

CHAPTER 25

THE HOLY TRINITY, OR
THE REDUCED MARX,
WEBER, DURKHEIM*Gavin Williams*¹

Karl Marx, Max Weber and Emile Durkheim are generally recognized as the founding fathers of sociology. This represents their work as of the past, laying foundations for subsequent scholars to build on. Few later sociologists, if any, can match each and all of their contributions to current historical understandings of societies in the past and the present. Their political priorities, intellectual foci, and explanatory strategies differ from one another and can be compared in order to contrast them. They can also be seen to complement one another.

Their work, like that of other great social scientists, is often vulgarized and misrepresented. This arises partly from the need to reduce complex ideas to simpler forms to make them more accessible, which will be true of my own account of their ideas. It arises also from a strong tendency among American and English scholars to assimilate their thinking to a dominant positivist and even utilitarian paradigm. Thus I will begin this essay with a discussion of mistaken identities. I then offer brief syntheses of the main themes and arguments of each thinker. From there, I will move to compare their views on four key issues for social and political theorists: capitalism; religion (Protestantism in particular); politics and the state; sociology and history. My own readings are necessarily selective.

1. I first learned about Marx, Weber and Durkheim from two professors of sociology at Durham University, John Rex and Philip Abrams. I owe much of my understanding of their work to Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, both Durham doctoral graduates. This paper is dedicated to John Peel for his critical and supportive guidance and in recognition of his varied and continuing intellectual achievements.

The greatness of these three authors is exemplified by the impossibility of arriving at an authoritative interpretation of their work. Their arguments and analyses are not always consistent and often in tension with one another. They shift their intellectual ground over time while sustaining important continuities. Hence, their writings are open to multiple readings, which continue to be renewed and extended. This enables us to appreciate their intellectual depth and deepens the significance of their writing. Their relevance for our times lies in their concern to make sense of a new and changing world. "All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind."²

Of the three, I find myself in greatest sympathy with Weber, whose political ideas are furthest from my own. This may be because of his demand for sober reasoning and the duality of the callings of politics and science. The obligation of politicians to take responsibility for the consequences of their actions is too evidently met in the breach. The demand that scientists put intellectual integrity above all else is threatened by commercial priorities and by the organization of the academy itself. No universal ethical judgements seem able or likely to underpin our philosophies of science or politics. The formal rationalities of bureaucrats and markets, in unholy alliances with one another, displace the rational pursuit of substantive ends and human values. We are re-making our own "iron cage."³

Marx, Weber, Durkheim: Three Cases of Mistaken Identities?

Positivism has many, often inconsistent, meanings: the reduction of human action to utilitarian calculation; its determination by causal or evolutionary laws; inductive inference; the empirical testing of deductions from hypotheses, the application of science to the realization of moral values. They are found in different ways in Hume, Bentham, St. Simon, Comte and Spencer. These authors cross the line separating matters of fact from questions of value,

2. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* [1948], *Collected Works (CW)*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1975–2001, (vol.) 6, (item) 52, p. 487.

3. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* [1905], George Allen & Unwin, 1905, ch. V, p. 181.

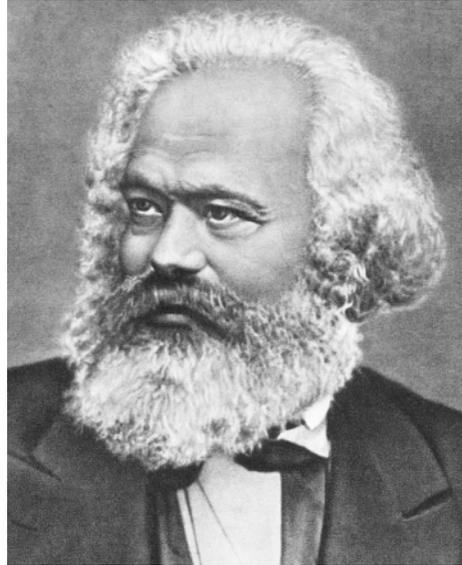


Figure 25.1 -

critical to Popper's requirement that conjectures, in principle, be empirically falsifiable,⁴ and they tend to exclude human agency.

Marx, Weber and Durkheim each set out their methodologies in ways that can be identified as positivist.⁵ Their substantive research and analyses transcended positivist protocols. All three authors derive their methods from and in response to the legacies of Immanuel Kant. They each all claimed to be scientists. This did not mean applying the protocols of the natural sciences to the social world but rather that "the purpose of all science is to coordinate our experiences into a logical framework."⁶

4. Karl Popper, "Science: conjectures and refutations" [1953] *Conjectures and Refutations: the growth of scientific knowledge*, 5th edition, Routledge, London, 1989, pp. 36–37, 53.

5. Karl Marx, "Preface" to *A Contribution to The Critique of Political Economy* [1859], CW, 29, pp. 263–264 and Marx, *Capital*, I [1867/ 1873], Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1973 or "Preface to first German edition" and "Afterword to second German edition" or CW, 35; Max Weber, *Economy and Society* [1920], University of California Press, 1978, (vol.) I, (Part) 1, ch. 1, 1–2, pp. 4, 11–12; Emile Durkheim, *The Rules of Sociological Method* [1895] and *Selected Texts on Sociology and its Methods* [1897–1917], ed. Steven Lukes, Macmillan, 1982, ch 2, p. 60 and "Preface to second edition" [1907], p. 35; ch 1–2.

6. Albert Einstein, *The Meaning of Relativity* [1922] London: Chapman and Hall, 1978, p. 1.

Marx's claims to originality rest on his theories of historical materialism and of surplus value. The first has been taken to combine explanations of institutions as ultimately economic with an evolutionary theory of history, ensuring the realization of communism. The second is presented as building on Ricardo's labor theory of value. These theories are economic, functionalist and evolutionist, allowing no scope for autonomous human agency. An alternative interpretation stresses Marx's application of the critical method to idealist philosophers, utopian socialists and classical economists and his commitment to human self-realization.

Weber identifies the work of Marx and Nietzsche as the key intellectual legacies of the age.⁷ Weber has been criticized for his religious explanation for the rise of capitalism, and for defending technical rationality, modern bureaucracy and capitalist enterprise. His ideal-types of "rational action" identify the logical conditions for utilitarian calculation and economic efficiency.⁸ His theories are allegedly idealist, determinist or positivist. He was a nationalist and a liberal and a critic of socialism. Explanations are always 'as if'. Weber's perspectives are always double-edged. Formal and instrumental rationality conflicts with the rational pursuit of substantive goals. The ascetic values of Protestantism have created a world in which "material goods have gained an inexorable power over the lives of men."⁹

Durkheim tells us to "treat social facts as things."¹⁰ Parsons interprets him as solving Hobbes problem of order.¹¹ The individual is subordinated to the *conscience collective*. Social disorders, such as suicide, arise from inadequate integration into or regulation by society. Durkheim is accused of positivism, functionalism, and conservatism. But social agents construct social facts, the collective conscience, and the forms of moral regulation. A society predicated on contract and interest would be no society at all.¹² Durkheim asks: what forms of citizenship or solidarity are appropriate to a commercial society?

7. Bryan Turner, "Preface to the new edition", *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills [1948], Routledge, London, 1991, p. 20.

8. Weber, *Economy and Society* I, 1, ch. 2, esp. 30, pp. 161–164.

9. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, ch. V, p. 181.

10. Emile Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, ch 2, p. 60 and "Preface to second edition" [1907], p. 35.

11. Talcott Parsons, *The Structure of Social Action: a study in social theory with special reference to a group of recent European writers*, Free Press, New York, 1968. vol. 1, p. 314.

12. Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society* [1893], The Free Press, New York, 1964, Book 1, ch. 7.

Marx: The Critical Method and Historical Materialism

In Marx's hands, the critical method identifies the social relations that make possible the economic phenomena of capitalism and their transcendence. Marx shares John Stuart Mill's commitment to human self-realization, but not Mill's analysis of the conditions which make this possible.¹³ In 1843 Marx read Adam Smith and David Ricardo through the prism of Young Hegelian philosophy.¹⁴ He rejects abstract idealism and Hegel's reconciliation of the claims of family, civil society and the constitutional state but recognizes that, unlike materialisms, idealism starts from human activity.¹⁵

Marx takes up Ludwig Feuerbach's critique of religion and of speculative philosophy: Man makes God in his own image and subordinates himself to his own creation.¹⁶ As the secrets of religion are to be found in human activity, so the secrets of the state are to be found in civil society, and explained by political economy. Workers are alienated from the act of production, from the product of their labor, from other people and from their (human) species being.¹⁷

Between 1845 and 1859, Marx and Friedrich Engels outlined theories of class, state and ideology. They provided a template for interpreting the sweep of events and had to be squared with unanticipated outcomes, notably the failures of the bourgeois democratic revolutions of 1848 in France, Germany and Austria.¹⁸ The ruling ideas are imposed by the ruling class and reflected relations of material domination.¹⁹ Ruling classes are fractured. The state was al-

13. J. S. Mill, *On Liberty* [1859], *The Subjection of Women* [1869], *Three Essays*, introduction by Richard Wollheim, Oxford University Press, 1975.

14. Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* [1844], *CW*, 4, 12.

15. Marx, *Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law* [1843] and "Introduction" [1944], *CW*, 3, 1 & 7, esp. pp. 8, 175–176; "Theses on Feuerbach I" [1845], *CW*, 5, p. 3.

16. Ludwig Feuerbach, *The Essence of Christianity* [1841], Harper Torchbooks, New York, 1957; Marx, "Introduction", *CW* 7, 3, p. 175; "Theses on Feuerbach" *CW* 5, pp. 3–5; Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology* [1846], Part 1, "Ludwig Feuerbach", esp. p. 36.

17. Marx, "Estranged labour", *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* [1843], *CW* 3, 12, pp. 270–283.

18. Marx and Engels, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* [1948], *CW* 6, 52; Marx, *Class Struggles in France* [1850] *CW* 10, 6; *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* [1852] *CW* 12, 3; Engels, *Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany* [1851] *CW*, 11, 1.

19. Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, Part 1, *CW* 5. p. 59.

ways more than an instrument; it reconciled and protected the interests of property.

Theories of base and superstructure, forces and relations of production (productive capacities and productive relations) provide an appealing explanation of capitalist society and of the conditions of the working class, and how they can be transcended.²⁰ But it is hard to see how the legal form, contract, can be explained by economic relations which require it. Productive capacities are capacities of relations and can hardly exist independently of them.²¹

Capital begins with the commodity.²² How is the commodity possible? If commodities, including labor-power, exchange at their value, how is profit possible? Why has an increase in the productive power of human labor not made work less onerous and workers relatively better off? Value in exchange is different from value in use. The first cannot be derived from the second. But it is only through exchange of commodities in the market that the value of our respective labor powers can be equated with one another.²³

Marx distinguishes abstract from concrete labor, in parallel with his earlier analysis of alienation: concrete labor produces goods for use; abstract labor produces commodities for exchange.²⁴ Labor-power is able to produce more value than its reproduction cost; the difference is appropriated and reinvested by the capitalist.²⁵ Capitalist competition increases relative surplus value for all capitalists but not for each employer, who must resort to expanding or intensifying labor time to increase absolute surplus value.²⁶ Labor makes capital—and subordinates itself to it.²⁷ In *Capital*, Marx returns to the analysis of the alienation of labor.

The state seeks to ensure the conditions of and to constrain exploitation of labor in the interests of capitalists as a whole.²⁸ Manufacturing deskills workers and demands new skills. Capitalism requires the forceful separation of producers from the means of production. It makes possible the expansion of human productive capacities but prevents its free development. The working class, and humankind, can free itself only by overthrowing capitalism.²⁹

20. Marx, "Preface" to *A Contribution to The Critique of Political Economy* [1859], CW, 29, pp. 263–264.

21. Marx, *The German Ideology*, Part 1, CW 5, p. 43.

22. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 1, p. 125 or CW, 35, p. 45.

23. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 1, p. 166 or CW, 35, pp. 84–85.

24. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 1, pp. 125–137 or CW, 35, pp. 45–56.

25. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 4–8, esp. ch. 7 or CW, 35.

26. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 10, 12 & 15 pp. 397–420 or CW, 35, pp. 517–543.

27. I owe this observation to Eluned Lewis.

28. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 10 or CW, 35.

29. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 26–32, esp. pp. 929–930 or CW, 35, esp. pp. 750–751.

Weber: Class, Power, and Politics

Max Weber applied the concepts of legal science to explaining the social world, thereby producing a distinct method and original analysis of the fate of the modern world, and Germany in particular. Central to both the substance and method of his analysis are notions of rationality.

We represent and interpret the world through selective ideal-typical representations of actors and of institutions and systems of belief. Explanations are partial and limited to historical contexts. They must be both meaningfully and causally adequate. Actors give meaning to their actions and respond to others. Weber distinguishes *Zweck* (purposive) from *Wert* (value) rationality and both from traditional and affective action.³⁰ *Wert* rationality refers to the choice of considered means to realise chosen ends. *Zweck* rationality refers to the pursuit of rational ends. How can ends be rational? Only if they can be defined and compared by a common measure: in the abstract, utility and in practice, money. Weber distinguishes formal rationality, the ordering of conduct and social institutions according to impersonal and calculable criteria, from substantive rationality.³¹

Weber disparages interpretations of history that insist on finding economic causes and treating other motives as accidents.³² He explores the decisive significance of religious ethics for economic conduct.³³ His aim is not to substitute “for a one-sided materialistic a one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of history and culture”.³⁴ Central to the modern world is the tendency towards the formal rationalization of all spheres of life. This has religious origins but extends to law, administration, architecture, science, music, and economy.³⁵

The modern state, “a compulsory association which organizes domination”³⁶ is decisive for modern political life. It depends on the tripod of interests, legitimacy and force. Its legal-rational forms of administration distin-

30. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 1, ch. 1, 1–2, pp. 4–26.

31. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 1, ch. 1, 9, pp. 85–86.

32. Weber, “Objectivity in the social sciences” [1906] in Weber, *The Methodologies of the Social Sciences*, ed. E.A. Shils and H.A. Finch, Free Press, New York, 1949, pp. 68–71.

33. Weber, “The social psychology of world religions” [1915] *From Max Weber*, ch. XI; *Sociology of Religion* [1922], Beacon, Boston, 1991, esp. ch. XIII, XV, XVI and as *Economy and Society*, I, 2, ch. 6, esp. xii, xv.

34. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, ch. V, p. 183.

35. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 2, ch. VI, esp. iii, viii, x (*The Sociology of Religion*, ch. IV, IX, XI); II, 2, ch. VII v–viii (in *Max Weber on Law in Economy and Society*, ed. E. Shils and M. Rheinstein, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA, 1954); *The Rational and Social Foundations of Music*, ed. D. Martindale, Southern Illinois University Press, 1958.

36. Weber, “Politics as a vocation”, *From Max Weber*, ch. IV, p. 82.

guish it from feudal or patrimonial rule.³⁷ Class, status [*Stand*] and party are analytically distinct but empirically related aspects of the “distribution of power within a community.”³⁸ Weber defines class as “market relation,” *Stände* as communities sharing a “social estimation of honor”, a common “style of life” and “restricted social intercourse.”³⁹ The Prussian Junkers were both a class of agrarian capitalists and a *Stand*, claiming political privileges and defending economic interests by virtue of their claims to honour.⁴⁰ Arguably, any class can form a basis for communal action only when its members share a common sense of their identity, when the class is also a *Stand*.

Capitalism, and the rationalization of conduct it entails, makes possible efficiency in production and administration, advances in science and procedural fairness. But “formal rationality... is always, in principle, in conflict with substantive rationality.”⁴¹ Means displace ends. What the Puritan did as a calling “we are forced to do.”⁴² Weber sees no political salvation: socialism offered only a bureaucratic administration of economic life.⁴³

We must choose which “warring gods” we serve.⁴⁴ Politics can only be a “strong and slow boring of hard boards.”⁴⁵ It entails a commitment, not to an “ethic of ultimate ends” but to an “ethic of responsibility [for consequences]” to the limit at which one can but stand and “do no other.”⁴⁶ Sciences each have their presuppositions. Their truths are never final; they ask to be surpassed. Science rests on the “disenchantment of the world;” its virtue is “plain intellectual integrity;” “if ye will enquire, enquire ye: return come”⁴⁷ These are Weber’s answers to his own requirement to address the legacies of Marx and Nietzsche.

37. Weber, *Economy and Society*, II, ch. XI–XIII; ch. XI “Bureaucracy” is *From Max Weber*, Ch. VII.

38. .

Weber, “Class, status, party”, *From Max Weber*, VII, p. 181 or *Economy and Society*, II, 2, Ch. 11, 6, p. 927.

39. Weber, “Class, status, party”, *From Max Weber*, VII, pp. 182, 186–187 or *Economy and Society*, II, pp. 928, 932.

40. Weber, “National character and the Junkers” *From Max Weber* ch. XV; “Class, status, party”, *From Max Weber*, VII, pp. 190–191 or *Economy and Society*, II, pp. 935–936.

41. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 1, ch. 1, 9, p. 85.

42. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, ch. V, p. 181.

43. Weber, “Socialism”, Speech for the General Information of Austrian Officers in Vienna, 1918, *Max Weber: the Interpretation of Social Reality*, ed. J.E.T. Eldridge, Michael Joseph, London, 1970, Part 2 (C)

44. Weber, “Science as a vocation”, *From Max Weber*, ch. V, p. 153.

45. Weber, “Politics as a vocation”, p. 128.

46. Weber, “Politics as a vocation”, pp. 120–127.

47. Weber, “Science as a vocation”, pp. 155–156.

Durkheim: Social Solidarity

Durkheim can be represented as a conservative, as a liberal and as a socialist. The conservative addresses the problem of order by functional and holistic arguments. The liberal criticizes individualism to identify the conditions for people to live freely in society. The socialist explores the creation of social solidarities.

Durkheim was a rationalist but not a positivist. He instructs us to treat “social facts as things.”⁴⁸ They are ways of acting, which are external, general, and constraining.⁴⁹ His central concern is always with “moral facts.”⁵⁰ The examples vary: division of labor, legal rules, religious beliefs and rituals, social currents; rates of crime or suicide. They are not material but social. The shared “representations which form the network of social life”⁵¹ arise from the ways individuals and groups relate to one another and to the whole society. Durkheim appears to conflate the different meanings of “normal” as average, as obligatory, and as desirable.⁵² He gives centrality to the study of moral facts, and consequently of their abnormal forms.⁵³

“Why does the individual, while becoming more autonomous, depend more upon society?”⁵⁴ The function of the division of social labor is not simply the utility of exchange but establishing a social and moral order, rooted in a collective conscience, linked to but quite different from particular consciences (as Rousseau’s general will is from particular wills⁵⁵). Society moves from mechanical to organic solidarity, from repressive to regulative law.⁵⁶ Contra Spencer, free exchange, which rests on contract, cannot be the basis of any society.⁵⁷ “For

48. Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, ch. 2 p. 60, “Preface to second edition”.

49. Durkheim, *Rules of Sociological Method*, ch 1. p. 59.

50. Durkheim, “The determination of moral facts” [1906] in *Sociology and Philosophy*, introduction by J. G. Peristiany, Free Press, New York, 1974, pp. 49–50.

51. Durkheim, “Individual and collective representations” [1898] in *Sociology and Philosophy*, p. 24.

52. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 3; *Rules of Sociological Method*, ch. 3.

53. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 3.

54. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, “Preface to the first edition”, p. 37.

55. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* [1752], *The Social Contract and the Discourses*, introduction by G. D. H. Cole, Everyman, London, 1993, Books 1–2, esp. pp. 192, 194, 203. publisher, place, date, Book 1, pp.

56. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 1.

57. J.D.Y. Peel, *Herbert Spencer: the Evolution of a Sociologist*, Heinemann, London, 1971; Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 1, ch. 6–7.

if interest relates men, it is never for more than some few moments.”⁵⁸ Non-contractual relations expand with contractual relations.⁵⁹

Specialization of knowledge and production, routinization and globalization may produce an anomic division of labor lacking adequate regulation, or insufficient integration or a division imposed by force.⁶⁰ The progress of individual personality and the division of social labor depend on each other and on regulation defined by rules, nationally and across national boundaries. Every professional activity must have its own ethics.⁶¹ Our present need is for an equivalent of medieval corporations, adapted to modern, international economic conditions⁶²: “civil society” and “co-determination?”

Suicide exemplifies the above themes. Suicides are “external to the individual,” indicated by relatively stable rates over time among populations, which should be studied comparatively; “societies cannot exist if there are only individuals.”⁶³ The distinctions among egoistic, fatalistic and anomic suicide echo the abnormal forms of the division of labor. Egoistic and fatalistic suicide arises from insufficient and excessive integration respectively; anomic suicide from inadequate regulation. We cannot live without the constraints imposed by religion, family, community, and economic change. But if suicide increases with knowledge, knowledge is not its cause but its remedy.⁶⁴ Once the destruction of accepted opinions has commenced, intelligence is our only guide.

For Durkheim, society is real, and socially constructed. We study it from without, yet the forms of our knowledge are socially constructed. The work of the sociologist is not that of the politician. But it may open out our political perspectives.

Capitalism as Cultural Revolution

Marx, Weber and Durkheim each sought to identify the distinctive features of modern capitalist society and its implications for the fate of humanity. Cap-

58. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 1, ch. 7, p. 203.

59. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 1, ch. 7, p. 206.

60. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 3.

61. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* [1900], Routledge, London, 1992, p. 15.

62. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, “Preface to the second edition” [1902]

63. Durkheim, *Suicide* [1897], Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1952, p. 38.

64. Durkheim, *Suicide*, pp. 168–169.

italism is necessarily more than an economic system: hence the need to study its social relations. These involve new forms of the division of social labor, of exchange, contract and property, of profit-making enterprises and economic conduct. Forms of law and state, as well as religious ideas and political ideologies, are prior conditions for the generalization of commodity relations. Capitalism combines individuation with new forms of association. It generates conflict between capital and labor.

Marx and Weber both define capitalism as the separation of producers from the means of production and produce remarkably similar definitions of its origins.⁶⁵ Marx starts from a critique of the classical labor theory of value and of limiting our conceptions of society to the “sphere of circulation... of Freedom, Equality, Property and Bentham.”⁶⁶ Weber responded to the neo-classical abstraction of “economic rationality” from non-economic motives.⁶⁷ Interests and economic calculations matter but are insufficient to explain the economics of labor relations in agriculture or the politics of interests. Durkheim rejects the vision, or possibility, of a society based on contract and individualism.

Capitalism, says Marx, is a form of co-operative production, which makes possible the combination and direction of means of production and labor-power within the enterprise and between enterprises. The product of co-operative work appears to be attributable to, and is made possible by, capital.⁶⁸ Skills and scientific knowledge are detached from the producer, though more general capacities and education are demanded.⁶⁹ Workers become “an appendage of a machine.”⁷⁰ The force of the state creates the class of free laborers.⁷¹ As production expands so does a diversified reserve army of labor, sustained by poor relief and available to meet the demands of labor markets.⁷²

Weber observes the age-old and diverse forms of capitalistic profit making, including “booty capitalism” and “unusual transactions with political bodies.”⁷³ “Rational capital accounting” depends on free labor, free markets and

65. Marx, *Capital* I, part 8; Weber, *General Economic History*, part 4.

66. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 6, p. 280 or CW, 35, p. 186.

67. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 1, ch. 2, esp. 1–4.

68. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 13, 19 or CW, 35; *Capital* III [1894] Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1981, ch. 48, pp. 955–967 or CW, 37, pp. 803–805.

69. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 14–15, esp. pp. 482, 617–619 or CW, 35, esp. pp. 366, 481–491.

70. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 25, p. 799 or CW, 35, p. 639.

71. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 31, pp. 915–916 or CW, p. 739.

72. Marx, *Capital*, I, ch. 25, pp. 781–799 or CW, pp. 623–640.

73. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 1, ch. 2, 31, pp. 164–166.

impersonal calculations, thus on the institutions which makes this possible. They require coercion and the “whip of hunger” as well as double-entry book-keeping, scientific enquiry and its application, and calculable rational law and administration.⁷⁴ Weber’s analysis of East Elbian agriculture explored the typical range of agrarian relations within and among estates and categories of workers, with different strategies for securing independence and livelihoods.⁷⁵ These are capitalist relations, not “feudal relics.”⁷⁶

Durkheim observes that the more dependent we are on one another, the greater the scope for individual autonomy. But our liberty requires regulation and thus the growth of the state. It is threatened by economic and social crises and by the separation of capital and labor and the forcible imposition of constraint. Science, like production, becomes specialized; the individual could become “an inert piece of machinery.”⁷⁷ Hence the need for new forms of social integration to facilitate the moral regulation of society.

For Durkheim, as for Marx and Weber, the starting point of exchange and contract opens the way to an understanding of the complex historical conditions that make their existence possible. The study of capitalism is a study of cultural revolution.

The Spirit of Protestantism

Marx, Weber and Durkheim all recognize the affinity between the spirit of Protestantism and of capitalism. “Accumulate, accumulate. That is Moses and the prophets.”⁷⁸ Weber identifies Protestantism as the most fitting form of religion for accumulating capital. The link involves changes in ideas and in the relations of individuals to society.

Marx starts out from Feuerbach: “*Man makes religion*”. Society produces religion as the consciousness of an “inverted world”. Religious distress expresses and protests against real distress.⁷⁹ Marx identifies the parallels between

74. *General Economic History* [1923] Collier, New York, 1961, part 4, pp. 207–209; *Economy and Society*, I, 1, ch. 20, 30.

75. Weber, “Developmental tendencies in the situation of East Elbian rural labourers” [1894] in *Reading Weber*, ed. Keith Tribe, Routledge, London, 1989, ch. 6.

76. Philip Corrigan, “Feudal relics or capitalist monuments: some notes in the sociology of unfree labour”, *Sociology*, 11, 1977, and *Social Forms/ Human Capacities*, Routledge, London, 1990, ch. 2.

77. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 3, esp. p. 371.

78. Marx, *Capital* I, ch. 24, p. 742 or CW, p. 591.

79. Marx, “Introduction”, to *The Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Law*, CW 3, 7, p. 175.

religious ideas, political institutions and the forms of economic relations. The ways in which we provide our living explain why politics dominated the ancient world, Catholicism the middle ages, and material interests the present.⁸⁰ Marx sceptically observes the spirit of Protestantism at work in the building of prisons to furnish labor.⁸¹ His critique of political economy strips away the mysteries of the commodity and capital to reveal that “Capital is a social relation...”⁸²

Weber studies Protestantism’s part in the expansion of the “spirit of capitalism.” Luther emphasized the calling (*Beruf*, vocation) to act in the world.⁸³ The Calvinist doctrine of predestination had more radical political and economic implications. It carried the “elimination of magic as a means to salvation” to its rational conclusion, confronting individuals with “unprecedented inner loneliness.”⁸⁴ Calvinists can do nothing to attain salvation but only attest, to themselves and others, of their election by their daily conduct. Protestantism led to accumulation of wealth, evidence of God’s blessing on the righteous, encouraged sobriety and justified incentives for workers.⁸⁵

The high religious traditions all reject magic to some extent. The promise of salvation requires prophets to give coherent meaning “both to human life and the world.”⁸⁶ “The conceptions of a transcendental unitary god” poses the problem of theodicy: how to reconcile “his power with the imperfection of the world he has created and ruled over.”⁸⁷ Calvinism offers one rational solution; the Hindu doctrine of *Karma* provides “the most complete formal solution of the problem.”⁸⁸ Hinduism, Buddhism and Catholicism value ascetic ideals for the few but they do not define the norms for the whole society.⁸⁹ The inner-

80. Marx, *Capital* I, ch. 1, p. 176n35 or CW, 35, pp. 92–93n1.

81. Marx, *Capital* I, ch. 27, p. 882n9 or CW, 35, p. 712n2.

82. Marx, *Capital* I, ch. 33, p. 932; III, ch. 48, p. 953 or CW 35, p. 753; 37, p. 801.

83. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, ch. III.

84. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, ch. IV. A. pp. 114, 107.

85. Weber, *Protestant Ethic*, ch. II, V; “The Protestant sects and the spirit of capitalism” [1906] *From Max Weber*, ch. 12.

86. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, ch. 4, p. 59 or *Economy and Society*, I, 2, ch. 6, iii, p. 450.

87. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, ch. 4, p. 138–139 or *Economy and Society*, I, 2, ch. 6, p. 522.

88. Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, ch. IX, p. 145 or *Economy and Society*, I, 2, ch. 6, p. 524.

89. Weber, *The Religion of India: the sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism* [1916–1920], Free Press, New York, 1858, esp. pp. 145–154.

worldly Confucian ethic of the literati adapts both to patrimonial rule and the cosmic order.⁹⁰ Protestantism takes asceticism into the world and has shaped a new capitalist order beyond its intentions, expectations or control.

Durkheim explains the higher suicide rates among Protestants than among Catholics or among Jews by their relative lack of common beliefs and practices and the spirit of free inquiry. Religious society, not doctrine, protects people.⁹¹ If society is founded on a collective conscience, then we must find its foundations in religious life. Drawing on ethnographies of Australian peoples, Durkheim seeks out the “collective representations” by which we define and classify our societies and construct our forms of understanding.⁹² Contrary to the ideas of the Enlightenment, he argued that religious beliefs are not illusory, nor are they privileged. The fundamental categories of thought are of religious origin; this is true of science, as it is true of magic, and also of moral and legal rules.⁹³ Religious experience is grounded not in the intuitions of the faithful but in society itself: religion is “in its image”.⁹⁴ Consequently, the foundations of knowledge are not a priori presuppositions but collective representations.⁹⁵ “Social life embraces at once both representations and practices,”⁹⁶ the Kantian duality of scientific thought and moral reasoning is resolved by recognising their common origins in society itself.

Marx, Weber and Durkheim accept and criticize the assumptions of the Enlightenment. Marx looks to a new society to bury the old gods. Weber and Durkheim look for new sources of creativity to replace them.

The State as a Social Fact

Marx, Weber, and Durkheim are all concerned to find a source of political leadership to address the problems of capitalist society. “Every state is founded on force”⁹⁷ but also on its claims to legitimate authority and the support of powerful interests. It provides an essential framework of moral reg-

90. Weber, *The Religion in China* [1916–1920], Free Press, New York, 1858, Free Press, New York, 1951, ch V, VI, VIII.

91. Durkheim, *Suicide*, ch. 2, p. 170.

92. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life* [1912], George Allen and Unwin, London, 1964, esp. “Introduction”.

93. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, pp. 417–419.

94. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 421.

95. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, pp. 15–16, 431–447.

96. Durkheim, *Elementary Forms*, p. 456.

97. Leon Trotsky, cited Weber, “Politics as a vocation”, p. 78.

ulation and is an instrument of class and other interests. They need access to the state, which shapes their political organization and alliances. The state reconciles and represents the particular interests as the interests of the whole society. It acts through its agents, who may use its policies and resources for their own ends.

“The executive of the *modern* State is but a committee for the management of the *common* affairs of the *whole* bourgeoisie.”⁹⁸ Neither instrumental nor functionalist interpretations reflect these insights. The separation of the secular political state from civil society epitomizes political alienation. The bourgeoisie failed to carry through the 1848 political revolution. It was divided by its own conflicting interests and in conflict with a working class. It retreated behind to the “party of Order.”⁹⁹ The peasantry is parochial and the bureaucracy self-interested. These are features of all capitalist states not just of France between 1848 and 1852. The state disciplines workers and also capitalists. Reflecting on the experience of the Paris Commune, Marx remarks that “the proletariat cannot lay hold on the ready-made state apparatus and wield it for their own purposes.”¹⁰⁰

Weber was committed to the power interests of the state and the social unification of the nation. The Junkers, bourgeoisie, Catholics and their parties were all unable to transcend their interests sufficiently to provide political leadership, as was socialism, with its bureaucratic impulses. Marxism has more to fear from the expansion of the Social Democratic Party than from bourgeois society. Modern bureaucracy provides the most technically efficient form of administration but constrains initiative.¹⁰¹ Politics must find a material base in those who live “for politics” or, as party employees or machine politicians, “off politics.”¹⁰² Political action demands the acceptance of responsibility for the consequences of action.

As the division of labor progresses, so does the scope of the state. The state is a group of officials *sui generis* within which representations and acts of volition involving the collectivity are worked out.¹⁰³ It is separate from the rest of society and its claims over the individual: it “sets [moral individuality]

98. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, CW 6, p. 486.

99. Marx, *Class Struggles in France* CW 10, 6; *The Eighteenth Brumaire* CW 12, 3.

100. Marx, “Second draft of *The Civil War in France*”, 6. “The Commune” CW, 22, p. 533.

101. Weber, “Bureaucracy” *From Max Weber*, pp. 214–216; *Economy and Society*, pp. 973–980.

102. Weber, ‘Politics as a vocation’, pp. 84–87.

103. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*.

free.”¹⁰⁴ Democracy is not “the political form of a society governing itself,” nor should it be. It “is a system based on reflection.”¹⁰⁵ The moral regulation of society requires groups, with their own professional ethics, between the state and the individual, not least in the economic order. If each state promotes the moral life of its citizens, national and world patriotism will be aligned with rather than opposed to one another. State formation is a continuing process of “moral regulation.”¹⁰⁶

The state is a social fact. It is external to each of us, extends beyond its separate institutions and certainly constrains. But it is not a thing. It is an idea; the idea of the state is the collective misrepresentation of capitalist societies.¹⁰⁷

Explaining Society, History, and the Future

Marx, Weber and Durkheim view society not from the end of history but from the middle. They reject individualist accounts of the origins of capitalism and share the conception of history as progressive change. But they each interpret its dynamics, direction, and fate differently. Each addresses the global problem of modernity.

Marx aims to found communism in empirical analysis rather than utopian speculation. His metaphors of base and superstructure and of the contradictions between productive forces and relations provide him with a theory of society and a motor of history. The bourgeoisie “creates a world after its own image.”¹⁰⁸ So will the proletariat. Marx “treats the social movement as a process of natural history”¹⁰⁹ but also observes that Darwin kills off “‘teleology’ in the natural sciences.”¹¹⁰ Marx responds ambiguously when asked if Russia must follow the path of capitalism to arrive at socialism, but explicitly rejects any “supra-historical theory,” which must necessarily stand outside his-

104. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*, pp. 68–69.

105. Durkheim, *Professional Ethics*.

106. Philip Corrigan and Derek Sayer, *The Great Arch: State Formation as Moral Regulation*, Blackwells, 1985.

107. Philip Abrams, “Some notes on the difficulty of studying the state” [1977], *Journal of Historical Sociology*, I, 1988.

108. Marx and Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, CW 6, p. 488.

109. I.I. Kaufmann, cited Marx, “Afterword to the Second German edition” [1873] of *Capital I*, p.107 or CW, 35, p. 18.

110. Marx, Letter to Lasalle, 16 Jan. 1861, CW, 41, 146, p. 247.

tory.¹¹¹ Marx outlines the “original accumulation of capital” and proceeds to declaim the “expropriation of the expropriated” to realize freely the capacities of social labor.¹¹² The problems of why the denouement of capitalism should be realized and of putting communist politics into practice remained unresolved.

For Weber, rationalization is specific to the West and contingent on complex religious, economic and political developments. It redefined modes of thought and social institutions, and their relations. Commerce strengthened prebendalism in patrimonial states. In China, the interests of patrimonial rulers and the literati and the Confucian ethic precluded capitalist development.¹¹³ Weber’s account of the economic and political origins and nature of capitalism is similar to Marx’s, but his view of the future is more sceptical and determinist. It develops within and is tied to the fate of the nation state and market economy. Rationalization appears inexorable.

Durkheim contests the explanation of the progress of the division of labor in “man’s unceasing desire to increase happiness”¹¹⁴ in favor of material and moral densities, which multiply relations among people. As the collective conscience extends and becomes more abstract and the idea of God more transcendent, law, morality, and civilization “more rational.”¹¹⁵ The division of labor may prove to be anomic or forced; hence the need for new forms of moral regulation, founded in justice and equity, which makes individual autonomy possible.

Positivists bridge the gap between fact and value by establishing general laws, which can be inform the realization of political goals. Evolutionary theories provide a handle on the future. For St. Simon and Comte, knowledge was power. For Marx, the point was to change the world,¹¹⁶ opening the issue of the relation of intellectuals to the working class. Weber and Durkheim were concerned with politics/policy, and insisted that political action required coming to terms with modern society. Durkheim insisted that reflection and knowledge could enable us to direct social change. For Weber “the knowledge of causal laws is not the *end* of an investigation but only a *means*.”¹¹⁷ Generalizations rest on homologies, not analogies. They cannot be applied by pol-

111. Marx, Letter to *Otechestvenniye Zapiski* (ed. N.R. Michailokvski, Nov. 1877, *CW*, 24, 17, p. 201.

112. Marx, *Capital* 1, part 8, ch. 25–32 or *CW*, 35.

113. Weber, *Religion in China*, parts 1 and 2.

114. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 2, ch. 2, p. 233.

115. Durkheim, *Division of Labor*, Book 2, ch. 3, p. 290.

116. Marx, *Theses on Feuerbach*, XI, *CW*, 3, p. 5.

117. Weber, “Objectivity in social sciences”, p. 80.

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icy makers to prescribe answers to questions of policy.¹¹⁸ And in their subject matter and preconceptions, “history and sociology are and always have been the same thing.”¹¹⁹

118. Gavin Williams, Brian Williams and Roy Williams, “History and sociological explanation”, *African Sociological Review*, 1, 2, 1998.

119. Philip Abrams, *Historical Sociology*, Open Books, Bath, 1982, p. x.