

Max Weber

- German sociologist, jurist, historian and political economist
- 21 April 1864 – 14 June 1920
- Major works: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Science as a Vocation, Politics as Vocation, Economy and Society



Rationality and Social Action



- Action is considered social when the individual acts with the intent to influence the behaviour of one or more other people.
- Social action as the basis for sociological theory
- Social action is that actions can be differentiated based on the type of rationality the actor aims to convey.

Rationality and Social Action



Elements of social action

- i) Social action encompasses all forms of human behaviour.
- ii) Social action involves assigning a subjective meaning to the behaviour.
- iii) The individual or individuals acting consider the behaviour of others.
- iv) Social action is directed toward a specific goal or course.



Rationality and Social Action

Social Action Theory: Society is a construction of the interactions & meanings of its members. It depends on human behaviour & the meanings they embed in institutions

Interpretivist approach to studying society

Practicing empathy to understand the meaning and motives behind people's actions: **Verstehen**



Social Action

Weber conceives of sociology as a comprehensive science of *social action*

The typology of actions is the most abstract level of the conceptual system

For Weber, rationalization involves a key characteristic of the world we live in. Thus, the classification of actions governs the Weberian interpretation of the contemporary society.



Social Action

- 1) *Zweckrational action* or Instrumental Rational Action
- 2) *Wertrational action* or Value Rational action
- 3) Affective action
- 4) Traditional action



Zweckrational action: Actor conceive's his goal clearly & combines means to attain it

Rationality is defined in terms of knowledge of an actor

Example: Engineer building a bridge

Wertrational action: Goal is to remain faithful to his own idea of honour. Example: *Captain going down with his ship, because abandoning the sinking ship will be regarded as dishonourable*



Affective action: dictated by the state of mind or humour of the subject. Emotional reaction of the actor overpowers (affectual orientation especially emotional)

Example: Mother slapping child

Traditional action: Dictated by customs & beliefs, obeying to certain norms due to conditioning



Traditional action: Dictated by customs & beliefs, obeying to certain norms due to conditioning. action, which is guided by customs and longstanding beliefs which become second nature or habit and is unquestioned.

Example: Greetings with folded hand

Weber in Iron Cage

- Instrumental Rationality and capitalism
- Rationalization/Formal Rationality
- Iron cage of Rationality
- Predictability vs Enchantment



Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism

AMORE ET STUDIO ELUCIDANDAE
ueritatis hae subscipta disparebunt Vuitenbergae, Prædicate
R. P. Martino Luther, Amici & S. Theologie Magistro, eius-
demq; ibidem lectione Ordinario. Quare petit ut qui non pos-
sunt uerbis praesentes nobiscum discere, agant id literis ab-
sentes. In nomine domini nostri Iesu Christi. Amen.



Omnino & Magister noster Iesus Christus, di-
cendo poenitentia agite &c. omnem uiam si-
delum, poenitentiam esse uoluit.

Quod uerbis poenitentia de poenitentia sacra-
mentalī, i. confessionis & satisfactionis quae
sacerdotum ministerio celebratur non po-
test intelligi.

Non tamen solā facit interiorē; immo interior nulla est, nisi
foris operetur uarias carnis mortificationes.

Maue itaq; poenā donec manet odium sui, i. poenitentia uera
interius) salicet usq; ad introitum regni celorum.

Papa non uult nec potest, ullas poenas remittere; praeter eas,
quas arbitrio uel suo uel canonum imposuit.

Papa nō potest remittere ullam culpā, nisi declarādo & appro-
bando remissam a deo. Aut certe remittēdo easus referuatos
sibi, quibus contēptis culpa prorsus remaneret.

Nelli prorsus remittit deus culpam, quin simul eum subiiciat
humiliatum in omnibus sacerdoti suo uicario.

Canones poenitētiales solū uiuentibus sunt impositi; nihilq;
mortuis, secundū eisdem debet imponi.

Inde bene nobis facit spiritus sanctus in Papa: excipiendo in su-
is decretis semper articulum mortis & necessitatis.

Indo &c. & male facit sacerdotes ij, qui mortuis poenitētia
canonicas in purgatorium referunt.

Zizania illa de mutanda poena Canonica in poenā purgato-
rij, uidentur certe dormientibus Episcopis seminata.

Olla poenae canonicae nō potest, sed ante absolutionem im-
ponantur, tanq; tentamenta uere contritionis.

DISPUTATIO DE VIRTUTE INDVLGEN.

xij Mortui, per mortem omnia solunt, & legibus canonū mor-
tū tam sunt, habentes iure eorū relaxationem.

xiiij Imperfecta sanitas seu charitas moritur, necessārio secum fer-
māgnū timorem, tūq; maiorē, quāto minor fuerit ipsa.

xv Hic timor & horror, satis est, se solo (ut alia tacemus) facere poe-
nam purgatorij, cum sit proximus desperationis horror.

xvj Videntur, infernus, purgatorium, caelum distere; sicut desper-
ratio, prope desperatio, securitas distere.

xvij Necessārium uidetur animabus in purgatorio sicut inuiui hor-
rorem, ita augeri charitatem.

xviii Nec probatū uidetur ullis, aut rationibus, aut scripturis, q; sint
extra statum meriti seu augendae charitatis.

xix Nec hoc probatū esse uidetur, q; sint de sua beatitudine certae
& securae, saltem oēs, licet nos certissimi simus.

xx Igit̃ Papa per remissionē plenariā omnium poenarū, non simpli-
citer omniū intelligit, sed a seipso rēmodo imposuit.

xxi Erant itaq; indulgentiarū praedicatores ij, qui dicunt per Pa-
pae indulgentias, hominē ab omni poena solui & saluari.

xxij Quia nullam remittit animabus in purgatorio, quā in hac ui-
ta debuissent secundum Canones soluere.

xxiij Si remissio ulla omnium omnino poenarū pōtalicū dari; certū
est eam nō nisi perfectissimis, i. paucissimis dari.

xxiiii Falli ab id necesse est, maiorem partē populī; per indifferentē
illam & magnificam poenae solute promissionem.

xxv Quātē potest habet Papa i purgatorij gēraliter talē habet
quibet Episcopus & Curae in sua diocesi, & parochia spātiter.

i Optime facit Papa, q; nō potestare clauis (quā nullam habet)
sed per modum suffragij, dar animabus remissionem.

ii Hominē praedicant, qui latronē, ut factus nūmus in cistā tū-
nient, euolare dicunt animam.

iii Certū est nūmo in cistā tūniente, augeri quēstum & auari-
ciam posse; suffragij autē ecclesiae est in arbitrio dei solus.

iiii Quis scit si omnes animae in purgatorio uelint redimi, sicut de
sancto Severino & paschali factum narratur?

v Nullus securus est de ueritate hae contritionis; multo minus
a ij

MAX WEBER

DIE PROTESTANTISCHE
ETHIK
UND DER GEIST
DES KAPITALISMUS



Reformation and coming up of the puritans



- Martin Luther King (16th century)
- Selling of indulgences
- Faith and faith alone, material or hegemonic power of the church, individual's interpretation is necessary
- Vernacular Bible (Latin to German)

Reformation and coming up of the puritans



- Individual's will to pay rather than tithe
- Peasants movements across Europe
- John Calvin in Geneva (post reformation) – symbolic city for morality
- Predestination

Protestant ethic & the spirit of capitalism

- Economic Traditionalism – frame of mind with respect to work (example: necessity work only)
- Economic Rationalism – Modern Capitalism (Science, production process, surplus)

Protestant ethic & the spirit of capitalism

How religion affects the development of economic system

He raises the question: To what degree is a particular attitude towards work determined by a religious conception?

Weber focuses particularly on the Calvinist. The Calvinist uses their **work ethic & individualistic values** to promote capitalism

Protestant ethic & the spirit of capitalism

How religion affects the development of economic system

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Calvinist conception

- 1) There exists an absolute, transcendent God who treats the world & rules it
- 2) God predestined each of us to salvation or damnation & it cannot be altered
- 3) God created the world of his own glory



Calvinist conception

- 1) Man is obliged to work for the glory of god
- 2) Salvation comes to man only through divine grace
- 3) This -worldly ‘Asceticism’- strict self-discipline, control and conquest of desires; simple, frugal life-style was recommended along with hard work
- 4) Supposed to re-invest into their endeavour



Calvinist conception

For Weber, all these elements exist separately in other religions, but their combination in Calvinism is unique

The individual is impelled towards work in order to overcome the anxiety inevitably resulting from his uncertainty about his eternal destiny

Work: rational and interpreted as obedience to the commandment of God



Protestant ethic

Coincidence between certain requirements of Calvinist and capitalist logic:

The protestant ethic believes this worldly things are guilty and thus encourages not spending money on this worldly things: conduct necessary to the development of capitalism

Capitalism: rational organization of work with a view to profit, the profit needs to be saved & not consumed

The protestant ethic provides an economic motivation for this attitude of saving

Ideal type



- An ideal type is a mental construct, similar to a model, used for examining and systematically characterizing a specific situation.
- The ideal type is a methodological tool that objectively examines reality. It analyses, classifies, organizes, and defines social reality without subjective bias.
- Example: If we want to study the state of democracy in India, our first step would be to define democracy by identifying its essential and typical characteristics. (Ideal types of historical particulars, such as capitalism.
-)

Characteristics of Ideal type



- Ideal types are neither general nor average representations.
- Ideal types do not represent the entirety of reality, nor do they attempt to explain everything. Instead, they provide a partial understanding of the whole.
- Ideal types are neither a definitive description of reality nor a hypothesis, but they can assist in both description and explanation.
- Ideal types help guide empirical research and are used to organize data on historical and social realities (comparative).



Ideal type

The ideal type represents a logical conclusion of Weberian thought.

Every ideal type is an organization of intelligible relations within a historical entity or sequence of events.

Ideal type is related to the process of rationalization.



Ideal type

- 1) Ideal types of historical particulars, such as capitalism.
- 2) Ideal types which designate abstract elements of historical reality
- 3) Rationalizing reconstructions of a particular kind of behaviour