

## Original Paper

# Max Weber

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### Abstract

*Why would you deny that Max Weber is the foremost social scientist ever? His range and scope is larger and deeper than that of Marx and Durkheim or Schumpeter. He had clear microfoundation and rejected socialist utopia.*

### Keywords

*micro-macro inquiry, inner-outer behaviour, meaning*

## 1. Introduction

It appears that a few German scholars are not happy with Weber's number 1 position. Recently, his nervousness was linked to the *Oidipus* syndrome (Radkau) and earlier he was linked to German barbarianism—the braun or black shirts (Mommsen), although he died in 1920. These arguments fail because they are not pertinent to the core issue, namely: did he theorize correctly?

## 2. Microfoundations

Weber identified the basic micro unit in social science analysis as intentional behaviour. The emphasis for Weber was upon intention—what he called “*Sinn*” (meaning). This word has a specific semantics in German philosophy and in religion. *Sinn* was the inner side of behaviour: thought, belief, will, emotion, etc. When outer behaviour was directed by complex meaning, we have “*Sinnzusammenhang*”. Weber devoted much time to analysing complexes of meanings in macro theories.

The humanities and social sciences understand outer behaviour by advancing intention or motive. He called it “*deutend verstehen*”. There is nothing similar in Marx' class and Durkheim's social facts.

This emphasis on the basic subjective nature of human activity opens up for the analysis of ideas, plans, hopes, etc. Since the relationship between inner and outer behaviour is many-one, finding the correct intention requires a conjecture or hypothesis with outer evidence—*Einfuehlung* not sufficient.

Intention or reason is simple or complicated, as when I walk over the street a la J. Searle in order to buy

ice cream or when I travel to Dubai a la Mossad to spy upon terrorists. Action = intention + behaviour. Goals drive behaviour either in themselves or as means-end chains:

Example 1:

On midsummer 1941, lots of people and objects started to move on the Ostfront into the USSR. What was the plan? The war had been planned for one year, but the end and the means? Amongst the German generals there were different goal conceptions, but they all adhered to *Blitzkrieg* as means. Yet, in early August the Supreme Commander declared Minsk and Kiev (*cauldrons*) the priority, not Moscow. Hitler's decision changed *Barbarossa* into an *attrition* war. The same strategy confusion lurked in the objectives for Stalingrad operations.

### 3. Research Paradigm

Every rational action could be analyzed with the means-end framework for understanding the inner aspect, Weber claimed in his Wissenschaftslehre. Much criticism has been raised against Weber's methodology of understanding an actor's motive - the inner side. It is all wrong. Without intention and reason, how to account for the outer side?

Example 2:

Why did Gustavus Adolfus intervene in the 30 years war? The motives and plans? Can sayings or written documents be trusted? His innermost intention? Weber stated that any hypothesis from "*verstehen*" needs corroboration or evidence. A social relation occurs when two persons relate to each other in consciousness, i.e., *Sinn*. What, then, does "*Sinn*" refer to? The scope of meaning is large and its importance makes a great difference *visavi* Nature and the natural sciences.

Searle and Putnam live in the so-called external world, whatever this may be: atoms: *new realism*. waves, strings or energy. And this external world of quantum quarks constitute THE ONE Reality. Weber's micro model can be rewritten as the rational choice model by placing causality restrictions upon his teleological notions means and end.

### 4. Macro

The subjective aspects of action did not pose a hindrance to causality. It was not the mind-body problem that interested Weber, but cause and effect in social life. He argued incessantly that belief and ideas mattered, although as a realist he underlined power and material benefits. Thus, he was to penetrate into cores of religious beliefs, while explaining religious struggle as conflict over life opportunities, portraying religious competition as opportunism with guile.

Weber put forward a number of macro theories where he often employed his specific method of concept formation—*ideal-types*. Here, we have:

- (1) The difference between the Orient and the Occident ecologically—in anticipation of Wittfogel's thesis.
- (2) The end of the Antique period by the transformation of slaves into serfs—anticipating Roztovzeff's thesis.
- (3) The evolution of two Law families that could claim justice, or the difference between Roman and Common Law on the one hand and socialist law as well as *Kadijustice* on the other hand—anticipating *Law and Economics*.
- (4) The *staedestaat* as the ideal type of feudal society.
- (5) The emergence of commercial law in late medieval trading societies.
- (6) The rise of modern *Herrschaft* with the ideal type of bureaucracy.
- (7) The two ideal types of democracy: parliamentary and presidential democracy.
- (8) The impossibility of a socialist or military economy—anticipating Hayek.

All these theories dealt with Civilisations and social transformations. The key question is always: Did he get it right? Was Tantric practice so dominant in Hinduism? Were Buddhists linked with Taoists or the latter with Confucians? Did Western superiority flow from rational religion or the bureaucracy model of the army? Recent research has certainly modified his views in several ways on e.g. western feudalism against eastern feudalism, bureaucracy as inertia, blends between capitalism and socialism, etc.

## 5. Meaningful Explanation

Weber became most well-known for his theory about the rise of capitalism. He linked the modern market economy with the Reformation, especially Calvinism, leading to endless debate about *Sinn, causation, and modernity*.

Weber argued 1904 that the parallel between the meaning of reformation and the meaning of modern capitalism were affiliated both logically and causally. He then in 1913 set out to show the opposite: no capitalism, no Calvinism. Causation called for evidence from outer behaviour or actions. The debate over the so-called Weber thesis goes on, now as the origins of modernism. For example Swedish economic historian K. Samuelson denied any connection, neither on the level of meaning (Sinn) nor in causation.

Weber did not observe the link between constitutionalism and the market economy where RIGHTS are the common meaning.

## 6. Conclusion

Weber's concept of the inner aspect of actions is today highly relevant. The subjective meaning cannot be neglected but what is it? His *Wissenschaftslehre* has been underestimated, perhaps due to the

concentration upon his theory of capitalism where he missed the implications of the rise of constitutionalism in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Weber should be ranked as one of the foremost philosophers of science besides Popper, Hempel and Kuhn.

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