

Max Weber

Introduction

Max Weber (1864 – 1920) was a German sociologist, philosopher and scientific management theorist. Next to his great work on modern sociology, he also became famous with his scientific management approach on **Bureaucracy** and his **Bureaucratic Theory**.

Max Weber biography

In 1882 Max Weber enrolled in the Heidelberg University. Next to being a junior lawyer, he passed in 1886 the examination for Referendar (final legal exam). In 1889 he earned his law doctorate by writing a dissertation on legal history. After his Law studies Max Weber joined the University of Berlin's faculty to lecture and consult the government. Next to that He had a particular interest contemporary social policy. Between 1888 and 1890, Max Weber joined Verein für Social politik, to fulfil a role of economics research (statistical studies), primarily as finding solutions to the social problems of the age. In 1890 Max Weber was in charge of a large Polish influx and migration study. The end results of this study generated great attention and created a starting point for his career as a renown social scientist. In 1893 Max Weber became a member of the Alldeutscher Verband (Pan-German League) and gave provocative lectures in which he criticized the immigration of Polish people.

In 1894 Max Weber moved to Freiburg and became professor of economics at the University of Freiburg. His research in that period was still focused on economics and legal history. In 1899 he had to stop his work as a professor and retire from courses because he suffered of depressions and insomnia. This to a work pause and Italy travel which lasted until 1902. He tried teaching again but needed to withdraw in 1903 and not return to it till 1919 (mental illness). He started teaching again at the University of Munich. In this period he created major works like General Economic History, Science as a Vocation and Politics as a Vocation. This created a lot of turbulence because many colleagues and students disagree on his opinions and statements about the German Revolution. Max Weber died in 1920 during the effects of pneumonia. He is considered to be the father of modern sociology, along with Karl Marx and **Emil Durkheim**.

Sociology of religion

Sociology of religion is the study of the beliefs, practices and organizational forms of religion using the tools and methods of the discipline of sociology. This objective investigation may include the use of both quantitative methods (surveys, polls, demographic and census analysis) and qualitative approaches such as participant observation, interviewing, and analysis of archival, historical and documentary materials.^[1]

Modern academic sociology began with the analysis of religion in Émile Durkheim's 1897 study of suicide rates among Catholic and Protestant populations, a foundational work of social research which served to distinguish sociology from other disciplines, such as psychology. The works of Karl Marx and Max Weber emphasized the relationship between religion and the

economic or social structure of society. Contemporary debates have centered on issues such as secularization, civil religion, and the cohesiveness of religion in the context of globalization and multiculturalism. The contemporary sociology of religion may also encompass the sociology of irreligion (for instance, in the analysis of secular humanist belief systems).

Sociology of religion is distinguished from the philosophy of religion in that it does not set out to assess the validity of religious beliefs. The process of comparing multiple conflicting dogmas may require what Peter L. Berger has described as inherent "methodological atheism".^[2] Whereas the sociology of religion broadly differs from theology in assuming indifference to the supernatural, theorists tend to acknowledge socio-cultural reification of religious practice.

Max Weber published four major texts on religion in a context of economic sociology and his rationalization thesis: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (1915), *The Religion of India: The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* (1915), and *Ancient Judaism* (1920).

In his sociology, Weber uses the German term "Verstehen" to describe his method of interpretation of the intention and context of human action. Weber is not a positivist; he does not believe we can find out "facts" in sociology that can be causally linked. Although he believes some generalized statements about social life can be made, he is not interested in hard positivist claims, but instead in linkages and sequences, in historical narratives and particular cases.

Weber argues for making sense of religious action on its own terms. A religious group or individual is influenced by all kinds of things, he says, but if they claim to be acting in the name of religion, we should attempt to understand their perspective on religious grounds first. Weber gives religion credit for shaping a person's image of the world, and this image of the world can affect their view of their interests, and ultimately how they decide to take action.

For Weber, religion is best understood as it responds to the human need for theodicy and soteriology. Human beings are troubled, he says, with the question of theodicy – the question of how the extraordinary power of a divine god may be reconciled with the imperfection of the world that he has created and rules over. People need to know, for example, why there is undeserved good fortune and suffering in the world. Religion offers people soteriological answers, or answers that provide opportunities for salvation – relief from suffering, and reassuring meaning. The pursuit of salvation, like the pursuit of wealth, becomes a part of human motivation.

Because religion helps to define motivation, Weber believed that religion (and specifically Calvinism) actually helped to give rise to modern capitalism, as he asserted in his most famous and controversial work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber argues that capitalism arose in Europe in part because of how the belief in predestination was interpreted by everyday English Puritans. Puritan theology was based on the Calvinist notion that not everyone would be saved; there was only a specific number of the elect who would avoid damnation, and this was based sheerly on God's predetermined will and not on any action you could perform in this life. Official doctrine held that one could not ever really know whether one was among the elect.

Practically, Weber noted, this was difficult psychologically: people were (understandably) anxious to know whether they would be eternally **damned** or not. Thus Puritan leaders began assuring members that if they began doing well financially in their businesses, this would be one unofficial sign they had God's approval and were among the **saved** – but only if they used the fruits of their labour well. This along with the rationalism implied by monotheism led to the development of rational bookkeeping and the calculated pursuit of financial success beyond what one needed simply to live – and this is the "spirit of capitalism".^[10] Over time, the habits associated with the spirit of capitalism lost their religious significance, and the rational pursuit of profit became an aim in its own right.

The Protestant Ethic thesis has been much critiqued, refined, and disputed, but is still a lively source of theoretical debate in sociology of religion. Weber also did considerable work on world religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism.

Bureaucracy

It refers to both a body of non-elected government officials and an administrative policy-making group. Historically, a bureaucracy was a government administration managed by departments staffed with non-elected officials. Today, bureaucracy is the administrative system governing any large institution, whether publicly owned or privately owned. The public administration in many countries is an example of a bureaucracy, but so is the centralized hierarchical structure of a business firm.

Various commentators have noted the necessity of bureaucracies in modern society. The German sociologist Max Weber argued that bureaucracy constitutes the most efficient and rational way in which human activity can be organized and that systematic processes and organized hierarchies are necessary to maintain order, maximize efficiency, and eliminate favoritism. On the other hand, Weber also saw unfettered bureaucracy as a threat to individual freedom, with the potential of trapping individuals in an impersonal "iron cage" of rule-based, rational control

The German sociologist Max Weber was the first to formally study bureaucracy and his works led to the popularization of this term.^[59] In his essay *Bureaucracy*,^[1]^[60] published in his magnum opus *Economy and Society*, Weber described many ideal-typical forms of public administration, government, and business. His ideal-typical bureaucracy, whether public or private, is characterized by:

- hierarchical organization
- formal lines of authority (chain of command)
- a fixed area of activity
- rigid division of labor
- regular and continuous execution of assigned tasks
- all decisions and powers specified and restricted by regulations
- officials with expert training in their fields
- career advancement dependent on technical qualifications
- qualifications evaluated by organizational rules, not individuals^[10]^[61]^[62]

Weber listed several preconditions for the emergence of bureaucracy, including an increase in the amount of space and population being administered, an increase in the complexity of the administrative tasks being carried out, and the existence of a monetary economy requiring a

more efficient administrative system. Development of communication and transportation technologies make more efficient administration possible, and democratization and rationalization of culture results in demands for equal treatment.

Although he was not necessarily an admirer of bureaucracy, Weber saw bureaucratization as the most efficient and rational way of organizing human activity and therefore as the key to rational-legal authority, indispensable to the modern world. Furthermore, he saw it as the key process in the ongoing rationalization of Western society. Weber also saw bureaucracy, however, as a threat to individual freedoms, and the ongoing bureaucratization as leading to a "polar night of icy darkness", in which increasing rationalization of human life traps individuals in a soulless "iron cage" of bureaucratic, rule-based, rational control. Weber's critical study of the bureaucratization of society became one of the most enduring parts of his work. Many aspects of modern public administration are based on his work, and a classic, hierarchically organized civil service of the Continental type is called "Weberian civil service"