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Seminar in Organization Theory
Carlson School of Management
University of Minnesota
Fall 2007

Max Weber: Biography

- Born in Erfurt, Germany in a politically active and intellectual family as eldest among seven children
- Joined the University of Heidelberg as a law student studying history and economics
- Earned Doctorate in 1889 from the University of Berlin with a thesis on '*The history of Medieval business organizations*'
- Influenced by the German historicism movement finally moving to the University of Heidelberg in 1896.
- Wrote his famous essay on Protestant work ethic and on bureaucracy after a hiatus of almost five years
- Controversial in German politics for left leaning views-involved in the Treaty of Versailles and drafting the Weimar constitution
- Regarded as one of the founders of modern sociology



Source :Trigilia (2002) *Economic Sociology*
Wikipedia

Context: German Historicism vs. Classical positivism

Societal context

- Differences in institutions
- Urbanization
- Market self regulation
- Kant and a historicist rooting
- Calvinist Influence

Intellectual context

- Simmel (1990), '*The Philosophy of Money*'
- Sombart (1902), '*Modern Capitalism*'
- Utilitarian and economizing tradition (British and French)

Evolution of Max Weber's Work



Work on Junker Estates in the East	Comparative work on the stock exchange	Critique of Utilitarian economics	Role of Religion, Law and State	Rise of Bureaucracy
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Source :Triglia (2002) *Economic Sociology*

Clegg & Lounsbury (2007) *Sintering the Iron Cage*

Weber's arguments

- Increasing rationalization leading to inevitable domination through bureaucratization
 - o Types of Authority and characteristics of the ideal type bureaucracy (oversimplification???, Role of Agency)
 - o Use of Ideal types to accentuate variation at the same type develop generalizations (precursor to current methods)
 - o Erosion of values, loss of social relations and dependence on collective goods ((resistance, exaggeration???)
- Capitalism and the link to Western civilization (Protestant economic ethic)

Prescription: Balance between political capitalism and the welfare state

Source :Shafritz, Ott & Jang (2005) *Classics of Organization Theory*

Clegg & Lounsbury (2007) *Sintering the Iron Cage*

Weber (1947) *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*