvin and his followers—ended in the radical disenchantment of the self. The Protestant's task was to bring God's order to the natural world, including to 'natural man.' While traditional Catholic practice may have produced a kind of otherworldly asceticism, it had nonetheless 'left the naturally spontaneous character of daily life' untouched. (1958, 154) In the attempt to gain control of this dangerous spontaneity, the Protestant spirit began to re-order the self, eliminating all remnants of the natural, the unpredictable, and the magical. Nonetheless, this disenchanted and rationalized self continued to exist within a religious context. The 'calling' demanded that the Puritan work and succeed within the world. But the 'rewards' of that success were not to be impulsively enjoyed. 'Man is only a trustee of the goods which have come to him through God's grace … The idea of a man's duty to his possessions, to which he subordinates himself as an obedient steward, or even as an *acquisitive machine*, bears with chilling weight on his life.' (170. Emphasis added.) Success belonged to God Himself. Possessions were not things to be had or enjoyed, but signs of Grace. The Puritan's duty toward God became *metonymically* translated into a duty toward possessions. This semiotic transference had profound consequences. The modern individual became an

'acquisitive machine', accumulating for the sake of accumulation, even after God had disappeared from the scene.

The Protestant ethic's insistence upon the rationalization of human life became an insistence upon rationalization for its own sake. What began with the elimination of the magician priest, followed by the elimination of the natural and disorderly elements in the human being, eventually produced conditions that 'favoured the development of a rational bourgeois economic life.' (1958, 174) This economic form originated in religious fervor. 'Then the intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God commenced gradually to pass over into sober economic virtue; the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness.' (176) By saying that capitalism's 'religious roots died out slowly', Weber seemed to suggest a kind of natural decay. But that was far from the truth of the matter. The radical elimination of magic from the world, once set loose, achieved its own autonomy, eventually consuming the last vestiges of magic in the world, the Puritan's hidden God. Remember, an essential moment in the constitution of the modern individual came when the Puritan personality displaced the Priest as mediator between humanity and God. God became an element, perhaps the foundational element, within the self's structure. When the process of disenchantment turned back upon the self, God was rationalized away. What remained was a structure without a basis; a form without a spirit. Modern individualism, once a living cloak thrown over natural man, became an iron cage—a steel hard casing—that captured selves without substance, acquisitive machines without souls.

The Protestant Ethos emerged from the life ways and practices of a social community. Once it emerged, it became a factor in social development, disciplining and selecting new forms of social subjectivity. Weber articulated a pragmatic theory of the emergence of the 'bourgeois subject', but that subjectivity remained a group based construction. Recall Weber's illustration of the young man from the putting-out family. He was driven by this new ascetic ethos, but his workers were driven by his imposition of new forms of labor discipline. His life was restructured when his 'person' became a 'personality'; while his workers were turned from 'peasants' into 'laborers.' While Weber argued that capitalism, once it came into being, represented a 'vast cosmos' that 'educates and selects' the social subjects it required, he did not explain how these 'laborers' became 'personalities', or, indeed, if they did. In this context, Veblen's work serves as a useful supplement to Weber's nuanced but incomplete narrative.

Veblen and the Disciplines of Work and Leisure[2]

Like Weber, Thorstein Veblen conceived the origin of capitalism as tied to new disciplinary apparatuses; but, like Marx, he posited a relation between these new habits of subjective practice and the materiality of labor. Nonetheless, the

---

2   These themes are explored more fully in Cassano (2005) and (2006).

self was no mere reflexive result of practice. Rather, it was a symbolic structure informed by circuits of social exchange, and among these circuits of exchange were forms of social production. According to Veblen, in the apprehension of the so-called 'savage', 'individuality is conceived to cover, somewhat vaguely and uncertainly, a pretty wide fringe of facts and objects that pertain to him more or less immediately.' (1998, 36) In turn, this 'quasi-personal fringe' that structured the self and its possessions, included, among other features, the self's 'shadow', 'reflection', 'image', 'peculiar tattoo marks', 'totem', 'glance', 'breath', handprint, footprint, 'ornaments and amulets', in short, any substance metonymically associated with the subject formed a part of the self. At the same time, this ambiguous sense of self depended upon and reproduced certain material forms of production. The subject structured through this quasi-personal fringe existed in a society based on communal property ownership, with little personal distinction or class differentiation. I don't have time to trace the entire development of this quasi-individuality into the modern subject. Instead, I will move directly from this period of so-called 'savagery', to the dawn of the modern world during what Veblen calls the 'handicraft era.'

Veblen argued that during this handicraft era (the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) notions of 'natural rights', modern scientific causality, and modern individualism emerged. These ideas were seeded by a new conception of human agency. The central fact upon which the culture of the Middle Ages depended was the divinely sanctioned privilege for the elite and the servitude for the common people. 'In the technology of handicraft', however, 'the central fact is always the individual workman, whether in the crafts proper or in the petty trades.' (1990, 234) The craft guilds produced a new 'central fact', *the individual workman*. Now the 'position of the craftsman in the economy' induced a new conception of subjectivity. The worker, as a 'creative agent *standing on his own bottom*,' became an 'ultimate' and 'irreducible' social fact. (1990, 234–35)

But almost as soon as they came into force, the values of handicraft production were displaced by a new emphasis upon calculation and market relations. In Veblen's terms, the 'price system' as it emerged from the handicraft era produced a new disciplinary system and gave birth to the machine age. In order to survive, the craftsman left the workshop behind and entered the bazaar. From the logic of the crafts, a logic that is in all its aspects a logic of *intentional subjectivity*, a new logic emerged dictated by the demands of the market and pecuniary considerations. This new logic was 'impersonal and dispassionate,' statistical and quantitative. And this new logic re-structured social perception. By 'force of the pervasive effect of habituation, it makes for a greater readiness to apprehend all facts in a similarly objective' fashion. (1990, 244–45) Those former aspects of reality that did 'not lend themselves to this facile rating,' that could not be counted and quantified and sorted according to the demands of impersonal statistical apprehension, lost 'the cogency which belongs to empirical reality.' 'They may even come to be discounted as being of a lower order of reality, or may even be denied factual value.' What could not be counted had to be '*discounted.*' But together with a new

blindness, this disciplinary training produced new quantitative and mechanized capacities and insights. (1990, 244–45)

The modern era became the age of the *calculating machine*. 'The machine process pervades the modern life and dominates it in a mechanical sense. Its dominance is seen in the enforcement of precise mechanical measurements and adjustment and the reduction of all manner of things, purposes and acts, necessities, conveniences, and amenities of life to standard units.' (Veblen 1904: 306) Through the force of the machine, reality became measured, calculable, rational; and what could not be measured, calculated, or rationed, disappeared.

I hope that the parallels between Weber's and Veblen's approaches are beginning to become apparent. Both thinkers found the origin of the bourgeois subject in disciplinary techniques and practices, in materialized ideas. Furthermore, Veblen's discussion of the machine age, the rise of accounting techniques, and the manner in which those techniques penetrated not only the construction of subjectivity but the reception of empirical reality itself has more than a passing resemblance to Weber's theory of modern disenchantment. Nonetheless, despite the external similarities in their critiques of modern capitalist rationalization, Weber and Veblen appear to end in very different places. For Weber, the self remained intact, but as a structure without substance. For Veblen, it would appear that the modern individual should, logically, pass away along with the technology of handicraft industry. The natural rights schema depended upon the individual worker as a metaphysical center. Now this decentered worker became a supplement to the machine. This new productive apparatus, we can only assume, would necessarily produce a new form of socialized subjectivity. If a bourgeois individualism remained, it would seem to be a kind of institutional survival eventually destined to die with the handicraft industry that gave it birth.

But here we need to address Veblen's class analysis. True, the modern worker had restructured habits of life and thought based upon her place in the productive process. But industrial efficiency in the modern world remained subordinated to pecuniary gain, and the class of masters who lived off business enterprises continued to thrive on a social system based on dominance and servitude. In other words, modernity contained two worlds simultaneously: the modern world of the industrial worker; and the barbarian domain of the captains of industry and finance, the so-called 'leisure class.' And, in fact, Veblen posited a 'cleavage of sentiment' between the industrial working classes and the leisure classes. But this cleavage had not, and perhaps could not, produce a transformation in the social order, because 'The American tradition stands in the way.' (1919, 174) According to Veblen, this tradition 'says that the people of the republic are made up of ungraded masterless men', and this tradition had roots in the handicraft era of the eighteenth century. Bourgeois individualism represented a kind of disciplinary training that blocked progress to a renewed social world. At the same time, this disciplined individualism, though in some sense baseless, gained a new foundation in the circuits of the modern market.

In one of his earliest and most celebrated texts, *The Theory of the Leisure Class*, Veblen argued that the socialized individual constructed her identity through mechanisms of identification. The individual derived her cognitive structure and her normative orientation from an idealized cultural scheme. Writing at the dawn of the twentieth century America, Veblen found that the so-called leisure classes represented this symbolic ideal. 'It is for this class to determine, in general outline, what scheme of life the community shall accept as decent or honorific; and it is their office by precept and example to set forth this scheme of social salvation in its highest, ideal form.' (1899, 77–78) The leisure class became a kind of 'generalized other' that shaped the perceptions and structured the values of the so-called 'common lot.' A lack, a want, a burning desire drove the social subject to emulate this generalized other. And through that emulation, fueled by 'invidious comparison', the socialized subject came to see the world through the Master's eyes. (For a more detailed examination of these themes, see Cassano forthcoming.)

Here it is worthwhile to recall the Veblenian distinction Weber made between 'classes' and 'status groups': '… "classes" are stratified according to their relations to production and acquisition of goods; whereas "status groups" are stratified according to principles of their *consumption* of goods.' (Weber 1946, 193) Veblen's 'leisure classes' emerged from the handicraft period as modern 'individuals', craftsmen 'standing upon their own bottom' as he wrote, and that individuality became metonymically associated with their prestige. A class and occupation based selfhood became a symbol of their status. But as handicraft industry gave way to the modern machine age, and the successful early craftsmen became, increasingly, masters of men, rather than simply masters of their craft,—or, in Veblen's words, as they became 'captains of industry,'—the basis for selfhood was no longer production, but the ability to conspicuously consume signs of leisure and wealth.

The emergence of pecuniary standards of decency signaled the end of the modern age, and the return to a barbarian sensibility. This new barbarism created a world no longer based in production, but in standards of decent consumption. And so the natural rights tradition that gave rise to an American republicanism conceiving the nation as a collection of 'ungraded masterless men,' became a consumer republicanism in which standards of mastery and subservience returned, now mediated by market exchange. The measure of the self's status was marked by the ability to consume commodities. And consumption became a contest between selves fighting for recognition and honor. The individualism that emerged from a handicraft economy in which the self stood as its own center became the consumptive individualism of a society bound together through standards of competitive decency. The 'bourgeois subject' was diffused across social class lines through the mediation of the market in symbolic prestige. In a very real sense, the late modern occidental individual became an acquisitive machine.

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, let me bring some of these thoughts together. Both Weber and Veblen concerned themselves with the function of ideas as directing pivots ('switchmen' in Weber's (1946, 280) famous metaphor; 'habits', or later, 'sovereign action patterns' for Veblen (1923)) within the socialized constraints of material circumstance. Furthermore, both thinkers described the emergence of the 'bourgeois subject' through the application of pragmatic disciplinary techniques to the biological individual. Weber attended to the religious and spiritual origin of these techniques; while Veblen concentrated upon the relationship between the productive apparatus and social consciousness. But this difference in emphasis need not amount to an incompatibility. Weber's own methodological relativism opens a possible conversation between these two perspectives. As Weber wrote, 'Other standpoints would, for this as for every historical phenomenon, yield other characteristics as the essential ones.' (1958, 47–48) But whatever their meta-theoretic relation, the fact remains that using this notion of a disciplined and constructed 'individuality', both thinkers sketched an arch of modern consciousness that moved from what might be called the 'productive self' of the handicraft era and the early Protestants, to the late modern 'consumptive self', the self as an acquisitive machine. At the same time, while Weber located the origin of this modern social construction in a particular social group at a particular historical moment, his explanation of the diffusion of that concept remains unsatisfactory. Veblen, however, with his much more overtly symbolic conception of subjectivity, explained the diffusion of 'bourgeois individualism' beyond the limited cultural space of the bourgeoisie. For Veblen, the fact that this new 'individuality' emerged among those who would become the leisure class assured its extension across class lines. Such an extension was itself an effect of the normative legitimacy that set the leisure class as an ideal other captivating the desires of the dominated classes.

This Veblenian supplement to the Weberian perspective also adds a further advantage. The consumptive self is not merely an iron cage or steel shell (following Chalcraft, 2004), but a social form that survives through active training and pragmatic discipline. Despite its pragmatic inefficacy in terms of modern industry, this consumptive individuality serves a central function in the maintenance of pecuniary, or commercial, culture. Without the continued celebration of what Durkheim called the 'cult of the individual', modern pecuniary culture would collapse upon itself. Modern consumptive individualism's pursuit of symbolic prestige in the form of individual pecuniary achievement simultaneously legitimates and supports the continued function of post-modern capitalism. Conspicuous consumption is driven by the demand for recognition; and in the post-modern context, as in the modern context, these two drives (for recognition and consumption) become fused within the self. Just as with Veblen's imagined 'savage,' through their metonymic connection with the person the accoutrements of selfhood become indistinguishable from the individual. In the words of the sociologist, Lauren Langman, 'The various props of appropriated selfhood such as clothes, car, home, leisure and cultural tastes are ever

more synonymous with the self.' (Langman 1992, 62) This individual, originally emerging from the new order that gave birth to capitalism, continues to support capitalist accumulation as an identity consumer shopping for the symbols of an ever more commercialized self.

According to Veblen, the natural rights tradition that emerged during the handicraft era blocked the path to a renewed social world,—a potential world in which industrial efficiency would be subordinated to the needs of the community, rather than to the demands of pecuniary exchange. Shattering the fiction of the modern self was a central moment in the transition from pecuniary barbarism to a more humane socialism. Yet Veblen himself was unable to imagine the contours of this new self required by industrial socialism. In a footnote to *The Theory of Business Enterprise*, Veblen articulated this possibility, but in entirely negative terms. He wrote:

> The socialists … profess that the mechanical exigencies of the industrial system must decide what the social structure is to be, but beyond this vague generality they have little to offer. And this mechanical standardization can manifestly afford no basis for legislation on civil rights. Indeed, it is difficult to see how any scheme of civil rights, much or little, can find a place in a socialistic reorganization. (1904, 339)

Make no mistake about it. Veblen was an anti-capitalist. (Cassano 2006; Mouhammed 2003; Dowd 2000) And, as a fierce critic of the natural rights tradition, he was nothing if not true to the implications of his logic. Yet these chilling words reveal a final parallel with Weber's work. Veblen, too, might be seen as a modern pessimist. And in so far as he conceived solutions to the contradictions of capitalism, the alternatives he imagined—even only negatively—offered cold comfort to social subjects incapacitated by the training offered in our pecuniary society. On the other hand, as Veblen might have argued, the limits of his sociological imagination were circumscribed by circuits of symbolic exchange. Perhaps, through his critique, Veblen hoped to lay the groundwork for a new conception of individuality, a notion of 'self' contrary to both the natural rights tradition and commercial culture,—a decentered, 'post-modern' self more coincident with the new, 'post-modern', industrial order. (1919, 11) Perhaps the seemingly totalitarian implications contained in Veblen's portrait of a post-capitalist individuality had less to do with his pessimism than with our own failure of imagination.

References

Camic, C. (1992), 'Reputation and Predecessor Selection: Parsons and the Institutionalists', *American Sociological Review* Vol. 57, No.4: 421–445.

Cassano, G. (2005), 'Stylistic Sabotage and Thorstein Veblen's Scientific Irony', *The Journal of Economic Issues* 39: 3.

—— (2006), 'Labor, Desire, and the Wages of War', *Rethinking Marxism* 18:3.

—— (forthcoming) 'Symbolic Exploitation: A Veblenian-Institutionalist Approach', in *Critical Sociology.*

Chalcraft, D. (2004), 'Bringing the Text Back In: On Ways of Reading the Iron Cage Metaphor in the Two Editions of the Protestant Ethic', in Ray and Reed (eds), *Organising Modernity* (London: Routledge).

Diggins, J.P. (1999), *Thorstein Veblen: Theorist of the Leisure Class* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Dowd, D. (2000), *Thorstein Veblen* (New Brunswick: Transaction Press).

Langman, L. (1992), 'Neon Cages: Shopping for Subjectivity', in Shields (ed.).

Mills, C. Wright (1992), 'Introduction', in Veblen, T.

Mouhammed, A.H. (2003), *An Introduction to Thorstein Veblen's Economic Theory* (Lewiston: The Edward Mellen Press).

Patsouras, L. (2004), *Thorstein Veblen and the American Way of Life* (Montreal: Black Rose Books).

Shields, R. (ed.) (1992), *Lifestyle Shopping: The Subject of Consumption* (London: Routledge).

Tilman, R. (2004), 'Karl Mannheim, Max Weber, and the Problem of Social Rationality in Thorstein Veblen', *Journal of Economic Issues*, Vol. 38, No.1, 155–172.

Veblen, T. (1906), 'The Place of Science in Modern Civilization', in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization.*

—— (1908), 'The Evolution of the Scientific Point of View', in *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization.*

—— (1922), 'Dementia Praecox', in *Essays In Our Changing Order.*

—— (1964 [1919]), *The Vested Interests and the Common Man* (New York: Sentry Press).

—— (1978 [1904]), *The Theory of the Business Enterprise* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publisher).

—— (1990), *The Place of Science in Modern Civilization and Other Essays* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

—— (1990 [1914]), *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

—— (1990 [1921]), *The Engineers and the Price System* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

—— (1992), *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New Brunswick: Transaction Press).

—— (1993 [1918]), *The Higher Learning in America* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

—— (1997 [1923]), *Absentee Ownership. Business Enterprise in Recent Times: The Case of America* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

—— (1998), *Essays In Our Changing Order* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers).

—— (2001 [1899]), *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (New York: Modern Library).

Weber, M. (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. (New York: Oxford University Press).

—— (1958), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

—— (1968), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology.* Ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press).

—— (2002), *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism.* Trans. S. Kalberg. (Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing).

Wood, E.M. and Wood, N. (1997), *A Trumpet of Sedition: Political Theory and the Rise of Capitalism, 1509–1688* (New York: NYU Press).

Wood, E.M. (2002), *The Origin of Capitalism: A Longer View* (New York: Verso).

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 12

Vergesellschaftung and *Berufsmenschentum*: Max Weber on Religion and Rationalism in the Middle Ages

Lutz Kaelber

Max Weber's views on religion and rationalism in the Middle Ages have often been misunderstood, mischaracterized, and misappropriated, in part because scholars have not sufficiently appreciated some of Weber's earliest writings and in part because they have misconstrued Weber's actual positions. In this chapter, I advance two arguments: 1) Weber addressed both medieval rationalism and medieval religion very early in his work, and his earliest academic writing included a historically situated analysis of the interplay of religious ideas, legal norms, and economic behavior to address pre-modern processes of *Vergesellschaftung,* or people entering into associative relationships; and 2) Weber's sociology of religion after 1900 includes a sociology of medieval religion and rationalism, mostly focusing on monastic asceticism and contrasting it to the conduct of the modern professional dedicated to his vocation: the *Berufsmensch*.

Weber's Early Work on Rationalism and Religion in the Middle Ages

Of Weber's larger studies before 1900—*The History of Commercial Partnerships in the Middle Ages* (Weber 1889), *Roman Agrarian History* ([1891] 1986), *Conditions of Rural Workers in East-Elbian Germany* ([1892] 1984), and his writings on the German bourse ([1894–1898] 1999–2000)—none expressly alluded to either religion in the Middle Ages or rationalism as a major topic or theme. The German word *rational* and its derivatives do not appear in these or other writings of that period, not even in his writings on the bourse. Where Weber uses the related word *rationell*, he does so sparingly and in its generic meaning of 'efficient' or 'efficacious' (see Weber [1891] 1986, 195, 287, 308, 321; [1894] 1988a, 486; [1896] 1988b, 304; [1894–1898] 1999–2000, 654). The word *religiös* occurs only once, in the context of late Roman history ([1891] 1986, 352), and in his scholarly writings Weber appears not to have used the word *Religion* at all. The paucity of these terms and the ostensible absence of any effort on Weber's part to relate them might suggest following conclusions: 1) Weber was initially concerned about neither religion nor rationality, and in these regards he paid no attention to

the Middle Ages; and 2) the concept of *rationalization*, particularly as the outcome of *religious* constellations, did not emerge as a well-recognized master trope in Weber's *oeuvre* (see Lash and Whimster 1987; Schluchter 1981; 1989; 1996) until late in Weber's sociology, where, in his own words in the context of the *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*, Weber ([1915] 2004, 216) wished to make a contribution toward a 'typology and sociology of rationalism.'

The first conclusion is demonstrably wrong, and the second, problematic. Weber's first significant academic publication, *The History of Commercial Partnerships*, which reflected his dissertation, was devoted entirely to the Middle Ages. Its theme was the development of certain forms of commercial partnerships in medieval Italy. Even though Weber did not use the term as such, he depicted this development as a form of economic, legal, and socio-cultural *rationalization*. In seeking the precursors to the modern forms of partnerships that Weber saw as one of the pillars of (modern) capitalism, he traced associations of business partners from their beginnings in household communities to their most developed forms in late medieval Italy.[1]

The unilateral *commenda* marked, he argued, the origin of the modern commission agency and silent partnership. It was a business partnership in which a capitalist provided capital to an enterprise and a managing partner carried out the business transactions. The managing partner did not partake in the risk and gradually developed into the capitalist's agent. The agent bought and sold goods in his own name on the account of the principal, an activity that in modern business is characteristic of a commission agency. A derivative of this form of business association was a partnership in which an investor contributed capital but limited his liability to his contribution, and his involvement in the partnership was not transparent to third parties. In modern business law, this reflects a dormant or silent partnership, which Weber related to the Pisan *dare ad portandum in compagniam*. In contrast, the bilateral *commenda* was constituted by an agreement between a sedentary investor as well as a traveling partner. Each partner contributed capital and shared the profits or losses. Legally the partnership's capital was separate from the investors' personal assets, and business was undertaken in a joint name, that of the firm. The sedentary partner's legal liability was limited to his contributed capital, whereas the traveling partner's liability was unlimited. Weber argued that this medieval form of the modern limited partnership had its roots in the Pisan *societas maris*.[2] Finally, associations of craftsmen and domestic traders started out as small family businesses. As the businesses grew, legal problems arose: Who exactly belonged to the family, and what to do when family members bonded their

---

1   This issue and the ones in the following paragraph are addressed in greater detail in Kaelber (2003a, 22–7). All references are to Weber (2003).

2   In German commercial law, the difference between a limited and silent partnership was not found until 1868. The silent partnership also exists in Islamic and Jewish law but Anglo-American commercial law has not recognized it among the standard legal entity types.

personal debt with family assets and their personal creditors could levy on assets belonging to the family business? The solution was to have a form of partnership that had a legally distinct asset pool, or separate fund, operated under the name of a firm with the name of the partners enumerated and disclosed, and had partners who were jointly and severally liable for the full amount of any partnership debt to partnership creditors. Weber traced this medieval type of modern general partnership to Florence.

Weber thus depicted three types of rationalizations: 1) legal, in so far as new laws emerged that stipulated the legal forms of business and the extent of the partners' legal liability; 2) economic, in so far as the new forms of business necessitated different forms of accounting and economic practices in dealing with third parties as well as among partners; and 3) familial/communal, in so far as family, kin, and community relations both reflected and influenced the shaping of law and business. Of the three types of rationalization, Weber's depiction of familial and communal rationalization was the most innovative. His account of the development of these relations from communal (*gemeinschaftlich*) to associational (*gesellschaftlich*) not only echoes Ferdinand Tönnies' line of argument made just two years earlier in *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Tönnies 1887), but also describes this development by employing a term that most previous scholarship has portrayed as being confined to Weber's writings in the last decade of his life (for example, Lichtblau 2000; for an exception, see Melot 2005): *Vergesellschaftung* (Weber 1889, 13, 48, 54, 58 n. 26, 165/2003, 60, 88, 92, 95 n. 29, 181). The only major writing before 1900 where Weber employs the concept of *Vergesellschaftung*, in the sense of establishing and maintaining social relationship on the basis of a formal association, is *The History of the Commercial Partnerships*. His use of the term here thus foreshadows his practice in later writings of contrasting *Vergesellschaftung* as associative form of relationship and the associated term *Gesellschaftshandeln* (action based on and oriented toward a formal rule or order) to *Vergemeinschaftung* as communal relationship and *Gemeinschaftshandeln* (communal action).[3]

Despite its inventiveness in relying on an early version of the *Vergesellschaftung* theme, Weber's account is also quite surprisingly 'un-Weberian.' Weber described the processes of legal, economic, and familial/communal rationalizations and thereby, implicitly, of *Vergesellschaftung* as historically linear and uniformly progressive, as if there were a direct link or connection between late medieval forms of business and their counterparts in nineteenth- and twentieth-century law (cf. Melot 2005, 764). Current legal scholars, historians, and historical sociologists are generally skeptical of the veracity of such claims. They reject notions of modern forms of business having their origins in medieval predecessors and of the existence of any direct linkages between the two, particularly in reference to

---

3   See Riedel (1979) for a history of the use of these terms. For Weber's use of them, see also Schluchter (183 n. 14, 216); Swedberg (2005, 11–2, 246–8).

Weber's Florentine case (Cordes 2001).[4] Legal scholarship on the rise of the firm, however, combines a renewed interest in this topic with a rediscovery of Weber's study and uses it as a reference point and some of its findings for a comparative analysis (Hansmann et al. 2006).

In regard to medieval religion, *The History of Commercial Partnerships* also ranks as the only one among Weber's early publications to engage the topic of medieval religion. While it is true that Weber has nothing to say about the topic of religion per se in it, he discussed medieval usury more extensively than in any other of his writings; yet the section where Weber addresses usury, defined as taking of interest on a loan so that the debtor had to return not only the principal but also an additional asset, appears to have escaped previous Weber scholarship altogether, even Benjamin Nelson's magisterial *The Idea of Usury* (Nelson 1969). For present purposes it suffices to delineate four main issues.[5]

First, usury laws, as religious and secular restrictions on economic actions, were not simply irrelevant in their economic and legal repercussions. For the provision of consumption loans, the prohibition of usury was an obvious constraining factor. For investment loans, Weber was able to show that it contributed to the demise of a form of maritime partnership in Pisa.

Second, because usury did not usually pertain to business transactions involving risk, the applicability of religious restrictions to economic action was severely circumscribed. In most medieval economic partnerships a partner contributing capital incurred a risk, that of losing it, so that even if was he not involved in managing the business he could legitimately reap a return beyond his initial investment, and usury did not attach.

Third, economic practices were not merely reactive to religious changes. Whereas scholars had previously argued that the development of forms of partnerships reflected the attempt to avoid the sting of increasingly stringent usury laws, Weber showed that changes in the forms of partnership making them increasingly less similar to interest-bearing loans and other types of investments susceptible to the charge of usury were already underway before the onset of stricter usury laws.

Fourth, from the previous analysis it is clear that Weber attributed considerable autonomy to law, religion, and the economy in the Middle Ages. He did not yet use terms such as 'value spheres,' 'life orders,' 'or 'inner logic' (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*), but his recognition of a distinctive nature of each sphere and his rejection of the

---

4   See also Padgett and McLean (2006), whose study, though addressing issues pertinent to some of Weber's arguments, does not mention Weber at all. In another study, these two scholars (McLean and Padgett 1997) endorse the view, which is also supported by historian Richard Goldthwaite (1987), that medieval Florentine capitalism evinces many of the features Weber ascribed to the 'form' of modern capitalism but has little resemblance to the 'spirit' of modern capitalism.

5   See for the following Kaelber (2004; 2007), where I also address the state of current historical and economic scholarship.

reductionist perspective of seeing conditions in one sphere as determined solely by conditions in another are apparent. In modern sociological parlance, Weber saw a differentiation of institutional spheres before modernity, without attributing secondary importance to legal institutions—after all, his was a dissertation in *law*—and yet he stressed, following in his doctoral supervisor Levin Goldschmidt's footsteps, historical contingency at every step of his argument, even (or especially) for the law. Still missing in Weber's first major publication, and in his early writings in general, were the notion of rationalization in the religious sphere as well as the thematization of the impact of religious factors on the secular spheres more severe and far-reaching than usury prohibitions.

Weber's Thought After 1900

While little is known about Weber's thought on medieval rationalism and religion before the turn of the twentieth century, the same can no longer be said for the period after 1900. Weber touched on medieval religion and rationalism in *The Protestant Ethic*, *Economy and Society*, *General Economic History*, and other publications. Some of his thought pertained to institutions, some to ideas and their impact on conduct. Wolfgang Schluchter has pointed out important institutional changes in the Middle Ages that Weber described as having historical legacies for the transformation to modern occidental rationalism in general, and to the development of modern capitalism in specific. These include what Schluchter calls the papal revolution, the feudal revolution, and the urban revolution (Schluchter 1996, 179–243). The papal revolution denotes the effects of the Gregorian reforms and constituted a precondition for the emergence of modern capitalism in so far as newly defined and enacted state-church relations prevented the domination of culture by either state (caesaropapism) or religion (theocracy), allowing the church internally to emerge as a relatively unified and rationalized hierocratic organization that nevertheless allowed for internal pluralization. It integrated virtuoso religion in the form of monasticism as rationalized monastic charisma with a relatively lax spiritual direction of the laity in the form of a rationalized priestly charisma of office. At the same time, it largely left the secular spheres to their own autonomous development. The feudal revolution transformed earlier forms of patrimonialism into a relatively decentralized *Ständestaat* system with a contractual basis of political power. The urban revolution, finally, marked the emergence of autocephalous and politically autonomous entities, where a corporate citizenry tending toward *Vergesellschaftung* resided. Cities were also the locus of rationalizations such as new forms of accounting or business, some of which Weber had studied earlier.

Besides these rationalizations of medieval institutional spheres, Schluchter points to a concomitant transformation, toward a religiously based foundation of modern bourgeois conduct, a theme in Weber's thought also explored in detail in my earlier publications (Kaelber 1995; 1996; 1998). Weber, beginning with the

initial version of the *Protestant Ethic* essay, continuing in a dialogue with Ernst Troeltsch, who soon after the publication of Weber's essay in a lecture and a series of articles leading up to his *Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* ([1912] 1956) complemented Weber's writings, and concluding in his later work emphasized the relevance of religious ethics and social action governed by ethical principles for the rationalization of social spheres. As he famously noted in his 'Prefatory Remarks to the Sociology of Religion,' 'rationalizations of the most varied character have existed in various departments of life and in all areas of culture. To characterize their differences from the view-point of history it is necessary to know what spheres of life are rationalized, and in what direction' ([1920] 2004, 109). At first, in the initial version of the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber conceived of the *explanandum* as simply the genesis of modern economic conduct, whereas later the *explanandum* was what he viewed as a specific form of rationalism initially unique to modern Western civilization, not merely economic but representing more general cultural phenomena 'in a line of development having *universal* significance and validity' ([1920] 2004, 101). In spite of the fact that Weber's writings in the last decade before his death shifted to a wider thematic framework—from religion and capitalism to religion and rationalism—and methodological framework—from an deliberately one-sided, ideational analysis to one that meant to give equal recognition to material factors—one of his core concerns remained the same: the historical-cultural origins of what Weber called *Berufsmenschentum* (see also Eisen 1979; Swedberg 2005, 293–5), or a culture of modern professionals pursuing their vocational calling. When circumscribed in this admittedly inelegant manner,[6] it is clear that what Weber sought to describe and explain in its historical origins was a modern secular and primarily but not solely economic phenomenon that affected all cultures and all aspects of modernity because it left no place on Earth and no era in modern history untouched. Without seeking to impose on Weber a myopic focus on a singular 'central' theme or topic (cf. Hennis 2000a; 2000b), I would argue that Weber saw the distinctive culture of professionalism, moved by the capitalist 'spirit,'[7] at the core of modern existence. The modern *Berufsmenschentum*, in so far as it was a time- and place-specific phenomenon, and the system it undergirded,

---

6   Indicative of a long history of difficulties in translations seeking to make Weber's writings readable and understandable in modern editions (see Kaelber 2006), the variability in scholars' renditions of the term, which first appears in Weber's writings in 1910, is considerable. Baehr and Wells translate it as 'the calling as a mode of human existence' or 'man of the calling' (Weber 2002, 265–6, 313); Chalcraft and Harrington, as 'people with a calling' or 'vocational humanity' (2001, 76, 117); Roth and Wittich, as 'man of a vocation' or 'professionalism' (Weber 1978, 575, 1200); Gerth and Mills, as 'vocational specialist type of man' (Weber 1958, 346); and Whimster, as 'vocational mankind' or 'world of vocational specialism' (Weber 2004, 52, 235).

7   On several occasions, Weber tied the two concepts together. In his replies to Felix Rachfahl, Weber referred to the *Berufsmenschentum* 'as a component of the capitalist "spirit" and to the "spirit" of the *Berufsmenschentum*' (Weber 2002, 266 [translation altered; LK], 313). In his study on *Confucianism and Taoism*, he used the latter expression again

modern rational capitalism, were but one manifestation among many different forms of economic systems and institutionalized sets of motivations, such as traditionalism, booty capitalism, or socialism, both within Western countries and outside of them, that Weber sought to analyze and comprehend in his comparative and analytical writings (see Kaelber 2005a). Since the notion of a vocational and professional obligation or duty of the calling (*Berufspflicht*), as a concomitant aspect of *Berufsmenschentum,* is, in Weber's words, a 'component of the spirit of capitalism…that extends above and beyond the economic into quite heterogeneous spheres of human activity' (Chalcraft and Harrington 2001, 76 [translation altered; LK]; see also Weber [1910] 2002, 265), these comparative and analytical writings had to have a broad focus and concern themselves with these other 'heterogeneous spheres of human activity.' This comparatively and analytically far-reaching 'typology and sociology of rationalism' remained tied to Weber's sociology of religion and particularly *The Protestant Ethic*, in spite of the much narrower focus adopted therein, because the modern *Berufsmenschentum*, carrying on its business on the basis of guiding ethical principles that propel it (the spirit or calling in which one is to work tirelessly and methodically), had an affinity to *religious* notions about proper conduct that shaped its development and whose influence was still reflected in word component *Pflicht*. Hence, Weber's analyses of religion were inextricably woven to his much broader comparative studies on rationalization and rationalism.

Yet it should also be noted that Weber did not assume that notions of duty and moral obligation can only derive from religious ethics—a presumption that still permeates much of American culture and politics today. Long before Jürgen Habermas's insistence on that point in his concept of the foundation of morality in secular 'discourse ethics' (for example, Habermas 1990), Weber was equally clear that there was no automatic or necessary link between religion and principled action. In fact, in pointing to the genesis of modern capitalism, he would have been in the driver's seat, so to speak, as far as arguing that no religious input had been necessary at all to launch modern capitalism and its underlying set of motives, for Weber had documented a process of rationalization and a rationalized form of economic *Vergesellschaftung* in the Middle Ages before, in his dissertation. Linking to his research in his earliest writing, Weber could have asserted that rational capitalist forms and the capitalist spirit emerged in a place that he was intimately familiar with from his earlier work: northern Italy in the Renaissance. His dissertation would have been the perfect platform from which to launch this argument, [8] refuting and at the same time extending Werner Sombart's arguments

---

and also wrote of the ''capitalist spirit' in the sense of the specifically modern economic *Berufsmenschentum*' (Weber 1989, 475).

   8   Since Weber had not only studied the legal framework of medieval business but also analyzed difficult source material in classical and medieval Latin, Italian, French, Spanish, and Catalan in his dissertation, at he likely was much better versed in medieval sources than in later English ones when he began his studies on ascetic Protestantism.

in his much-discussed *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (1902), which provided an important impetus for Weber for writing *The Protestant Ethic* (Lehmann 2005). In particular, Sombart's depiction of pre-modern commerce as vastly inferior in scope, complexity, organization, and accounting, lacking modern capitalism's thorough focus on calculability and guided by a spirit of status honor to achieve and secure status-appropriate conditions of living (*Nahrung*),[9] would directly have lent itself to refutation by Weber. After all, Weber had already documented the gestation of such calculability in the emergence of family partnerships and dealt with the complexity of medieval Italian maritime trade relations and accounting methods. Yet he did not take that route and for the most part concentrated on the role of ascetic Protestantism and its rationalizing legacy instead. This involved, as Weber wrote in 1906 in his *Protestant Sects* essay, recognizing the 'mighty role' played 'by these religious elements in that age, when the character of the modern civilized nations was being formed' that 'we modern, religiously "unmusical" people find … difficult to imagine or even simply to believe' (Weber [1906] 2002, 214 [translation altered; LK]).

The 'mighty role' of religion in the early modern epoch that contributed to the emergence of the *Berufsmenschentum* did not emerge out of nowhere. It had a prior history, which Weber designated as worthy of inquiry in his 'research program' at the end of the first version of *The Protestant Ethic*. This program outlined the first steps toward a more general study that Weber later designated to be *The Christianity of the Occident*. That study never materialized, but traces of an empirical investigation of the religious rationalization of conduct in the Middle Ages did. It addressed three areas: in orthodoxy, monastic virtuoso religion and lay spirituality, and, in heterodoxy, the ascetic shaping of conduct in religious movements.

Of these groups, the medieval laity was the largest. Weber did not explore this topic in detail but pointed mostly to factors that inhibited the disenchantment of the world and the rationalization of secular behavior: the charisma of the priest partially rooted in the efficacy of his magical practices, the fulfillment of religious demands through a system of penance that bolstered religious traditionalism, the existence of a second tier of religious morals, and their relatively passive integration into the ecclesia. Weber's treatment of this topic was somewhat formulaic (see Kaelber 1998, Chapters 1, 3). Weber touched on religious asceticism in heterodox movements even less and mostly in reference to pre-modern precursors to inner-worldly asceticism and a vocational ethic that sought to seek proof in conduct in sectarian social settings—a topic in the Weberian literature that has only recently received more attention (see Kaelber 1995; 1998, chapters 4–5; 2003b).

---

9   'There is indeed nothing more foolish than populating the Middle Ages with capitalistically thinking and economically schooled merchants' (Sombart 1902, 174). Weber accepted Sombart's views of the traditionalism for small-scale artisans, but less so for merchants. Newer research, however, raises doubts about their position (see Brandt 2004).

Monasticism was an entirely different matter, one to which Weber accorded considerable more weight. Compared to lay and heterodox spirituality, monastic religious life and its relation to the secular spheres was a topic that Weber visited and re-visited on many an occasion and addressed from many different angles. As early as in 1905 he expressly likened the modern *Berufsmenschen* to their medieval monastic predecessors. In the context of discussing the similarities between ascetic Protestants' conception of prudence in managing their time economy and the modern professionals' constant exposure to time pressures— evocative of Benjamin Franklin's notions about the opportunity costs of wasting time—he wrote that

> we are accustomed to regard it as a typical feature of the modern *Berufsmensch* that he 'has no time,' and even take the fact that clocks strike the quarter hours as a mark of capitalist development, as Goethe put it in [*Wilhelm Meisters*] *Wanderjahre* and Sombart repeats in [*Der moderne*] *Kapitalismus*. We should not forget, however, that the first people (in the Middle Ages) to live according to divisions of time were the monks, and the original purpose of church bells was to mark these divisions (Weber [1905] 2002, 178 n. 231 [translation altered; LK]).

Weber then further specified the historical role of the monastic groups for the rationalization of conduct and the directions it took in his comparative religious studies. Compared to its counterparts in Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, Weber argued, Christian monasticism is comparatively unique in two aspects: 1) its relatively modest ascetic requirements, 2) its stronger inner-worldly focus; and 3) its emphasis on labor.[10] Even though Christian monasticism knew of extremely demanding ascetic practices, such as those displayed by the Syrian stylites, its practices never quite equaled those required of Hindu ascetics, who may have produced some of the most extraordinary religious forms of world renunciation and bodily abnegation known to humankind. In contrast, Western Christian monasticism, especially as it became guided by the Benedictine rule, aimed for consistency, not supererogatory achievements possible only for a very select few. The emphasis on consistency contributed to Western monasticism's methodical character, and its less stringent ascetic demands coincided with a stronger inner-worldly focus. That is, Christian monastics were not expected to leave the world behind in contemplation nearly as much as Hindu or Buddhist monks were, but rather, at least in principle, embraced manual labor as an ascetic practice. Weber expressly termed the Christian medieval monk the methodical *Berufsmensch*. This designation was based on the presence of the notion of a specific and distinctive monastic vocational achievement (*Berufsleistung)*, but in the form of furthering the Church's foreign and home mission and fending off her enemies rather than economic labor (Weber 1978, 1167, 1172/1985, 694–5, 699).

---

10   See especially Weber (1978, 551–6/2001, 332–40). For these and the following remarks, I draw heavily on Kaelber (2005b).

Christian monasticism's asceticism was thus still much more otherworldly than worldly and rationalized conduct in a different direction than ascetic Protestantism. In the section 'Religious Communities' published as part of *Economy and Society*, Weber discusses the main differences using the terms *Vergesellschaftung* and yet again *Berufsmensch* and *Berufspflicht:*

> Only in the Occident, where the monks became the disciplined army[11] of a rational bureaucracy of office, did other-worldly asceticism become increasingly systematized into a methodology of active, rational conduct of life. Moreover, only in the Occident was the additional step taken—by ascetic Protestantism—of transferring rational asceticism into the life of the world … But [when compared to Christian monasticism and asceticism in other world religions] an unbroken unity integrating in systematic fashion an inner-worldly duty in a calling [*Berufspflicht*] with assurance of religious salvation was the unique creation of ascetic Protestantism alone … The demands placed on the believer are, not [monastic] celibacy, as in the case of the [medieval] monk, but the avoidance of all erotic pleasure; not [monastic] poverty, but the elimination of all idle and exploitative enjoyment of unearned wealth and income, and the avoidance of all feudalistic, sensuous ostentation of wealth; not the ascetic death-in-life of the cloister, but an alert, rationally controlled conduct of life, and the avoidance of all surrender to the beauty of the world, to art, or to one's own moods and emotions. The clear and uniform goals of this [modern] asceticism were the disciplining of conduct and its methodical organization. Its typical representative was the *Berufsmensch*, and its unique result was the rational impersonalization [*Versachlichung*] and *Vergesellschaftung* of social relations in contrast to all other types of religion in the world (Weber 1978, 555–6 [translation altered; LK]/2001, 339–40).

Conclusion

Many of Weber's core arguments concerning medieval religion and rationalization remain unknown to this day. They speak to larger issues in Weber's oeuvre.

Weber argued, first, that *Vergesellschaftung* is not a process limited to modernity, or necessarily began in Western countries for that matter. Weber first expressly thematized *Vergesellschaftung* in his first book and major study, where he addressed the change from traditional *Vergemeinschaftung* among kin in medieval Italian families as primarily units of consumption to *Vergesellschaftung* among business partners in companies that grew out of these families in the process of becoming primarily units of production. Though clearly cognizant of historical contingency, Weber described this development as a steady and linear process of

---

11   The German critical edition includes an obvious reading error avoided in the Winkelmann edition of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Weber 1985, 336) in referring to an *un*disciplined army. This makes no sense and inverts Weber's use of the term in the same context elsewhere (see Weber 1985, 695).

rationalization over several centuries in the High and later Middle Ages. Nothing suggests that at the time Weber thought this process to be exclusively Western.

Second, Weber recognized in his discussion of usury very early on that religion was capable of shaping economic conduct profoundly. Yet whether it had any effect at all required a time- and place-specific analysis rooted in the exploration of primary historical documents.[12] To Weber, already in the Middle Ages religion as a social sphere had a considerably degree of autonomy, and that to some extent processes of institutional differentiation that he and other scholars focused in their analyses of modernity had their precursors in the Middle Ages.

Third, one of the themes linking Weber's later sociology of rationalism, which focused on putatively unique features of the West, to his occasional inquiries into medieval studies was the term *Beruf* and especially its derivatives *Berufsmensch*, *Berufsmenschentum*, and *Berufspflicht*.[13] While scholars have paid attention to the issue of whether Weber correctly portrayed Luther's notion of a calling and its significance (for example, Lehmann 1995), they have given far less consideration to the development of the type of humanity that goes along with it, the *Berufsmenschentum*. Without giving deeper anthropological significance to the term, Weber showed a continued interested in this topic from early on in his *Protestant Ethic* studies to the rest of his life. He termed the medieval monastics the first *Berufsmenschen* and precursors to their counterparts in ascetic Protestantism in so far as asceticism was their designated vocational achievement (*Berufsleistung*) and duty (*Berufspflicht*) within the medieval Church.

Finally, the analysis of *Berufsmenschentum* adumbrated by Weber is suggestive of further comparative Weberian studies. This may entail comparing and contrasting medieval monastics to members of heterodox movements, but it should also encompass moving forward in time into the post-Weberian era. After ENRON, is it plausible to presume that modern capitalism still rests on methodical conduct? Is the *Berufsmenschentum* now a world-wide phenomenon, and do *Berufsmenschen* answer to the god of materialism in a way that only an increase in profit and material production is seen as a proper discharge of their *Berufspflicht*? Will the *Berufsmenschentum* govern until 'the last ton of fossil fuel has been burnt' (Weber [1920] 2002, 123 [translation altered; LK])? Given the ominous signs of global warming, it seems that at lot more than the exhaustion of fossil fuel is at stake.

---

12   In contrast to the theological and curatory literature used in his *Protestant Ethic* studies, the sources Weber used in *The History of Commercial Partnerships* were mostly legal statutory records, which are even more problematic for gaining insights into actual patterns of conduct.

13   *Berufsleistung* could be added to this list.

References

Armstrong, L, Elbl I., and Elbl, M. (eds) (2007), *Money, Markets, and Trade in Late Medieval Europe: Essays in Honour of John H.A. Munro* (Leiden: Brill).

Brandt, R. (2004), *Nahrung, Markt oder Gemeinnutz: Werner Sombart und das vorindustrielle Handwerk* (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte).

Chalcraft, D. and Harrington, A. (eds) (2001), *The Protestant Ethic Debate: Max Weber's Replies to His Critics, 1907–1910* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press).

Cordes, A. (2001), 'Transfer einer Rechtsidee: Gesellschaftsrechtliche Haftungsbeschränkungen in Florenz und Nürnberg im 15. Jahrhundert', in M. Senn and C. Soliva (eds).

Eisen, A. (1979), 'Called to Order: The Role of the Puritan "Berufsmensch" in Weberian Sociology', *Sociology* 13:1, 203–18.

Goldthwaite, R. (1987), 'The Medici Bank and the World of Florentine Capitalism', *Past and Present* 114, 3–31.

Habermas, J. (1990), *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action* (Cambridge: MIT Press).

Hansmann et al. (2006), 'Law and the Rise of the Firm', *Harvard Law Review* 119:5, 1333–1403.

Hennis, W. (2000a), *Max Weber's Central Question* (Newbury: Threshold).

Hennis, W. (2000b), *Max Weber's Science of Man* (Newbury: Threshold).

Jones L. (ed.) (2005), *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd edition, Volume 9 (New York: Macmillan).

Kaelber, L. (1995), 'Other- and Inner-Worldly Asceticism in Medieval Waldensianism: A Weberian Analysis', *Sociology of Religion* 56:2, 91–119.

Kaelber, L. (1996), 'Weber's Lacuna: Medieval Religion and the Roots of Rationalization', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57:3, 465–85.

Kaelber, L . (1998), *Schools of Asceticism: Ideology and Organization in Medieval Religious Communities* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press).

Kaelber, L. (2003a), 'Introduction', in Weber, *The History of Commercial Partnerships*, 1–47.

Kaelber, L. (2003b), 'Sociological Explanations of Cathar Success and Tenacity in Languedoc: A New Perspective Focusing on the "Houses of Heretics"', *Heresis* 38, 31–49.

Kaelber, L. (2004), 'Max Weber on Usury and Medieval Capitalism: From "The History of Commercial Partnerships" to "The Protestant Ethic"', *Max Weber Studies* 4:1, 51–75.

Kaelber, L. (2005a), 'Rational Capitalism, Traditionalism, and Adventure Capitalism: New Research on the Weber Thesis', in W.H. Swatos and L. Kaelber (eds), 139–63.

Kaelber, L. (2005b), 'Monasticism: Christian Monasticism', in L. Jones (ed.), 6131–6.

Kaelber, L. (2006), 'The Art of Reading and Understanding Max Weber: Reflections on Recent (and Not-So-Recent) Readers and Compilations', *Canadian Journal of Sociology* 31:1, 131–41.

Kaelber, L . (2007), 'Max Weber and Usury: Implications for Historical Research', in L. Armstrong, I. Elbl and M. Elbl (eds).

Lash, S. and Whimster, S. (eds) (1987), *Max Weber, Rationality, and Modernity* (London: Allen and Unwin).

Lehmann, H. (1995), 'Max Webers Lutherinterpretation', *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 5:3, 349–58.

Lehmann, H. (2005), 'Friends and Foes: The Formation and Consolidation of the *Protestant Ethic* Thesis', in Swatos and Kaelber (eds), *The Protestant Ethic Turns 100*, 1–22.

Lichtblau, K. (2000), '"Vergemeinschaftung" und "Vergesellschaftung" bei Max Weber', *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* 29:6, 423–43.

McLean, P. and Padgett, J. (1997), 'Was Florence a Perfectly Competitive Market? Transactional Evidence from the Renaissance,' *Theory and Society* 26:2–3, 209–44.

Molet, R. (2005), 'Le capitalisme médiéval entre communauté et société: Retour sur les travaux d'histoire du droit de Max Weber', *Revue Francaise de Sociologie* 46:4, 745–766.

Nelson, B. (1969), *The Idea of Usury*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Padgett, J.F and McLean, P.D. (2006), 'Organizational Invention and Elite Transformation: The Birth of Partnership Systems in Renaissance Florence', *American Journal of Sociology* 111:5, 1463–1568.

Riedel, M. (1979), 'Gesellschaft, Gemeinschaft', in O. Brunner et al. (eds), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Volume 2 (Stuttgart: Klett), 801–62.

Schluchter, W. (1981), *The Rise of Western Rationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Schluchter, W. (1989), *Rationalism, Religion, and Domination* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Schluchter, W. (1996), *Paradoxes of Modernity* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Schluchter, W. (2000), *Individualismus, Verantwortungsethik und Vielfalt* (Weilerswist: Velbrück).

Senn, M. and Soliva, C. (eds), (2001), *Rechtsgeschichliche Interdisziplinarität* (Frankfurt: Lang).

Sombart, W. (1902), *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (Leipzig: Duncker und Humblot).

Swatos, W.H. and Kaelber, L. (eds) (2005), *The Protestant Ethic Turns 100: Essays on the Centenary of the Weber Thesis* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers).

Swedberg, R. (2005), *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Tönnies, F. (1887), *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (Leipzig: Fues).

Troeltsch, E. (1956), *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches* (New York: Macmillan).

Weber, M. (1889), *Zur Geschichte der Handelsgesellschaften des Mittelalters: Nach südeuropäischen Quellen* (Stuttgart: Enke).

Weber, M. (1958), *From Max Weber*, ed. H.H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (New York: Oxford University Press).

Weber, M. (1978), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Weber, M. (1984), *Die Lage der Landarbeiter im ostelbischen Deutschland*, ed. M. Riesebrodt (Tübingen: Mohr).

Weber, M. (1985), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 5th, Revised Edition, ed. J. Winckelmann (Tübingen: Mohr).

Weber, M. (1986), *Die römische Agrargeschichte in ihrer Bedeutung für das Staats- und Privatrecht*, ed. J. Deininger (Tübingen: Mohr).

Weber, M. (1988a), 'Entwickelungstendenzen in der Lage der ostelbischen Landarbeiter', in M. Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, ed. Marianne Weber, 2nd Edition (Tübingen: Mohr), 470–507.

Weber, M. (1988b), 'Die sozialen Gründe des Untergangs der antiken Kultur', in Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte*, 289–311.

Weber, M. (1989), *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus: Schriften 1915–1920*, ed. H. Schmidt-Glintzer (Tübingen: Mohr).

Weber, M. (1999–2000), *Börsenwesen*, ed. K. Borchardt (Tübingen: Mohr).

Weber, M. (2001), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte: Nachlass: Teilband 2: Religiöse Gemeinschaften*, ed. H.G. Kippenberg (Tübingen: Mohr).

Weber, M. (2002), *The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism and Other Writings*, ed. P. Baehr and G.C. Wells (New York: Penguin).

Weber, M. (2003), *The History of Commercial Partnerships in the Middle Ages* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield).

Weber, M. (2004), *The Essential Weber*, ed. S. Whimster (London: Routledge).

Chapter 13

Beyond the Protestant Ethic:
Culture, Subjectivity and Instrumental Labor

Richard Lloyd

In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Max Weber argues that the rise of modern capitalism in the West cannot be understood merely in terms of the formal innovations of capitalism[1]—though he expends a great deal of energy enumerating these—but also as a change of ethos, 'the ability and disposition of men to adopt certain types of practical rational conduct' (Weber 1958, 26). Moreover, he pluralizes the notion of a Spirit of the Age, specifying how adherence to specific and contested patterns of religious belief had the unintended consequence of disposing some more than others to the practical necessities of success in a changing economic milieu. Thus, Weber's account of the elective affinity between modern capitalism and ascetic Protestantism involves historical specification on two counts, as Anthony Giddens observes: 'Not only an analysis of the content of protestant beliefs and an assessment of their influence upon the actions of believers, but also the specification of the particular characteristics of modern western capitalism as a form of economic activity' (Giddens 1971, 125).

Weber explicitly set out to debunk 'the doctrine of naïve historical materialism,' but without retreating to a position of pure idealism. In fact, while Weber gleaned the importance of religious belief in the uneven adoption of new economic practices, he also noted that the logic of capitalism was powerful enough to no longer require a spiritual dimension for its expansion, and in fact to undermine the transcendent ethos that nurtured its infancy. Introducing the widely noted metaphor of the Iron Cage in the essay's final pages, Weber observes: 'Today the spirit of religious asceticism … has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer' (Weber 1958, 181–182).

This claim is surely correct, but these mechanical foundations do not as it happens reproduce capitalism in a static state. Weber's signature accomplishment in *The Protestant Ethic* is to show how a cultural ethos can emerge in specific contexts and become animated in unintended and unexpected ways in quite

---

1 For example, new principles of accounting, or the organization of formally free labor.

different ones.[2] Marxist analyses of the dynamism of capitalism, inspired by the structurally inscribed instability of periodic accumulation crises, remains a necessary component in understanding new patterns of confluence between economic structure and subjective dispositions. Moreover, many contemporary interpreters of Weber, particularly neo-conservative thinkers inclined to criticize the breakdown of societal values, reify the Protestant Ethic as the one transcendent ethic of capitalism (Bell 1976; Lasch 1991; Himmelfarb 2001), robbing Weber's analysis of its historical specificity and more subtle implications. Over-emphasis on the Protestant Ethic specifically, rather than on the varied and contingent ways that culture, subjectivity and instrumental labor may intersect and interact, misses the point, and undermines the generative potential for Weber's classic analysis in contemporary scholarship.

What I will discuss below as the bohemian ethic, birthed in the tumult of nineteenth-century Paris, seems far apart from the staid dispositions of Weber's 'sober bourgeois capitalism' (Weber 1958, 4). Certainly it is the case that specific modern dynamics—the explosive growth of the metropolis, the extension of the market, the ethos of individualism, the decline of aristocratic patronage—enabled the birth of bohemia as a socio-cultural space, just as these same dynamics helped to propel bourgeois ascendancy in France. Still, the culture of bohemia has been understood by adherents and critics alike as directly opposed to the ethos of bourgeois capitalism. The vaunted ideology of '*art pour l'art*' refuses economistic logic; Pierre Bourdieu refers to the more avant-garde segments of the field of cultural production as 'the economic world reversed' (Bourdieu 1993). Still, this chapter will argue that elements of bohemia, surprisingly durable through subsequent generations and still most obviously found in increasingly ubiquitous urban districts, generate dispositions and competencies among adherents that are surprisingly amenable to neo-liberal and postindustrial capitalist practices.

As in Weber's account, making this argument requires sensitivity not only to content of beliefs inculcated in the bohemian milieu and their effect on action, but also to the particular characteristics of present-day capitalism. Like *The Protestant Ethic*, this approach has the virtue of addressing an empirical anomaly, in this case the reanimation of distinctive urban spaces, once dedicated to industrial manufacturing, as strategic sites in a postindustrial economy (despite the dispersal capacity enabled by digital communications, and the 'immaterial' character of cultural work). Drawing on an extended ethnographic study of a case in Chicago as well as historical and comparative analysis, I have designated my own ideal-typical heuristic for the phenomena, *neo-bohemia* (Lloyd 2006). This chapter will offer only cursory reference to the case, however; the point here is to locate my contribution with respect to Weber's theory of the intersection between economic activity and subjective dispositions, and with respect to the provocative subsequent interventions by Antonio Gramsci and Daniel Bell.

---

2   Foucault has provocatively revisited this insight with his genealogical method, as in *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage, 1977).

From Sober Bourgeois Capitalism to Fordism

Weber's account is not actually about all of the participants in the variegated cosmology of emerging capitalism—*The Protestant Ethic* is mainly the story of the new bourgeoisie. His empirical point of entry is the fact that 'business leaders and owners of capital, as well as the higher grades of skilled labor, and even more the technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant' (Weber 1958, 35). These are the individuals most required in their economic pursuits to display novel and curious virtues such as deferring gratification. In contrast to Marx, owners of capital do not exhaust this category for Weber—the signature characteristic uniting these actors is not property but rather a disposition towards utilitarian calculation.[3] Under these circumstances, the unusual importance that Weber grants to double-entry bookkeeping as a leading innovation begins to make sense. Likely no theorist before or since has made a comparably grand claim for the historical importance of the accountant.

Still, as Weber makes clear in this, as well as subsequent, ruminations on bureaucracy, the formal rationality of modern capitalism is imperialistic by nature, colonizing increasing spheres of social life. Moreover, the intimate scale of bourgeois shopkeeper capitalism would give way to ever larger and more complexly integrated enterprises. As the twentieth century unfolded, the great titans of industry were eclipsed by faceless entities, corporations that subsumed bourgeois individualism into a new imperative of conformity. Gone too, Weber argues, is capitalism's transcendent ethic: 'Where the fulfillment of the calling cannot directly be related to the highest spiritual and cultural values … the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it all' (Weber 1958, 182). In the United States, where Weber gleaned the spirit of capitalism in its most purely realized form, there would be a distinctive change in ethos—for prominent mid-century critics of American dispositions, 'the unprecedented inner loneliness' that had characterized the Puritan might remain, but now felt not by inner-directed ascetics but other-directed organization men (Riesman 1950; Whyte 1956).

The advent of the factory economy, in which Henry Ford's assembly line and Taylor's scientific management stand as signature advances in the routinization of labor, led many to posit the advance of a mass society corresponding to standardized production. Nowhere was this more evident than in the United States. In an analysis of the cultural dimension of this society, which he tagged Fordism, Antonio Gramsci noted that 'in America rationalization has determined the need to elaborate a new sort of man suited to a new sort of work and productive process' (Gramsci 1971, 301). If the foundational American myth is that of the frontier and the cowboy individualist, increasingly the economy demanded that workers live in cities and labor as cogs in a machine. The growth of urban centers in the North, fueled by immigrant labor, spurred nativist backlash, but Gramsci argues

---

3   Like Marx, Weber rejects Adam Smith's claim that utilitarian dispositions are somehow transhistorical properties.

that compared to the impediments of anachronistic social relations in Europe, the United States was blank slate for yet another grand cultural experiment. If he is correct, the project of the first half of the twentieth century was assimilation, not only of immigrants but Anglo nativists also, to a reconstituted idea of American virtue. In the process, the bourgeois individual called into being by nineteenth-century capitalism would seemingly be absorbed into populist mass culture.

Regulation theorists, including Michel Aglietta and David Harvey, treat mature Fordism as a complex of institutional arrangements implemented in response to the crises of Depression and world war—international Keynesianism, the domestic welfare state, union legitimation and co-optation, vertical integration and mass bureaucratization (Aglietta 1979; Harvey 1989). Underwritten in the United States by postwar Western hegemony and unprecedented levels of economic growth, the mixed economy of Fordism and its welfare-warfare state seemed to have struck the right balance to overcome, once and for all, the older contradictions that plagued capitalism (Bensman and Vidich 1987). Whatever its flaws, this system did produce in the United States a broad middle class society, which appears in retrospect an aberration from the plutocracy that characterizes both the beginning and end of the twentieth century (Krugman 2002; Philips 2006). The new societal ethos was bureaucratic in nature; leftist critics of the United States in the postwar period increasingly turned their attention from material inequities, whose solution were presumably to be found in the administered society, and towards the cultural dimension of Fordism, which effaced individualism (Horkheimer and Adorno 1944; Marcuse 1964). Incipient in the 1940s and 50s, the cultural critique would explode into the rise of new social movements in the 1960s.

Post-1960s America and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism

An intellectual disposition that cuts across the political spectrum concludes that the political energies and transformative optimism of the New Social Movements were largely exhausted after 1968, replaced by a fractured left politics (Gitlin 1995) and a putative 'culture of narcissism' (Lasch 1991). Neo-conservative critics such as Allan Bloom and Daniel Bell see the 60's as culprit in the effacement of American cultural life, an 'unmitigated disaster' in Bloom's terms (Bloom 1987, 51). Bell's analysis in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* is of particular interest to this discussion, being deeply indebted to Weber's argument. Like Weber, Bell views economy and culture not in terms of determining base and subordinate superstructure, but rather as quasi-autonomous realms, liable perhaps to serendipitous affinity but also to contradiction. Bell's critique of post-1960s American culture echoes the final passages of *The Protestant Ethic*: 'When the Protestant ethic was sundered from bourgeois society, only the hedonism remained, and the capitalist system lost its transcendent ethic … The cultural, if not moral, justification of capitalism has become hedonism, the idea of pleasure as a way of life' (Bell 1976, 21–22). For Bell the decade of 1970s, à la Tom Wolfe 'the Me

decade,' (Wolfe 1976) was truly given over to 'specialists without spirit [and] sensualists without heart' (Weber 1958, 182).

Of course for Weber 'this nullity' was already *fait accompli* by the time *The Protestant Ethic* appeared, a consequence of worldly disenchantment and bureaucratic imperialism. In its unholy alliance with capitalism, it would seem, ascetic Protestantism had planted the seeds of its own destruction (and this with no help at all from barefoot flower children and rock'n'roll). Periodically throughout *The Cultural Contradictions* Bell admits as much. But the novelty of Bell's intervention comes not in noting the decline of the Protestant Ethic, which in any event seems a bit overstated today with the increasing influence of religious fundamentalism in significant areas of American social and political life.[4] Bell is ultimately concerned less with the decline of Protestantism than with the extension of another historically rooted cultural impulse, one never addressed by Weber—the legacy of aesthetic modernism, with roots in the nineteenth century Parisian bohemia with its band of marginals. 'The lifestyle once practised by a small *cénacle*, whether the cool life mask of Baudelaire or the hallucinatory rage of Rimbaud, is now copied by the 'many' (a minority in the society, to be sure, but nonetheless large in number) and dominates the cultural scene' (Bell 1976, 54). Bell argues that embedded in this ascendance is an economic contradiction that Weber did not anticipate. Beyond its inadequacies to meeting requirements for meaning in the cultural sphere, the prescripts of bohemia collide with the rational imperatives of the techno-economic realm, which Bell says 'remains bureaucratic and hierarchical … [and] organized fundamentally in terms of roles and specialization' (Ibid., 14).

Brilliant though Bell's essay is, it doesn't ring true. A native New Yorker and former Columbia professor before moving to Harvard, Bell may have been excessively attuned to the culture of celebrity, spectacle and hedonistic excess taking shape in the Manhattan as the seventies advanced, overlooking the coalescence of a significant cultural backlash percolating outside the metropole. In fact, while Bell correctly identifies the increase in the scale and influence of the so-called 'adversary culture,' he neglects to adequately specify the ongoing importance of its urban dimension, so apparent at bohemia's inception. Still, this is not really the problem with Bell's analysis, at least not the largest one. Where he fails is not so much in his cultural interpretation (though he does elide certain persistent elements of the 'bohemian ethic') as in his analysis of capitalism, somewhat surprisingly given the prescience of his previous book, *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (1972).

The crises of the 1970s were not only, or primarily, cultural in nature. Economic crisis, the increasingly apparent failures of Fordism to ensure growth and manage

---

4 Particularly in the United States' contemporary suburbs, a curious amalgam of puritanical observance and Babbittry (that is, following Sinclair Lewis's satirical novel (1922), excessive fealty to the expectations of one's neighbors and the success ethic) seems to be the emergent cultural order.

social conflicts, set the stage for capitalist restructuring towards a more nimble and more cruel organization, called by David Harvey 'flexible accumulation' (Harvey 1989). In this case, there is a new and surprising elective affinity between the dispositions and competences nurtured in bohemia and new sectors of the capitalist economy. While the bohemian ethic may have been at odds with past regimes of accumulation, this ethic is not necessarily adversarial with regards to the 'ability and disposition' of workers to adapt to current productive relations.

The Bohemian Ethic

The economic modernity of capitalism may have been bound up with spiritual revolution, but the rise of the cultural *modernism* that Bell is inclined to place at odds with techno-rational bureaucratic capitalism has decidedly different origins. Writes David Harvey: 'It seems that [aesthetic] modernism … was very much an urban phenomenon, that it existed in a restless but intricate relationship with the experience of explosive urban growth' (Ibid., 25). Nowhere in the West was the relationship between modernist cultural innovations and distinct urban enclaves more in evidence than Paris during the nineteenth century—the Paris of Baudelaire and the Impressionist painters, among other revolutionaries. It was there that the term bohemia, once used to refer to gypsy populations in Europe, was first adopted as popular shorthand for the new breed of urban artist. 'Each epoch dreams the one to follow,' Walter Benjamin wrote (1999, 13), and the boulevards, arcades, back alleys, hovels and cafés of Paris provided the template against which was constituted a durable dream of the artist in the city.

The value system that governed this new and deeply romanticized style of artistic striving would seem the absolute antithesis of bourgeois propriety, and that was clearly the view of those who promulgated it. Henry Murger's *Scenes de la vie de Bohème* (2004), the mid-nineteenth century serials that popularized the term among general readers, opens with the artist Schaunard violating every prescript in *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Certainly Murger's bohemians were no Puritans—they had no patience for the sobriety of 'sober bourgeois capitalism.' The illicit diversions of the city—so alarming to puritanical sensibility—were just the ticket for bohemians. These were easily found in the European capital: 'Paris was bound to attract all those who had come to the city to make a living from its many incidental activities: the floater, the sharp, the playboy and the shadowy entrepreneur—people whose existence was essentially improvised, unconventional, ingeniously opportunistic, full of an easygoing lust for fun' (Grana 1964, 23).

Still, the relationship between bohemian and bourgeois was always rather more complicated than a simple dichotomy would suggest. Bohemians mocked the sterility of the business class, but did not entirely abandon their own hopes for market fortune. Moreover, if prisons and poorhouses housed the surplus of

proletarian labor, bohemian garrets may well have housed the lumpen bourgeoisie.[5] Cesar Grana observes: 'Paris not only attracted its literary *declassees*, but manufactured them, and some contemporary accounts are realistic and off-hand enough to attribute the super-abundance of intellectual fervor to nothing more lofty than occupational frustration' (Grana 1964, 25). Bohemia's fabled *ennui* emerges then as a romanticization of the sting of failure, transformed into a brooding aesthetic in which one claims to reject what was already denied.

Marshal Berman's famous analysis of modernity emphasizes the qualities of upheaval, discontinuity and flux. Still he writes that 'although most people probably experienced [modernity] as a radical threat to all their history and traditions, it has, in the course of five centuries, developed a rich history and plenitude of traditions of its own' (Berman 1986, 16). Bohemia is one such tradition, rather paradoxically so, given that the avant-garde so often castes itself as not merely historically original, but in fact the culminate event of all cultural history. Bohemia has proven a phenomenon both durable and portable, stubbornly recurring in urban districts such as Greenwich Village, Bloomsbury, Venice Beach and a host of others on both sides of the Atlantic. Today such districts are if anything more frequent in cities throughout the United States and Europe, including many not typically associated with artistic production and the associated lifestyle eccentricities.

New bohemias are of course shaped by the specificities of both the cities and the eras in which they appear. Nevertheless, certain elements of the Parisian prototype remain remarkably constant, even in widely variant historical contexts. One is the commitment of artists to the city, and beyond that to very distinct sorts of districts, in which high and lowbrow diversions mix promiscuously (Gendron 2002; Gluck 2005). In fact, as I have been at pains to demonstrate elsewhere, identification with these districts is a crucial component for the forging of an artistic persona, especially for the young (Lloyd 2004). Moreover, for all the hedonism imputed to bohemia, there endures a romance of the starving artist, and indeed the willingness to endure ostentatious privation can translate into bohemian status (signaling the elusive quality of authenticity), in the 'loser wins' logic identified by Bourdieu (1993).

Persistent as well is the performative aspect of bohemia, a dimension that characterizes not only artists but also the legion of affiliated hangers-on. As Jerrold Seigel notes of the denizens of the Parisian prototype: 'Ambitious, dedicated, but without means and unrecognized, they turned life itself into a work of art' (Seigel 1986, 4). Flamboyant personal presentation is part of what makes bohemia so easy to find, even if the style employed in the 'conspicuous consumption of self' is highly variant, from the dandyism of Baudelaire to the 'spectacular subcultures' of 1970s punk rock (Hebdige 1977). Bourdieu observes that 'the tricks of the artists' trade … implies not only the art of producing a work, but the art of self-presentation,' (Bourdieu 1993, 61) talents which need not be commensurate in a

---

5   I thank Philip Kasinitz for this formulation.

given participant. Concrete observation in bohemia reveals that many are far more gifted at the former than the latter, and vice versa.

The flamboyance of bohemia certainly sets it apart from the modesty demanded by the Protestant ethic. Beyond conventions of self-presentation, there is a presumed repudiation by bohemians of the key tenets of ascetic Protestantism (at least with regards to capitalism), utilitarian calculation and the work ethic. From the proto-bohemians of the Parisian salon to the beatniks of 1950s Greenwich Village, these coteries were considered to harbor an out-and-out disdain for the conventions of capitalist labor. As Ned Polsky observes of the 'Village beat scene' in 1960: 'Beats avoid work … this avoidance is typically not a rationalization for any work incapacity, but is almost always a matter of conviction plain and simple' (Polsky 1967, 154). Indeed, Polsky considers this orientation against normalizing labor more fundamental to a beat consciousness than whatever creative aspirations the Beats may have harbored. Bell likewise notes the opposition to utilitarian activity: 'The cultural impulse—I take Baudelaire as its exemplary figure—thus turned into a rage against bourgeois values. "To be useful has always appeared to me as something quite hideous' Baudelaire declared" (Bell 1976, 17). The realm of aesthetic production as constituted in the nineteenth century entails, as Peter Bürger puts it, 'a particular notion of art linked to a complex of modes of conduct—*purposeless creation* [emphasis added] and disinterested pleasure' (Bürger 1992, 6).

But there are also elements of bohemia more clearly resonant with bourgeois culture, even if these are often overlooked by those who would emphasize the stark dichotomy. This can be seen, for example in the shared commitment to the notion of the modern individual, and the embrace of an 'ethic of authenticity,' (Taylor 1991; Trilling 1971) even if the rules for assessing authentic behavior diverged starkly. There can be no doubt that the notion of a calling is as crucial to the modern artist as it was to the Calvinist. While they may not mention God, still the most common refrain I hear in asking contemporary (self-proclaimed) artists how they came to the vocation is some version of 'I had no choice,' implying a compulsion of metaphysical origin. This compulsion often demands self-sacrifice, which can encompass even activities like substance abuse, which in the hands of ritual abusers like Poe, Bukowski, Burroughs or Basquiat cannot be explained by simple hedonism. There is also an ascetic dimension of bohemia, an adoption of voluntary poverty (with compensatory rewards of field-specific status) that is in fact entirely ignored by Bell and more recent observers such as Richard Florida (2002) and David Brooks (2001).

Moreover, for both the Calvinist and the young artist, a place among the Elect, those truly 'chosen' as opposed to the larger mass of the ineligible, is a central preoccupation. For neither artist nor Puritan is the market taken to be a reliable arbiter of elect status, though both nonetheless are liable to look there in a groping quest for clues. Finally, the vaunted opposition to work is not really a commitment to idleness as much as the repudiation of distractions from the calling. Balzac and Murger both hastened their own deaths through excessive caffeine intake, fueling

writing bouts that stretched to the wee hours of the morning and beyond. They are not eccentric in this regard. And, as I will touch upon below, in bohemia even what appears to be idleness is anyway often a component of the creative ethos.

Despite these affinities, not to mention typically shared points of social origin and levels of educational accomplishment, no one has traditionally been more committed to maintaining the bourgeois/bohemian distinction than bohemians themselves, who rage against bourgeois values at every opportunity. In one of the more biting observations of his essay, Bell points out that this opposition had by the 1970s taken on properties of the absurd.

> The legend of modernism is that of the free creative spirit at war with the bourgeoisie. Whatever the truth of such a view when, say, Whistler was accused of having 'flung a pot of paint in the public's face,' in our time the idea is a caricature. Who in the world today, especially in the world of culture, defends the bourgeoisie? Yet in the domain of those who think themselves serious about culture … the legend of the free creative spirit now at war, no longer merely with bourgeois society but with 'civilization,' or 'repressive tolerance' or some other agency that curtails 'freedom,' still sustains an adversary culture (Bell 1976, 40).

Indeed this opposition is a founding myth of bohemia, without which it could scarcely exist. But Bell's derision of an oppositional culture no longer satisfied to 'merely' deride the bourgeoisie betrays a large degree of historical carelessness on his part. Bell suggests that the society in its 'social structure (economics, technology and occupational bases) remains bourgeois' (Ibid., 40). But this glib proclamation misses the historically inarguable fact that in terms of economics, technology and occupational bases there are striking divergences among the proto-entrepreneurial capitalism Weber described, the consolidations of the Gilded Age, the specific techno-rationality of mature Fordism, and the emerging neoliberalism of postindustrial society. In other words, 1970s America did not remain bourgeois economically any more than culturally, certainly not in the sense that the Paris of the Second Empire or Protestant New England could once be called bourgeois.

Some gestures of the postwar avante-garde—Jackson Pollack's habit, once sufficiently famous, of pissing in Peggy Gugenheim's fireplace, for example—are fairly retrograde examples of bohemians acting out against increasingly pliant bourgeois parent figures (Wolfe 1975). But the critical project of the beats, immature and inarticulate though it could often be, had a different object. Note this passage from Norman Mailer's beat manifesto 'The White Negro': 'One is Hip or one is Square … one is a rebel or one conforms, one is frontiersman in the Wild West of American night life, or else a square cell, trapped in the totalitarian tissues of American society, doomed to conform willy-nilly if one is to succeed' (Mailer 1959, 313). The square (and this is true for Ginsberg and Kerouac no less than for Mailer) is not the classic inner-directed bourgeois of Weber's account, but rather the 'new type of man' anticipated by Gramsci, the organization man of postwar Fordism.

It can be argued that these objections are likewise directed towards a facile caricature, and there would no doubt be truth to that. In any event, today neither the imago of the bourgeoisie, nor that of the organization man, is particularly adequate to depicting the class relations of post-Fordist capitalism. Yet, as it happens, one or the other depiction continues to be invoked by new bohemians as they go about staking a claim to subcultural distinctiveness.

Capitalist Restructuring and the New Bohemia

The social norm of Fordism was standardization, both in terms of labor relations and consumption practices. Conformity to the discipline of the assembly line and of the checkout counter was repudiated by bohemian critics such as the beat writers, who challenged Fordist mass society with the same animus Baudelaire directed toward the utilitarian bourgeoisie. But the norms of the mass production society have increasingly proved inadequate on their own terms, failing to meet the challenges of sustained accumulation. Harvey explains:

> On the surface, these difficulties could best be captured by one word: rigidity. There were problems with the rigidity of long-term and large-scale fixed capital investments in mass production systems that precluded much flexibility of design and presumed invariant growth in stable consumer markets. There were problems of rigidities in labor markets, labor allocation, and in labor contracts (Harvey 1989, 142).

The challenge of the post-Fordist period has been that of increasing flexibility, on both the production and consumption side. The strategies adopted by capital interests to meet this challenge over time produce systematic restructuring of the capitalist system, restructuring driven by the crises of Fordism.

The economic strategies comprising what Harvey identifies as a new regime of flexible accumulation produce new norms of production and consumption, for which sober bourgeois dispositions are poorly suited. On the production side, the new global division of labor, taking advantage of the low labor costs in developing nations, has largely displaced the most unskilled work of standardized production from cities like Chicago. In the United States the emphasis in growth sectors is on avoiding the rigidities of Fordism, generating strategies that destabilize Fordist labor relations, as realized either on the assembly line or in the bureaucratized corporate structure. The old promises of career and social security under the terms of the Fordist corporation and the welfare state have increasingly evaporated.

Just as the relatively stable career trajectories of Fordism (both white and blue collar) have declined, so too the consumption practices of flexible accumulation diverge from the 'relatively stable aesthetic' (Ibid., 156) of Fordism, creating a diversity of consumption styles in which cultural production plays a dramatically heightened role. Harvey writes: 'Flexible accumulation has been accompanied on the consumption side, therefore, by a much greater attention to quick-changing

fashions and the mobilization of all the artifices of need inducement and cultural transformation that this implies' (Ibid., 156). An aesthetic economy is intrinsic to this regime of accumulation, as Perry Anderson observes:

> Culture has necessarily expanded to the point of where it has become virtually coextensive with the economy itself, not merely as the symptomatic basis of some of the largest industries in the world—tourism now exceeding all other branches of global employment—but much more deeply, as every material object and immaterial service becomes inseparably tractable sign and vendible commodity (Anderson 1998, 55).

The art historian Thomas Crow sums up the fundamental paradox of production in the cultural economy:

> In our image saturated present, the culture industry has demonstrated the ability to package and sell nearly every variety of desire imaginable, but because its ultimate logic is the strictly rational and utilitarian one of profit maximization, it is not able to invent the desires and sensibilities it exploits. In fact the emphasis on continual novelty basic to that industry runs counter to the need of every large enterprise for product standardization and economies of scale (Crow 1996, 34).

Despite the massive consolidations of culture and media industries, what we might call the 'software' inputs of cultural innovation, are still mostly generated outside the rigid domain of corporate control. The individuals and small-scale enterprises of cultural production may not formally integrate, but they do agglomerate. Contemporary consumer culture requires new specialized spaces of production, producing environments fostering creativity and flexibility. Thus, while factory labor is displaced from erstwhile industrial cities, as capital chases labor around the globe, the aesthetic dimensions of production and distribution are produced flexibly in re-colonized industrial districts.

It is this dimension of post-Fordist restructuring that directly figures into the confluence in cities that I call neo-bohemia—the vacating of older spaces of industry and the rising economic importance of aesthetic enterprises in Western cities, from local entertainment provision to advertising, graphic and Internet design, to innovative work on behalf of culture industries in film, recording or television, as well as standard activities in the plastic and performing arts. Corresponding to the post-1960s aestheticization of the economy has been an increase in artists, writers and performers—four-fold in total numbers since 1970 (Florida 2002, 46-47). This is particularly striking in erstwhile smokestack cities like Chicago or Rotterdam. Much that is striking about the contemporary economy can be explained by economic compulsion, of course—Wal-Martism or third world sweatshops, for example. But in the flexibly organized activities of the aesthetic economy the spatial and cultural properties of bohemia, rooted in long tradition, importantly underlie new strategies, concentrating social actors imbued with distinctly amenable competencies and dispositions. As Harvey Molotch (1996)

and Sharon Zukin (1995) have indicated, artists do even ordinary work differently than others would. At the most banal level, this can be seen in the preponderance of New York actors, Nashville musicians or Chicago painters waiting tables in hip and trendy boutique eateries. Their inclinations to favor flexibility, and to be in the 'scene' (even as labor), coupled with their performative competence as good bohemians, turning life into a work of art, all combine to produce an exceptionally useful, and exploitable, labor pool.

As in past bohemias, contemporary participants in the new bohemia insist upon their opposition to an imagined mainstream. When elaborating upon this objection, local artists specifically repudiate participation in a corporate workforce committed to conformity and the base pursuit of material security. Yet this imago of the mainstream is anachronistic, as the old promises of career and social security under the terms of the Fordist corporation and the welfare state have increasingly evaporated. Vicki Smith argues:

> Uncertainty and unpredictability, and to varying degrees personal risk, have diffused into a broad range of postindustrial workplaces, service and production alike. Tenuousness and uncertainty have become 'normal' facts of work and employment across the occupational spectrum in the United States (Smith, 2001, 7).

In addition to requiring that workers acclimate themselves to greater flexibility, with volatile compensation and irregular work schedules, the flexible workplace makes increasing demands made on the individual's creative capacity, even in mundane service sector jobs. Writes Ulrich Beck:

> Never before has individual creativity been as important as it is today … But never before have working people, irrespective of their talents and educational achievements, been as dependent and vulnerable as they are today, working in individualized situations without countervailing collective powers, and within flexible networks whose meaning and rules are impossible for most of them to fathom (Beck 2000, 85-86).

Today, workers must be competent to the task demands of flexible production—able to demonstrate 'individual creativity' to an unprecedented degree—and they must also be able to acclimate themselves to enormous amounts of uncertainty and risk.

The 'ethical' dispositions nurtured in the bohemian milieu (but not confined there) may indeed have been incompatible with the highly routinized labor that prevailed in the Fordist city, the world of the assembly line worker, or the other directed 'organization man.' But *la vie bohème* has long been characterized by the contingency that now infects broad swaths of the postindustrial economy, and we have seen that the bohemian ethic elevates tolerance of uncertainty to a virtue: 'As an artist you know that you many not be secure for the rest of your life.' And the disposition to wear risk as a badge of bohemian honor is carried by neighborhood artists even into their non-art related employment.

Thus, while Bell and others view the dispositions magnetized and nurtured within the socio-cultural space of bohemia unproblematically as the 'other' of the Protestant Ethic, confirming in the process bohemians' own persistent self-image, a contemporary paradox emerges that resonates with Weber's classic analysis. In either case, an ideological disposition and guiding ethic emerges from a space other than the formal confines of the capitalist economy and the logic of instrumental labor (indeed, both repudiate instrumentality as a guiding principle). But, in very different historical moments and structural configurations of the capitalist economy, both the Protestant Ethic and the bohemian ethic are demonstrably implicated in patterns of workforce incorporation. In fact, many elements of the Protestant Ethic now conflict with imperatives of flexible accumulation, for example contingent employment. Weber notes: 'Irregular work, which the ordinary laborer is often forced to accept, is often unavoidable, but always an unwelcome state of transition. A man without a calling thus lacks the systematic, methodical character, which is, as we have seen, demanded by worldly asceticism' (Weber 1958, 161). The bohemian ethic more easily accommodates such contingency, while holding in place a sense of a transcendent worldly calling that stands apart from ordinary toil. Rather than being contradictory, the bohemian ethic, nurtured through decades of cultural repetition, now appears better suited to practical realities of the economy, even if its adherents persist in a state of denial regarding this fact. By letting go of an ahistorical notion of the relationship between the Protestant Ethic and capitalism, one that reifies both the cultural and economic implications, we can begin to move beyond the Protestant and clarify the more dynamic and generative possibilities for contemporary theory contained in Weber's classic work.

References:

Aglietta, M. (1979), *A Theory of Capitalist Regulation* (New York: Verso).

Anderson, P. (1998), *The Origins of Postmodernity* (London: Verso).

Beck, U. (2000), *Brave New World of Work* (Cambridge UK: Polity).

Bell, D. (1976), *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic).

Bell, D. (1972), *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society* (New York: Basic).

Benjamin, W. (1999), 'Paris: Capital of the 19th Century', in *The Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Bensman, J. and A. Vidich (1987), *American Society: The Welfare State and Beyond* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey).

Berman, M. (1986), *All That is Solid Melts into Air* (New York: Penguin).

Bloom, A. (1987), *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster).

Bourdieu, P. (1993), *The Field of Cultural Production* (New York: Columbia).

Foucault, M. (1977), *Discipline and Punish* (New York: Vintage).

Brooks, D. (2001), *BoBos in Paradise* (New York: Simon and Schuster).

Bürger, P. (1992), *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press).

Crow, T. (1996), *Modern Art and the Common Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

Florida, R. (2002), *The Rise of the Creative Class* (New York: Basic).

Gendron, B. (2002), *Between Montmartre to the Mudd Club* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Giddens, A. (1971), *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press).

Gitlin, T. (1995), *The Twilight of Common Dreams* (New York: Metropolitan).

Gluck, M. (2005), *Popular Bohemia* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press).

Gramsci, A. (1971), 'Americanism and Fordism', in *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (New York: International, 1971).

Grana, C. (1964), *Bohemian vs. Bourgeois* (New York: Basic).

Harvey, D. (1989), *The Condition of Postmodernity* (London: Blackwell).

Hebdige, D. (1977), *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London: Routledge).

Himmelfarb, G. (2001), *One Nation, Two Cultures* (New York: Vintage).

Horkheimer, M. and T.W. Adorno (1994), *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (New York: Continuum).

Krugman, P. (2002), 'For Richer' *The New York Times Sunday Magazine*, October 20.

Lasch, C. (1991), *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York: W.W. Norton).

Lloyd, R. (2004) 'The Neighborhood in Cultural Production: Material and Symbolic Resources in the New Bohemia', *City and Community* 3:4 343–371.

Lloyd, R. (2006), *Neo-Bohemia: Art and Commerce in the Postindustrial City* (New York: Routledge).

Mailer, N. (1959), 'The White Negro', in *Advertisements for Myself* (New York: Bantam).

Marcuse, H. (1964), *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon).

Molotch, H. (1996), 'LA as Design Product', in A. Scott and E. Soja (eds), *The City: Los Angeles and Urban Theory at the End of the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

Murger, H. (2004), *The Bohemians of the Latin Quarter* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press).

Philips, K. (2006), *Wealth and Democracy* (New York: Broadway Books).

Polsky, N. (1967), *Hustlers, Beats and Others* (New York: Anchor).

Riesman, D. (1950), *The Lonely Crowd* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

Seigel, J. (1986), *Bohemian Paris* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Smith, V. (2001), *Crossing the Great Divide: Worker Risk and Opportunity in the New Economy* (Ithica NY: Cornell University Press).

Taylor, C. (1991), *The Ethics of Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Trilling, L. (1971), *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Weber, M. (1958), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Macmillan).

Whyte, W.H. (1956), *The Organization Man* (New York: Simon and Schuster).

Wolfe, T. (1976), *Mauve Gloves and Madmen; Clutter and Vine* (New York: Bantam).

Wolfe, T. (1975), *The Painted Word* (New York: Bantam).

Zukin, S. (1995), *The Cultures of Cities* (London: Blackwell).

This page intentionally left blank

PART 5
Studies in the Sociology
of Legitimacy

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 14

The Leadership of the Dead:
Notes towards a Weberian Analysis of
Charisma in Narratives of Martyrdom

Marisol Lopez Menendez

> The first form of rulers in the world were the 'tyrants', the last one will be the 'martyrs'... Between a tyrant and a martyr there is of course an enormous difference, although they both have one thing in common: the power to compel. The tyrant, himself ambitious to dominate, compels people through his power; the martyr, himself unconditionally obedient to God, compels other through his suffering. The tyrant dies and his rule is over; the martyr dies and his rule begins.
>
> Søren Kierkegaard (*The Journals of Kierkegaard*)

Introduction

It was the year 320AD. A group of soldiers belonging to the Thundering Legion received orders from Emperor Licinius for all to sacrifice to the gods of the Empire. Forty of them refused to do so, declaring themselves to be Christians. Following the customs of the time, they were to be put to death. The Legion was stationed in Armenia, and the lore says it was March. The punishment selected for them was devised to make them suffer and to give them time to repent and change their mind. They were to be exposed partially naked on the ice of a nearby lake. To tempt them, a warm bath was prepared at a small distance so they could easily see it from the frozen water. The 40 of them were put into the frigid pond and a group of guards was left to witness the execution. One of the punished soldiers weakened and got out of the freezing liquid and submerged himself in the hot bath.[1] But a sentinel, amazed by the courage of the other 39, quickly took his place and died with them.

The 'converted' legionnaire thus became one of the '40 martyrs of Sebaste' (Hebermann et al 1913, 153), and although in this case just one person was inspired to act, the story stresses the role that can be played by martyrdom in the constitution of social mobilization, influencing people to believe and commit to social practices. The suffering and death of some individuals brings others to join

---

[1] In a cruel irony, the legend goes on to say that the poor fellow died immediately after his body got in contact with the hot water of the bath.

a cause and strengthens the identity of the group to which the martyred and the still living all belong.

But imitation is not the only phenomenon to be created by martyrs. On the contrary, I wish to sketch the argument that martyrs qualify to be considered as charismatic leaders. At first glance, to relate martyrdom to charismatic leadership might seem to be sociologically counter-intuitive. It might appear to be an unusual connection on the grounds that for Weber, as I will explain in more detail below, the death of a charismatic leader is not the beginning of a social or religious movement but rather an event that can cause such levels of instability that ultimately bring the movement to a chaotic end. For sure, Weber would include Jesus of Nazareth under a designation of charismatic leader, but this is not on account of his death and resurrection. Indeed, Jesus is a charismatic leader *before* his death and for many the crucifixion spelled the end of the nascent movement. It was only subsequently that Jesus was understood to have conquered death. Nonetheless, the example of Jesus' death was not an uncommon model of martyrdom to be emulated by the faithful in times of persecution. In such contexts, the fact that Jesus willingly suffered was a further confirmation of his charisma.

By considering martyrdom from the perspective of Weber's notions of charismatic leadership, a number of things will be demonstrated. For example, dimensions of martyrdom previously downplayed or overlooked come into clearer focus.[2]

Also, Weber's own thinking about charisma is viewed critically in so far as it becomes clear that Weber did not consider the manner in which narratives come to play a part in the construction of charisma, in the spread of its power, and its routinization.

In particular, in the light of Weber's model of charisma, and in an attempt to understand the ways in which martyrs can be said to be charismatic leaders, attention is paid in what follows to the nature of the sense of a mission in martyrdom; the revolutionary character of martyrdom, especially the ways in which martyrs reject routine and familial and affective ties, and, finally, to the relation between the charismatic leadership of the martyr and the problem of routinization. The extent to which the narratives of martyrs inform us about these features and also the

---

2   Several authors have studied martyrdom by exploring the psychological state of those put to death and tortured willingly. Scholars such as Rona Fields, Jack Sanders or even G.S. Bowersock (who intended to contextually analyze the phenomenon of martyrdom in the Roman Empire) have stressed the role played by the martyr and her characteristics of personality. This is also frequent in the analysis of recent cases such as those collected by the journalist Joyce M. Davids in the book *Martyrs*, dealing with suicide bombings in the Middle East. Some others have taken the social existence of the martyrs more seriously and developed frameworks of interpretation. In his study *The Martyrs* (1931), Donald W. Riddle explains the decision to become a martyr either out of fear of the punishment to be suffered in hell in case of recantation, or out of the will to die produced by the expectation to access the Paradise and gain eternal life.

way that the narratives contribute to the creation and alteration of the phenomena will also be noted. These ideas suggest ways in which Weber's thinking can be extended.

Weber's Conception of Charisma: Some Key Aspects

The concept of charisma was developed by Weber as part of a typology of political leadership. Considered from the perspective of the meaning assigned by the actors to their actions, the motivations behind the way they act within the world, it can be seen how Weber's typology also functions as a comparative model of legitimate *authority*. The three types of legitimate authority are distinguished by Weber in the following ways (Weber 1968, 46):

1. *Rational Authority* is based on the belief in the legality of 'patterns of normative rules and the right of those elected to authority under such rules to issue commands'. Authority is based on procedures and formal rationality.
2. *Traditional Authority* rests on '… an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them'.
3. *Charismatic Authority* is opposed to both rational and traditional authority, and rests 'on the devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him'. Charismatic leadership appeals to substantive rationality and affective social action as defined by Weber.

The concept of charisma is one of the cornerstones of Weberian sociology.[3] It is not to go against the grain of Weber's own analyses of charisma to include a consideration of religious phenomena. On the contrary: although the notion of charismatic leadership was coined as part of his analysis on legitimate domination, authority and power, he acknowledged that he borrowed the notion of charisma from the historian and jurist Rudolf Sohm, who studied the historical development of authority within the early Christian Church (Weber 1968, 19). Actually, the term charisma comes from the Greek word *charizesthai*, after the name of the Greek goddess Charis, the personification of grace, beauty, purity and altruism. In Greek it means favor or gift of divine origin (Oakes 1997, 25). So, from the beginning, the term charisma was conceived as a vehicle of the sacred, as Weber well knew.

---

3   Weber's writing on Charisma can be found in a number of places and include the older and revised part of *Economy and Society* as well as in his works on the sociology of religion. My exposition is mostly based on his studies on legitimate authority. For further commentary and explanation see Weber (1968).

The term charisma is an adaptation of the word 'charismata' meaning a gift of God. Weber applies the designation of charisma to figures in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament: from Amos, to Samson to Jesus; all are moved by the spirit of God.

The validity of charisma lays in the recognition by the followers of the special attributes of the leader that they happen to hold in esteem. Only by recognizing them and subordinating to him does charismatic authority become a social reality capable of sociological enquiry. The charisma is less a personal quality and more a relational quality based on the recognition of the carrier of charisma by those in a position to accept or reject the claim. Only because the leader is *believed* to be special, to have been endowed with a mission and to be different from other human beings, is she followed. This is probably the most important feature of charisma as a sociological concept: personal characteristics, abilities and capacities are relevant only as long as the person has followers who actually believe her.

Because of its rejection of every day activity, rational accumulation and projection to the future, charisma is—at least in its pure form—antithetic to institution building. It is 'naturally unstable' as Weber would put it (1978, 1114), so the powers of the charismatic leader must be continuously proven and might desert him. The role model of Christian martyrdom, Jesus, was forsaken by his God in the most significant popular martyrial narrative of all times.

Charismatic leadership openly rejects traditional rules as well as mechanisms of political succession, because it does not turn back to the past nor does it have foresight: even if charismatic discourse is oriented towards the future, like in the case of martyrs by referring to the imminent Second Coming of Christ or, in modern terms, the building of the kingdom of God, the power at the core of the charismatic impulse is the destruction of what is given as a tradition, without any concern for building structures able to substitute. Charisma is a powerful destructive force whose revolutionary character was described by Weber as one of its main features. According to him

> The mere fact of recognizing the mission of a charismatic leader establishes his power […] Because of this mode of legitimation genuine charismatic domination knows no abstract rules and regulations and no formal adjudication. It's 'objective' law flows from the highly personal experience of divine grace and god-like heroic strength and rejects all external order solely for the sake of glorifying genuine prophetic and heroic ethos. Hence, in a revolutionary and sovereign manner, charismatic domination transforms all values and breaks all traditional and rational norms. (Weber 1978, 1115)

Charismatic leadership in its pure form has a number of characteristics which differentiate it from both rational and traditional forms of domination. Weber's own account of these characteristics includes the absence of permanence and the problems of succession for the leader; the sense of a mission to be accomplished both by the leader and his or her followers; the rejection of rational economic conduct of gain; the rejection of routine and affective ties; the relationship

established between charisma and hope; the absence of legal codes or any other rational way to adjudicate authority; the dominance of substantive justice; the generation of discipline (routinization) and the revolutionary character of charisma. How these attributes of charismatic leadership can be related to the phenomenon of martyrdom to demonstrate its charismatic nature will be considered in more detail below. First, some further exposition of these ideas is needed.

By definition, charismatic authority is neither rational nor oriented towards economic gain or even to the development of conduct able to produce pecuniary benefits, even if sometimes those engaged in charismatic practices (both the leader and the followers) are seduced by the not so uncommon practice of taking booty or plainly stealing. Charisma is an institutional structure's opposite: 'In order to do justice to their mission, the holders of charisma, the master as well as his disciples and followers, must stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations, as well as the routine obligations of family life' (Weber 1968, 21).

For charismatic leaders, the sense of a mission must (and did) prevail over any other form of worldly engagement. A beautiful example of the way in which this has been interpreted by modern standards is Nikos Kazantzakis' novel *The Last Temptation of Christ.* Christ's last temptation is actually the one of founding a family, to be a regular Joe with wife and children, step down from the cross and live to an advanced age. And that simple dream, the dream of everyday life and ordinariness, is a trap set to prevent him from fulfilling his mission, a mission in which others believe as well as him.

So the sense of a mission is as important as the notion of being chosen by a higher power. Charisma (the gift) may leave, so the leader must continuously prove himself in order to be followed. And this continuous and repeated need for proof is what makes charismatic leadership responsible: if things go wrong, ' ... he is obviously not the master sent by the gods' (Weber 1968, 23).

The recognition of the charismatic leader, his power, ' ... springs from faithful devotion. It is devotion to the extraordinary and unheard-of, to what is strange to all rule and tradition and which therefore is viewed as divine' (Weber 1968, 23). This is the reason why charismatic domination is revolutionary: it breaks ties to any external order and represents 'a sovereign break with all legal and traditional rules' (Weber 1968, 24). This absolute break governs the politics of the extraordinary and makes possible the modification of social values and the actual construction of revolutionary uprisings and utopian energies.

Martyrdom

Martyrdom belongs to the lineage of the extraordinary. Scholars have long debated about its origins and most of them recognize some features of the phenomena in the Jewish tradition. Others have incorporated the Greek heritage and consider Socrates as a proto martyr; but all agree that it is only in the Christian tradition

that martyrdom takes the classic form most familiar.[4] Weber treated the topic just briefly in his essays on 'The Prophet' and 'The Relationship of Religion to Politics, Economics, Sexuality and Art' (Weber 1956) opposing the successful prophet to the martyr by underlining the former's ability to accomplish his mission, and considering death as a defeat (Weber 1956, 64).

Also, Weber believed martyrdom to be a result of the conflict between religion and politics. Martyrdom was an expression of 'mystical apoliticism' or even political indifference which can be observed in some forms of inner-worldly asceticism (Weber 1959, 228–229). Martyrdom, thus, did not recognize a rational order in the (external) world nor 'a rational domination of the world desired by God'.

A Model of Martyr Narrative

In their study on martyrdom and noble death, William Van Henten and Friedrich Avemarie propose a working definition of martyrdom based on their study of Christian and Jewish sources: '… a martyr is a person who in an extremely hostile situation prefers a violent death to compliance with a demand of the (usually pagan) authorities' (2002, 3). From their analysis of the sources it is clear that the death of such a person is a central and pivotal structural element in the writing about the martyr. The manner of death becomes the core of a narrative. The life of the martyr is retold and climaxes in their death. The earlier detail of their career becomes important only on account of their martyr-status (sociologically speaking their master status is their martyr status!); and their martyr status either relies on, or is greatly enhanced, if the manner of their death is of type that is expected of martyrs: it must involve suffering, torture and the opportunity to recant and escape the trial. I return to this point below.

Thus, the mere 'facts' must be reworked by the believers in order to transform the demise into martyrdom and to secure the charismatic reputation. This reworking made by living people, acting in this world and assigning meaning to other's actions as well as their own makes martyrdom a rich terrain which sociology can explore.[5]

---

4   Classic works like *Martyrdom and Rome* by G.W. Bowersock (1995) or *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church* by W.H. Frend (1967) explore the matter to arrive at opposite conclusions. While Bowersock considers martyrdom a predominantly Christian phenomenon only possible within the Roman social reality, for Frend it is Judaism itself that is a religion of martyrdom. Daniel Boyarin (1999) has tried to prove the fact that rabbinic Judaism and Christianity are 'twin religions' and martyrdom is a discourse fought over to crystallize their identities as separated creeds.

5   It has been suggested that Emile Durkheim's notion of altruistic suicide can be useful while thinking sociologically about martyrdom. According to him, this type of suicide is caused by 'too rudimentary individuation' (Durkheim *Suicide* 1979, 221). His words might be taken as a developmental analysis in which more complex, modern societies-those in which the division of labor is higher- tend to have a greater number of egoistic

That is, the process by which charisma is normally acknowledged through the recognition of followers of a leader, occurs here in analogous form through the recognition of the charisma of the martyr proven only through their martyrdom. Whilst the death of the martyr herself is clearly of importance to the process, what is most significant is the way in which those alive remember her, and the number of ways in which remembrance inspires meaningful social action. Thus, a death becomes meaningful only when a group of followers are able to build a narrative that provides them with a role model. Only then can one speak of the charismatic leadership of the dead, when the claim is made through narrative on their behalf by those composing and/or transmitting the narrative of their death and its nature.

Based on the study of ancient sources Van Henten and Avemarie have constructed a model based on the key features that seem to be present in most martyrial narratives.[6] This phenomenon reminds us that a sociological analysis of ancient martyrdom must theorize the relation between the reality and its narrative mediation, and indeed subject the construction and consumption of the narratives to analysis from the perspective of charisma.[7] The model includes the following elements.

- An enactment issued by the (pagan) authorities is the point of departure of the narrative. Transgression of this enactment results in the death penalty.
- The enforcement of the law brings Jews or Christians into a conflict of loyalty, since Jews cannot stay faithful to their God, the Law and their Jewish way of life and Christians have to make concessions to their religious convictions.

---

suicides while simpler, archaic societies tend to have altruistic suicides. Altruistic suicide is generally performed as a duty towards the social group, although Durkheim identifies also cases in which renunciation to life happens to be considered praiseworthy (Durkhheim 1979, 223). Martyrdom can be read as altruistic suicide inasmuch as 'We can actually see the individual [...] seek to strip of his personal being in order to be engulfed in something which he regards as his true essence. The name he gives it is unimportant: he feels that he exists in it and in it alone, and strives so violently to blend himself with it in order to have being. He must therefore consider that he has no life of his own' (Durkheim *Suicide*, 1979, 225). While egoistic suicide appears out of desperation, altruistic suicide springs from hope. Nevertheless, I have chosen to rely on the Weberian approach because it does not primarily stress the meaning assigned to death by the martyr herself, but the one created by those following her through her ordeal and after her demise.

6   In these instances the social reality behind the representation could well have been more diverse, but the authors' effort seems to emulate Weber's analytical perspective by constructing an ideal type.

7   Actually, martyrdom is one of the topics in which the distinction between 'facts' and 'memory' or 'narrative' is conspicuously present and permanently at issue. The tension between considering martyrdom as a narrative and studying it as a historical reality is present in most texts devoted to the topic. An excellent example of the way in which historical scholarship has dealt with it can be found in Elizabeth Castelli's *Martyrdom and Memory* (2004).

- When Christians or Jews are forced—for instance, after their arrest—to decide between complying with the law of the government or remaining faithful to their religion and practices, they choose to die rather than obey the authorities.
- This decision becomes obvious during the examination by the ruler or other officials, which is sometimes accompanied by tortures.
- The execution is described, or at least indicated (Van Henten and Avemarie 2002, 4).

Early Christian martyrdoms as well as many modern examples evidence a 'degree of fit' with this model of the martyr narrative. From Ignatius of Antioch to the English Marian Martyrs; from the Abyssinian martyrs claimed by the Donatists to Giurdano Bruno—all of them can be inscribed in it.

This model of martyrdom is based on the idea that historical facts are stressed or downplayed by the faithful to obtain a workable character based on a previously built pattern. Although Weber's sociology did not address directly the role of narratives in the development and routinization of charismatic authority, he did stress the importance of recognition to generate charismatic leadership and to make possible the existence of followers. Charismatic leadership arises from the inner determination of the holder of charisma. But the claim '... breaks down if his mission is not recognized by those to whom he feels he has been sent' (Weber 1968, 20). The phenomena of martyr narratives and their standardization, however, can also be fruitfully understood from a Weberian perspective in so far as his concern with processes of routinization finds here an illustration. I shall return to this point.

In what follows five key dimensions of Weber's treatment of charismatic leadership that have particular relevance to illuminating aspects of martyrs and martyrdom will be explored. The manner in which the leadership of the dead is understood through this sociological lens will be kept in mind throughout.

Martyrs as Charismatic Leaders

1. The sense of a mission   To qualify for charismatic leadership, it is necessary for there to be a sense of mission to be accomplished by the leader and by the group of followers. Martyrs can be said to have the mission of demonstrating the legitimacy and power of their beliefs to the 'audience' or to other members of their faith communities who remain alive, or to wider members of the society who learn of the manner of their deaths. The origin of the word 'martyr' is indeed 'witness'. Martyrs were those who would bear testimony to their faith by enduring any kind of physical pain or even death. The Second Century Church Father Tertullian has been frequently quoted as saying that '…the blood of martyrs is the seed of Christians', referring to the stimulus to conversion generated by martyrdom. And

this is demonstrably true during at least the first three centuries of Christianity (Salisbury 2004, 23–26).

In the case of both early and later martyrdoms, the role played by those dying was understood in terms of a battle between good and evil, where protagonists were clearly identified, and where political authorities of Empires could be equated with evil.[8] The mission of the martyrs, once they were arrested, was to fight on the side of good through their steadfastness. In times of persecution how else was one to witness to the faith?

One of the main reasons to begin the persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire was not religious, but political.[9] Christians were perceived to be antisocial in a culture where public life was highly regarded. With their churches, the Christians were creating their own society within the wider Roman one, and their loyalties were to each other rather than to the family structures that formed the backbone of Roman society. Their faith made them abandon their families, renounce their parents, children and spouses. To Roman eyes these behaviors were deeply disturbing and they were regarded as a perverse way of undermining the social fabric, which in fact they did (Salisbury 2004, 16). Religious practices in ancient Roman society were non differentiable from political allegiances. Political institutions, social and familial commitments and social structures were part of the same complex matrix of meaning (Castelli 2004, 50). The mission of the martyrs was not necessarily to undermine the social structure: rather the social structures were called into question as an unintended consequence of their pursuit of the charismatic life.

Martyrs then were, depending on the point of view, at the same time notorious criminals and individuals chosen by God. The enormous resistance to pain showed by martyrs made both Christians and Romans alike believe that they were indeed touched by a divine grace; and this belief could inspire others in the faith to emulative action. There are several examples to attest to this fact, but the following may give a good idea of the way in which would-be martyrs related to full fledged martyrs in order to overcome their ordeal.

An unnamed confessor (one who had just declared himself to be a Christian and was waiting for punishment in prison) is said to have experienced some kind of dream or vision in which '… the martyr Cyprian appeared to him. He asked Cyprian if the final blow was painful. Cyprian replied 'It is another flesh that

---

8 In this chapter I am primarily referring to examples taken from Early Christianity. However the model then created is still in use today, and most of the characteristics here described can also be found exemplified among recent martyrs in the Western tradition.

9 Elizabeth Castelli has shown how in the framework of the Roman Empire the civic and the religious realms were not differentiated in the way we moderns do. Thus, sacrifice to the Roman gods was also '… a force that kept power in circulation in Roman society and it sustained in good working order complex networks of relationship and patronage' (Castelli 2004, 50). No wonder, then, that those confessing to be Christians and rejecting to sacrifice were considered criminals.

suffers when the soul is in heaven, the body does not feel this at all when the mind is entirely absorbed in God' (Salisbury 2004, 27).

Here Weber is pertinent again. In his works on the sociology of religion Weber established several distinctions to clarify types of religious experience and leadership. In the terms of those types some martyrs can be understood as examples of exemplary prophets (in both their lives and their manner of dying), whilst other martyrs see themselves as tools of the divine will rather than as vessels (Weber 1956, 55; Weber 1978, 546 ff). In most cases the martyr's religiosity (and willingness to undergo torture and death) is a virtuoso one. However, the mission of the virtuoso is to inspire virtuosity in others rather than playing a substitutory role for those many others who cannot submit to martyrdom.

If there is a cause worthy enough to die for, then it is possible for others to keep living. The martyr reshapes the future of a collectivity by providing a spring pulling to act within the world. In martyrdom, the Weberian notion of the power of ideas is utterly manifest. This is so because the martyr achieves the impossible. Through death, the illusion of the achievement of perfection is made. And through the re-creation of martyrdom through narrative the brief moment of perfection is brought back again and again by the faithful, those who have survived to testify and give meaning to the death of the martyr.

Since martyrdom appears to have the effect of encouraging others to remain steadfast in the faith or indeed of providing a model of how to undergo suffering and death at the hands of executioners it can be argued that their mission is to lead through their virtuosity, through their charisma. The realization of their mission may be more at the hands of those traducing the narrative of the martyrs; though surely those in the midst of suffering took some spiritual comfort from the good their witness might well bring about to the faithful and heathen alike.

2. Rejection of routine, economic and affective ties: the revolutionary character of martyrdom   To qualify as examples of charismatic leadership in the Weberian mode, martyrs need to be linked to a mission and a style of life that challenges the everyday and in some senses can be seen as revolutionary.

The example of martyrs can inspire others in the collectivity to act after their deaths: in this way, they achieve charismatic leadership. Weber also considered the community of the faithful to often consider themselves equally filled with charisma. For example, a sect could be seen as 'community of saints'. An important feature of sectarian life, Weber argued, was the need to constantly prove one's charisma, one's claim to be a member, in full view of other members (see Chalcraft this volume, 35). When Christians were martyred together in groups, it was important to remain steadfast not only to impress a public audience, but also to demonstrate one's legitimate membership of the sect. The latter is but one example of the way in which charisma operated: the family of the sect replaces the regular social demands placed on individuals. Charisma also comes into conflict with political authority.

Narratives of martyrdom tend to present the victims always as opposed to the powers that be. A good example is the famous martyr Pancras. He happened to live

during the Great Persecution of Diocletian, in which thousands of Christians were said to be executed because they refused to sacrifice to pagan gods and confessed to believe in Christ. Pancras has been frequently depicted as opposed to the image of secular power, Diocletian himself. As in many other narratives, a clear opposition between earthly powers and heavenly mission is set. Something similar can be seen in Medieval iconography of Jacubus Intercisus. He is usually presented by himself (no friends or relatives accompany him while enduring martyrdom) while he is confronted with his nemesis. Actually, Jacubus was a military officer and a courtier to Persian King Yezdigerd I. During Yezdigerd's persecution of Christians, Jacubus apostatized. Following the king's death, he was contacted by family members who had never renounced their faith. James experienced a crisis of faith and conscience, and openly expressed his faith to the new king Bahram. He was condemned, tortured, and martyred in 421; slowly cut into 28 pieces; he survived the loss of limbs hacked off piece by piece, dying from beheading. He is now considered by Catholics and Orthodox Christians as the patron of torture victims.

This opposition to earthly powers is part of a cluster of characteristics that confer revolutionary qualities to the charismatic power. Weber says 'In order to do justice to their mission, the holders of charisma, the master as well as his disciples and followers must stand outside the ties of this world, outside of routine occupations as well as outside the routine obligations of family life' (Weber 1968, 21).

The Early Christians, within the tradition[10] are not represented as a chosen people trying to defend their way of life and customs, but appear as individuals who fight against the state—or at least a *status quo*—breaking from tradition to create a new path, a new way of life and new standards and sources of obedience. Christians were deeply antisocial in Roman terms. In a highly hierarchical society with well defined boundaries and in which family ties constituted the base of social order, Christians severed all links to relatives and friends and devoted only to their brothers and sisters in faith. Martyrs in the Christian tradition have generally become so by severing familial ties and generating strong bonds mainly with others in their same situation (and this applies to secular martyrs, too).[11] Whilst all members of the early Christian movement stood in some opposition to established customs and social relationships, martyrs represented a more extreme form of such resistance and difference.

One of the most famous cases of Roman Martyrs is the one of Perpetua and Felicitas (Musurillo 2000, 103 ff). Their story has been recorded in the *Acta of*

---

10   On the contrary, the Jewish tradition, as showed in II and IV Maccabees, depicts a people dying to maintain a certain way of life, a social constitution. The classic example more frequently given by scholars is the siege of Masada and the suicide of its inhabitants.

11   This feature of both martyrdom and charisma has been greatly depicted by Pier Paolo Pasolini in *The Gospel According to St. Matthew* (1967), when Jesus rejects Mary's loving disposition. Narratives of martyrdom frequently also underline it.

Christian Martyrs and is said to have been written in part by Perpetua herself. Perpetua and Felicitas were a couple of young women who lived in Carthage around the year 203. While Perpetua belonged to a wealthy family, Felicitas was a servant at her house. Both of them were new catechumens and became confessors, were imprisoned and sentenced to die in the arena. Perpetua had a baby son whom she was still nursing and Felicitas was pregnant at the time of their arrest and sentence.

Perpetua's father, eager to save her, is said to have gone to the jail and begged her to recant her confession, trying to persuade her by reminding her of her duties to her son and the love of her family. She refused to be so persuaded, denying these ties, and asked him to leave. Meanwhile, Felicitas prayed desperately to give birth, because her sentence could not be carried out until the child was born and she did not want to miss the opportunity to die with her companions. At the end, her prayers were answered and she was able to share the arena with Perpetua and the others.

Several features are prominent in this narrative. In the Roman World in the third century, the sexes were kept sharply separated and women in general were not endowed with any public authority and had little authority in the domestic sphere. Nevertheless, female Christian martyrs are fairly common. Chris Jones has shown how women played a principal role as martyrs and put in jeopardy several of the legal standards of the day. The prominence acquired by women though led to similarity in punishment and consequently to the breaking of gender hierarchies (Jones 1993, 26–27). As can be seen in the following quotation, punishment in Roman society was linked to social status:

> The legitimacy of violence […] depended on who did it to whom. Roman criminal law divided society into *honestiores*, the elites, for whom the endurance of physical violence was thought to be uniquely degrading, and *humiliores*, the vast majority of ordinary people, against whom such violence aroused little comment (Gaddis 2005, 19).

In the case of martyrs, as Perpetua and Felicita's martyrdom shows, not only were status differences of no consequence; the fact that the prisioners were women made no difference either to their treatment.

The story stresses the fact that Perpetua rejects all instances of paternal and maternal care. It is recorded that she only felt a little sorry on account for her father's 'old age' (Musurillo 2000, 108). Instead, a deeply emotional bond has been created with Felicitas, her servant, and other catechumens waiting to be executed. Whilst one possible motivation for women to join new religious movements may well be on account of the lack of alternative opportunities to attain any kind of social status, it certainly seems more likely in the case of women martyrs that the charismatic questioning of regular social order and the force of the charismatic community of saints, taken together with the power of the charismatic leadership of previous martyrs, play a significant role.

Perpetua and Felicitas' martyrdom has been analyzed over and over again. It remains shocking because all possible social boundaries and obligations are broken, including those pertaining to parents, to children and to social status. All of these obligations are denied and abandoned on account of a charismatic questioning of social order. This questioning of the social order continues after their deaths as they are transformed into charismatic leaders.

3. Routinization of charisma and generation of discipline   Martyrdom is a sui generis form of charismatic leadership, because charisma is proven once and for all while suffering and dying. It is easy to be a martyr because you only die once. The strength showed at the moment of dying, the ability to die a 'noble death', however, is what confers its charismatic qualities to the martyr. And, unlike other kind of charismatic leaders, charisma does not desert its bearers; instead it tends to fade into oblivion, if it is not captured by narrative and that narrative is retold.

Martyrs become routinized in this fashion. They become institutionalized as they are adopted as saints or blessed and become part of an institutional cult. However this routinization does not lessen their power as charismatic leaders- on the contrary, their charismatic leadership (a leadership they share with other martyrs) depends on this routinization and is increased by it. It remains powerful because it is capable of generating new adepts, conquering new hearts and encouraging new persons to voluntary follow them. If the would-be martyr has a claim to be charismatic on account of being a proven member of the community of saints, their status as a virtuoso member of that community, and hence a charismatic leader is dependent on their being martyred and having their narrative celebrated.

Weber sets an interesting relation between discipline and charisma. In its pure form, charisma is incompatible with any kind of discipline. But those who seek to have their social position 'legitimized' and transform factual power relations into rights (thus, transforming substantive rationality into formal structures and making possible the construction of legality) seek also to give charismatic power more stable foundations. Thus, the routinization of charisma may occur in two directions, when either traditional or bureaucratic institutional arrangements are devised.

The perpetuation of the charismatic leadership of the martyr however might also accrue a degree of power and influence on others who are part of the institutional structure that has developed around the martyr. In such case, we are dealing with a derived charisma. As Bryan Wilson observes, derived charisma:

> Persists largely by periodic calls to remember the original message (or something that passes for the original message). In such revivalist terms, new miracles may be worked, usually in the name of the original charismatic claimant. [...] Even though the charismatic leader is only remembered, his name is invoked and reinvoked by men who may borrow the patina of charisma (Wilson 1975, 116).

In other words, the narratives of martyrdom can be developed by others to underline and reinforce the core of the faith, whilst developing some newer (and less virtuoso) interpretations of what it means to belong . One type of development is where martyrs are depicted as having been especially chosen by the divinity to act as messengers and to set an example among the faithful. This course involves an elaboration of the narrative of the whole life, and there may well be an accretion of other tests and trails prior to martyrdom that the martyr successfully overcame. The narrative grows to become an example of a life: a martyr is such only when she has demonstrated the ability to keep living according to her beliefs in spite of dangers and external menaces, and dies only as consequence of her choice.[12] The martyr chooses to keep living a noble life even if it means having to die a noble death. Thus, the narrative emphasizes the calling, renunciation, an active choosing of the path believed to be designed for her, the provision of an opportunity to recant which is heroically refused, and, of course, an eventual martyrs death.

In this way an emphasis can be placed, via the control of the narrative, on the need for the followers of the charismatic leader to pursue their calling within the religious movement: the example of the charismatic leader is for a way of life as well, if necessary, a way of death. It is possible, once the emphasis is placed upon a calling, for the followers to pursue more mundane lives. For example, they can administer the cult of the martyr as priests. Their charisma is derived from the charismatic leadership of the martyr whose cult and tradition they maintain.

4. The Social Recognition of the Charisma of the Martyrs   We have seen that there must have been something heroic about those early Christian martyrs: it seems they were not ordinary people. At least, the circumstances in which they practiced and suffered for their faith was not ordinary. Weber wrote that, 'Charisma knows only inner determination and inner restraint' (Weber 1968, 20). In this way, he put an accent on the personality of the leader, whom has been endowed with a gift, a set of particularities, abilities that make him or her different from the rest of the humanity. It is these peculiarities that can be recognized in the narratives of martyrs. But the narratives are not written by the victims: rather they are remembered by the social group which remains alive. It is the social group, 'the followers', to which this person belongs that recognizes their charisma: if the charisma was not recognized, the martyr themselves would have been forgotten. It

---

12   It was not always like that. During the first three centuries after Christ, the idea of dying for one's faith was so popular that prominent people as Augustine or Clement of Alexandria explicitly forbade seeking martyrdom and condemned it as a form of suicide, against some of the basic precepts of Christendom. This point seems to be also at the root of the Donatist schism. If the Roman Catholic Church has usually considered it as simply a disagreement regarding the appointment of a bishop, what seems to be at stake is a stance towards martyrdom. Thus, Donatists considered themselves to be 'the Church of the martyrs' and clearly opposed to those '*traditores*' who had handed over sacred texts to the Romans in order to save their lives, during the great persecution of Diocletian.

is in the remembering that martyrs have sociological significance. It is the social relationships that are significant for the appreciation of a person as having special qualities. Personal features may give some individuals the possibility of being recognized as charismatic, but social groups are the ones who, by conferring charismatic leadership, follow the chosen one. It is precisely this social feature of charisma with which Weber is concerned. The martyr only achieves her charismatic condition by dying. It is not only death but the way of dying that transforms a common person into a martyr and gives her the possibility of being followed by others.

The Weberian emphasis of the requirement of a social recognition of charisma before one can identify an individual as charismatic sociologically, also applies in those instances where a sect constitutes a community of saints. In other words, within a community of saints, all members partake of a shared charisma. Charisma, that is, is a qualification for membership. When martyrdom occurs to members of this charismatic group, the martyr's charisma is charisma of a heightened virtuosity. This high degree of virtuosity, and the claim to charismatic leadership, can only be recognized and conferred in the event of the death of the martyr.

During Diocletian's persecutions many Christians opted to follow those who preceded them in martyrdom, and spontaneously confessed their faith. A desire to follow those already gone, perhaps a desire to likewise provide extra proof to fellow members of the religious movement that one did indeed qualify for membership, made them give themselves up to be delivered to the beasts or the flames. This desire was so widespread that it was necessary for the Archbishops to severely criticize suicide and point out its sinful nature. This established a gap between martyrdom and suicide and a reworking of the narrative pattern according to which followers were supposed to actually imitate those dying for their faith. Those who called themselves Christians were now supposed to live like Christ (or the saintly martyrs), not to die like him. This transformation can be seen in the thought of Clement of Alexandria (d.215) and Saint Augustine (354-430). Their opinions no doubt influenced the tradition of 'martyr narratives' and gave rise to a modern concept of martyrdom in which it is the life and not death per se that constitutes the holy example. A martyr is one knows that

> to profess their faith through their life, may result in death, but choose to profess faith through their life. This is the common element of the secular and the religious martyr. But it is predicated on a choice to live to profess the faith, the act of living is itself a profession of faith, and the struggle to overcome obstacles to life is fueled by belief mixed with hope (Fields 2004, 27).

Martyrs are charismatic also because of the sense of a calling. The faithful tended to believe that only special people, those selected by God and blessed by him, were capable of enduring torture and the endless pain to which they were exposed prior to their deaths. But in general they could only give proof of the fact that they were special, marked by an election and therefore had a (virtuoso) charismatic gift, by

actually dying. The Early Church grew considerably out of martyrdom. Apparently, those who saw people singing on their way to be tortured and executed considered that their religion had to be a better option than life itself; moreover the examples placed a certain amount of pressure on members of religious movements to prove themselves to their fellows equally. Charisma is proven once and for all while the ordeal lasts. Contrary to other forms of charismatic leadership, the martyr proves his or herself only by bearing torture and death. Charisma does not desert them and there is no problem of succession. Instead, it tends to lose strength and fade into oblivion unless it is remembered and transmitted in narrative form. Martyrs tend also to become part of a cult, usually leaded by professional priests. Hence, their leadership routinizes into tradition and bureaucracy. There is no narrative of martyrdom that survives long without an institutional endorsement.

References

Bensman, J. and Givant, M. (1986), 'Charisma and Modernity: the Use and Abuse of a Concept', in Glassman and Swatos Jr. (eds).

Berger, P. (1963), 'Charisma and Religious Innovation: the Social Location of Israelite Prophecy', *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 28, No. 6.

Boyarin, D. (1999), *Dying for God. Martyrdom and The Making of Christianity and Judaism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, California).

Bowersock, G.W. (1995), *Martyrdom and Rome.* (Cambridge: New York: Cambridge University Press).

Brown, P. (1981), *The Cult of the Saints. Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Castelli, Elizabeth A. (2004), *Martyrdom and Memory. Early Christian Culture Making* (New York: Columbia University Press).

Desroche, H. (1979), *The Sociology of Hope* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul).

Fields, R. (2004), *Martyrdom. The Psychology, Theology and Politics of Self-Sacrifice* (Connecticut: Praeger).

Frend, W.H.C. (1967), *Martyrdom and Persecution in the Early Church; a Study of a Conflict from the Maccabees to Donatus* (Garden City, N.Y., Anchor Books).

Gaddis, M. (2005), *There Is No Crime for Those Who Have Christ. Religious Violence in the Christian Roman Empire* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Glassman, R. and Swatos Jr., W.H. (eds) (1986), *Charisma, History and Social Structure* (New York: Greenwood Press).

Hall, S. (1993), 'Women among the Early Martyrs', in Wood (ed.).

Hebermann, Ch. G. et al. (1913), *The Catholic Encyclopedia. An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline and History of the Catholic Church*, Vol. 6 (New York: Robert Appleton Co.).

Jones, C. (1993), 'Women, Death and the Law during the Christian Persecutions', in Wood (ed.).

Musurillo, H. (ed.) (2000), *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press).

Ricciotti, G. (1992), *The Age of Martyrs. Christianity from Diocletian to Constantine* (New York: Barnes & Noble Books).

Riddle, D.W. (1931), *The Martyrs. A Study in Social Control* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Salisbury, J.E. (2004), *The Blood of Martyrs. Unintended Consequences of Ancient Violence* (London and New York: Routledge).

Van Henten, J.W. and Avemarie, F. (2002), *Martyrdom and Noble Death. Selected Texts from Graeco-Roman, Jewish and Christian Antiquity* (London and New York: Routledge).

Weber, M. (1958), *On Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, edited and with an introduction by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press).

Weber, M. (1968), *On Charisma and Institution Building*. Selected papers edited and with an introduction by S.N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Weber, M. (1978), *Economy and Society. An Outline on Interpretive Sociology*, Two volumes, edited by G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Wilson. B.R. (1975), *The Noble Savages. The Primitive Origins of Charisma and Its Contemporary Survival* (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Wood, D. (1993), *Martyrs and Martyrologies*. Papers read at the 1992 Summer Meeting and the 1993 Winter Meeting of the Ecclesiastical History Society. (London: Blackwell Publishers).

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 15

The Da Vinci Code:
Ecclesial Governance and Max Weber's
Ideal Types of Authority

James H. Mahon

The Roman Catholic Church's critique of *The Da Vinci Code* focused largely on its purported distortions of history, its denial of certain constituent Christian dogmas, and on calumnies it spoke against Opus Dei. However, by framing the affair within Weber's understanding of the dynamics of legitimacy, this chapter additionally construes the Church's efforts in opposing *The Da Vinci Code* as a concerted bid to reinforce the ideological bulwark surrounding millennia-old structures of episcopal governance.

Guided by Weber's concept of 'routinization of charisma', this chapter postulates that it was Church leaders' sensing a challenge to Roman Catholicism's traditional manner of organizing and exercising power in the form of depersonalized office charisma that provoked the criticisms they mounted worldwide against *The Da Vinci Code*. Catholic faithful submit to rule by a bureaucratic administrative authority, which is exercised under direction of the Pope and bishops as bureaucratic masters, because they accept as an article of faith that the authority this hierarchy exercises descends from the apostles through the practice, unbroken over the centuries, of laying on of hands by those who walked and talked with Jesus. Were Jesus to have lineal descendants, these would have a claim to Jesus's charisma routinized through inheritance. And were Christians to accept that claim, it would provoke a controversy over the source of legitimate power in the Church similar to the one between the caliphate and the party of Ali in early Islam.

Weber's discussion of models for the institutionalization of legitimate power speaks directly to the contingency of outcomes for religions founded upon charismatic authority. Although it was the Catholic Church who provided the historical data for his analysis, the lens he created is useful in examining any such crisis in authority. Weber speaks of three pure types of claims to legitimate domination (Weber 1978, 1:215):

1. Rational grounds – resting on a belief in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).

2. Traditional grounds – resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority).
3. Charismatic grounds – resting on devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of the individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority).

Weber argued that when a charismatic leader dies, his authority quickly wanes and, if the organization (religion) is to continue, that authority must be transformed or institutionalized into a form no longer dependent upon a singular personal force. In the case of the Catholic Church, the transmogrification was a bureaucratic one. In the case of Islam, traditional forms took hold.

The denunciations emanating from the Roman Catholic bureaucracy in the wake of the *The Da Vinci Code* provide a contemporary example of the way in which an expression of religious outrage can be demystified and broken down into quite worldly components of power and legitimacy. The Weberian hermeneutic, once understood, offers an alternative window through which to understand the specific threat perceived by Roman Catholicism in *The Da Vinci Code*: the prospect of being subjected to a crisis of legitimacy similar to that experienced by Islam at the time of its inception.

The Da Vinci Code: Narrative and Criticism

The element of the narrative line of *The Da Vinci Code*, which is pertinent to the focus of this chapter, describes Jesus as having married Mary Magdalene and siring a daughter with her. In D.B.S. Jeyaraj's summary (2006), 'According to the movie Jesus wanted Mary to lead the faith after him. But Church leaders like the Apostle Peter forced her to run away with the child.' The 'code' of the movie's title claims 'that the legendary "Holy Grail" is really Mary Magdalene [and] the bloodline of the descendants she and Jesus produced' (Welborn 2006:12). As additional filigree, the plot brings in Opus Dei as an 'organization [that] will go as far as murder to keep the secret' (White 2006).

A convenience – and decidedly non-probability – sample of Church criticisms of the movie (and earlier, of the novel on which the movie is based) – as reported in journals of opinion, newspapers, and popular magazines, both in print and online – generally fall within the rubrics of distortions of history, denial of dogma, and calumnies against Opus Dei. For example, John Hagen (2006:18) objects to the fictionalized representation of the Council of Nicaea, which was convened by the Emperor Constantine in 325 AD, as having invented Jesus's divinity and imposed it 'through a relatively close vote'. By contrast, scholars say that indeed 'Constantine did convene the Council of Nicaea in 325, [but that] the New Testament has references to Jesus as divine, including the Gospel of John, which historians say

was written toward the end of the first century' (*Washington Post* 2006:6). Laurie Goodstein (2006) reported in the *New York Times* that 'many Christian leaders ... agree that the book attacks the pillars of Christianity by raising doubts about the divinity of Jesus and the origins of the Bible.' Andrew Greely (2006), a Catholic priest, sociologist, and novelist who identifies himself 'as no fan of Opus Dei members', wrote that accusing the conservative Catholic group 'of serial murder for hire ... defames them.'

By the time the movie version of *The Da Vinci Code* was released in May 2006, the novel by Dan Brown had been a bestseller for upward of three years. It had been translated into 44 languages (Jeyaraj 2006) and Timothy Homan (2006) reported 46 million copies to be in print. By these statistics, it is safe to assume that Mr. Brown quite successfully built an entertaining albeit fictional tale around a series of events that occurred in early Christianity (although reviewers of Ron Howard's movie version were quite in agreement that it was not very good – 'a long, dreary and stilted affair' said one [Greeley 2006]). But what was little more than an artifact of popular culture evoked critical reactions from Church leaders worldwide quite out of proportion to its status as a work of contemporary – and not terribly important – historical fiction.

In early 2005 (according to MSNBC) Cardinal Tarcisio Bertone, a former high Vatican official, urged Catholics to shun the novel like rotten food and branded the bestseller 'a sack full of lies' insulting the Christian faith. He said Catholic bookstores should take the thriller off their shelves and accused its author of 'deplorable' behavior. The president of Sri Lanka 'ordered the Public Performance Board to ban the screening of the movie ... in local cinemas and on local televisions stations ... [a decision] taken on an appeal by the Catholic Bishops Conference in Sri Lanka' (Jeyaraj 2006). 'Chinese authorities pulled *The Da Vinci Code* off movie screens nationwide ... , apparently as a concession to Chinese Catholic groups that warned that the film threatened social stability' (Kahn 2006) – a typically Confucian concern. 'Philippine Catholic bishops gave priests and parishioners guidelines ... on how to refute the plot of the religious novel' (Reuters 2006). 'A group of Greek theologians, lawyers, and judges said they [would] attend their country's premiere of the film to consider possible legal action against theaters that screen it' (Olesen 2006). In England 'a group, including a Benedictine abbot and two priests, launched an attack on the "damaging and grotesque" account of their faith' (Allen 2006); while in the United States a Framingham, Massachusetts, pastor described certain passages as 'really outrageous' and 'pushing the envelope a little too far' (Homan 2006); and a priest in Ripon, California, said, 'This is total harassment of Catholic Christianity and Jesus and we want to stand up and say that it's really wrong, that it is so offensive to Jesus and his church' (White 2006). In anticipation of the movie's release, Cardinal Angelo Amato, secretary of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, voiced his objection to the 'slander, offenses and errors' contained in the book and the film based on it (Wooden 2006); and Cardinal Francis Arinze, another ranking Vatican official, announced 'that Christians should take "legal means" against *The Da Vinci Code*'

(Goodstein 2006), adding in a reference to the conflagrations over the Danish cartoons featuring Muhammad, 'There are some other religions which, if you insult their founder, they will not be just talking. They will make it painfully clear to you' (Morris 2006).

It is the thesis of this chapter that ecclesial authorities reacted as they did to *The Da Vinci Code* because, in part, elements of its narrative line, if true or believed to be true, would challenge the Catholic understanding of Christianity's very seat of authority.

Bishops and Bureaucracy

It bespeaks the obvious to recall Max Weber's frequent references to bureaucracy in the Catholic Church (*inter alios*: Weber 1978, 1: 221; 1978, 2: 959, 964, 985–986, 1141, 1164–1166). For Weber, the Catholic Church provided a paradigmatic example of the rise of a bureaucracy to the position of an all-powerful authority. Although, as he noted (Weber 1946, 295), the Pope's jurisdiction was formally circumscribed by the requirement for official or *ex cathedra* definition, the Pope, the bureaucracy, and the bishops claimed for themselves a universal competence in matters of religion (Weber 1978, 1: 221). Weber located his discussion of bureaucracy in the Catholic Church within his more extensive investigation of leadership succession upon the death of a charismatic leader (see, *inter alios*, Bendix 1962, 298–328; Turner 1974, 75–92; Weber 1946, 297–301; 1978, 1: 241–254; 1978, 2: 1111–1157). In general, Weber argued that when a charismatic leader dies, his unique domination, based on his personal attractiveness, tends to ebb and to transform itself into an institutional arrangement. One outcome which Weber postulated for this process was for the successor and his administrative support staff to become the instrument by which charisma and charismatic blessings are transformed '... from a unique transitory gift of grace of extraordinary times and persons into a permanent possession of everyday life' (Weber 1978, 2: 1121). This is the process which Weber ascribed to the evolution of the papacy and its bureaucracy in Catholic Christianity.

Organizational Structure of the Roman Catholic Church

The *Code of Canon Law* (cited hereinafter as CIC after its formal Latin title of *Codex Juris Canonici*) is the official compilation of the universal laws according to which the Roman Catholic Church governs itself and its members. The code defines a *diocese* as 'a portion of the people of God which is entrusted for pastoral care to a bishop …' (CIC 1983: canon 369). Canon 372, par.1 (CIC 1983) provides that '[a]s a rule that portion of the people of God which constitutes a diocese ... is limited to a definite territory so that it comprises all the faithful who inhabit that territory.' By virtue of his office, the bishop who governs a diocese 'possesses all the ordinary ... power which is required for the exercise of his pastoral office' (CIC

1983: canon 381) and consequently he is often referred to as *the ordinary* of the diocese. An *ecclesiastical province*, which is defined by canon 431 (CIC 1983), is an aggregate of neighboring dioceses brought together for purposes of better coordinating 'the common pastoral activity of the various neighboring dioceses ...' The titular head of an ecclesiastical province is a *metropolitan*, more commonly called an *archbishop*, who is the ordinary of the diocese in the province that is designated as the *archdiocese* (CIC 1983, canons 431, 432, 435; Coriden, Green, and Heintschel 1985, 351–354).

Historically bishops who rule over dioceses that share social, political, or cultural identities, have associated themselves in regional conferences to work on common problems and develop uniform policies for their dioceses. For example, bishops in the United States have associated themselves into what is called the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB). In these ways, dioceses in the United States, who share a distinctive American social, political, and cultural identity can be said to be part of an 'American Catholic Church'. From a sociological and historical perspective these dioceses comprise a unique entity distinguishable from, say, the 'German Catholic Church' or the 'African Churches'. This manner of structural organization derives directly from the territorial divisions set up in the Roman Empire by Diocletian for administrative purposes: Patriarchates, provinces, and dioceses (Calvo Cortés and Ruiz Días 1986, 45; Kinder and Hilgemann 1978, 101).

Canonically the ordinary of each diocese is the supreme head of the Catholic Church in his region. However, according to Roman Catholic doctrine, he holds this authority only as long as he maintains ecclesiological unity with the Bishop of Rome (the Pope) and the college comprising all the other bishops in the world. The first Vatican Council, which 'declared that the Pope was infallible when teaching the Universal Church, *ex cathedra*, on faith and morals,' also provided 'that the Pope possessed ordinary jurisdiction within every diocese, thus placing every Catholic directly under the Pope even on matters not fitting for infallible, universal decrees' (Cross 1968, 18). The head of each diocese is in a direct, unmediated (albeit subordinated) relationship with the Bishop of Rome; and the aggregate of all bishops in such relationship with the Pope constitutes the college of bishops, each of whom rules his local church in unity with the Pope and all his brother bishops.

This is the observable structure that is empirically accessible: parishes, dioceses, archdioceses, national churches, the bishop of Rome and his Vatican bureaucracy, world Catholicism—'The Church', an historically evolved, formally organized authority structure, hierarchically governed and bureaucratically administered. Leaders and believing members of the world church view it theologically as an empirical manifestation of what is ultimately a web of metaphysical relationships. What since the second Vatican Council has been called 'the people of God' is an expression in phenomenal reality of what is essentially a single metaphysical complex that underlies and subsists, or has subsisted at different times in history, in diverse associations of Christian believers and in various forms of formal

organization, and that is ultimately indivisible unless it lose its identity as 'The Church'. This conception is reminiscent of Robert Bellah's caution (1973) that we should not read Durkheim's concept of society (in this context substitute 'church') as representing an empirical, objective, tangible entity, but rather as a community, emergent from processes of human action, that shares in common sentiments of belonging and obligation, united in the *conscience collective*. According to Catholic theology the diocesan bishops throughout the world are the effective instruments by which this 'symbolic reality' (Bellah's term) is made incarnate and sustained in the realm of phenomena. In the words of a commentary on the Code of Canon Law (Coriden et al. 1985, 316, col. 2):

> [A] portion of the people of God is entrusted to the bishop as the visible principle and foundation of its unity [i.e., the unity of the people of God] ... . The bishop is the ordinary, proper, and immediate pastor of the church entrusted to him… The bishop governs and represents the particular church and acts in its name in the communion of churches. He also represents the universal Church among his fellow believers; the universal Church is present through the preaching of the gospel and the celebration of the sacraments, *mediated by the bishop* (emphasis added).

Bureaucracy as Sacrament

Different systems of religious beliefs hold different understandings regarding the nature of the relationship between phenomenal and ultimate reality, i.e., the character of the relationship between the world of nature and the divine. Pantheism identifies nature with God whereas deism understands God to be the creator of nature but does not believe that the creator subsequently insinuates himself into the operation of the natural world. Judaism teaches that if the Jewish people are faithful to their covenant with God, they will possess a land and become a blessing to all people. Christians believe that God became present in the natural world through Jesus who redeemed humankind by his suffering, death, and resurrection. According to Islam, Allah is the one sovereign God over all the universe, his messenger is Muhammad, and the words of the *Qu'ran* came directly from his mouth.

The Roman Catholic variant of Christianity understands the natural world to be related to the divine 'sacramentally.' Sacrament in this usage refers to the instrumental manner by which the divine is made present to humankind. Jesus is sacrament because he is the instrument through which God became present in the human world. The church, in its turn, is sacrament because it is the instrument by which Jesus remains present in the human world 'until he comes' (1 Cor 11:26). Finally, those rituals that are conventionally called sacraments (e.g., baptism, eucharist, penance) are sacrament because they are the instruments (i.e., actions of the church) by which God is made present through Jesus to the individual faithful members of the church. Thus we see that a constituent belief of the Roman Catholic Church is that through the instrumentality of itself as an organizational entity it,

and it alone, is fully able to unite humankind with God and that its mission in the phenomenal world is to achieve exactly that. In this way a hierarchically-governed, bureaucratically-administered organization is said to be a sacrament.

The following table, Hierarchically Stratified Reality, presents a schematic representation of the church's traditional understanding of phenomenal and ultimate reality combined as a single, hierarchically-stratified corporate entity comprising hierarchies within hierarchies. When John Coleman (1989, 254) asserts that it is the church's hierarchical structure that provides the basis for its unity, he is reflecting the church's belief that it is this total hierarchical organization of all reality that provides the structural basis for its unity (not unlike Lovejoy's 'great chain of being' [1936]1960). The church's governing hierarchy takes as its God-given commission to maintain the integrity of that part of the structure that is on earth, the Church Militant, the only locus within this integrated, transcendent, stratified society where the hierarchical structure by which God has ordained to form all reality into a single whole – the physico-organic with the ultimate – can be corrupted.

Table 15.1   Hierarchically Stratified Reality

Church Triumphant (souls of the Saints in Heaven – '*Paradiso*')
Church Suffering (souls of the Faithful Departed in Purgatory – '*Purgatorio*')
Church Militant (Humans living on earth)
    Ordained Ministers
        <u>Priestly Teaching Hierarchy</u>
        Bishops
            <u>Governing Hierarchy</u>
            Pope
            College of bishops
                Administrative bureaucracies in the Vatican and
                local dioceses
        Priests (Presbyters)
        Deacons
    Consecrated Religious
    Laity
Souls of the deceased, sinless but unbaptized, in Limbo
The Damned (souls of the deceased, dying without grace, in Hell – '*Inferno*').

Source: Commentary for the November 2 'Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed,' p. 1551 in *St. Andrew Daily Missal*, St. Paul, MN: E.M. Lohman, 1945

In this scheme, Weber's 'administrative staff' is the Vatican bureaucracy, the various national and regional episcopal conferences, and the diocesan chanceries throughout world Catholicism. The bureaucratic masters are the bishops as a collegial unit in union with and under the headship of the Pope. The laity is a stratum in this hierarchical structure – occupying a status similar to that of workers in a modern business enterprise, or in a government or nonprofit bureaucracy, or that of enlisted personnel in a military organization. A significant feature of this structure is that no provisions exist for an intermediate region of autonomy or zone of privacy like 'civil society' wherein the individual, without the coercive presence of the ruling organization, can search out in her own conscience and in dialog with whatever 'spirit' she feels coming upon her, a personally integrating accommodation with her physical-organic environment and ultimate reality. Indeed, one can read the central message of *The Splendor of Truth* (John Paul II 1993) to be that the individual conscience is liable to error (par.62) and therefore persons, in forming their consciences, *must* give attention to the *certain* teachings of the church (par.64) and consider them in conscience as *morally binding* (par.110, emphasis added). Without question, the church's leaders understand their organization rightly to be – and organize it as – a single, stratified, total society; and assert that it possesses an exclusive and absolute authority to define doctrine and exercise discipline.

The hierarchical administrative organization and its suprabureaucratic masters assert a divinely granted power to teach and discipline, and pronounce that one indispensable requirement for full communion with the Catholic Church is that members 'adhere to ecclesiastical governance ... through obedience to [these very same] sacred pastors' (CIC 1983: canon 205; Coriden et al. 1985:126–128). The basis for this claim to spiritual power is the bureaucratic masters' belief that by virtue of their ordination they are the duly authorized recipients of a depersonalized charismatic authority transmitted to them from Jesus, through the apostles, by a literal, unbroken, physical chain of laying on of hands.

However, if Jesus indeed sired direct descendants, as *The Da Vinci Code*'s fictional narrative suggests, it would set up a competing claim for legitimate possession of Jesus' 'routinized' charisma. If there were lineal descendants of the Lord, the believing community might well accept such a bloodline as the legitimate carrier of his charisma thereby precipitating within Christianity a split similar to the one that fractured early Islam. From the bishops' perspective, *The Da Vinci Code* challenges more than what they teach; it challenges the very legitimacy of their hierocratic domination, i.e., their very power to exercise psychic coercion over people by granting or withholding religious benefits (Weber 1978, 1:54–56).

Sunni and Shi'a Islam: Conflict over Sources of Legitimacy

Recall Weber's concepts (1978, 1:53): *Power* is 'the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite

resistance ... .' *Domination* is 'the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons.' *Discipline* is 'the probability that by virtue of habituation a command will receive prompt and automatic obedience in stereotyped forms, on the part of a given group of persons.' And *authority* (Bendix 1962, 292, n.16) is a voluntary submission to the domination being exercised because of a belief that it is legitimate, i.e., authority comprises both the power to command and a felt duty to obey. By this conception, power can be 'asserted' but authority can only be 'granted' by those subject to the holder of power. Muhammad acquired his authority by virtue of his position as God's messenger. However, he died in 632 C.E. without naming a successor. 'All his sons had predeceased him, and he had only one surviving daughter, Fatima, who was married to his nephew Ali' (Bloom and Blair 2000:49). His followers therefore 'were left without any clear leadership in a situation where there were no readily available political norms for engineering the continuity of the movement' (Turner 1974:82).

The legitimacy of Muhammad's domination mapped isomorphically with Weber's concept of charismatic authority, which, according to Weber (1978, 1:215) *rests on* 'devotion to the exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of *the normative pattern or order revealed or ordained by him*' (emphasis added). When choosing Muhammad's immediate successor and during the three decades immediately following his passing, during the period of the *rashidun*, i.e., of the four 'rightly guided' caliphs, the Prophet's charismatic authority was 'routinized' (Weber 1978, 1:246–254) by falling back on pre-Islamic Arabic criteria for legitimating authority. 'The traditional practice for creating a new leader was for the tribal council to nominate a new *sayyid* (or headman). ... The ... candidate who commanded general respect was Abu Bakr [Muhammad's uncle] whose daughter was Muhammad's chief wife and who led public worship when Muhammad was ill' (Turner 1974:82–83). Abu Bakr not only effectively held Muhammad's followers together during this initial transition but conquered all of Arabia and penetrated into Palestine and lower Iraq. Bakr was followed in 634 C.E. by Umar, another of Muhammad's uncles, who in turn was succeeded in 644 C.E. by Uthman, a member of the Umayyad clan who was both an early follower of Muhammad and one of his sons-in-law. Uthman's assassination in 656 C.E. marked the beginning of a 30 year period of open religious and political conflict over the basis of authority (i.e., of legitimate domination) within the *ummah* (the community of Muslims) (Armstrong 2000:xiv, 23–33).

Uthman's assassins acclaimed Ali, who was Muhammad's cousin and married to his daughter Fatima, as caliph (*khalifa* or 'successor' to the prophet). According to Karen Armstrong (2000:33):

> Ali seemed an obvious choice. He had grown up in the Prophet's household and was imbued with the ideals promoted by Muhammad. He was a good soldier and wrote inspiring letters to his officers, which are still classic Muslim texts, preaching the

necessity of justice and the importance of dealing compassionately with the subject peoples.

However, as Armstrong also noted (2000: 33), Ali's 'rule was not universally accepted.' 'Muhammad's favorite wife Aisha, together with her kinsman Talhah and Subayr ... attacked Ali for not punishing Uthman's murderers' (Armstrong 2000: 33–34). Muawiyyah, a kinsman of Uthman and governor of Syria, also opposed Ali and after indecisive skirmishing, Ali agreed to submit their dispute to arbitration, which went against Ali. Taking advantage of Ali's weakness, Muawiyyah deposed him in 657c.e. and had himself proclaimed caliph (Armstrong 2000: 34–35; Bloom and Blair 2000: 54; Turner 1974: 84–85). One group of Ali's followers, the *kharajis* or seceders, for both theological and political reasons, were so disaffected by Ali's submission that they withdrew from the *ummah* and one of their number assassinated Ali in 661c.e. (Armstrong 2000: 35; Bloom and Blair 2000: 51; Turner 1974: 85).

Muawiyyah established the Umayyad dynasty (661–680c.e.) when he nominated his son Yazid as his successor (Armstrong 2000: xv), a move that set in motion a steady progression away from charismatic leadership toward a domination that was legitimated by the fiction that the caliph was called forth by popular acclamation of decisions by tribal *sayyid* (Turner 1974: 85). This process typified Weber's concept of traditional domination that rests on 'an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those elevated to authority under such rule to issue commands' (Weber 1978, 1: 215,226); 'legitimacy is claimed for it and believed in by virtue of age-old rules and powers' (Weber 1978, 1: 226); and 'domination ... rests upon ... piety for what actually, allegedly, or presumably has always existed ...' (Weber 1946: 296).

However, another series of events took place during the 30 years following the *rashidun* that exemplifies a second thread or basis for legitimacy present in Weber's account of the concept of traditional authority. Following Ali's murder, his supporters acclaimed his son Hasan, the Prophet's direct descendant by his daughter Fatima, as the next caliph, but 'Hasan came to an agreement with Muawiyyah and retired to Medina (Armstrong 2000: xv) "as a wealthy man ..." where he earned the epithet of "the Divorcer" by marrying as many as ninety times and having three or four hundred concubines. For the next twenty years ... Hasan's brother Husayn [Ali's son also by Fatima] attempted to gain support over a deeply divided community' (Bloom and Blair 2000: 52).

In 680 Yazid became the second Umayyad caliph on the death of Muawiyyah, his father. There was an outcry against this dynastic succession and loyal followers of Ali [in Kufah in Iraq] called for Husayn to rule. Armstrong (2000: 43) recounts the received account of what happened next.

Husayn set out from Medina to Iraq with a small band of followers, together with their wives and children. In the meantime, the Kufans had been intimidated by the local Umayyad governor and withdrew their support. Husayn refused to surrender, however,

convinced that the sight of the Prophet's family on the march in quest of true Islamic values would remind the *ummah* of its prime duty. On the plain of Kerbla, just outside of Kufah, he and his followers were surrounded by the Umayyad troops and massacred. Husayn was the last to die, holding his infant son in his arms.

Turner (1974: 84) teases out the implication of this event. The *Shi'a* party (a contraction of *Shi'at 'Ali* – the party of Ali) held that because of his kinship with Muhammad, Ali, who was 'the first cousin of the Prophet, the husband of Muhammad's daughter and the father of Muhammad's two surviving male descendants, al-Hasan and al-Husayn, ... had a better claim to the caliphate than either Abu Bakr, Umar or Uthman.' It was the Shiʿite interpretation that 'only members of the Hashimites (Muhammad's clan) have authority, since only they can inherit the knowledge and power of the Prophet.' As the Shiʿite branch of Islam developed, there concurrently developed conflicting understandings as to the genealogies of the Prophets descendants. However, Shiʿites share the belief that 'any head of the community should be a direct descendant of Muhammad through his daughter and her husband Ali' (Bloom and Blair 2000: 51). This is in contrast to Sunni Muslims who comprise an 85 per cent majority of the worldwide Muslim community. While accepting Ali as the fourth caliph, Sunnis believe 'that Ali's nomination to the caliphate was through public acclamation, just like that of the first three caliphs, and not because the Prophet designated Ali as a member of his family to be the leader of the community' (Bloom and Blair 2000: 54).

The historical events surrounding the Sunni–Shiʿite split over the basis for authority within the *ummah* are evocative of Weber's assertion (1964: 297) that traditional legitimation of domination can also arise from the 'belief [that] charismatic qualification of the charismatic leader's kin group can lead to a belief in hereditary charisma, as represented by hereditary kingship and hereditary hierocracy…' It is the latent threat of this inherited authority, lying embedded in the story line of the *Da Vinci Code*, that plausibly accounts for some portion of the intensity of the Church's reaction against what is nothing more than an artifact of popular culture, and, if reviews from the time are to be believed, not a terribly good one at that. Using Weber's words (1946: 297), were Jesus to have spawned linear descendants, members of the Catholic Christian community would be liable to exchange the belief that hierocratic authority adheres to those 'designated by consecration' for loyalty to him [or her] who rules 'by virtue of ... inherited qualities ... .'

Ecclesial Governance and Max Weber's Ideal Types of Authority

Recall: Weber speaks of three pure types of claims to legitimate domination: rational/legal, traditional and charismatic (Weber 1978, 1: 215). Weber goes on to assert (1978, 1: 220) that the

purest type of exercise of legal authority is that which employs a bureaucratic administrative staff. Only the supreme chief of the organization occupies his position of dominance by virtue of appropriation, of election, or of having been designated for succession. But even his authority consists in a sphere of legal 'competence.' The whole administrative staff under the supreme authority then consists, in the purest type, of individual officials ... who are appointed and function according to the ...

criteria of the type that Weber labels 'modern bureaucratic administration' (see Weber 1978, 2: 956–1005, 'Bureaucracy'). Weber is quite explicit (1978, 1: 221) that the Catholic Church is illustrative of this concept:

> Bureaucratic organization is well illustrated by the administrative role of the priesthood in the modern [Catholic] church. ... It is also illustrated by the notion of a [Papal] universal episcopate, which is thought of as formally constituting a universal legal competence in religious matters. Similarly, the doctrine of Papal infallibility is thought of as in fact involving a universal competence, but only one which functions 'ex cathedra' in the sphere of the office, thus implying the typical distinction between the sphere of office and that of private affairs of the incumbent.

Thus the Governing Hierarchy stratum of the Hierarchically Stratified Reality described in the table above is the carrier of the routinized charisma of Jesus. It is institutionalized as a structure of rational-legal domination wherein bureaucratic administrative staffs exercise power on behalf of titular bureaucratic chiefs that are invested with office through formally prescribed procedures: The Pope via election by the College of Cardinals and the bishops via appointment by the Pope and consecration by the laying on of hands (symbolic of apostolic succession) by at least one other duly consecrated bishop. Central to this arrangement is that neither Pope nor clerical hierarchy (the bishops, the priests, and the deacons) are carriers of a purely personal charisma. 'They have become officials in the service of a functional purpose, a purpose which in the present-day 'church' [is] at once impersonalized and ideologically sanctified' (Weber 1978, 2: 959). Weber calls the process that produced this arrangement one of 'passive democratization' (1978, 2: 985–986) wherein 'first feudal and then all independent local intermediary powers were eliminated' and these local powers were transformed into pure functionaries of central papal authority.

Weber (1978, 2: 1141) characterizes this historical outcome as a 'radical form of depersonalization of charisma and of its transformation into a qualification that is inherent in everybody who has become a member of the office hierarchy through a magic act, and that sanctifies official acts.' Inherited charisma stands in diametrical opposition to office charisma. It is a threat to the sanctity of the organizational structure and nullifies the power of those who occupy its offices. To paraphrase Weber (1978, 2: 1165): Belief in the charismatic qualification of members and descendants of the charismatic leader's kin group inevitably becomes an uncompromising foe of all genuinely office charisma. 'Office charisma must

oppose it, in order to preserve the dignity of the organization.' Should the Holy Grail of *The Da Vinci Code* be embraced as truth, that dignity would be challenged, just as it was in seventh century Islam.

References

Allen, V. (2006), 'Church's Da Vinci Backlash', Mirror.co.uk [website], (published online 6 May) <http://www.mirror.co.uk/printable_version.cfm?objectid=17039397&siteid=94762> accessed 8 May 2006.

Armstrong, K. (2000), *Islam: A Short History*. (New York: Modern Library).

Bellah, R.N. (1973), 'Introduction' to *Emile Durkheim on Morality and Society: Selected Writings*, ed. by *idem*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Bendix, R. (1962), *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*. (Garden City, NY: Anchor, Doubleday).

Bloom, J. and Blair, S. (2000), *Islam: A Thousand Years of Faith and Power*. (New York: TV Books).

Brown, D. (2003), *The Da Vinci Code*. (New York: Doubleday, Random House).

Calvo Cortés, A. and Ruiz Díaz, A. (1986), *Eclesiologia Elemental: Del Aula a la Comunidad de Fe*. (Estella, Spain: Editorial Verbo Divino).

Carvalho, N. (2006), 'Indian Bishops against Movies that 'Belittle What Is at the Heart of the Christian Faith', *AsiaNews.it* [website], (published online 12 May 2006) <http://www.asianews.it/view_p.php?l=en&art=6155> accessed 8 May 2006.

CIC [*Codex Iuris Canonici*, Code of Canon Law] (1983), *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*. Coriden, J.A., Green, T.J., and Heintschel, D.E. (eds.). (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist, 1985).

Coleman, J. A. (1989), '*Raison d'Eglise*. Organizational Imperatives of the Church in the Political Order', pp. 252–275 in *Secularization and Fundamentalism Reconsidered*. (New York: Paragon House). Vol. 3 of *Religion and the Political Order*. Hadden, J.K. and Shupe, A. (eds). (New York: Paragon House, 1986–1989).

Coriden, J.A., Green, T.J., and Heintschel, D.E. (eds) (1985), *The Code of Canon Law: A Text and Commentary*. (New York and Mahwah, NJ: Paulist).

Cross, R.D. (1968), *The Emergence of Liberal Catholicism in America*. (Chicago: Quadrangle).

Goodstein, L. (2006), 'Christian Foes of "Da Vinci Code" Debate How to Fight It.' *New York Times*, 11 May 2006.

Greeley, A. (2006), 'Is "The Da Vinci Code" Only a Story?' *National Catholic Reporter* [NCRonline.org], (published online 2 June 2006). <http://ncronline.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2006b/060206/060206q.php> accessed 1 June 2006.

Hagen, J.D., Jr. (2006), 'The Real Story of the Council of Nicea', *America*. 5–12 June 2006, pp. 18–21.

Homan, T.R. (2006), 'Catholic Church Takes Issue with "Da Vinci" Film', *Milford (Massachusetts) Daily News*, [website], (published online 12 May 2006) <http://www.milforddailynews.com/localRegional/view. bg?articleid=91600&format=text> accessed 13 May 2006.

Jeyaraj, D.B.S. (2006), 'A Christian Perspective on the Da Vinci Code Movie Ban', *TW News-Features* [website], (published online 3 June 2006. 16 June 2006.

John Paul II. (1993), *The Splendor of Truth* [*Veritatis Splendor*]. (Boston: St. Paul Books and Media).

Kinder, H. and Hilgemann, W. (1978), *From the Beginning to the Eve of the French Revolution*. Translated by Menze,W.A. Maps designed by Harald and Ruth Bukor. Vol 1 of *The Penguin Atlas of World History*. (New York: Penguin).

Kahn, J. (2006), 'China Cancels "Da Vinci" Movie, and a New Mystery Arises', *New York Times*, 10 June 2006, sec. A, p.4.

Lane, A. (2006), 'Heaven Can Wait: "The Da Vinci Code"', *New Yorker*, 29 May 2006, pp. 76–78.

Lovejoy, A.O. ([1936]1960), *The Great Chain of Being: A Study of the History of an Idea*. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, Harper and Brothers).

MSNBC. (2005), 'Cardinal's Plea: Don't Read "Da Vinci Code" – Theologian Calls Novel Insulting "Sack Full of Lives"', *MSNBC News Service* [website], (published online 16 March 2005) <http://www.msnbc.msn.com /id/7205300/print/1/displaymode/1098/> accessed 8 May 2006.

Morris, W. (2006), '"Da Vinci" Debate – Surprise: Both Sides of Controversy May Win', *Herald News* (Paterson, NJ) 18 May 2006, sec. B, pp.1, 2.

Olesen, A. (2006), '"Da Vinci Code" Opens in Beijing, before Cannes Can', *Herald News* (Paterson, NJ) 18 May, sec. B, pp.1, 2.

Reuters. (2006), 'Philippine Catholic Bishops Issue Their Own "Da Vinci" Guide', *The Financial Express* [website], (published online 12 May 2006 <http://www. financialexpress.com/print.php?content_id=126970> accessed 13 May 2006.

Swedberg, R. (2005), *The Max Weber Dictionary: Key Words and Central Concepts*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford Univ. Pr).

Turner, B.S. (1974), *Weber and Islam: A Critical Study*. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul).

Washington Post (2006), 'Scholarly Comments on the 'Code'', *Newark (New Jersey) Star Ledger*, 17 May 2006, p.6.

Weber, M. (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Translated, edited, and Introduction by Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C.W. (New York: Oxford University Press).

Weber, M. (1978), *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*. Roth, G. and Wittich, C. (eds). 2 vols. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

Welborn, A. (2006), 'Come in from the "Code" to Get Real Story of Christ', *The Beacon* (Diocese of Paterson, NJ) (*Our Sunday Visitor*), 18 May, p.12.

White, A. (2006), 'Code Red', Modbee.com [website], (published online 6 May 2006) <http://www.modbee.com/life/faithvalues/v-print/story/12148265p-12894676c.html> accessed 8 May 2006.

Wooden, C. (2006), 'Vatican Official Suggests Catholics Boycott *The Da Vinci Code* Film', *The Beacon* (Diocese of Paterson, NJ) (Catholic News Service), 18 May 2006, pp.11, 12.

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 16

Weber's Rational-Legal Model of Legitimation and the Police in London and New York City, 1830–1870

Wilbur. R. Miller

Chief William Parker of the Los Angeles police once said, 'The vital elements of civilized life, including our most sacred institutions, at one time or another, have been laboriously *sold* to the people' (quoted Banton 1954, 1). Aside from leading a major urban police force, Parker was also a very active salesman for it, including sponsoring the *Dragnet* TV series. He sought to inculcate what Max Weber described as 'a *belief*, a belief by virtue of which persons exercising authority are lent prestige,' that is, legitimization (Weber 1966, 382).

Weber did not include police forces in his discussion of legitimization, even though he was citizen of a thoroughly policed nation. Nor did he delve into the *process* of 'selling' or creating legitimacy for agencies of the state generally. He seemed to assume that legitimacy of the larger state makes subordinate agencies legitimate in the eyes of its citizens or subjects. In an authoritarian society like Kaiser Wilhelm's Germany, the administrative apparatus derives its authority simply by embodying the dominant state. However, in a state with representative government such as England and the United States, bureaucratic agencies do not necessarily immediately acquire legitimacy. Created through the actions of elected representatives, agencies have to meet their expectations, as well as those of the citizens who elected them.

In such societies, creation of modern police forces offers an excellent illustration of the process of legitimization. To ordinary citizens probably the most conspicuous agency of the state is the police. Police forces are fundamental components of rational/legal states. Overall, their legitimacy is based on the principle of 'the rule of laws, not of men.' That is, formal rules define their authority and govern their conduct. They are a Weberian bureaucracy—or have evolved over the years to become one. The police are hierarchically organized; they are chosen on the basis of examinations and other specified qualifications; they are paid fixed salaries; their employment is a career, with promotion according to achievement or seniority; their conduct is 'subject to strict and systematic discipline and control' (Weber 1966, 333–334).

Weber's criteria describe the police as law enforcers, with bureaucratic 'dominance of a spirit of formalistic impersonality' (Weber 1966, 340).

Nevertheless, in their role as maintainers of general social order they have much more personal discretion than typical bureaucrats do. Strictly rational-legal or impersonal authority often seems unreal to people under it, and the individual official has to win legitimacy on a personal basis rather than by virtue of his office alone (Parsons in Weber 1966, 68–69). In ordinary situations police officers exercise discretion when deciding whether to enforce laws for minor offences— should they simply warn an offender or arrest him or her? When patrolling in areas where respect for the uniform, representing the legal system of the state, is not enough, the officers have to gain respect for *them.* Police officers facing hostile citizens are sometimes in a delicate dilemma. If they exercise too much force to control them, people will regard the officers as oppressive and might resist even more violently. On the other hand, if police officers do not exercise enough force, they may be perceived as weak, arousing contempt along with resistance. The discretion police officers exercise in such situations, the choices they make, is controlled by various factors—training and policies for dealing with confrontations; informal knowledge officers acquire from veterans; peers' conceptions of courage and honour; the officer's own personality.

All of these factors contribute to the *degree* and *manner* of discretion that officers exercise. This degree and manner, in different circumstances, is useful for distinguishing not only individual officers in their practice, but also different police forces in both levitation and practice. In states with representative governments, they all operate under the general principle of' 'rule of laws, not men,' but within that very general type of authority their exercise of personal power varies considerably. Even though police authority as fundamentally bureaucratic, it is vital to understand how different social and political circumstances in different societies contribute to the degree of personal discretion that police exercise. It is not only because of the general unreality or distance of strictly impersonal authority, but specific historical developments shape the nature of police authority.

Comparing the creation and early development of the London and New York City police in the nineteenth century gives an opportunity to expand Weber's concept of rational-legal legitimization. On one hand, the comparison shows how legitimization develops both as part of the general legitimization of the state, but also according to specific political and social situations at the time. The history of the two forces also reveals how the rational-legal mode of legitimization can be modified by greater or lesser degrees of police officers' personal power. The close study of history modifies Weber's theory, as it does with theories generally, but Weber's ideas of legitimization also enhance history, introducing a new dimension to understanding state development, and its institutions like the police.

Legitimating Two Police Forces[1]

London's Metropolitan Police, created in 1829, was the first modern police force in a nation with representative government. It was modern because of its declared purpose: preventing crime and disorder before they occurred rather than reacting after the fact. Successful prevention relied on centralized direction of a large semi-military force of officers patrolling regular 'beats', wearing distinctive blue uniforms, and carrying a club as their weapon. Ideally, the notion of 'preventive police' would replace reliance on harsh punishments, which no longer deterred crime. They displaced an ancient, unevenly effective night watch and detective officers attached to the courts, who relied on fees and rewards for recovery of stolen property rather than apprehension of the criminals. The heads of the force consciously sold their institution, sought to convince sceptical citizens that it was legitimate. They sought to solve the dilemma of too much or too little use of force by seeking to develop a reputation for the police as powerful but restrained. Daily practice was by no means a perfect embodiment of this image, but the London police did develop a reputation as a legendary British institution that lingered through the mid-twentieth century.

New York City's police were the first in the United States, in 1845, to follow the London preventive model. New Yorkers adopted the general structure of the London force, but at first rejected key elements. As democrats in the 'Jacksonian era' of very assertive democracy,[2] they chose a localized method of appointment (by city councilmen) and rejected uniforms until 1853. A major consequence of this localism was political control of the police, which survived the 1853 reform that made a commission responsible for appointments. More significant in differentiating the two police forces is the degree of personal discretion they were allowed—the degree to which the rational/legal legitimization was mixed, in theory as well as practice, with officers' personal authority. New York officials were much less conscious of selling the police, generally letting it be legitimated simply as an agency of a democratic state. This led to less formal or legal power for the police officers but much broader leeway for informal, personal discretion.

Legitimating the London Police

Sir Robert Peel, credited with creation of London's new police, synthesized decades of thought about police reform and used his political skill to steer the

---

1   General information on the two police forces can be found in Wilbur R. Miller (1977), Richardson (1970) and Emsley (1991). Citations will be only for quotation or specific information.

2   Named after President Andrew Jackson (served 1829-1837), this form of democracy wanted a professional civil service on the principle that any intelligent citizen could perform official duties.

Metropolitan Police Act through Parliament, which had rejected several earlier attempts to create preventive police. However, his only organizational contribution was insisting that policemen be appointed because of their physical and mental qualifications instead of the usual pattern of patronage.

The individuals who took on the complicated task of organizing and legitimating the police were the two Commissioners he chose—Charles Rowan, a military officer, and Richard Mayne, a lawyer. This combination reflected the very nature of the police, a semi-military organization charged with upholding the legal system. These men served long terms, Rowan for twenty years and Mayne for almost forty years, and self-consciously shaped the mode of legitimization as well as practice of the police. They were the 'salesmen,' and the citizens to whom they sought to persuade were not easy to convince that the new force was in their best interests.

Although Londoners were growing increasingly intolerant of disorder, they were ambivalent about creation of an effective force to maintain order. To many, the 'bobby' on patrol was a 'peeler' or even 'blue locust' or 'crusher,' an ominous intrusion on civil liberty. Created by an aristocratic Tory government, even 'respectable' property-owning citizens worried about importation of the French 'Continental spy system,' a secret political police, or a more efficient version of England's own reliance on spies and informers to suppress dissidents during the Napoleonic Wars. The organization and uniform of the police also raised long-standing English fears of a standing army, a large permanent regular force that would oppress the people. They had already experienced the harsh consequences of military action against demonstrators and rioters. As well as these general fears, the London police took to the streets amid England's constitutional crisis over parliamentary representation for disenfranchised middle-class citizens that led to the Reform Act of 1832. As the capital, London was the focal point of the state's crisis of legitimacy. Middle-class orderly protests were backed by a reserve of a more disorderly working class, who hoped to be included in the broadening of voting rights. The politically dominant landed aristocracy met the challenge by co-opting the property-owning middle class, granting only them the vote and thereby making them interested in the stability of the state and social order. Working class resentment at being excluded culminated in Chartism, a movement demanding universal male suffrage, annually elected Parliaments, and elimination of the property requirement for Members of Parliament. The strength of the aristocracy-middle class alliance survived the 1848 mass Chartist demonstration, when shopkeepers turned out as 'special constables' to help the police control anticipated disorder. By that time the police had overcome many of the fears that surrounded their creation.

The Commissioners appointed by Peel, Home Secretary of the unreformed Tory government,[3] faced a direct political challenge: would they simply serve the partisan

---

3   The Home Secretary combines the functions of the American Secretary of the Interior and Attorney General. He appoints the Commissioners of Metropolitan Police and

interests of the existing government, which in 1829 were stoutly resisting voting reform? They responded by legitimating the police as an impersonal agent of the law, a Weberian bureaucracy well before development of the English civil service. They hired according to a set of physical and mental qualifications; promoted according to merit; trained the men (though nothing like modern standards); they issued instructions and regulations of their conduct; and disciplined violators (in the early years, they fired half the men[4] for drunkenness, an occupational hazard of nineteenth century police work). They were determined that 'the force should not only be, in fact, but be believed to be, impartial in action, and should act on principle.' (Commissioners 1839a, 324). They clearly anticipated Weber's understanding that perception was essential to legitimacy—belief in impartiality was as crucial as actual impartiality.

The Commissioners sought a bureaucratic image for their men, as officials who act within a clearly defined set of rules with a minimum of personal discretion. Their ideal policeman fit Weber's model of 'formalistic impersonality, … without hatred or passion, and hence without affection or enthusiasm' (Weber 1966, 340). A journalist described this image as of the 1850s: he observed a policeman plodding his beat, 'Stiff, calm and inexorable, an *institution* rather than a man.' (Wynter 1856, 171). This stiff, plodding individual could be unresourceful and unimaginative, like Inspector Lestrade in the Sherlock Holmes stories. Nevertheless, if the alternative were to be the resourceful and unscrupulous French policeman, the Commissioners were comfortable with the type they sought.

Although faced with high turnover in the early years (hours were long, pay was low), the Commissioners wanted their men to see police work as a career on the model of a Weberian bureaucrat. They closely regulated their men's behavior not only on duty but off-duty, hoping to create an individual who would rise through the ranks dedicated to police work with few, if any, outside interests. They were not entirely realistic in this expectation, but did watch the men closely. The Commissioners had a remarkable degree of bureaucratic autonomy for their time. They were not subject to political influences and were free to create a police force as they saw fit. To create their bureaucrat, they required careful delineation of procedures and strict discipline (Weber 1966, 340) to avoid arbitrary behavior, which would confirm the charges of partisanship. Their police officer was distant from the community, living in barracks or in married men's housing chosen for them. The Commissioners even had to approve of their wives. Their blue uniform made them immediately identifiable to criminals, citizens needing their help, and superior officers watching out for improper behavior. While their uniform was a military style blue, except for a unique top hat, it was not the usual red, which

---

sets broad policies but does not get involved in administration of the force.

4   All the police officers discussed in the historical sections of this paper were men. Women joined both the London and New York forces as matrons for women prisoners, later serving as social workers for women and children who were arrested. Women did not go out on active patrol until the 1970s–80s.

would reinforce the standing army fears. The Bobbies were armed with a billy club, not pistols. The club was a formidable weapon, probably more reliable than the single-shot pistols of the 1830s, but was less likely to lead to death than a pistol and certainly could not *accidentally* harm innocent bystanders. The police officers, though, were formidable with the full legal powers of the state and Commissioners ready to support them if they followed their rules. One of the major rules was discouragement of decisions made on the spot according to individual standards of discretion.

As suggested, the Commissioners' efforts to control discretion covered many aspects of the police's work. An important example is the way they sought to restrict 'blanket' or 'cover charges' that police officers could use to arrest people who angered them without committing a specific offence. In the early days of the force, when Bobbies faced widespread hostility, they made frequent charges of assaulting or obstructing an officer while on duty—these could be prompted by a genuine assault or simply talking back. Rowan and Mayne ordered that officers were not 'authorized to take anyone into custody without being able to prove by some specific act by which the law has been broken. No Constable is justified in depriving any one of his liberty for words only and language however violent towards the P.C. himself is not to be noticed' (Commissioners 1830). The problem did not entirely go away, but the Commissioners worked hard to keep it under control.

A different sort of discretion problem arose when policemen sought to *help* crime victims without legal authorization. The issue was arresting for assault without a warrant. Existing law allowed police to arrest for assaults only if they had actually seen the attack themselves. Many people complained of police inaction, and the Commissioners pressed the Home Secretary to allow police to arrest whenever they saw the physical evidence of an assault—injuries. Originally he authorized arrests when officers saw evidence of 'manifest wound or bodily harm.' The Commissioners replied that this gave Bobbies *too much* discretion, and agreed to phrasing that required evidence of the victim having been 'cut or wounded.' This led to still another problem, of police having to ignore assault charges when there was no evidence of a cut or wound. During the 1830s they pressed Parliament to give police full arrest powers, which they finally obtained in 1839: police could arrest for assaults they had 'good reason to believe' were committed (Commissioners 1833; 1837–38, 84; 1837, 22). This sounds like very wide discretion, but the point was that the Commissioners did not want to give police officers powers that were not *specifically authorized by law.* Their power should be formalized, not exercised in the interstices of the law. This is an example of what Weber described as the ideal bureaucratic response to officials treating their function from a 'utilitarian point of view in the welfare of those under their authority' becoming formalized by regulatory measures (Weber 1966, 340). That is, the police wanted to help assault victims, but the Commissioners required that they have formal powers to do so. They would not accept ambiguity that could lead to too much discretion. Although this formalism could create bureaucratic

(in the pejorative sense) police officers, it could not entirely eliminate personal discretion. The degree of discretion, personal power as opposed to power granted by law, varied according to the social class of the citizens the police dealt with.

As early as 1831, when there was still considerable hostility, sometimes violent, toward the new police, the Commissioners hoped 'that the Police have conciliated the populace and obtained the good will of all respectable persons' (Commisisioners 1831). Clearly obtaining 'good will' is a more positive goal than 'conciliation,' and the impartial or impersonal image the Commissioners sought was one to appeal to the 'respectable' middle classes who believed in 'the rule of law' but who in 1831 felt excluded from the social order. The police, by their impartiality, should win support from these people who would soon acquire a political as well as economic stake in the social order. They should not feel that the police were either partisan or arbitrary. Conciliation was less ambitious, to achieve acceptance from the 'populace' or working classes who could not be expected to give active support to the police. Conciliation is the bottom line of legitimacy: one accepts authority without necessarily embracing it. Many working class Londoners knew the policeman primarily as the person who told him or her to 'move on', frustrating their efforts to make a living on the streets or enjoy popular recreations. Even an impartial enforcer of the law confirmed their conviction that there was 'one law for the rich, another law for the poor.' In short, for the middle class, the police sought active support, the highest level of legitimacy where very little *power* or control is required. From the working class, though, the police simply sought acceptance instead of open resistance, a goal that required more exercise of overt power than selling an image of impartiality. Consequently, in relation to middle class citizens, personal discretion could be minimized, because the policeman's personal reputation reinforced the general basis of legitimacy. For police patrolling working class areas, in the poorest of which they could never patrol alone, they had to establish an individual reputation through clear assertion of their power. To 'conciliate' the populace, a clear demonstration of power, the individual copper's ability to handle the local roughs, was essential to working-class acceptance as a presence in the neighbourhood they could do nothing about. This is by no means to suggest that all workers opposed the police: many found them useful for relief from the depredations of the roughs, for breaking up a domestic fight, or helping recover a stolen watch. Nevertheless, working class people in general have mixed views of bureaucracies. Negotiating all the rules and regulations can be hard for a person accustomed to working with his or her hands. Sometimes the bureaucrat is a person's only resort, and helpfully delivers a necessary service. Other times, the bureaucrat is inaccessible or overbearing to a person without influence. As in the case of the police, a bureaucrat's personal style or manner can increase or decrease working-class people's suspicion and hostility.

Another form of conciliation was avoiding enforcement of laws obnoxious to large sections of the 'populace.' For example, The Commissioners testified in Parliament against efforts to close pubs on Sunday because they thought the only result of police enforcement would be 'odium to the police which injures

their general usefulness to the public…' (Commissioners 1839b). The police enforced the laws made by Parliament, but sought to discourage passage of laws they felt would be widely seen as oppressive. The Commissioners worked to prevent perceptions that 'legal formalism' offended 'the sentiments of 'substantive justice' in a population (Parsons in Weber 1966, 64). That situation is a recipe for corruption, and in dealing with vice the London police were not entirely free from accepting payoffs from illegal drinking, prostitution and gambling operations.[5] Nevertheless, such graft never reached the systematic scale of New York and other American cities, partly because London officials did not have the financial stake in non-enforcement of unpopular laws their American equivalents often had.

The Commissioners' selling of the police was a survival strategy in a period of political crisis. Whether consciously or not, they linked their force to the powers about-to-be, the middle classes, rather than to the powers that were, the aristocracy. Of course, they served both, but not one at the expense of the other's resentment. Resolution of the crisis clearly legitimated the state and its agents, obviously benefiting the police. Similarly, working class anger over continuing disenfranchisement simmered down after Parliament finally passed the Reform of 1867, giving urban workers the franchise. Again, the police clearly gained some legitimacy in a state that gave workers the right, and power, to elect members of Parliament. They never won workers' universal support as with the middle class, and their acceptance depended on their actions more than their image. Complaints against the police never went away, whether about corruption, rough handling of protesters, excessive violence, or inefficiency. Nevertheless, by the 1840s the London police were there to stay, supported by the 'good will' of the propertied citizens and by acceptance of their power, however grudging at times, by the 'populace.' The 'good will' of the middle class created a legend of the 'friendly bobby' that thrived through the 1950s, began to fray in the 1960s and 70s, and was quite ragged, though with many efforts at patching, by the end of the twentieth century when racial conflicts emerged as a social problem in England. Historians contributed to its tatters by pointing out that police legitimacy and practice had always varied according to one's social class (Emsley 1991).

Legitimating the New York Police

New York's police first walked their beats in a very different social and political context than their London brethren. New York was a fast-growing, heterogeneous city with a full collection of urban pathologies like London, but it was not a metropolis in the European sense. New York was quickly becoming America's

---

5   A scandal in 1877 that revealed the three highest officials of the detective division as accomplices of an international ring of confidence men came as a shock to middle class Londoners. Many workers, though , simply assumed that the police were corrupt from experiences in their own neighborhoods.

economic and cultural capital, but it was not the nation's political capital. Except for the spectacular three-day anti-draft riots of July, 1863,[6] Americans did not look to New York for the nation's political fate as English people looked to London. New York was not the centre of class conflicts with national resonance. Major political issues like who has the right to vote had been clearly settled in favour of universal white male suffrage by the time the police appeared on the streets. While social and economic classes certainly existed, political disenfranchisement was not a source of class resentment. The conflicts that did punctuate the mid 19th century often united middle class and skilled working class citizens against the wave of immigrants that was rolling in from the 1830s through 1850s. The context for the New York police was consensus about the political structure, a shared basis for legitimating the national state, and cross-class hostility toward 'foreigners,' especially the unskilled Irish. In class terms this was a consensus that the lower classes had to be controlled. Nevertheless, this is complicated by politicians' recruitment of immigrant unskilled workers as voters, essential in maintaining the power of different political factions. What New Yorkers agreed upon, representative democracy, and what they disagreed on, immigration, both had consequences for the practice and legitimization of police authority.

The creators of the New York police had to overcome fears similar to those of Londoners,—spies and standing armies—with the added element that the London model itself seemed too authoritarian to many Americans. New Yorkers finally accepted the preventive principle as necessary after serious riots in 1834, looting after a disastrous downtown fire two years later, and the unsolved murder of Mary Rogers in 1841. Partisan political wrangling over who would control the police (Democrats or Republicans? City or State?) delayed implementation for many years after the need was admitted. New Yorkers' fears of authoritarianism shaped the new police force's structure to match democracy's faith in local self-government and opposition to professional or bureaucratic public officials.[7]

Unlike London, there were no leaders like Rowan and Mayne who could shape and legitimate the police during long terms of office. No New Yorker had their bureaucratic autonomy. George Matsell, Chief of the Municipal Police from 1845 to 1857 and Superintendent John A. Kennedy of the State-controlled Metropolitan

---

6　Originally these riots were directed at the new federal conscription law that allowed people who could afford $300.00 to be exempt from the draft. The anger of rioters was class anger, directed against the well-to-do, but also as the riots progressed, against African Americans, whom the largely Irish did not want to fight a war (Emancipation was in January 1863) and whom they feared would take away their jobs.

7　A local experience reinforced these fears. In 1844, Nativists (an anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant political party) won the mayoralty and a majority of the city council. They established a police force that allowed only native-born Americans to join, and outfitted the men with blue uniforms. Immigrants and many native-born New Yorkers detested the new force as well. In the next election, only one year later, the Democrats, who relied heavily on Irish voters, disbanded the Nativist police and established the more 'democratic' force I am describing.

Police from 1860 to 1870 stand out as major influences, but they did not have the same impact as the London Commissioners. Nobody at the top articulated principles of legitimacy as in London. Rare direct statements of the democratic basis of police legitimacy appeared when a New York mayor and the *Times* agreed that a police as efficient as London's would be too authoritarian for American tastes. American democrats could not be moulded in the same fashion as working class London police recruits. If the result was less efficient policemen, that was a price worth paying for democracy (Mayor 1856, 33–34; *Times*, 9 December 1857, 4). The police evolved partly as need for change was realized but also through political conflicts and manoeuvrings, rather than a clear conception of the best means to legitimate the force.

Although New York adopted important structural features of London—semi-military organization, regular beat patrols; payment of salaries rather than fees,[8] the police never became a Weberian bureaucracy. Not until 1853 were police officers appointed with good-behavior tenure, not until 1857 promoted according to merit. Whatever was the official policy, political control meant that hiring and promotion were according to connections rather than qualifications or merit. The police never escaped being a political issue. Instead of effective central discipline, the individual precinct Captains were the real powers in the force. Discipline and practice reflected their personal standards, despite rulebooks that proclaimed principles very similar to London's. Police officers did not have a uniform to distinguish them from ordinary citizens until 1853, and they at first resented the innovation. Originally they carried only clubs like their London comrades, but in 1857, a year of political conflict, economic depression, riots, and several attacks on police officers, individual patrolmen started carrying revolvers. There was no training or policy declaration, but by the next decade firearms were routine equipment on the beat. Criminals were also acquiring the cheap, effective revolvers and a cycle of violence began that has marked much of American urban history. The most important difference from a Weberian model or the London force was New York cops' degree of personal discretion in carrying out their duties.

While the London Commissioners had full power to create a force that would not alienate respectable citizens, New York officials were more concerned that the police fit into people's expectations of democratic institutions. These expectations included unwillingness to grant police the extent of formal legal powers that London officers possessed, but at the same time more personal discretion and consequently more possibility of arbitrary behavior. This paradox reflected the ethnic conflicts that divided the city. Respectable citizens, middle class and skilled workers alike, feared too much police power if it was applied against *them,* but expected the police to control the unskilled Irish who threatened to take workers' jobs and whose foreign Catholicism seemed to threaten democracy itself. Many mid-nineteenth century New York police were Irish, but their very job separated them from their

---

8   Modified, though, by the extent to which police accepted graft or payoffs, among higher ranks exceeding their salaries.

Irish peers. They were by no means excessively lenient toward them: they arrested about as many Irish people as did native-born American officers. The paradox also reflected democratic Americans' willingness to subordinate 'rule of law' to 'rule of the people.' Popular demands for order superseded legal boundaries to police authority.

The very idea of 'rule by the people' was alien to the London Commissioners: their men would act as impartially as possible according to their legal powers and the Commissioners' own regulations. Theoretically this was true in New York as well, but police leaders' attitudes toward 'cover charges' and assault reveal a much greater tolerance of discretion. Cover charges are used to arrest people who have angered the police officer in some way, but without committing an actual offence. In the case of charges of assault or interference with an officer the New York regulations were as strict as those of London. However, judging from the much greater number of arrests for 'disorderly conduct' in New York, they very likely got around the restrictions by using a classic 'cover' charge. In 1851 New York cops made one disorderly conduct arrest for each 109 people; London peelers made one for each 380 people. In 1868–69 New York's absolute number of disorderly conduct arrests was greater than London's: 14,935 compared to only 2,616 in the much larger British metropolis (Miller 1977, 189) . This could suggest that Londoners were much less disorderly, but I think it actually demonstrates the Commissioners' regulation (and judicial disapproval) of this type of 'cover' arrest. A magistrate complained that too many people were arrested for disorderly conduct 'merely because they took the [badge] number of the policeman.' A journalist asserted that 'the fancy of the policeman' determined who was arrested for disorderly conduct, 'a discretionary power that few use discreetly' (Welch 1861, 14; Crapsey 1872, 27). Disorderly conduct arrests may also have compensated for New York officers' less comprehensive powers of arrest in assault cases—they could arrest attackers without a warrant only if they saw the assault or the victim were 'severely cut or wounded.' This is far more restrictive than the power granted London Bobbies in 1839 to arrest people they 'reasonably believed' had committed an assault. They may very well have arrested assaulters for disorderly conduct than for the actual offence. In 1866 disorderly conduct arrests were 13,050, while assault arrests were 8,081 (Valentine 1866, 120). Obviously, not all the disorderly people were assaulters, but police officers very likely used their discretion to bring in attackers who had done less than 'severely' injure their victim. Police charges of assault and battery, the most serious form with evidence of injury, did not fare well in courts. Police Justices (magistrates or justices of the peace) committed an average of 52 per cent of these arrests to higher courts, where jury guilty verdicts averaged only 24 per cent of arrests between 1851 and 1855. Between 1858 and 1867, when the State (Republican) controlled Metropolitan Police was unpopular among judges as well as many people in the Democratic city, committals were only 36 per cent of arrests, and convictions only 17 per cent (Miller 1977, 99). In other words, many people were arrested for assault and battery who ended up released by judges or acquitted by juries. These arrests may not have stood up

for many reasons (including political favouritism toward thugs useful at election time), but the police, lacking full powers to arrest in such cases may have arrested anyway, using arrest as a form of 'street corner justice,' harassment of people they personally disliked for whatever reason. In many cases assault and battery may have been a 'cover charge', without much expectation of conviction.

'Respectable' New Yorkers were ambivalent about the police. On the one hand, they condemned political control and the inefficiency and systematic corruption that went with it. At the same time they agitated for enforcement of anti-gambling and Sunday saloon closing laws that invited the very corruption they criticized. They never developed a legendary benign police image as middle class people did in London. On the other hand, as long as they themselves were not victims, 'respectable' citizens did not complain about excessive police discretion in the name of controlling the 'dangerous classes' of immigrant unskilled workers. While many New Yorkers could despise the police, when they did their job against Irish mobs in the anti-draft riots of 1863 or the Orange riots of 1871, they became heroes. As Sidney Harring remarked, while corrupt police forces are 'incompatible with Weberian concepts of rationalization, bureaucratization, and professionalization,' they can nevertheless be effective in some areas such as crowd control or aiding industrialists in breaking strikes (Harring 1983, 40–41). New York's tolerance of personal power substituted for London's broader legal power. Legitimization in New York, less consciously worked out than in London, integrated the police with the general democratic legitimization of the American state. This included local political control, less legal power, but also less regulation of personal discretion. In a way, New Yorkers chose substantive justice over legal formalism and the police carried out their mandate.

Legitimization as Process

London's police leaders deliberately developed a Weberian bureaucracy model to legitimate their new institution. It was never perfectly impersonal and formalistic, because all policemen have discretionary power, but the Commissioners seriously attempted to keep the police to that standard. They sought active support from the respectable property-owning middle classes who were initially hostile. They eventually achieved acceptance, and even admiration, of the police from this group. Working class Londoners retained much of their hostility, and police officers had to assert their individual power to gain respect rather than rely on their official image.

As England became a more heterogeneous society in the later twentieth century, police practice came to resemble New York's when dealing with Afro-Caribbeans and South Asians. 'Whites' of all classes as in the United States became the group threatened by other races. Police recruits in London, drawn from the white working class, sometimes acted out their prejudices and the impartial image of the police has suffered in recent years. London officials looked to more experienced

New York for models of community relations programs, minority recruitment, and later, in the 1990s, the policy of 'zero tolerance,' arresting for minor crimes to help prevent major ones. Although generally supported by most Londoners, the police are facing a strong challenge to their traditional mode of legitimization and have become more 'American.'

New York's police leaders imperfectly implemented a Weberian bureaucracy because their democratic ideology rejected permanent, professional public servants. Control, at first direct and later indirect, by elected representatives was the only option within that ideology. Democracy also dictated limits of the legal powers of the police, but it also tolerated wide discretion if used against groups, such as Irish immigrants, who threatened the social order supported by skilled workers as well as the property-owning classes. By the later nineteenth century, reformers struggled to develop a bureaucratic police force, often referring to England and Europe as examples to be followed, but they had to fight an uphill battle and never fully achieved their goal. Corruption was particularly endemic, although by the 1970s it was limited to groups of individuals involved in anti-vice enforcement rather than the entire system. Police behavior toward suspected criminals or members of groups assumed to have criminal tendencies has changed in many respects because a large segment of the public-liberal intellectuals and many minority group members who have gained political voice since the 1960s —calls for greater police restraint. Nevertheless, despite outcry and official efforts to contain police violence, the old personal style of legitimization and practice remain powerful today because most citizens accept it as necessary in 'the war against crime.' One might say even today that the police are bureaucratic in form but not entirely in substance.[9]

Weber's concepts of legitimization have been essential in understanding differences between development of the London and New York police. This close look at institutional history reminds us that legitimization is not static, but a process that develops differently in different societies. This process is complex, varying according to political and social circumstances, sometimes requiring sustained effort to establish, other times evolving within the context of the general legitimization of the state. Studying development of these two police forces adds a dynamic element to Weber's discussion of legitimacy by revealing the political and social complexities that create a process of legitimization, modifying the bureaucratic mode that on the surface both forces shared.

---

9   The station-house torture of Abner Louima and shooting of Amadou Diallo in the late 1990s generated powerful protests, but whether these changed police attitudes is an open question.

References

Banton, M. (1964), *The Policeman in the Community* (New York: Basic Books).

Commissioners (1830), *Police Orders* 25 Jan., Ms. Metropolitan Police Records 7/1 (London: Public Record Office).

Commissioners (1831), *Police Orders* 15 Oct., Ms. Metropolitan Police Records 7/2 (London: Public Record Office).

Commissioners (1837), *Third Report, Criminal Law Commissioners* (London: Parliamentary Papers 1837, vol. 27, appendix 1).

Commissioners (1837-38), *Police Offices* (London: Parliamentary Papers, 1837–1838, vol. 15).

Commissioners (1839a), *First Report, Criminal Law Commissioners* (London: Parliamentary Papers, 1839, vol. 19).

Commissioners (1839b), Richard Mayne to Sir William Cintes 29 Nov., Ms. Metropolitan Police Records 1/45 (London: Public Record Office).

Crapsey, E. (1872), *The Netherside of New York* (New York: Sheldon).

Harring, S. (1983), *Policing A Class Society* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press).

Mayor (1856), *Mayor's Annual Message* (New York: Board of Aldermen Documents 1856, vol. 23, no.10).

Miller, W. (1977), *Cops and Bobbies: Police Authority in New York City and London, 1830–1870* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Richardson, J. (1970), *The New York Police: Colonial Times to 1900* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Times (1857), *New York Times*, 9 Dec.

Weber, M. (1966), *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* Talcott Parsons, ed. (New York: Basic Books).

Welch, Justice (1861), *Police Investigation* (New York: State Senate Documents, vol. 2, no. 71).

Wynter, A. (1856), 'The Police and the Thieves', *Quarterly Review* 99 (June 1856), 160–200.

PART 6
Consciousness, History, Relativism and the Interweaving of Past and Present

This page intentionally left blank

Chapter 17

The Perpetual and Tight Interweaving
of Past and Present
in Max Weber's Sociology

Stephen Kalberg

Commentators have discussed Max Weber's 'view of history' for over 100 years. Agreement has been rare and quite contrary conclusions have been drawn.

Many interpreters insisted that Weber understood the course of history in *dichotomous* terms. He described, according to this position, the distant past as an era of great charismatic figures standing occasionally in direct opposition to the sheer weight of tradition. A different dichotomy reigned in the industrial epoch: now heroic leaders placed their powerful personalities against rigid bureaucracies (Mommsen 1974, 1989; Salomon 1935). Other commentators detected in Weber's writings a further dichotomy: persons prominently influenced by their emotions and the grip of traditions inhabited earlier societies while in later societies a predominance of means-end rational (*Zweckrationales*) action reigned (Alexander 1987).

Weber has also been depicted as a sociologist who charted history's *linear* thrust. These interpreters divide into two groups. 'Evolutionists' downplayed his ambivalence regarding the modern world and defined the bureaucratization and 'rationalization' he charted as involving a benign unfolding of progress and universalization (Parsons 1963, 1966, 1971; Nelson 1973, 1974; Nielsen 2005). Neo-Marxists on the other hand castigated the oppression and inequality called forth by the modern bureaucratic organization and condemned Weber as a 'bourgeois theorist' who supported the rulership of functionaries (Marcuse 1971; Habermas 1971).

A final body of major commentary proclaimed that Weber understood history as unfolding in an *inevitable* manner. It marched forth pushed by its own internal rhythms, according to this interpretation, and the bureaucratized society of today must be understood as a predictable outcome. These critics were also convinced that Weber—a 'cultural pessimist'—foresaw a further inexorable development, namely, from the present to a 'steel-hard casing' (*stahlhartes Gehäuse*) of the near future. Impersonal and cold hierarchical relations would prevail in this new 'cosmos' ruled by conformist and timid functionaries in massive bureaucracies. According to Weber, the commentators proclaimed, a static and 'ossified' society devoid of heroes oriented to ideals was unavoidably on the horizon. Instrumental

calculations would replace compassion and binding values in this 'disenchanted' future (Salomon 1935; Scaff 1989; see Kalberg 2001a). Can these various depictions of a 'Weberian view of history' withstand close scrutiny?

Serious flaws lie at the center of all. First, they remain at a global level of analysis inconsistent with his texts, all of which are anchored in empirically-grounded research and characterized by exhaustive detail. Ideal types, 'societal domains'—the law, religion, economy, rulership [*Herrschaft*], universal organizations (the family, the clan), and status groups spheres—and 'social carriers' (strata, classes, and organizations) orient his studies rather than dichotomous concepts or overarching movements of history. Indeed, a large gap exists between the proclivity among commentators toward sweeping generalities—evolution, bureaucratization, and disenchantment—and Weber's sociological writings. Rather than tracing a uniform 'Western rationalization process,' his texts carefully distinguish the diverse historical pathways taken by England, Germany, Russia, and the United States into the twentieth century.

Second, attributions of history's 'inevitable' and 'linear' path also resonate weakly with the major tenor of Weber's sociology. History pursues a course of its *own* design, these commentators contend and, moreover, generally stays on an evolutionary tack. However, throughout Weber's studies contingency characterizes the flow of history and groups are embedded deeply in social contexts. Paradox, irony, and unforeseen consequences mark history's unfolding, Weber holds, rather than a linear and predictable development. Delicate balances and complex interweavings are repeatedly visible.

Third, Weber's interpreters have often simplified his understanding of history's causal mechanisms by declaring single forces to be its 'movers.' 'Bureaucratization' and 'rational action' drive forward the modern epoch and 'charisma' pushed history in the pre-modern era, many commentators proclaim, and 'the Protestant ethic' unilaterally gave birth to bureaucratized, steel-hard capitalism. However, far more typical of Weber's research is a broad multicausality; indeed, a contextual and 'thick web' understanding of causality prevails.

This preliminary investigation criticizes the above 'Weberian views of history' by exploring fundamental elements of his sociology that perpetually and tightly interweave the past with the present. Throughout, three foundational components remain pivotal. First, the *level of analysis* characteristic of Weber's texts will be defined; ideal types, and social carriers come to the fore here. Second, his broadranging *multicausality* will be summarized. Third, Weber's highly *contextual* embedding of patterned social action in constellations of patterned social action will be examined. While opposing all versions of his view of history that see global concepts, broad dichotomies, and sweeping generalities as central, this investigation, as will become apparent, abjures any portrayal of Weber as a theorist who perceived history's pathway as random.

1. Ideal Types

Ideal types stand at the very core of Weber's methodology. They convey one of his fundamental premises: past and present are constituted from diverse action that repeatedly congeals into social action[1] and then into *patterns* of social action. Sociology is concerned with these *regularities of action*:

There can be observed, within the realm of social action, actual empirical regularities; that is, courses of action that are repeated by the actor or (possibly also: simultaneously) occur among numerous actors because the subjective *meaning* is typically *meant* to be the same. Sociological investigation is concerned with these *typical* modes of action (1968, 29 [emph. orig.; transl. alt.]; see also pp. 19–21; Weber 1949b, 67).

Thus, 'courses of action' capture Weber's attention rather than, for example, universal laws, evolution, society's 'organicism,' action's interest-based drift, or the question of social order. Action is continuously uprooted from an undirected flow and endowed with continuity, regularity, and meaning, according to him. Such patterns of action resist competing action; indeed, they articulate group boundaries. Delineated and sociologically-significant groups—sects, churches, bureaucracies, states, families, etc.—are ubiquitous, he holds.

Weber's formation and utilization of ideal types conveys this fundamental position.[2] These constructs indicate to him regularities of action—that is, likelihoods regarding the empirical persistence of action. They often imply social action according to Weber.[3] Indeed, ideal types conceptualize as groups the patterned meaningful action shared by persons. Weber's orientation to the subjective meaning of individuals remains basic, yet his sociology also seeks to identify the manifestation of patterned meaningful action in a vast variety of groups. Ideal types constitute his heuristic construct for doing so.

Furthermore, this concept implies a *potential* for causal efficacy, Weber argues. In signifying a likelihood for empirical, patterned social action, each ideal type connotes a probable causal thrust—an '*autonomous*' aspect. The values captured by

---

1   Weber's foundational definition of Sociology must be noted: 'Sociology ... is a science that seeks interpretively to understand social action and thereby causally to explain its course and its effects. We can speak of "action" if—and to the extent that—an acting person, or acting persons, attaches a subjective meaning to his (her) or their human behavior (regardless of whether it involves external or internal activity, or neglect or toleration). However, "social" action should mean such an action that, in terms of its intended meaning, takes account of the behavior of others and is oriented in its course to this behavior' (1968, 4 [emph. orig.; transl. altered]). In this study 'social action' and 'meaningful action' will be used synonymously. For Weber's definitions of his 'four types of social action' (value-rational, means-end rational, traditional, and affectual), see 1968, 24–5.

2   On Weber's formation and use of ideal types, see Kalberg 1994b, 81–142; Berger 1976.

3   Whether action becomes social action—that is, action meaningfully oriented to others (see n. 1)—remains an empirical question to Weber.

the ideal type 'warriors,' for example (bravery, courage, loyalty, honor, friendship with fellow warriors, an awareness of the meaningfulness of death in battle, and a scorn of all immersion in emotional needs), indicate the possibility of an empirical causal impulse. He views in the same manner the action-orientations specific, for example, to civil servants (toward reliable and punctual conduct, specialized tasks, hierarchical chains of command, and the impersonal performance of tasks) and to Calvinists (toward methodical work, the acquisition of profit and its reinvestment, and an ascetic style of life). In sum, ideal types identify regular action-orientations. This action often, Weber maintains, empirically implies shared subjective meaning and a degree of endurance, directedness, and firmness—and hence it formulates groups. However, these heuristic constructs never indicate *a priori* hierarchies or a rank ordering of groups, he insists. Even orientations to the supernatural and to legitimate rulership, although significant throughout his sociology, are never awarded a *general* causal capacity. The unceasing ebb and flow of interests, power, authority, status concerns, traditions (customs and conventions), and values preclude any such ordering, Weber holds (see 1968, 29–40). Instead, ideal types serve simply to facilitate identification by researchers of regular action.

This level of analysis—ideal types charting significant action patterns as manifest in demarcated groups—characterizes Weber's sociology rather than sweeping generalities, linear thrusts, global dichotomies, broadranging concepts, or inevitable and overarching historical trends. A major question must now be posed: how does it occur that the groups charted by ideal types become influential empirically, indeed to such an extent that they may interweave tightly the past with the present? First, cohesive social carriers must be present.

2. Social Carriers

Patterned social action of causal significance occurs within carrier (Träger) groupings, Weber contends: strata, classes, and organizations.[4] Carriers stand at the very center of his interlocking of past and present.

Values, ideas, interests, traditions, and currents of thought of every imaginable variety have arisen in every epoch and civilization, Weber insists. However, whether regularities of action acquire cohesive proponents remains a separate question. As he notes: 'Unless the concept "autonomy" is to lack all precision, its definition presupposes the existence of a bounded group of persons which, though membership may fluctuate, is determinable' (1968, 699 [transl. alt.]). The patrimonial bureaucracy and the literati stratum in China remained the major carriers of Confucianism for more than 2,000 years, and the Brahmins carried Hinduism in India for more than a millennium.

---

4   For a more detailed discussion on carrier groups, see Kalberg 1994b, pp. 58–62, 71–8.

The internal cohesiveness of groups does not alone account for their capacity as social carriers, Weber maintains; pivotal also is their possession of a certain minimum of power or authority. Only then will the patterned action carriers imply successfully oppose the patterned action carried by other groupings. Indeed, power and authority play central roles in his many discussions of the congealing of regular action and its acquisition of carriers capable of setting historical developments into motion. History, Weber asserts, constitutes an incessantly moving terrain and patterned action must, if to achieve a sociological significance, acquire strong carriers. If it does so, its influence may even extend beyond the epoch of its creation.

A principled multicausality also anchors the interweaving of past and present in Weber's sociology. Its wide spectrum first captures our attention; the contributions in this respect of societal domains are then explored.

3. Weber's Multicausality I: The Broad Spectrum[5]

Power and the search to legitimate authority have been omnipresent causes of new patterned action throughout history, Weber holds. On the other hand, at times he sees as pivotal, for example, technological innovation, significant historical events, and economic and political interests, and status honor. And great charismatic leaders, by the sheer force of their personalities, can mobilize large populations on behalf of their missions. Religious and secular values may also, even if never enunciated by an extraordinargy and heroic figure, offer new and influential directions to patterned action.

Weber contends that values may be powerful enough to deflect or even curtail patterns of social action placed into motion by political and economic interests, especially when a cohesive stratum, organization, or class congeals as their carrier. The reverse occurs regularly, however: the content and shape of a value configuration may be strongly influenced by political and economic interests (1946, 267–9; 1968, 341). At other times the sheer weight of immovable tradition effectively confronts all innovative impulses, regardless of their sources. Even the capacity of charismatic personalities to introduce dramatic transformations depends upon a facilitating context (see below).

Innumerable clusters of regular action develop into groups in Weber's sociology, acquire strong carriers, and then pursue independent pathways. The sources of patterned action are extremely pluralistic, he insists; all attempts to locate a 'resting point'—a single causal force—must be seen as a futile endeavor (1946, 268; 1968, 341). Even structurally identical organizations—even sects—do not, by virtue of this similarity, carry the same sets of values, according to Weber (1946, 292). And a causal analysis that focusses alone on economic interests will

---

5   For more in-depth discussion of Weber on this theme, see Kalberg, 1994b, 50–78; 1997, 225–32; 2003, 164–6.

remain blind to the manner in which, for example, the authority of tradition in China, once strengthened by magical forces, thwarted for centuries the pursuit of economic interests (see 1951, 227–9). The 'development of an organized life oriented systematically,' Weber maintains, 'toward *economic* activity has confronted broadranging internal resistance' wherever 'magical and religious forces have inhibited the unfolding of this organized life' (2002a, 160).

As he repeats on various occasions, 'no significant generalizations can be made' and no 'general formula' will establish a 'prior' or 'dominant' pattern of social action (1968, 341, 577, 1179; 2002b, 125). 'We would lose ourselves,' he argues, 'in these discussions if we tried to demonstrate these dependencies in all their singularities' (1946, 268).

Weber's understanding of the past's perpetual influence upon the present is rooted not only in his ideal-type level of analysis and attention to social carriers; his sociology's broad multicausality also anchors his interweaving of past and present.[6] Whether political or economic, interests always motivate people, Weber contends, yet a broad spectrum of causes outside the inexhaustible sway of interests always exists. Furthermore, he repeatedly discovers tensions and conflicts across patterns of action and across and within groups, as well as fissions and fusions—which then cause further shifts and realignments. 'Ideas and interests' intertwine and diverge repeatedly in the most complex ways. New regularities of social action are placed into motion with newfound coalitions. New carrier groups crystallize, yet they often remain unstable and delicate. Completely unforeseen consequences appear frequently; Weber describes paradox and irony regularly.

The endurance of groups varies amidst this open jostling and contention. Some may maintain their influence over longer periods. History, however, to Weber, advances seldom in an overtly linear manner; rare coalitions of multiple cohesive and powerful groupings are required. His pivotal concept 'societal domain'[7] further illuminates his broad multicausality and serves as an additional construct in his sociology that demonstrates how past and present are tightly interlocked.

4. Weber's Multicausality II: Societal Domains

Economy and Society (E&S)

Weber's analytic treatise, is organized around an array of sociologically-significant societal domains: the economy, rulership, religion, law, universal organizations,

---

6   The exception, of course, is Weber's analysis of the origins of a 'Protestant ethic' (2002b). A multicausal analysis is not offered here. By accentuating the realm of religion (see 2002b, 124–5), Weber wished forcefully to enter into an on-going debate on modern capitalism's origins that had neglected this realm.

7   That is, *Lebensbereiche*, *Lebenssphäre*, and *Lebensordnungen*. The terms sphere, realm, arena, and domain are here used synonymously.

and status groups spheres (see Kalberg 2003, 152–68). With a certain likelihood, action in these bounded analytic realms of subjective meaning (*Sinnbereich*), as captured by ideal types, is empirically uprooted from its random and reactive flow and becomes endowed with a directed aspect, he holds. A probability exists for this action to become *social* action and then to congeal into patterns of social action that form demarcated groupings.

Each sphere implies a likelihood of empirical action-orientations clearly distinct *vis-à-vis* action-orientations in every other domain. Persons are 'placed into various life-spheres, each of which is governed by different laws,' Weber maintains (2005b, 267). What are each domain's typical themes, dilemmas, and sets of questions as identified in *E&S*?

Religion

A focus upon explanations for suffering, misfortune, and misery distinguishes this domain (1968, 422–6). Believers are oriented to transcendental forces, religious doctrines, and questions regarding salvation—and this orientation influences their social action. Whenever salvation goals and paths place a comprehensive set of demands upon action, the faithful organize their entire lives on behalf of religious values, for they have become aware that certain activities, when performed methodically, assist and even guarantee salvation. In this manner religion-oriented action becomes characterized by continuity and, in some cases, by a comprehenive systematization. Even a *methodical-rational* organization of life may then arise (1946, 290–1; 1968, 518–76; Kalberg 1980, 1990, 2001b).

Rulership

This domain concerns the reasons why persons attribute legitimacy to commands and their motives for rendering obedience. It refers to the probability that a definable group of individuals will orient their social action to giving commands, that another definable group will direct their social action to obedience, and that commands are in fact carried out. Here three major 'principles of legitimation'— rational-legal, traditional, and charismatic—orient meaningful action, according to Weber (1968, 53, 212–45, 941–54).

Law

The orientation of social action to laws involves an attribution of validity to them. That is, a legal order is believed to be binding, at least to some extent. This element of legitimacy directs action, Weber insists, though it does so in combination with a further component central to the law domain: legal statutes are enforced by a staff in possession of coercive powers, whether the patriarch's clan or the state's functionary (1968, 311–16, 654–8).

The Economy

The search to satisfy desires for useful goods and services also orients action. It does so in particular when this satisfaction involves scarce goods or services. This realm also concerns the organization of labor in order to enhance production (1968, 311–55).

The Universal Organizations: The Household and Sib Group

These 'undifferentiated forms of life' are characterized by relationships to persons, close affectual bonds, and intense personal interaction. Person-oriented values are cultivated in these groups rather than, for example, a means-end pursuit of desired goods. A strong ethic of compassion and sharing prevails, as do the values of candor, reliability, and respect for authority (1968, 356–84).

Status Groups

This domain refers to action oriented to group-specific consumption patterns, socialization practices, conventions, values, and styles of life. Accordingly, unique to each group are (positive or negative) notions of social honor, esteem, and prestige. Moreover, each status group places restrictions to some degree on social interaction with status unequals. Hence, specific to this arena are action-orientations that protect social distance and cultivate exclusiveness (2005a, 151–62).

   As noted, each domain, charted analytically in E&S through innumerable ideal types, indicates probable empirical orientations, and even patterns, for social action. Furthermore, although analytically distinct in terms of dilemmas, problems, and sets of questions, realms may in some epochs and societies overlap and intertwine empirically to such a degree that their boundaries, themes, and autonomy are scarcely visible; in other epochs and societies they develop more 'autonomously.' Finally, by no means do they unfold empirically at the same tempo or in a parallel manner.[8] Each realm's 'autonomy' appears with a greater likelihood whenever supporting carrier groupings congeal. E&S assists conceptualization of how some spheres can then be seen to cast their influence broadly—and even beyond the era of their origin.

   Weber offers many illustrations.[9] His discussion of rulership, for example, concerns an evaluation of the extent to which the 'developmental chances' of rulership's 'structural principles' are subject to 'economic, political or any other external determinants.' However, it also assesses the degree to which the types

---

   8   Weber's most direct statement on this point is to be found in *The Protestant Ethic* (2002b, 35–7). Here he opposes the 'general rationalization' thesis of Werner Sombart.
   9   This section is indebted to Kalberg 1994b, 55–7. Further illustrations are found there.

of rulership follow 'an "autonomous" logic inherent in their technical structure' (1968, 578, 654–5, 1002). Weber is especially cognizant of how the attribution of legitimacy to rulership endows this realm with an independent profile. The power of the Brahmins in classical India, for example, did not alone account for the caste system's endurance and opposition to the development of a city economy and a 'citizenry'; rather, the widespread belief that the Brahmins legitimately possessed prestige and authority proved also pivotal (1958, 90–1, 113–14, 127–9).

Weber frequently calls attention to religious doctrines and salvation paths, each of which might influence the practical way of life of believers in an autonomous manner: 'The Indian doctrine of Kharma, the Calvinist belief in predestination, the Lutheran justification through faith, and the Catholic doctrine of sacrament,' for example (1946, 286–7). Although status groups in particular may play important roles in the formation of religious doctrines, particularly in their formative stages, beliefs can never be comprehended as functions of stratum-specific interests, he insists (1946, 268–70). Similarly, a religion's 'economic ethic' can never be understood exclusively 'as a simple "function" of a form of economic organization' (1946, 268):

> The nature of the desired sacred values has been strongly influenced by the nature of the external interest-situation and the corresponding way of life of the ruling strata and thus by the social stratification itself. But the reverse also holds: wherever the whole way of life has been methodically rationalized, its direction has been profoundly determined by the ultimate values toward which this rationalization has been oriented (1946, 286–7 [transl. alt.]; see pp. 268–70, 286, 290).

To Weber, 'the content of religious ideas ... carry purely within themselves an autonomous momentum, lawful capacity (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*), and coercive power' (2002b, 240 [n. 94]). Indeed, once established, religious beliefs may have a strong impact upon economic and political development, he maintains—and even shape an epoch's legitimating principles and world view.[10]

In sum, the various societal domains of *E&S* provide a firm foundation for Weber's broadranging multicausality. Comprised of delimited constellations of ideal types (Kalberg, 1994b, 149–51), each arena signifies, as noted, a particular dilemma, problematic, indigenous staying power, and potential empirical autonomy. 'The structural forms (*Strukturformen*) of social action,' Weber argues, 'follow "laws of their own", as we shall see time and again, and even apart from this fact, they may in a given case always be co-determined by other than economic cases' (1968, 341; see p. 935). Some demonstrate, especially if supported by strong carrier groupings and facilitating contexts (see below), a more enduring capacity; however, empirically they seldom develop in parallel or at the same tempo. Hence,

---

10   On the 'dynamic autonomy' of religious ideas and world views placed into motion by the problem of theodicy in the West, see Kalberg 1990, 2001b, 2004. Unfortunately, this large theme must be omitted here.

domains convey forcefully Weber's non-linear view of history and contribute a powerful further mode of conceptualizing how, to him, the past and present interweave. His notion of social context also conceptualizes this interlocking.

5. What Can Arise: The Importance of Context

Social action is embedded deeply in social contexts, according to Weber. He queries, 'what action can arise in a specific milieu?' 'What action can become sociologically significant?'

Comprised exclusively from arrays of patterned action, according to Weber, contexts influence particular patterned action—indeed its substance as well as its impact. New patterns of action expand and attain sociological significance amidst facilitating contexts of patterned action. Carrier groupings play important parts in this process, yet Weber now moves a step farther. He seeks to integrate 'the "particular fact" ... as a real causal factor into a real, hence concrete context' (1949a, 135). Only a few illustrations can be offered.

Even the rise of charismatic leaders depends upon a milieu of conducive action-orientations and groupings, he maintains. Even ethical prophecy, which Weber sees as an extraordinary force capable of shattering sacred norms and of revolutionizing daily life, is normally dependent for its development upon the existence of a 'certain minimum of intellectual culture' (1968, 486; see pp. 577, 1116–17). A fertile ground in the period of the first Exile in ancient Israel facilitated the impact of this prophecy far and wide, yet its extraordinary capacity had confronted suffocating barriers in ancient India, China, and Egypt (1968, 418–19, 447–50; Kalberg 1994a, 1999).

Weber's examination of markets, the legal education, and the social status of entrepreneurs also focusses upon social contexts. The expansion of the market economy depends in part upon whether—in the form of a substantial degree of guaranteed contractual freedom and a broad legal authorization of transactions—a legal context appears (1968, 668). And what array of patterned action and groups allowed for a type of legal education to appear?

> The effects of legal training are bound to be different where it is in the hands of *honoratiores* whose relations with legal practice are professional ... The existence of such a special class of honoratiores is, generally speaking, possible only where legal practice is not sacredly dominated and legal practice has not yet become too involved with the needs of urban commerce. (1968, 793)

Finally, while the status of the entrepreneur and businessman in Antiquity and the Middle Ages was alike quite low, Weber stresses that the reasons for this evaluation varied according to social milieu: it resulted in the ancient world from the contempt of a leisure class of rentiers for traders and tradesmen, while it originated in the Middle Ages from criticism of commercial relations by the Catholic Church—for

these interactions could not be regulated by ethical norms (1976, 66–7; 1968, 583–8).[11] Even when carried by powerful classes, organizations, or status groups, new patterns of subjectively meaningful action and new groupings never spread across constellations of groups in a uniform manner, Weber insists; they confront at every step configurations of groups. The multiple ways in which, depending upon whether a facilitating milieu exists, arrays of patterned action and groups juxtapose and crystallize into unique configurations captures his attention. Accordingly, he repeatedly admonishes in strong terms against temptations to formulate inter-cultural and inter-epochal analogies (1976, 39–40, 341; Kalberg 1994b, 83).

In general, the emphasis Weber's sociology places upon ideal types, social carriers, societal domains, and the broadly multicausal origins of regular action all lead him to conclude that patterned action must be viewed as situated within contexts of patterned action. Utilizing this armament of concepts, he can assess whether regular action is located within a milieu of *many* ideal types and domains or, conversely, within a context more limited in scope. And does a particular *type of social action* reign 'across' several ideal types and even domains?

Just as patterned action becomes located in contexts of regular action and groups that erect circumscribing or facilitating boundaries, societies as well—because comprised of *multiple* configurations of patterned action in groups—can be best conceptualized as characterized by group-based parameters, Weber insists. To him, some patterns of action place thrusts into motion and other patterns of action resist these impulses; some thrusts remain weak and marginal while other constellations of regular action become widespread—indeed, they may become, especially if powerful carriers appear, cohesive and demarcated groups. If further facilitating social contexts fail to congeal, however, even these impulses seldom call forth significant social transformations. And every development calls forth a reaction, according to Weber. Social groups that start out strong as carriers of new ideas, interests, and values may fade quickly, smothered by heretofore latent groupings now allied in solid opposition against the new.

Weber's concepts allow him to see further that some milieu—those, for example, in which traditional action prevails widely—can be understood as closed and resistant to new patterns of action. In this case even the message of a great charismatic figure may go unheard, and even technological innovations and massive power may fail to introduce new regularities of action and groups. He often views the ancient Egyptian and Chinese civilizations in these terms. Indeed, in these empirical cases the comprehensive rigor of traditions implies to Weber that scarcely a gap exists between 'past' and 'present' (see 1968, 429). On the other hand, a qualitatively different *context* for new patterned action exists, he maintains, when predominantly means-end rational action extends across configurations of groups—namely, one that less firmly interweaves past and present. Thus, Weber's armament of concepts allows the conceptualization of social contexts in a way that

---

11   For further examples that demonstrate the centrality of social contexts for Weber, see Kalberg 1994b, 38–46, 168–92.

enables identification also of *variation* in the extent to which the past influences the present.

In sum, to him every established constellation of groups—'the past' – demarcates a singular context that influences and shapes new action patterns and groups. 'What *can* arise' relates directly to a social milieu—a thick web of existing regular action and groups. Consequently, Weber's sociology rejects 'universal laws,' for they imply to him a level of action inadequately rooted empirically. Of necessity the influence of unique contexts is downplayed. Similarly, sweeping generalizations (bureaucratization, rationalization, evolution) remain blind to the level of analysis—patterns of action and groups—demarcated by Weber's concepts and his broadranging multicausality. Hence, they remain incapable, he contends, of grasping the *complex* ways in which the past and present interweave.

6. Conclusion: The Perpetual and Tight Interweaving of Past and Present

Weber's emphasis upon the multicausal origins of regular action and groups anchors the close interweaving in his sociology of the past with the present. Further foundational and empirically-based concepts also do so: ideal types, social carriers, and societal domains. In addition, reference to social contexts, he stresses, serves an indispensable task: it identifies the circumstances under which patterns of action may become firm and, manifest as groups, acquire powerful carriers. Some groups may then, given further facilitating social contexts, develop autonomously and even penetrate deeply into a subsequent epoch. To Weber, 'that which has been handed down from the past becomes everywhere the immediate precursor of that taken in the present as valid' (1968, 29 [transl. alt.]). Even the abrupt appearance of 'the new'—even the 'supernatural' power of charisma –never fully ruptures, he holds, ties to the past (1968, 577; 1946, 273).

Weber's sociology sees multiple and complex constellations of patterned action and innumerable moving groups as omnipresent. Moreover, larger configurations of groups, even each 'society,' possesses a 'characteristic individuality'—yet, to him, one constituted *only* from particular configurations of patterned action and groups. If Weber's procedures and heuristic concepts are utilized, these configurations can be identified. His sociology explains, for example, how 'openness' and development in clearly definable directions characterize some societies and how others turn inward and become 'closed' and unchanging.[12]

Exclusive reference to charisma-tradition or charisma-bureaucracy dichotomies inadequately capture the diverse, multiple, and substantive ways in which the

---

12   . The general emphasis in Weber's sociology upon conflict, as well as its conceptual organization around societal domains, social carriers, and ideal types rather than 'society,' opposes all versions of organic holism. For him, a society's unity relates exclusively to *empirical* forces and is always one of degree (see 1968, 1192–3; 1976, 341; Kalberg 2003, 141–7).

past perpetually influences the present, Weber's procedures and armament of concepts maintain.[13] Moreover, from the vantage point of his sociology, global and overarching concepts—bureaucratization, rationalization, and disenchantment—also must be seen as imprecise. Weber's empirically-based concepts are empowered to take cognizance of 'fateful events,' tenuous balances, fissions and fusions, and unrepeatable configurations (1968, 1192–3; 2002, 123).

Switchbacks, reversals, unforeseen coalitions, and unexpected consequences characterize Weber's studies rather than a collapsing of regular action and groups into 'necessary,' directed, and predictable historical developments. Survivals and legacies are central and frequent;[14] paradox and irony repeatedly become apparent. His conceptualization of the causes of patterned action and group formation as widely pluralistic and his acknowledgment that societal domains may develop empirically along their 'own' pathways leads him to reject all cyclical and evolutionary theories (1976, 366).[15] All depictions of history as following linear lines and pursuing an inevitable course stand opposed to Weber's foundational tenets. Although rationalization, disenchantment, and bureaucratization pathways can be conceptualized by Weber's concepts and procedures, his entire sociology stresses that the empirical unfolding of these sweeping 'processes' depends upon singular concatenations of hosts of patterned action, not least the crystallization of facilitating contexts of regular action. Likewise, Weber's foundational concepts and procedures reject all sociological schools that focus upon overarching themes (the question of social order and 'equilibrium,' the integration and unity of society, the omnipresence of class conflict) and positivist assumptions regarding the 'lawfulness of society.'

Whether constellations of regular action crystallize in a manner that causes groups to develop in a clear direction comprises to him an empirical question only. Further questions then follow regarding the empirical strength of social carriers and the basic features of the patterned action and groups that comprise a social context. Weber opposes all theorizing that minimizes the complexity of his concepts. Patterned action, ideal types, carrier groups, and societal domains, once juxtaposed with a broadranging multicausal methodology and a rigorous orientation to social contexts, articulate a uniquely Weberian 'view of history'—one that perpetually and tightly interweaves past and present.

---

13   Nor will reference to, he would argue, the dichotomous concepts familiar to us today: *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft*, tradition-modernity, and particularism-universalism.

14   On Weber's important notion of 'legacies', see Kalberg 1994b, 159–64; 2001b, 310–14.

15   Weber's opposition to evolutionary thinking is often obscured by the frequent translation of *Entwicklung* (development) as 'evolution'.

References

Alexander, J. (1987), 'Fundamentale Zweideutigkeiten in Max Webers Theorie der Rationalisierung', in Böckler and Weiß (eds).

Berger, T. (1976), *Max Weber's Theory of Concept Formation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press).

Böckler, S. and J. Weiß (eds) (1987), *Marx oder Weber?* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag).

Camic, C. (ed.) (1997), *Reclaiming the Sociological Classics* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

Gerth, H.H. and C.W. Mills. (eds) (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Glock, C. and P. Hammond (eds) (1973), *Beyond the Classics?* (New York: Harper & Row).

Habermas, J. (1971), 'Value-freedom and Objectivity', in Stammer (ed.).

Kalberg, S. (1980), 'Max Weber's Types of Rationality: Cornerstones for the Analysis of Rationalization Processes in History', *American Journal of Sociology* 85:5, 1145–79.

Kalberg, S. (1990), 'The Rationalization of Action in Max Weber's Sociology of Religion', *Sociological Theory* 8:1, 58–84.

Kalberg, S. (1994a), 'Max Weber's Analysis of the Rise of Monotheism', *The British Journal of Sociology* 45:4, 563–84.

Kalberg, S. (1994b), *Max Weber's Comparative-Historical Sociology* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Kalberg, S. (1997), 'Max Weber's Sociology: Research Strategies and Modes of Analysis', in Camic (ed.).

Kalberg, S. (1999), 'Max Weber's Critique of Recent Comparative-Historical Sociology and a Reconstruction of His Analysis of the Rise of Confucianism in China', in Lehmann (ed.).

Kalberg, S. (2001a), 'The Modern World as a Monolithic Iron Cage?', *Max Weber Studies* 1:2, 178–95.

Kalberg, S. (2001b), '"Should the 'Dynamic Autonomy' of Ideas Matter to Sociologists?" Max Weber on the Origin of Other-Worldly Salvation Religions and the Constitution of Groups in American Society Today', *Journal of Classical Sociology* 1:3, 291–328.

Kalberg, S. (2003), 'Max Weber', in Ritzer (ed.).

Kalberg, S. (2004), 'The Past and Present Influence of World Views: Max Weber on a Neglected Sociological Concept', *Journal of Classical Sociology* 4:2, 139–64.

Kalberg, S. (ed.) (2005), *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

Lehmann, J. (ed.) (1999), *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* (Stamford, CT.: JAI Press Inc.).

Marcuse, H. (1971), 'Industrialization and Capitalism', in Stammer (ed.).

Mommsen, W. (1974), *The Age of Bureaucracy: Perspectives on the Political Sociology of Max Weber* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell).

Mommsen, W. (1987), *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press).

Nelson, B. (1973), 'Weber's Protestant Ethic: Its Origins, Wanderings, and Foreseeable Futures', in Glock and Hammond (eds).

Nelson, B. (1974), 'Max Weber's "Author's Introduction"', *Sociological Inquiry* 44:4, 269–78.

Nielsen, D. (2005), '"The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism" as Grand Narrative: Max Weber's Philosophy of History', in Swatos and Kaelber (eds).

Parsons, T. (1963), 'Introduction', in Weber (1963).

Parsons, T. (1966), *Societies: Evolutionary and Comparative Perspectives*. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall).

Parsons, T. (1971), *The Evolution of Societies* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall).

Ritzer, G. (ed.) (2003), *The Blackwell Companion to Major Social Theorists* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers).

Salomon, A. (1935), 'Max Weber's Sociology', *Social Research* 2: 1, 61–73.

Scaff, L. (1989), *Fleeing the Iron Cage* (Berkeley: The University of California Press).

Shils, E. and H. Finch (eds) (1949), *Max Weber: The Methodology* Stammer, O. (ed.) (1971), *Max Weber and Sociology Today* (New York: Harper & Row).

Swatos, W. and L. Kaelber (eds) (2005), *The Protestant Ethic Turns 100* (Boulder: Paradigm).

Weber, M. (1927), *General Economic History.* Translated by Frank H. Knight. (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1946), 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions', in Gerth and Mills (eds).

Weber, M. (1949a), 'Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences', in Shils and Finch (eds).

Weber, M. (1949b), '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', in Shils and Finch (eds).

Weber, M. (1951), *The Religion of China.* Translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth. (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1952), *Ancient Judaism.* Translated by Hans. H. Gerth and Don Martindale. (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1958), *The Religion of India.* Translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale. (New York: The Free Press).

Weber, M. (1963), *The Sociology of Religion.* Translated by Ephraim Fischoff. (Boston: Beacon Press).

Weber, M. (1968), *Economy and Society.* Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. (New York: Bedminster Press).

Weber, M. (1976), *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations.* Translated by R.I. Frank. (London: NLB).

Weber, M. (2002a), 'Prefatory Remarks'. Translated by Stephen Kalberg, in Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.*

Weber, M. (2002b), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.* Translated by Stephen Kalberg. (Oxford: Blackwell).

Weber, M. (2005a), 'Class, Status, Party', in Kalberg (ed.), *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity*.

Weber, M. (2005b), 'Politics as a Vocation', in Kalberg (ed.), *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity*.

Chapter 18

Temporality and the Value of Facts in Max Weber's Critical Social Science

Robert M. Slammon

The history of the social sciences is marked by a perpetual questioning of its foundations and status as a legitimate science. And arguably one of the aporias driving this disciplinary self-reflection over the years has been the 'problem' of time, or historical time, in its practices of knowing.

The recognition of time as a problem is nothing new to Western metaphysics, but it reaches a dramatic level of intensity in late-nineteenth century European discourses on philosophy and science. A sudden awareness of the problem engulfs German intellectual culture beginning around 1880, inaugurating a period of 'crisis' across the sciences (Troeltsch 1966; Spengler 2006; Bambach 1995). The crisis took many forms—debates over issues of national identity, political sovereignty, the role of philosophy, economic scholarship, knowledge and state policy, and tradition and education. Eventually, the crisis would assume the form of a general cynicism over the legitimacy of German culture and institutions or whether history could be understood as a meaningful unity or progressive continuity (Bambach 1995, 6). But in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the crisis was precipitated by an intense questioning of the legitimacy of what would later be labeled historicism, the reigning paradigm of German historical scholarship.

Historicists shared a perspective that broke with doctrines, such as natural law, that posit an a-temporal and universal *nunc stans* to human existence (Iggers 1968, 5). Human being, rather, was considered radically historical, and history was valorized as the domain of human values and freedom. The course of history, from this perspective, could not be understood, as we understand nature, as a simple process of cause and effect; nor could events be understood removed from their specific spatial-temporal locations in history. The task of the historian, therefore, was not to subordinate historical events to laws or theoretical concepts, but to grasp the past in its unique, concrete particularity, to see it, as Ranke, the father of German academic historicism, exhorted, 'as it essentially was' (Ranke 1973, 23). Values, from this standpoint, are realized temporally in history. 'No individual, no institution, no historical deed can be judged by standards external to the situation in which it arises, but rather must be judged in terms of its own inherent values' (Iggers 1968, 8). It is not the job of the historian to pass judgment on events of the past. As an expression of the moral energies of a people or spirit of an age, history revealed itself as a purposive and meaningful unity, valuable in itself.

By the 1880s, most of these premises came under intense scrutiny. Positivism, which grew in influence during these decades, promoted a notion of human science, modeled on the natural sciences, that came in direct conflict with the basic premises of historicism. The positivist challenge to historicism triggered intense methodological debates, referred to then as the 'Methodenstreit,' which fostered an extensive reevaluation of the foundations of the human sciences. Above all, there was a growing awareness of a performative contradiction at the heart of the historicist enterprise: adherents insisted on the fundamental historicity of all things human, but reserved for themselves, as producers of valid knowledge about the past, a standpoint outside of historical determination. The problem of historicity presented a set of questions that were at once epistemological and moral. Historical inquiry could establish a basis for truth or value, but could it establish a basis for both, without succumbing to relativism? The uncertain relationship between facts and values in history posed a theoretical and cultural quandary for scholars. Indeed, it was interpreted by many as an urgent, epochal crisis, the arrival of age of epistemological and moral chaos. How can objective knowledge of the past be guaranteed when knowledge is determined from a position that is historical itself and therefore articulated with values? How can the present maintain its unity (values, identities, etc.) if the past responsible for its temporal determination can no longer be understood as a given, coherent, or continuous?

The historical studies and critical reflections of Max Weber occupy a significant place among the work of thinkers of the period who sought to establish a basis for humanistic and historical inquiry. Weber affiliated with the Baden group of neo-Kantians; and he adopted a distinctive, Kantian perspective from which to address the controversies concerning historical relativism, the divide between facts and values, the distinction between the natural and human sciences, and the standards of judgment in the human sciences. Weber's views on these topics are contained in a series of methodological essays and critiques he wrote between 1902 and 1917. The first was a critique of Wilhelm Roscher and Karl Knies, two prominent figures of the German Historical School of economics. Next he published two more essays, one titled 'Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Policy and the other 'Critical Studies in the Logic of the Cultural Sciences' in 1904 and 1905, respectively. The latter two essays appeared in the journal *Archiv fur Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, of which Weber had assumed, with Werner Sombart and Edgar Jaffe, joint editorship in 1903. These texts are the first in which Weber lays out his basic position on the distinction between the natural and human sciences and on the relationship between value judgments and empirical knowledge, themes he would return to and refine in subsequent essays and critiques. In what follows, I attempt to clarify Weber's neo-Kantianism by examining his notion of Wertfreiheit (value-freedom) in the light of Kant's theorization of finitude in the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Weber's perspective on the distinction between facts and values, as expressed in his idea of value-freedom, rests on a notion of finitude that is, I contend, distinctively Kantian. Historicists, as well as Weber's neo-Kantian colleagues, Wilhelm Windelband and

Heinrich Rickert, sought to preserve the validity of values by grounding them in an a-temporal, trans-historical order. Weber, alternatively, took human finitude as a precondition of the ethical subject, the terms by which a subject *must* organize its conduct around certain chosen values. Indeed, for Weber, only under the condition of human finitude can values, including the value of science, be said to have validity. Value-freedom, from this perspective, is central to Weber's project of constructing, as an alternative to the dominant intellectual trends of his day, a critical sociology that avoids the dogmatic tendencies of both historicism and positivism.

The debates over method in Weber's day were framed primarily as a conflict between historicism and positivism (Eliaeson 2002, 6–8). The unease that pervaded German academic culture was precipitated in part by the ascendancy of the technological sciences in the universities and the growing influence of positivism, mostly outside of Germany. Some groups argued that the positivist interest in establishing laws could be applied not only to natural world but to social and historical phenomena as well (Eliaeson 2002, 9). These developments created uncertainty about the utility and legitimacy of humanistic traditions of scholarship and fostered a number of efforts to defend these traditions, defined expressly in historicist terms, from the threat of positivism and the technical sciences. Although Weber adopted some of the terms of each perspective, he by no means sided with either. Instead, Weber pursued an alternative path, guided by Kant's speculative and practical philosophy, which sought to avoid the common errors of historicism and positivism. Most troubling, from Weber's perspective, was the tendency of both perspectives to presuppose a universe that was a rational and coherent order, one that was, for this reason, intelligible in itself. Historicism broke with natural law traditions and embraced the full historicity of the human world. The only thing that prevented historicists from recognizing the relativistic implications of their perspective was a common faith that behind the apparent flux of the world stood an eternal and purposive order (Berding 2005, 41–47). Although positivism was associated by most German scholars with Enlightenment rationalism and with the collapse of meaning in the modern world, it too operated with a conception of the social and historical world as being a coherent system with an intrinsic, law-like structure (Iggers 1968, 124).

These assumptions functioned not only to secure values and norms from the contingency of a chaotic world but also to grant existing conditions an axiological status. From such a worldview, science was often reduced to serving an ideological purpose, affirming the status-quo by equating the present state of affairs with what was normatively right. This tendency was not uncommon in German academic culture during the nineteenth century, but it reached its highpoint during the war years, when many university professors used their institutional power and research as an occasion to legitimize and glorify the power of the German state. In Weber's criticism of such practices, he recognizes the interconnection of epistemological and political commitments. He laments that the university had increasingly become an 'institution for the training of loyal state administrators' (Weber 1949, 7). The

efficiency of the state to exercise its 'power over life, death and liberty' and legitimate its policies was underwritten, from Weber's perspective, by a metaphysics that made no 'logical distinction between 'existential knowledge,' i.e., knowledge of what 'is,' and 'normative knowledge,' i.e., knowledge of what 'should be.' The failure to make this distinction, in this case, by opposing schools in the field of economics, was made possible, according to Weber,

> first by the views that immutably invariant natural laws,—later, by the view that an unambiguous evolutionary principle—governed economic life and that accordingly, what was normatively right was identical—in the former case—with the immutably existent—and in the latter—with the inevitably emergent (Weber 1949, 51-52).

From the historicist perspective, values are the product of temporally actualized moral forces; as such, the present always represents a totality that can be taken as a basis of description and normative judgment. Positivists collapsed the distinction between the descriptive and the normative by attributing certain universal, law-like characteristics (the rationality of the historical agent, for example) to human nature. From these ontological and anthropological assumptions followed the common belief that the human sciences could be elevated to the level of an ethical science with empirical foundations. This presented to Weber and his contemporaries a set of problems that were as much ethical as they were epistemological. By regarding the totality of cultural values merely as substantive content for ethical norms and by granting all values an ethical label, this attitude obliterated the autonomy of the ethical imperative and deprived ethical norms of their formal character. These conditions, Weber contends, leave no means of evaluating one value position from another; nor do they provide a purpose of human science other than to reproduce 'objective' reality (Weber 1949, 52).

We can better understand Weber's approach in addressing these problems by first considering the relationship of several aspects of Weber's methodological reflections to Rickert's philosophy of science. Weber adopts many of the basic arguments and conceptual vocabulary of Rickert's philosophy, but it is unclear to what extent Weber accepted all of the premises of Rickert's project. He shares with Rickert as a starting point, for example, the Kantian premise that reality consists of an intensive and extensive manifold. By appropriating this Kantian ontology, Weber and Rickert challenge the intuitionism of historicism and the theoreticism of positivism. The objective world, in its infinite richness, frustrates our attempts to comprehend it 'as it essentially is.' And since we only have access to the phenomenal world, we can no longer assume that our theoretical discourse mirrors reality as it is in itself. Conceptual thought nevertheless plays an indispensable role in our knowledge of the phenomenal world. It is only by subjecting the objective world to the structure of our conceptual thought that it becomes intelligible to us. Concepts, both Weber and Rickert agree, not only make knowledge possible but help us delimit, organize, and select from empirical reality what is most important to us given our cognitive interests. It is less clear whether Weber subscribes to

Rickert's full account of concept-formation, which lies at the center of the latter's solution to the epistemological and moral relativism of historicism.

Indeed, Rickert's theory of concept-formation is critical to his attempts to ground the possibility of knowledge and value outside of temporal experience in the *a priori* forms and categories of the transcendental subject. Concepts, from his perspective, make knowledge possible because they are formed by transcendental rules of logic (Rickert 1962, 36). The formal, *a priori* rules that make knowledge both necessary and universal also determine the respective cognitive interests that distinguish the natural and human sciences (Rickert 1962, 34–35). They establish the principles of concept-formation and the goals of each science. One can subject the manifold to determination either from a logic of equivalence or from a logic of difference. In other words, a science is either interested in what phenomena have in common (generality) or in what makes a phenomenon unique (individuality). The natural sciences abstract from concrete reality in search of general laws, and once these laws are established, the natural sciences focus only on particulars which can be subsumed under these general laws. The human sciences, on the other hand, direct their interest to the particular of the infinite manifold, not for the derivation and application of laws but for their unique individuality. The distinction between the natural and human sciences, from Rickert's perspective, is not absolute; they merely diverge with different epistemological interests, which have their origin in the *a priori* rules of the transcendental subject. 'All empirical reality,' Rickert writes, 'becomes nature when we consider it with regard to the general; it becomes history when we consider it with regard to the particular … every discipline has its point of departure in immediately experienced reality' (Rickert 1986, 250). By rooting these distinctions in transcendental rules of logic, Rickert sought to endow the historical human sciences with the same validity and necessity as the natural sciences.

Rickert advances the same transcendental argument as a solution to moral relativism. What distinguishes the human sciences from the natural sciences is that the former are concerned with values; that is, the human sciences are sciences of culture (*Kulturwissenschaft*). Cultural science studies values in history, but these values, from Rickert's standpoint, are not determined historically (Bambach 1995, 102). The source of all values rather is transcendental and, therefore, universal and absolute. Cultural objects or practices may not represent universal values themselves, but they *refer* to universal values. For all culture arises from the individual and collective efforts to realize universal values in empirical existence, to bridge the gap between 'what is real and what is not yet real but which should become real' (Rickert 1934, 228–29). The task of the investigator, therefore, is to relate cultural objects and practices to the universal values that went into shaping them. The relations of objects to universal values, or 'value-relation,' not only determines their historical individuality but also their significance to the investigator. The investigator's selection of cultural objects, therefore, is not arbitrary or tainted by subjective bias but is guided by values that are universal and absolute.

The primacy Weber attributes to value-freedom in his methodological writings conveys the impression that Weber adopted Rickert's transcendental solution to epistemological and moral relativism. This conclusion appears to be valid in light of Weber's repeated insistence on the *logical* necessity of the separation of facts and values. University professors who abused their power by cloaking value-judgments in the guise of empirical fact are not only committing a personal indiscretion, Weber suggests, but violating a boundary separating two, logically distinct domains. 'What is really at issue,' Weber writes in his 'Ethical Neutrality' essay of 1917, 'is the intrinsically simple demand that the investigator and teacher should keep unconditionally separate the establishment of empirical facts … and his own practical evaluations … These two things are logically different and to deal with them as though they were the same represents a confusion of entirely heterogeneous problems' (Weber 1949, 11). For Weber, arguments directed at our ethical capacity, on one hand, and to 'our capacity and need for analytically ordering empirical reality in the manner which lays claim to validity as empirical truth,' on the other, are separated by an unbridgeable gap (Weber 1949, 58). For this reason, 'It can never be the task of an empirical science to provide binding norms and ideals from which directives for immediate practical activity can be derived' (Weber 1949, 52). The human sciences can provide insight into the appropriateness of the means for achieving a given end, the consequences of selecting particular means to an end, and even the significance of the desired end. But what science cannot provide, Weber insists, is the choice itself. 'It is rather the task of the acting, willing person: he weighs and chooses from among the values involved according to his own conscience and his personal view of the world' (Weber 1949, 53). Weber appears in these and similar passages to be reasserting, in the spirit of the critical philosophy, the jurisdictional boundaries among the logical domains Kant establishes in his three critiques.

But the difficulty of assessing what is Kantian about Weber's neo-Kantianism—or, for that matter, evaluating Weber's relationship to Rickert—lies in his tendency to historicize Kant. For example, in Weber's address, 'Science as a Vocation,' the reason that is presented for the separation of science, morality, art and other domains is no longer purely logical but historical. The impossibility of deriving value-judgments from the domain of science no longer rests in *a priori* rules that proscribe such an illegitimate use of practical reason but follows from the fact that 'various value spheres of the world stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other' (Weber 1946, 147). The steady process of rationalization, of which modern science is part, has destroyed the sense of the universe as a meaningful totality. What remains is a polytheistic universe of divided spheres, each sphere ruled by a different god, and each god at war with the gods of the other orders and values. Thus, the separation of facts and values, Weber suggests, describes our historical condition more than it reflects the a-temporal structure of a transcendental subject. The split between what 'is' and what 'ought to be,' in other words, defines a historical moment effected as much as theorized or prescribed by Kant and modern science. If this interpretation is correct, it could be asked how it was possible for

Weber to maintain such a fated view while defending the legitimacy of science so passionately. The general message of 'Science as a Vocation' suggests one explanation. Since transcendence of our historical moment is not possible, we must enlist the terms and conditions of our present as the basis of our passionate struggle. That means choosing one's god or, in the case of science, one's devil: 'If one wishes to settle with the devil,' Weber instructs his students, 'one must not take to flight before him as so many like to do nowadays. First of all, one has to see the devil's ways to the end in order to realize his power and his limitations' (Weber 1946, 152). In this sense, Kant is one among the principle gods and devils Weber channels in his effort to mount a critical challenge to historicist and positivist epistemology. Weber enlists Kant in what he thought was the necessary task of establishing the limits of truth and value claims in the human sciences.

In his doctrine of the faculties, Kant not only insisted on the relative autonomy of the speculative, practical, and aesthetic interests but clearly defined practical reason as the higher interest. 'The existence of the world could not acquire a worth from the fact of its being known' (Kant 1973, 108) by speculative reason, Kant writes. The speculative and practical interests legislate over different domains: the speculative interest over the domain of sensible objects of possible experience; the practical interest over the a-temporal, supra-sensible—or transcendental— domain of freedom. But the condition for positing ends at all—including the ends of speculative reason—is made possible by practical reason, the capacity of the rational being to posit itself (as a rational being) as its own end. The higher interest of practical reason would be irrelevant, however, if it was not able to realize itself in the real world; the only way this is accomplished, Kant held, was by actualizing itself through temporal, sensible nature (Kant 1973, 14). Sensible nature, in other words, is a last *end* of the moral subject—the freedom of the moral subject realized in sensible nature; therefore, it can never be a *means* of knowing value. Put another way, since any exercise of speculative reason is determined and completed by practical reason, by the act of actualizing values in sensible nature, then speculative reason can never expect to derive—to know—values from or through sensible nature, for this exercise is an *act* of actualization itself.

For Weber, values (or practical interests) clearly play a determining role in the human sciences, but the exact nature of this role is not always clear. On the one hand, Weber appears to reproduce Rickert's notion of 'value-relation': the boundlessness of the infinite manifold necessitates that the investigator make a selection. This selection, which involves the determination of what is of value to the investigator, is guided by certain evaluative ideas. 'To be sure,' Weber writes, 'without the investigator's evaluative ideas, there would be no principle of selection of subject-matter and no meaningful knowledge of concrete reality' (Weber 1949, 82). Cultural objects or practices are significant because they relate to values specific to their own historical and cultural milieu. In turn, these value-relations are significant to the investigator in as much as they relate to her own values. As Weber writes, 'We must learn how to relate the events of the real world consciously or unconsciously to universal 'cultural values' and to select out those

relationships which are significant to us' (Weber 1949, 82). And Weber states time and again that cultural objects become significant to the investigator as they relate to her 'cultural interests' (Weber 1949, 81).

What Weber means exactly by the value-relations that obtain between cultural subject matter and the 'cultural interests' of the investigator is maddeningly ambiguous. By 'cultural interests,' does he refer to mundane 'cognitive interests' or to purely scientific values grounded *a priori*, as Rickert may have defined them? Or does he point to a broader notion of culture? Weber, in a sense, faced the same challenge encountered by Windelband, Rickert, and other members of the Baden School, that is, in making the historical human sciences fit the narrow framework of Kant's speculative philosophy. The kind of experience claimed by the human sciences as their subject-matter differs significantly from the narrowly atomistic notion of experience Kant modeled after mathematics and physics in his first Critique (Benjamin 1996, 100). The human sciences, as sciences of human culture, deal with content already constituted, *a posteriori*, as meaningful wholes. In an attempt to preserve the certainty of historical knowledge and the validity of values, Rickert widened the role of *a priori* concepts to match this expanded field of experience. As a consequence, the difference between conceptual thought that is historical (*a posteriori*) and purely logical or formal (*a priori*) become blurred; and culture is defined narrowly, in relation to abstract values, to be adequately contained by these *a priori* concepts. Weber often appears to be dealing with a wider notion of culture, which suggests that he broke with these premises. In one passage, for example, he writes, 'The transcendental presupposition of every cultural science lies not in our finding a certain culture or any 'culture' in general to be valuable but rather in the fact that we are cultural beings, endowed with the capacity and will to take a deliberative attitude towards the world and lend it significance' (Weber 1949, 81). The phenomena that are the subject matter of the cultural sciences, in other words, 'have cultural significance for us, and on this significance alone,' Weber adds, 'rests their scientific interest' (Weber 1949, 81).

Weber comes close in these passages to voicing a position similar that of Wilhelm Dilthey , who viewed cultural being as the fundamental condition of possibility for any knowledge of the past. But unlike Dilthey, who questioned the legitimacy of conventional scientific standards, Weber still defended the 'capacity to distinguish between empirical knowledge and value-judgments' (Weber 1949, 58). Despite the ambiguity of Weber's usage of certain key terms, what is clear is the primacy Weber granted the practical interests of the investigator or of his or her cultural milieu. It is the practical interest, the investigator's capacity to impute meaning and value in the world, that facilitates scientific inquiry and makes knowledge possible in the cultural sciences. Under the legislation of the practical interest, commitment to scientific truth becomes never something guaranteed but rather a kind of Kantian regulative ideal. In his editorial statement for the *Archiv*, for example, Weber states that the 'fulfillment of the scientific duty to see the factual truth … constitutes the program to which we wish to adhere with ever increasing firmness' (Weber 1949, 58). And in his address, 'Science as a Vocation'

he characterizes this duty as 'something that in reality never comes, and never can come, to an end' (Weber 1946, 138).

By defining the scientific commitment as a 'duty', Weber by no means deprives the speculative interest of science of the powers specific to it. Consistent with the distinctions Weber attempts to legislate is his assertion that values cannot be derived from empirical knowledge. 'Evaluative ideas are for their part empirically discoverable and analyzable as elements of meaningful human conduct,' Weber maintains (Weber 1949, 111), but these ideas, as objects of empirical knowledge, no longer remain valid for us. Weber's consistent rejection of the objective determination of value is perhaps the most intriguing aspect of his work. By rejecting the objective determination of value, Weber vitiated the possibility of grounding the value of truth. He essentially admits as much in his famously enigmatic claim that, 'Scientific truth is precisely what is valid for all who seek the truth' (Weber 1949, 84); or when he states, 'It should be remembered that the belief in the value of scientific truth is the product of certain cultures and is not a product of man's original nature' (Weber 1949, 110). Weber's position, of course, left him with a dilemma: on what grounds do the possibility of scientific activity rest? On one hand, Weber resolves this dilemma by rooting the possibility of scientific activity in the ''personality' of the scientist, that is to say, in the integrity of the scientist's 'irrational' commitment to truth as the ultimate value' (Owen 1994, 91). In other words, Weber grounds the value of truth in the knowing subject 'who recognizes that the value of truth cannot be rationally grounded and yet chooses to legislate this value for himself and to affirm its value as a matter of faith' (Owen 1994, 91). On the other hand, as much as this legislation falls under the jurisdiction of practical reason, the value of truth cannot be affirmed with indifference to sensible nature, for it is through sensible nature that the value of truth must be realized. The primacy Weber gives to the concepts of 'reality' and 'objectivity' in his methodological essays should not be read as an endorsement of epistemological realism or a simple positivism. The objects of experience that form the subject matter of the human sciences—'Wirklichkeit,' in Weber's terms—become the ends by which the value of truth is realized.

Wirklichkeit then becomes a limiting concept not only for something that can never be exhaustively *conceptualized*—i.e., the infinite manifold—(Palonen 1999, 536), but also for something that can never be fully, or once-and-for-all *actualized*—i.e., the value of truth. Inquiry in the human sciences is always subject to the vicissitudes of an ever changing cultural horizon and to the contingencies of the investigator's confrontation with concrete 'problems' within the setting of empirical research. For this reason, the human sciences can never expect to achieve complete systematicity. 'There are sciences to which eternal youth is granted,' Weber maintains, 'and the historical disciplines are among them—all those to which the eternally onward flowing stream of culture perpetually brings new problems' (Weber 1949, 104–105). The unproblematic and ahistorical relationship between concepts and reality that was often presupposed by historicists and positivists alike is replaced by Weber with one in which concept and reality are

divided by the stream of historical time. 'In the cultural sciences,' he writes, 'concept-construction depends on the setting of the problem, and the latter varies with the content of the culture itself. The relationship between concept and reality in the cultural sciences involves the transitoriness of all such syntheses' (Weber 1949, 105). In another passage, he argues that 'attempts to determine the 'real' and the 'true' meaning of historical concepts always reappear and never succeed in reaching their goal' (Weber 1949, 105). Neither can actualizing the value of science, from this perspective, ever reach its final goal. Just as living in the modern polytheistic universe requires that the ultimate values by which one lives one's life be determined by choice, the scientist too must stake the value of science in the practice of science itself, in the choice to commit oneself to the enterprise with passionate devotion, even in the absence of the certainty of its ultimate value. But since scientific practice, like all social practice, occurs within a temporal horizon, the task of actualization, of committing the values we have chosen to the empirical conditions of action, is a never-ending project, one that must be repeated indefinitely.

What emerges in Weber's reflections on method is a notion of subjectivity that resembles the basic structure of the Kantian subject. It is, in essence, a subject that is divided from itself by time. According to Kant's doctrine of practical reason, the subject is both phenomenon and thing in itself, subject to temporality and natural necessity as phenomenon and source of 'free causality' as thing in itself (Deleuze 1996, 40). The actions of the finite subject produce sensible effects that are subject to the laws of necessity that govern nature; but in as much as these actions are determined by the will of a rational subject, they are an expression of a free cause, a will that, in its autonomy, cannot itself be caused. Thus, nature and freedom always lie in a relationship of assistance or opposition; or more specifically, 'Opposition or assistance,' Kant writes, 'is not between nature and freedom, but between the former as phenomenon and the effects of the latter as phenomena in the world of sense' (Kant 1973, 37). For Kant, the moral subject wills sensible objects to conform to the moral law, a law that is universally binding to all rational subjects. Weber held no such confidence in the universalizability of moral axioms (Warren 1988, 39). The modern world presents the subject with a plurality of value-spheres, each sphere with its own internally specific ends. The best a subject can aspire to is 'a consistency of its inner relationship to certain ultimate values and meanings of life, which are turned into purposes and thus into teleological rational action' (Weber 1975, 192). Thus, an ethic of ultimate ends is insufficient; one must also commit oneself to an ethic of responsibility, a heightened regard for the worldly consequences of one's value commitments.

It is understandable if Weber's 'solution,' based on a rejection of the possibility of ever rationally demonstrating the axiomatic premises of one's choices, is greeted as less than satisfying. But they are the most uncompromising features of his thought that prove to be the most decisive in countering the dogmatic tendencies he associated with historicism and positivism. Representatives of these perspectives were able to claim epistemological and moral certainty by adopting

certain premises, such as intuitionism or naturalism, the utility of which lay in their effacement of subjectivity. Weber's reassertion of subjectivity was in fact central to his intervention. By attaching the validity of values to their manifestation in the empirical conditions of action, Weber attempted to widen the critical distance between the subject and the concrete historical conditions of which it is part. Value, from this perspective, can never be identified with what exists—a society's current institutional or normative order, for example—but is determined within the critical space specific to the Weberian, neo-Kantian subject. In this sense, Weber's notion of subjectivity presents an alternative to the fated subject of historicism. Although historicists claimed human freedom as a basic tenet of their thought, their conception of radical historicity, the historical determination of all things human, pushed to its logical conclusion, proved incompatible with freedom. How could an historical subject be free and historically determined at the same time? For Weber, history is never a matter of pure determinism or freedom but entails a complex articulation between the two (Palonen 1999). The subject, from Weber's perspective, neither transcends nor is identical to history. This mode of being that is specific to the subject in Weber is given not by Reason or Providence but by subjectivity itself. Again, for Weber, subjects are ultimately 'cultural beings endowed with the capacity and the will to take a deliberate attitude toward the world and lend it significance' (Weber 1949, 81). Since this capacity is exercised against a multiplicity irreducible in itself, it must take the form of a choice. We must, in other words, choose the values in terms of which we organize our lives; that is, we organize a way of life by integrating such values in a consistent fashion within the sensible world of action. 'To judge the validity of such values,' however, 'remains a matter of faith,' Weber says (Weber 1949, 55), for values are only valid in as much as they are actualized in the sensible world. It is this temporality that resists both the determinist consequences and exaggerated pronouncements of freedom characteristic of historicism. For Weber, the subject's determinate existence, its temporal mode of being, is the condition of both ethical conduct and freedom.

References

Bambach, C.R. (1995), *Heidegger, Dilthey, and the Crisis of Historicism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press).

Benjamin, W. (1996), 'On the Program of the Coming Philosophy', in Benjamin, W.

Benjamin, W. (1996), *Selected writings, 1913-1926*, vol. 1. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press).

Berding, H. (2005), 'Leopold von Ranke,' in Koslowski, P.

Deleuze, G. (1996), *Kant's critical philosophy: The Doctrine of the Faculties* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press).

Eliæson, S. (2002), *Max Weber's Methodologies: Interpretation and Critique* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press).

Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C.W. (eds) (1946), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University press).

Iggers, G.G. (1968), *The German Conception of History; The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press).

Iggers, G.G. (1997), *Historiography in the Twentieth Century: From Scientific Objectivity to the Postmodern Challenge* (Hanover, NH: Wesleyan University Press, published by University Press of New England).

Kant, I. (1956), *Critique of Practical Reason.* Translated by L.W. Beck. (Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill).

Kant, I. (1964), *Critique of Pure Reason.* Translated by N.K. Smith. (New York: Macmillan).

Kant, I. (1973), *Critique of Judgment.* Translated by J.C. Meredith. (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press).

Koslowski, P. (ed.) (2005), *The Discovery of Historicity in German Idealism and Historicism* (Berlin: Springer).

Owen, D. (1994), *Maturity and Modernity: Nietzsche, Weber, Foucault, and the Ambivalence of Reason* (London; New York: Routledge).

Palonen, Kari (1999), 'Max Weber's Reconceptualization of Freedom', *Political Theory* 27.

Ranke, L. von and Humboldt, W. (1973), *The Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill).

Rickert, H. (1934), *Grundprobleme der philosophie, methodologie, ontologie, anthropologie* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (P. Siebeck).

Rickert, H. (1962), *Science and History; A Critique of Positivist Epistemology* (Princeton, NJ: Van Nostrand).

Rickert, H. (1986), *The Limits of Concept Formation in Natural Science: A Logical Introduction to the Historical Sciences* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press).

Spengler, O. et al. (2006), *The Decline of the West* (New York: Vintage Books).

Troeltsch, E. (1966), *Der Historismus und seine Überwindung* (Aalen: Scientia-Verlag).

Warren, M. (1988), 'Max Weber's Liberalism for a Nietzschean World', *American Political Science Review* 82.

Weber, M. (1975), *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics* (New York: Free Press).

Weber, M. (1946), in Gerth and Mills (eds).

Weber, M. (1949), *Max Weber on the Methodology of the Social Sciences* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press).

Chapter 19

Weber and the Straussian Charge of Relativism[1]

Ahmad Sadri and Mahmoud Sadri

1. Introduction

We learn from Weber that under certain conditions Ideas can 'co-determine' the course of history (Weber 1952, 80) (Weber 1957, 249). Leo Strauss's critique of Max Weber could be said to have co-determined our present world. That critique was the sharp edge of the wedge that went through America, foreshadowing the lurid bipolarities of our current culture and politics. Strauss's misgivings about liberal democracy included an accusation that modern social sciences, infused as they are by liberal *Weltanschauung*, are incapable of declaring the allegedly self evident truth of superiority of the Western culture. This contention briefly reverberated in Allan Bloom's dark prognostications (Bloom 1987)[2] and then rode the cultural transmission belt to inform the crusade against 'political correctness,' 'multiculturalism' and the current campaign against academic un-Americanism.[3] Telling it like it is—politeness to the ultramontane barbarians and protected minorities be damned—became the battle cry of angry white men leaning out of the cultural windows of the eighties and nineties. Not that the left's infantile ideological language games, rigid orthodoxies and divisive social engineering regime didn't have this puncturing of its multicolored balloons coming. One day the liberal left must ask what made all those angry white men so angry … what turned Dr. Michael Alan Wiener into a 'Savage?' But that is a different discussion.

The aim in this chapter is to underline the 'ignorance' of Strauss's rash, trans-cultural judgments and his critique of the 'inability' or unwillingness of social

---

1   This essay is based on an earlier article we published in the *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* (Vol. 1, No. 3. 1988) reissued in French, *Societe* (No. 3, Printemps 1989).

2   For a fascinating perspective on Bloom's Straussian frame of mind see Saul Bellow's narrative biography of Bloom in: *Ravelstein*, Viking, 2000.

3   One manifestation of this could be seen in the HR 509 (formerly HR 3077) of 2003 that establishes a politically appointed advisory board to oversee the monies dispersed by the Department of Education to Middle East studies in American universities under Title VI grants. This legislative foray was spearheaded by such right wing critics of academia as Martin Cramer and Daniel Pipes, the founders of an Internet site (campuswatch.com) that is dedicated to monitoring unpatriotic tendencies of the academia.

sciences to make judgments of that sort. This kind of Straussianism is still alive in academia (Behnegar 2005)[4] but it has also jumped species to reverberate in nativist rants of right wing talk show hosts. We are not calling Leo Strauss ignorant in the usual sense of the word—for not even his enemies deny his erudition in the Western tradition. Borrowing from African American activists, we use 'ignorance' as a stand in for careless, reckless, libelous and Eurocentric view of other cultures. We are charging Strauss and some of his followers with sliding down a ladder that the Western mind (aided by its social sciences) has climbed since the days when colonialism was considered the triumph of civilization over barbarism and savagery. The bottom of that ladder is crowded by Western armchair philosophers of yore who had no compunctions calling (to use Strauss's language) 'a spade a spade.' No mealy mouthed I-am-okay-you're-okay stuff there. Superiority of the Western, Judeo-Christian and Greek heritage appeared obvious to Strauss and his judgmental predecessors. Asking for the input of other cultures and civilizations on questions of importance to humanity appeared to Strauss as intellectually dishonest and culturally dissipating. How else could one arrive at 'rational ethics' and escape moral relativism with all those other voices chiming in? It would be hard indeed to maintain that: 'All human thought, and certainly all philosophic thought, is concerned with the same fundamental themes or the same fundamental problems, and therefore there exists an unchanging framework which persists in all changes of human knowledge of both facts and principles' (Strauss 1953, 23-24) without dismissing non-Western religions and philosophies.

One more caveat is in order here. We are not holding Leo Strauss responsible for what the second and third generation of his disciples (known as the Neo Conservatives; newocons for short) and their followers in the culture industry have wrought during the presidency of George Walker Bush. The invasion of Iraq, the xenophobic calls of right wing pundits for reestablishing torture and concentration camps in the United States and the spewing of anti-Muslim racism in internet sites (e.g., David Horowitz' frontpage.com, and Robert Spencer's jihadwatch.com) are not to be blamed on Leo Strauss. But it is hard to imagine the self-righteous attitude of the neo-conservative movement without the judgmental backbone that Strauss and his disciples carefully assembled at the Committee on Social Thought of the University of Chicago. Fundamental to that theoretical infrastructure is an attack on the legacy of American social sciences and its alleged prime mover, Max Weber.

Furthermore, we distance ourselves from hysterical accusations of proto-fascism against Strauss (Steinburg 2003). We do not consider the ghost of Strauss as the '*eminence grise*' of the Bush foreign policy. Although it is hard to see how a complete dissociation of Strauss, and the political activism of his disciples would be conducive to understanding the master either. Strauss apologists argue that whereas there was a Leo Strauss with a certain anti-liberal political stance, his students disagree on his intellectual legacy and that there is no link between them

---

4   This book is praised by Weekly Standard as 'the single best book on Strauss. http://www.weeklystandard.com/Utilities/printer_preview.asp?idArticle=2025&R=EBA71736

and 'Straussians' engaged in politics (Norton 2004,) (Lila 2004, 1; 2004,2). Some have argued that indeed there is no such thing as Straussianism.[5] How would one prove that a top designer of the Iraqi invasion, (Paul Wolfowitz), who studied with Leo Strauss at Chicago and with Allan Bloom at Cornell, and who calls himself a follower of Strauss, is indeed a 'Straussian'? The same way one would conclude that Stalin was a Marxist. Marx can't be directly blamed for the atrocities of Lenin, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot just as Strauss is not directly culpable for the vulgarities of Glen Beck and the horrors of Abu Ghuraib. But there is surely a relationship between Marx's theoretical subversion of civil society on the one hand and what happened to people who were brutalized under Marxist potentates. And if Shadia Drury is right (and she probably is) that 'those who believe the things that Strauss believed are bound to behave badly when they are in positions of power and influence' then there is certainly a connection between Strauss and Straussians (Drury 2005, Introduction).

2. Polemical Gambits of Strauss

Let us start this treatise on Leo Strauss with an anecdote. We started to read the works of Leo Strauss at the enthusiastic recommendation of a fellow ABD student who had deserted the New School for Social Research for the Committee on Social Thought at the University of Chicago. She advised us to follow her lead, but, she confided, that we would 'get nowhere up there' without reading (and loving) Leo Strauss. She was star struck. Testimonials of converted Straussians like Werner Dannhauser, and H.V. Jaffa later confirmed that our friend's wide-eyed enthusiasm was not uncommon among Strauss's disciples.[6] But we were coming from Iran of the 1970s where scholastic forays against the 'historicist' and 'relativist' social sciences were a dime a dozen. So, unlike our American friends, we were not bowled over by pithy rhetorical arguments like: 'to prohibit value judgments is itself a value judgment!' We failed to see the novelty in a statement such as this: 'Weber, never proved that unassisted human mind is incapable of arriving at objective norms or that the conflict between different this-worldly ethical doctrines is insoluble by human reason' (Strauss 1953, 70). Iranians have heard this all before, from their own side of the cultural divide, and from the lips of their nativist philosophers. Notice, for example, the string of conditional phrases in the following Straussian logical stream:

---

5   In their *The Truth About Leo Strauss*, Catherine and Michael Zuckert (2005, 22) go beyond Ann Norton's contention that Straussianism in foreign policy is unrelated to Strauss. They deny that 'there is a real link between authentic Strauss and "Washington Straussians"'.

6   Dr. Werner J. Dannhauser describes himself before meeting Strauss as 'a relativist ill at ease in his relativism'(Dannhauser 1975). Also see: H.V. Jaffa's account of his pre-Straussian stage (Jaffa 1985).

'Let us *assume* that we *had* genuine knowledge of right and wrong, or of the Ought, or of the true value system. That knowledge, while not derived from empirical science*, would* legitimately direct all empirical social science; it *would* be the foundation of all empirical social science ... If there *were* genuine knowledge of the ends, that knowledge *would* naturally guide all search for means. There *would* be no reasons to delegate knowledge of the ends to social philosophy and the search for the means to an independent social science. Based on genuine knowledge of the true ends, social science *would* search for the proper means to those ends; it *would* lead up to objective and specific value judgments regarding policies. Social science *would* be a truly policymaking, not to say architectonic, science rather than a mere supplier of data for the real policymakers (1953, 41) (Italics added).

The plodding logic of these long sentences easily reminds contemporary Iranians of Ayatollah Morteza Motahhari's erudite lectures in the magnificent Madrassah of Sepahsalar in Tehran. As his students, we agonized over such questions while shuttling between Sociology classes of the University of Tehran and the lectures of learned Ayatollahs. Their conclusion, tortured as it was, was indisputable: the variety of notions of right does not logically prove the 'nonexistence of natural right or the conventional character of all right.' But we found it, also, infantile to dismiss the dizzying kaleidoscope of cultural varieties as the garbage heap of so many trials by seven thousand years of human civilization before one culture finally discovered 'The Truth.' We found it implausible to subscribe to Ayatollah Motahhari's school of culturally particular, yet universal truths. Further confirmation of the wisdom of that judgment came when we encountered the same brand of ethnocentric universalizing sophistry in the works of a Western professor: Leo Strauss.

3. Strauss and the Tribunal of Cultures

Strauss's bi-focal tunnel vision located the pristine sources of morality somewhere between Greek 'right thinking' and 'Jewish right acting,' or between Socrates and Amos (1953, 147, 332). The presumed domain of respectable culture ranging between Athens and Jerusalem (Strauss 1983, 142, 332) is reminiscent of the simplified intellectual geography shared by such eighteenth century scholars as Edmond Burk and Edward Gibbon. Strauss criticized modern social sciences for their scandalous 'recognition of all civilizations as equally respectable,' and for accepting 'as morality, religion, art, knowledge, state, etc., whatever claimed to be morality, religion, art, etc.' (Strauss 1953, 5, 55). There is nothing new or unique about this smug sense of possessing the true morality, religion, art, knowledge, state, etc. Ethnocentrism is common to all human cultures. But it is also true that a critical elite in all cultures is aware of the silliness of these self-congratulatory sentiments. The Quranic dictum: 'every sect is giddy for what they possess (Quran ch.23, v.53) 'is an example of this awareness. 'Everyone fancies himself the most knowledgeable and his children the most adorable' says the thirteenth-century

Persian poet Sa`di, before sharing a sobering parable about the squabble between a Jew and a Muslim:

> *A Jew and a Muslim started to bicker,*
> *In a way that made me snicker:*
>
> *The Muslim said if I am wrong may God turn me into a Jew!*
> *The Jew said by Torah, if I lie, may I turn into a Muslim like You!*
>
> *If Reason were to vanish from the terrain,*
> *All would fancy themselves with the only overflowing brain.*

But Strauss's Eurocentric philosophy was more than simple ethnocentrism. He had to encourage his disciples to unlearn the legacy of enlightenment in order to return to cozy certitudes of the bygone times. In order to facilitate his cross cultural judgments Strauss demolished the Kantian separation of facts and values, and the Weberian distinction between the empirical sciences of action (such as sociology) and dogmatic disciplines (such as jurisprudence, ethics and aesthetics.) The author of a recent book on Weber and Strauss has attempted to comfort his readers that Strauss's is no enemy of sociology of religion. Not if we accept as 'sociology of religion' the science that would distinguish 'not only "between genuine and spurious religion" but also between "higher and lower religions"' (Behnegar 2005, 91). Strauss conceives of sociology of religion as a handmaiden to medieval religious polemics:

> The sociologist of religion cannot help noting the difference between those who try to gain the favor of their gods by flattering and bribing them and those who try to gain it by a change of heart. Can he see this difference without seeing at the same time the difference of rank which it implies, the difference between a mercenary and a non-mercenary attitude? Is he not forced to realize that to attempt to bribe the gods is tantamount to trying to be the lord or employer of the gods and that there is a fundamental incongruity between such attempts and what men divine when speaking of such gods? (Strauss 1953, 41).

A non-Straussian sociologist would immediately recognize that these distinctions that impose themselves on the Straussian sociologist by virtue of their ineluctable 'self evidence' are indeed the illegitimate progeny of mixing of facts and values. Unless the intrinsic religious value of the practice of 'devotional offering' is reduced to 'bribing the gods,' it can not be seen as inferior to a Deist 'religion of reason.' It is, indeed, Strauss himself—not some new fangled Straussian neocon—who sees it fit to label non Western cultures as cognitive, moral, and expressive inferiors of the West. He takes this assumed native right to the point that he proposes a 'tribunal' of intercultural judgments. The judge in this tribunal reserves the privilege of selecting in what respect the contending religions must be compared—an unfair

advantage for a 'sociological judge' who is not exactly impartial to his own Judeo-Christian heritage. The Straussian tribunal also gets to label the practice of non-Western folks in complete disregard of the 'native's account.' The anthropological dichotomy of emic/etic has no meaning for such a 'judge' for none but etic is admissible here. The observed have no voice: in labeling (and indeed libeling) Hindu 'devotional offerings' as 'bribing', Strauss denies the practitioners of that religion a courtesy that he always extends to the sages of his own culture: the chance 'to be understood as they understand themselves' (57). Other cultures not only are defined by unfair epithets; they are occasionally subjected to a kind of psychoanalysis that would make Lenin blush: 'Why do Hindus believe in their karma doctrine if not because they know that otherwise their caste system would be indefensible?' (130). The Christian and the Jew would never be treated so shabbily. It is a sin for Strauss to even attempt to relate Xenephone's thought to 'historical situations,' as this 'is not the natural way of reading the work of a wise man' (Strauss 1968, 24). When it comes to a classical master:

> We cannot be better judges of that situation if we do not have a clearer grasp than he had of the principles in whose light historical situations reveal their meaning…. And even if it were true that we could understand the classics better than they understood themselves, we could become certain of our superiority only after understanding them exactly as they understood themselves. Otherwise we might mistake our superiority to our notion of the classics for superiority to the classics (195).

In other words we must 'bow without a murmur to their self interpretation' (1953, 55). Meanwhile, the poor Hindu is manhandled in Strauss's kangaroo 'tribunal' by the crudest economic determinism known to Western man. Strauss is convinced that this is the proper method for understanding others. He appears to have been genuinely shocked that social scientists don't partake of such methods to arrive at his conclusions: the inferiority of non-Western cultures. His only explanation was that social scientists are morally paralyzed by the poison of historicism and nihilism (or maybe, just politeness) to endorse such sweeping evaluations. Seduced by his own carefully cultivated naiveté Strauss suspected that social scientists also saw the inferiority of the non-Western cultures. But they played a 'childish game' in which the participants are forbidden to say a certain word despite their certainties and desires to do so.

Now, let's examine the Straussian tribunal's examination of a Western religion: Calvinism. To understand 'true' Calvinism it is forbidden to connect ideas to their social consequences—the method used to connect the karma doctrine to the caste system. Indeed pure Calvinism must be also cleansed of the taint of its unintended historical consequences. Strauss is scandalized by Weber's interpretation of the Calvinism, because it implies that capitalism was Calvin's fault! Unlike Strauss, Weber never posed the rhetorical question: 'why do Calvinists believe in 'predestination' if not because they know that otherwise their capitalist system would be indefensible?' Weber had merely maintained that it was a reinterpretation

of Calvin's ideas which dovetailed with the development of capitalism. But Strauss demands that Weber go further to explicitly condemn the economized Calvinism as a corruption of Calvin's ideas. So here is the final tally. The Karma doctrine (that predates the caste system and is upheld by some religions that despise the castes) is *nothing but* an ideological facade for the caste system. In the meanwhile Calvinism is declared unrelated to and a corruption of Calvin's pristine ideas (59-62).

Strauss reserves his lowest polemical blow against a hypothetical social scientist engaged in the study of a hypothetical concentration camp. The bloodless drones, the antiseptic, relativist social scientists of Strauss's imagination would conduct their study of a concentration camp, avoiding allusions to cruelty in order to avoid moral judgments. As if social scientists who believe in separation of facts and values could not pry themselves away from their research for half an hour in order to condemn the inhumanity of the perpetrators.[7] But if we are to ponder the worst case scenarios, would the conservative social philosophers (especially those who prefer Hobbes to Kant in matters of international politics) fare any better than the non-committal social scientists? If social scientists might be in danger of condoning evil (by refraining from value judgments) committed social thinkers, the engineers of the 'natural order' and the advisers of the state, must tremble at the possibility of creating and perpetuating that very evil. Hypothetical, morally paralyzed, sociologists who would coldly study an Abu Ghuraib are surely not more contemptible than the not-so-hypothetical Straussians who built and legitimized it!

4. Was Weber a Relativist?

Instead of rash intercultural judgments Strauss could have mounted a rigorous critique of relativism. But even this would not have concerned Max Weber because he is not a relativist. Neither Weber's neo-Kantian epistemological taste in punctiliously parsing facts and values nor his ontological stance on irrationalizability of the world (Weber Eds. Gerth and Mills 1946, 281) and ineradicability of conflict in social relations and among value spheres (Weber 1978, 39) would be sufficient to label him as a cultural relativist.[8]

Recognition and indeed legitimization of the value- relevant interests of the investigator is what distinguishes Weber from general relativism as well as the

---

7   Weber's 'The Meaning of Ethical Neutrality' and 'Objectivity in Social Sciences and Social Policy' (Weber in Shills ed 1949) make it abundantly clear that passing moral judgments by social scientists are permissible as long as they don't attempt to disguise such judgments as scientific statements.

8   This is not to argue that there are no inconsistencies among Weber's various ontological and epistemological stances and his sociological projects. Indeed such gaps might have inspired his voluminous methodological writings.

Straussian essentialism and exceptionalism. Populating a cultural museum with isolated and incommensurable specimens was not part of Weber's research project. Whenever Weber trained his gaze on historically or geo-culturally 'distant peoples,' he clearly evinced his value-relevant, that is, civilizationally rooted interests. Indeed, value-relevant interests of the investigator, avoided or ignored by both relativists and their neo-rationalist (Straussian/essentialist) opponents, constitutes the hub of Weber's unified theory of studying the 'distant peoples'—i.e., those who existed before or exist apart from the investigator. In Weber's methodological writings and in his substantive works the blind spot (investigator's 'interest' in distant people) turns into a discriminating lens. In other words, the mountain of data in its 'intensive and extensive multiplicity' succumbs to the discriminating investigator who uses his or her own civilizationally implanted value- relevant interests as a conceptual sieve. In this manner the Weberian investigator reduces the infinite richness of empirical reality by ideal typical methods of 'individulalizing.' Just as a hermeneutical consciousness of our rootedness in time renders destructive prejudice into constructive historical insight, an awareness of our defined presence in geo-cultural space can turn cultural distance into intellectual leverage for understanding.

Instead of echoing the self-righteous claims of a dominant culture, Weber represents a conscious adaptation of the social science to the limits of human condition. Against the essentialist denial and the relativist neglect of the presuppositions of the social sciences Weber stated: 'the object of universal conceptualization cannot be decided "presuppositionlessly"' (Weber 1949, 48). It is obvious that in his studies of alien civilizations Weber did not hesitate to use the familiar categories of the Occidental civilization. He freely spoke of 'confessional relationships' of Hindus to their gurus (Weber 1958a, 157) and of 'knighthood' in medieval Japan (Weber 1958a, 333). He elaborated on the 'petit-bourgeois' strata in ancient China and on the 'welfare state' and 'democratic religions' in India (Weber 1958a, 12). Weber observed cross-cultural parallels between the continental influences of France and Hellenic cultures in Europe and those of China and India in Asia (Weber 1958a, 142, 240). He underscored the similarities of Confucian and Greek philosophies (Weber 1958a, 329); liberally quoted from the *The Communist Manifesto* to describe the plight of Hindu lower castes (Weber 1957, 175) and, compared the Quaker silent meditations to the apathetic Ecstasy of Yogis (Weber 1957, 163). To use Strauss's language, Weber did use 'the language of praise and blame' but unlike Strauss and his recent defender (Behnegar) Weber distinguished between judgment about values in closed cultural matrices (that would allow the discussion of 'progress' within an artistic school but not in art, in general) and snap 'value judgments' rendered by the Western observers on non-Western natives. Some of Weber's cross cultural references are pedagogical; others bear a tinge of irony and some bespeak Weber's fascination with psychological classifications of religious experiences of all sorts (Weber 1957, 143, 303) . Most infamously, Weber expressed his hope that one day the

dissimilarities of Occidental and Oriental rationalism would be explicated by the sciences of neurology and physiology (Weber 1930, 31).

Max Weber assumed that the inevitable distortions imposed on alien cultures due to the geo-cultural distance were benign as long as they were not encumbered by crass judgments—of the kind Strauss prescribes. It is true that the predominance of the observer's cognitive orientation in the study of the alien cultures tends to perpetuate the unfair advantage of the observer over the observed. But there is nothing in the Weberian method to restrict to construction of value relevant images and sociological ideal types to the Western observers. All cultures can, do, and must construct their own value- relevant ideal types of other cultures. The result will be a variety of cultural images that reflect one another and know each other not despite but *because* of differences in value relevant interests that inspire them. These mutually reflective cultures could enter into a crescendo of evolving knowledge of each other.

It must be emphasized that Weber's method of studying distant peoples is not a form of cultural utilitarianism. Max Weber's contemporary historian Eduard Meyer limited the scope of 'historically relevant' facts to those elements that have been 'causally effective' in bringing about the 'present.' Weber responded that even the study of alien and extinct civilizations such as Aztecs would be heuristically relevant to our interests. They may help us understand analogous cultural developments in our own civilization (Weber 1949, 156). The Weberian social scientist is at peace with the fact that he or she is after all a finite human, bound to a specific culture, time and space. Although Strauss sees in this attitude nothing but arrogant nihilism and cynical historicism, it is nothing more than a combination of sobriety and humility as a basis for a social science of (historically and geo-culturally) distant peoples.

References

Behnegar, N. (2005), *Leo Strauss, Max Weber, and the Scientific Study of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Bellow, S. (2000), *Ravelstein*, (New York: Viking).

Bloom, A. (1987), *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Dannhauser W.J. (1975), 'Becoming Naïve Again', *American Scholar* Vol. 44, Autumn 1975.

Drury, S. (2005), 'The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss, Introduction' (New York: Palgrave).

Gerth, H.H. and Mills, C.W. (eds) (1958b), *From Max Weber, Social Psychology of the World Religions* (New York: Oxford University Press).

Jaffa, H.V. (1985), *New York Review of Books*, 10 October.

Lila, M. (2004 1), 'Leo Strauss: The European', *New York Review of Books*, 21 October.

Lila, M. (2004 2), 'The Closing of the Straussian Mind', *New York Review of Books*, 4 November.

Norton, A. (2004), *Politics of American Empire* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press).

Shills, E.A. and Finch, H.A., *Methodology of Social Sciences* (New York: Free Press).

Steinberg, J. (2003), 'Profile: Leo Strauss, Fascist Godfather of the Neo-Cons', *Executive Intelligence Review*, March 21, 2003.

Strauss, L. (1953), *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Strauss, L. (1968), *On Tyranny* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Strauss, L.(1983), *Studies in Platonic Political Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press).

Weber, M. (1930), *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons).

Weber, M. (1949), 'Objectivity in Social Sciences in Methodology of Social Sciences', in Edward A. Shills and Henry A. Finch.

Weber, M. (1952), *Ancient Judaism*, (ed.) H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale (New York: Free Press).

Weber, M. (1957), *Religion of China*, (ed.) H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale (New York: Free Press).

Weber, M. (1958a), *Religion of India*, (ed.) H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale (New York: Free Press).

Weber, M. (1958b), 'Social Psychology of World Religions', in Gerth and Mills.

Weber, M. (1973), *Economy and Society*, (eds) G. Roth and C. Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press).

Index