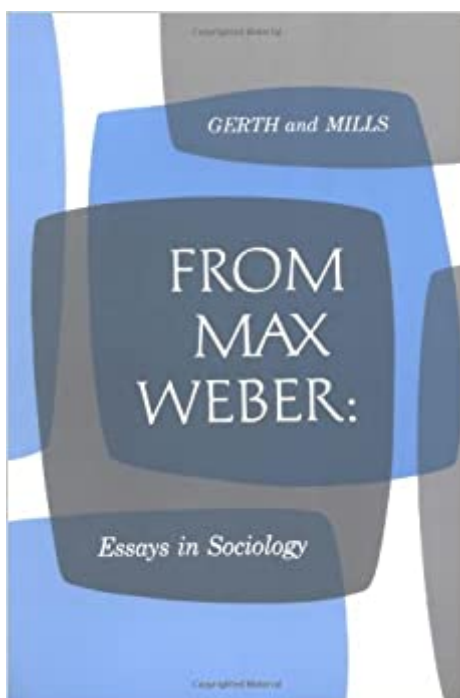


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From Max Weber: Essays In Sociology



Synopsis

An introduction to the work of the greatest German sociologist and a key figure in the development of present-day sociological thought.

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Max Weber (1864-1920) was a German political economist and sociologist who is considered one

of the founders of the modern study of sociology and public administration.

Good book. Great condition. Needed it for college class.

In spite of the real differences between them, Weber and Marx sometimes seem to have more in common than is often acknowledged. American social scientists' deification of Weber and limited interest in Marx has given short-shrift to the conflictual nature of social life as Weber understood it. In the process, they have also given short-shrift to the commonalities between these two classical theorists. This book helps to clarify the relationship between Weberian and Marxist social theory. As a practical matter, with regard to historically specific phenomena, it sometimes seems that Weber tacitly shared Marx's assessment of the antagonistic relationship between capital and labor. This is especially apparent when Weber is playing the inherently ironic role of a determinedly disinterested value-free social critic. For example, when Weber visited the United States in 1905, he was interested in studying the peculiarly intense form of American capitalism. Located at Washington University in St. Louis, Weber became interested in the large, privately owned transit system that provided transportation for people throughout the city. Weber learned that the system had fallen into a bad state of disrepair, and serious accidents were commonplace. The owners of the system had two choices: repair and update the horse-drawn trolleys that moved people from place to place. Or continue to pay damages to passengers who were badly injured and to the families of those who were killed. A cost-benefit analysis showed the latter choice to be less expensive, and so the decision was made. For Weber, this was an obvious outcome: capitalists minimizing costs and maximizing profits, just as their social roles specified. Weber's contemporary Werner Sombart who was favorably disposed to Marxist social theory, found much the same when he studied coal mining in relatively developed capitalist countries, including the U.S. Accidents resulting in injury or death occurred at a much higher rate in U.S. mines than in mines located in European countries. This led Sombart to conclude that American capitalism was, indeed, an especially intense sort, one in which rational calculability in pursuit of profit was practiced with a vengeance. For those of us who lived through the the 1970's and 1980's such stories may have a familiar ring. The Ford Pinto was an inexpensive and popular subcompact. It's design, however, was flawed in that the gas tank, located in the back of the car, was likely to explode if the car were rear-ended. Ford knew about this design flaw, but according to the company's cost-benefit calculations, it would cost less to pay off victims of exploding gas tanks (or their survivors) than to redesign the Pinto. So the design flaw stayed in place, and again, rational calculability in dollar terms took precedence over other considerations. In

spite of their commonalities, however, Weber spoke in terms of organized structures of domination, such as that which gave functional control over labor, rather than antagonistic social classes at war with each other for resources of all kinds. In addition, Weber emphasized that the rationally calculable control of labor by capital was essential for efficient production in a capitalist society. Moreover, Weber objected to Marx's assignment of priority to material and experiential phenomena rather than cultural prescriptions, proscriptions, and meanings. As we have seen, however, Weber's and Marx's treatments of concrete instances of social organization under capitalism sometimes have more in common than is often acknowledged. There is, in fact, a good deal of class conflict, as Marx understood that phenomenon in Weber's social thought. This is something that Gerth and Mills account enables the reader to discern, but which was long hidden in Parsons' early translations.

hard book. I couldn't understand it even though I read it.

This is a good introduction to some of Weber's writings.

good

I bought this book and was given a refund, but I want to let people know that they're better off buying a printed copy of the book. The Kindle version is a cheaply produced version. This Kindle version has numerous errors in spelling and formatting. It was obviously scanned and OCR'd from the printed text, but has not been proofread. For instance, these words are at the first Kindle location: "X rel;" and "reiace." I assume that's supposed to be something like page "X" and "Preface." But if I can't be bothered to fix simple errors like that at the first location in the text (which would be the first page of the printed edition), then what other errors have been allowed to slide through the rest of the text? My favorite error is between locations 21-33. I found this word, "5jBa039." I can't even guess what that's supposed to say. I'm an academic and it's quite important that I have a reliable text to work with. This book is not ready for prime time, and needs serious word-by-word editing by a professional. They shouldn't even be selling this book.

Meticulously translated, this collection of essays is a great place to start for a person only familiar with Weber's seminal work "The Protestant Ethic". I found the essays to be very readable, and Weber's unique style makes it a joy to read. This is a great place to start for anyone interested in beginning to study sociology.

An error-filled mess. Save your money and avoid.

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