

similar advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand they are soulless. On the other, they are simple, predictable, and—within certain parameters, at least—treat everyone more or less the same” (Graeber 2015: 151–152). Without doubt, rationality to some extent constitutes the very concept of justice in modern societies (ibid. 7). But when a conquest of „triumph of reason over chaos” (Graeber 2015: 167), weighs out the conception of bureaucracy as a neutral social technology, rationality becomes an end in itself, and thus, an utopian project (ibid.).

Being the most important historic voice on the matter, Max Weber clearly acknowledged both sides of the coin when it comes to bureaucracy. Largely approving administration for the qualities briefly discussed above, his writing is distinctively perturbed when it comes to its dehumanizing outcomes (Greisman & Ritzer 1981). Weber drew a clear line between the concepts of formal rationality (as a decision-making tool incorporating means-ends calculations) and substantive rationality, „in which action is chosen within an overall context of values, such as socialism or communism” (Greisman & Ritzer 1981: 36), explicitly elevating formal rationality as an achievement of modern civilization over substantive rationality.

In his work „The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” Weber historically traced the development of formal rationality and emphasized the substantial impact of an ascetic Protestant work ethic on the genesis of bureaucracy and capitalism on one hand and the abandonment of mystical faiths and aesthetic values on the other (Greisman & Ritzer 1981: 36–37). While the fundament of protestant faith almost entirely diminished over time, capitalist economy, bureaucracy, and a fully rationalized society had remained and replaced the vacancy Protestantism had left. It is this vast expansion of the principle of rationality into all branches of social life that Weber described as an Iron Cage: