

Publisher's Note

With the consent of Professor Stammer and of J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), Tübingen, certain passages have been omitted from this English version of the transactions of the 15th German Sociological Congress held in Heidelberg to commemorate the centenary of Max Weber's birth. In particular the speeches of welcome to the delegates and Professor Adorno's tribute to the late President Theodor Heuss are excluded, and the summaries of the discussions at the end of the book have been curtailed.

The English of the papers and other contributions by Professors Talcott Parsons and Benjamin Nelson is their own, not the translator's. Professor Raymond Aron's paper is translated from his original French.

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*Introduction*¹

OTTO STAMMER

Max Weber was one of the most important scholars of the turn of the century, the initiator of scientific sociology in Germany and co-founder of the German association for sociology, an analytical philosopher and open-minded political adviser and critic. As we know from the biography by Marianne Weber, and from biographical notes by his colleagues, friends and pupils—such men as Karl Jaspers, etc.—he was closely connected with the intellectual and cultural climate of Heidelberg. Despite the cruel illness, which attacked him shortly after his appointment to the chair of economics (formerly that of his teacher Knies) and forced him to retire from lecturing, he spent twenty fruitful years here, with certain longer or shorter interruptions by his numerous journeys in Germany and abroad. After a period of marked political 'engagement'—for example his famous inaugural speech at Freiburg, his appeal for a progressive social policy at evangelical-social congresses, his efforts in the Union for social politics, his close connection with Friedrich Naumann and the National-Social Union—the idea of retirement from vigorous political activity seems to have been connected for him with the acceptance of the chair at Heidelberg. Yet he remained involved in the conflict between scientific duty and political activity and this conflict was the occasion of his reflections on the objectivity of socio-scientific knowledge.

From his years in Heidelberg emerged his most important essays in methodology and theory, and here he developed his conception of the value-freedom of scientific knowledge in relation to the value-relatedness of all objects of cultural and social research. Here he published his well-known work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, and worked at his further sociological studies of religion. Here he founded together with

¹ This section is abridged from Professor Stammer's opening speech at the conference.

PART I

Value-freedom and Objectivity

TALCOTT PARSONS

It is indeed both an honour and a challenge to be invited to participate in this most significant occasion, the observance of the one hundredth anniversary of the birth of Max Weber. It is also a great pleasure to revisit the University of Heidelberg though not quite for the first time, just short of forty years after my enrolment here as a student in 1925. This was too late to know Max Weber in person, but of course his intellectual influence was all-pervasive in the Heidelberg of that time, constituting the one primary point of reference about which all theoretical and much empirical discussion in the social and cultural fields revolved. I was also privileged to know his gracious and highly intelligent widow, Marianne Weber, in particular to attend a number of her famous 'sociological teas' on Sunday afternoons. It was an extraordinarily stimulating intellectual environment, participation in which was one of the few most important factors in determining my whole intellectual and professional career.

I hope it is agreeable to Professor Stammer, and the other members of the Committee which planned this programme, if I interpret my topic broadly rather than narrowly. In the sense in which this is true of Professor Henrich, and Winckelmann and many others, I am not a Max Weber scholar, in particular a scholar of the intricate details of his methodology of science and its relations to the currents of German philosophy of his time. It seems much more appropriate for me to address myself to the broad questions of Max Weber's place in and contribution to the principal trends of development of thought in the Western world on the theoretical understanding of the problems of man in society and culture, which were both the problems of his own time, seen in his perspective as a German scholar, and universal problems of all time. As an American, deeply influenced by Weber, it is doubly

adequate for me to consider his significance in this wider perspective. Moreover, I wish to see Weber's problem not only in the purely intellectual frame of reference, but also in terms of some of the social and political developments of the time, to which Weber himself was so sensitive. It is my conviction that the two aspects have been very intimately connected and that a certain approach in terms of the sociology of knowledge will prove to be fruitful in understanding them.

This of course is not at all to say that the problems of the relation of values to objectivity in the social and cultural sciences, as treated by Weber, were of secondary importance. On the contrary I would attribute the greatest importance to them, perhaps, in the general intellectual developments, at least as great as to that of his substantive contributions in social science. I am therefore by no means unhappy to be dealing in the first instance with the former rather than the latter, and I think it quite proper that they should be considered first in the present symposium.

To come to my central theme, I would first like to suggest that Weber's peak of intellectual maturity coincided remarkably with the outbreak of the greatest crisis of this century in the social and political order of the Western world both internally and in its relations to the rest of the world of our time, namely the beginning of the First World War in 1914. Fifty years of retrospect make it possible to be quite sure that this truly marked the end of an era. Politically it was the beginning of the end of the nineteenth-century system of European national states, which on the one hand has ultimately made their traditional 'sovereignty' *vis-à-vis* each other untenable, on the other hand has destroyed their hegemony over the rest of the world. In the first context the Common Market and the European Unification movement are sufficient indices that the old order has changed internally, the present position in the world power system of the United States and the Soviet Union, and the ending of colonialism, that the old Europe no longer plays its nineteenth-century role in relation to the rest of the world.

It is less well known but I think equally definite and important, that the generation spanning the turn to the twentieth century saw the decisive initial steps taken in a profound intellectual and cultural transformation, the full consequences of which are even now only beginning to emerge. I would like first to discuss Weber in the context of the latter set of problems and then relate the structure

of these problems and of thought about them to the trends of evolution of the social and political system.

WEBER'S THEORETICAL REFERENCE GROUPS

Max Weber's intellectual home, of course, lay in the 'historicist' aftermath of German Idealism as this worked out in the historical schools of jurisprudence, economics, and more generally of culture, e.g. in the work of Dilthey, and of religion as in the work of Troeltsch. The trend was, of course, to stress the internal integration and the historical individuality and uniqueness of the particular cultural system, such as Roman Law, or Renaissance Culture, or indeed 'rational bourgeois capitalism'. The way in which this was done tended to accentuate the dualism already present in the Kantian position between the world of Nature and the world of *Kultur* or *Geist*, involving Kant's 'practical reason', human values and problems of meaning. The cultural and social sciences, dealing with the latter realms, were thereby sharply set off against the natural, not only in terms of empirical subject-matter but also of basic method and mode of conceptualization.

This position not only accentuated a distinction between the two groups of sciences. It went further to structure the relation in favour of protecting the historical-cultural sphere against the encroachments of natural science perspectives and methods. The implication that these were dangerous to human values was certainly present. Closely related to this problem in turn was that of the relation between the individual observer and his subject-matter. As became perhaps particularly clear in the philosophy of Dilthey, the relativity inherent in the conception of the socio-cultural historical individual came to involve the individual because of his involvement in it. There was, then, the threat of a socio-cultural solipsism which in some respects was more profound than the individual version propounded by Bishop Berkeley.

The crucial problem from one point of view was that of the source of leverage whereby the individual scholar or scientist, and the scholarly community of which he was a part, could avoid involvement in a closed system from which there was no escape. From some perspectives the difficulty seemed to be insuperable because the understanding of motives and meanings (*Verstehen*), which were shared between observer and object, seemed to be the

essence of the cultural disciplines which separated them from the natural. This was, of course, perhaps the most central point at which Weber made his proposals for reformation.

The citing of these difficulties in German historicism—which incidentally have tended to be repeated a half century later in American cultural anthropology—is by no means meant to belittle the major substantive contributions made under the aegis of the 'historical schools' in various disciplines during the relevant period. They did, however, create tensions which were the starting points for Weber's special contribution.

Before attempting to characterize this, I think it will be helpful to sketch briefly the two principal alternatives to historicism which seemed to be most readily available in the intellectual situation of Weber's time. The first of these was relatively foreign to the main German tradition, though constantly close to its centre of awareness. Indeed there was a strong tendency to define the main axis of the differences between German and 'Western' culture in terms of the contrast between the complex just sketched and Western 'rationalism', atomism and various other terms.

In intellectual history this contrast presents too many complexities to enter into here. The most salient elements for present purposes, however, were those centring in British social thought—and American, though the United States was not at the time a very prominent focus of major intellectual movements to a central European. Here the main focus, I think, lies in the broad Utilitarian movement, which had two particularly important characteristics for purposes of the present analysis. The first of these is that it tended to assimilate the natural and the socio-cultural fields to each other rather than, in the German tradition, separating them. The most prominent movement in this direction centred about the development of economics as a theoretical discipline, which had become firmly established in Britain. The same general intellectual framework had much to do with the beginnings of psychology as a science. The level of economics was clearly one of the *Verstehen* of human motives, of the relations of the 'wants' of individuals to the measures taken to secure their satisfaction. In theoretical terms, however, this was a sharply limited range of motives and utilitarianism also remained 'atomistic'—which is to say that it had no theoretical way of establishing relations among individuals other than at the level of means and the situation of action. As such it was

unstable and subject to pressures to 'reductionism', the purport of which was that the relevance of the theoretical model of 'natural science' tended to cover over the reduction of man to what was in fact a biological organism or even a physical particle. Considerations such as these seem to be related to the common German tendency to derogate the intellectual merits of utilitarian thought by treating it as merely an ideological expression of the 'materialistic' interest of its proponents. There were, however, profoundly important intellectual problems underlying the difference between German historicism and English utilitarianism.

French social and cultural thought of the time is much more difficult to characterize. On the one hand both positivism and rationalism of important sorts flourished in France. This circumstance is related to the German tendency at that time to treat French *Civilization* as somehow inferior to German *Kultur*. At the same time, as developments of special interest to the sociologist have made clear, there were more readily available openings for a sociological type of development in France than in England, in the more 'collectivistic' strain of French radical rather than conservative thought, i.e. from Rœussau, through St. Simon and Comte to Durkheim and other contemporaries of Weber. It seems fair to say that on the whole the French situation was intermediate between the German and the British and subsequently, though not in Weber's lifetime, came to be an essential intellectual bridge between them.

The second major movement toward which Weber had to assume a position was socialist thought. As by far the most philosophical version and over the long run the most influential, it seems justified to confine attention here to Marxism. Moreover, it was the version dominant in the German intellectual situation of Weber's time, though it should not be forgotten that the split between the Communist and the Social Democratic wings did not occur in time to affect Weber's basic orientation.

In the present frame of reference, Marx presented a peculiar synthesis between the German and British patterns of thinking just outlined, which he could achieve by, in his famous phrase, 'standing Hegel on his head'. I understand this to mean that Marx remained basically within the main frame of reference of German philosophy in this respect, above all in that he accepted a dichotomy which was not identical to that between the cultural and the

natural science, but obviously very closely related to it, namely between the two categories of factors operating in the field of human behaviour, the *Idealfaktoren* and the *Realfaktoren*. Hegel, as idealist, clearly thought the former to be paramount whereas standing him on his head asserted the primacy of the other set, of the 'material' interests. This could even bring Marx closer to the natural sciences as in a sense the concept 'scientific socialism' suggested, but it still remained within the idealist-historicist frame of reference. It could also make possible a positive use of utilitarian economics, as a scheme for analysing the internal dynamics of the capitalistic system in modified Ricardian terms—though remaining true to historicism, by insisting that economic theory in anything like that sense applied *only* to capitalism. To be sure, finally, Marx stopped short of pure historicism in that he shared with Hegel a teleologically orientated scheme of the evolution of human society and culture as a whole.

My thesis is that these three intellectual movements, with reference in all cases to the problem of the sciences of human social and cultural affairs, defined the co-ordinates of Weber's problem. In fact he achieved a synthesis which, though refusing to accept any one of them on its own terms, ended by incorporating essential elements from all of them into a single frame of reference, and leaning on this, the beginnings of a theory, which was clearly on a level much higher than could be offered by any of these antecedents. Weber's innovations—in which he was not alone, but certainly in most respects pre-eminent, can I think best be put in terms of his 'methodological' conceptions on the one hand, his substantive contribution to social science on the other. This distinction, it seems to me, is roughly equivalent to that between frame of reference and theory in the broad scientific sense.

WEBER'S METHODOLOGY OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

1. *Wertfreiheit*

The concept of *value-freedom* may be said to be the foundation of his position. It stands in sharp contrast to all three of the above views from which Weber differed. From the historicist perspective the investigator was so firmly ascribed to his cultural position that

capacity to transcend it in favour of a new level of objectivity was certainly problematical. From the Marxist point of view this embeddedness in a socio-cultural system, here the class-system, remained, but this time was compounded by the movement's commitment to political action in the name of the implementation of the doctrine's views of the iniquity of capitalism and the prospective glories of socialism. The case of utilitarianism is a bit more complex, for here no clear line was drawn between the grounds of objectivity in empirical judgment on the one hand, and of advocacy of policies on the other, since the latter problem was so far reduced to the level of merely individual preferences.

By contrast with all three, Weber's position is one of a much higher level of differentiation. It is not an advocacy that the social scientist abstain from all value-commitments—for example the position taken in *Wissenschaft als Beruf* makes that entirely clear. The point is rather that *in his role* as scientist a particular subvalue system must be paramount for the investigator, that in which conceptual clarity, consistency and generality on the one hand, empirical accuracy and verifiability on the other are the valued outputs of the process of investigation. But the scientist is never the whole man, and the scientific community is never a whole society. It is as inconceivable that either a person or a society should be exhausted in these terms as that there should be a totally 'economic' man of society. Other value-components are naturally paramount in other roles of individuals and in other subsystems of the society. Value-freedom I thus interpret as freedom to pursue the values of science within the relevant limits, without their being overridden by values either contradictory to or irrelevant to those of scientific investigation. At the same time it involved the renunciation of any claims that the scientist *qua* scientist speaks for a value-position, on a broader basis of social or cultural significance than that of his science. Thus from Weber's point of view such a phrase as 'scientific socialism' is just as unacceptable as 'Christian Science' would be if the term science there were meant in an empirical sense. The policy-orientations of political movements are *never* simple applications of scientific knowledge, but always involve value-components analytically independent of the sciences, natural or social. Value-freedom, furthermore, implies that a science need not be bound to the values of any particular historic culture.

2. *Wertbeziehung*

Secondly, there is a sense in which the doctrine of *Wertbeziehung* is the obverse of that of *Wertfreiheit*. The latter I have interpreted in the sense of stressing the independence of the role of scientists from other roles. The former may be interpreted as stressing their interdependence. This, above all, seems to be directed against the kind of naïve empiricism, according to which scientific knowledge is held to be simply a 'reflection' of the reality of the external world, whether this empiricism be understood in the more historicist sense of involvement in the particular cultural system itself, or in that of British empiricism with its relations to utilitarianism and to cultural trait-atomism. It is an implication of the differentiation of roles between scientist and other bases of participation in both the cultural and the social systems, that the bases of interest for the posing of problems for a science should be carefully distinguished from the canons of procedure in the solution of those problems, and of the validity of propositions arrived at through following those procedures. Scientific investigation is never purely an occupation of the ivory tower and its products are not 'immaculately conceived'. Values for Weber may in this context be said to constitute the extrascientific source of the scientific 'paternity' by virtue of which 'mother-science' can be fruitful. This doctrine is of course related to a number of considerations. First it may be noted that the scientist himself, as a total human being, must find his commitment to his science meaningful in terms of his values—it must be his calling (*Beruf*). But, secondly, science is only in a limiting case a purely individual isolated activity—it must in the nature of the case be socially organized. In this connection it is essential that it should be integrated to a degree of the value-consensus of the community in which it takes place, not totally absorbed, but accorded the kind of place which is essential to its support in a broadly political sense. Without such consensus for example anything like a modern university system would be unthinkable. Contrary, then, to much naïve cultural 'isolationism' we can then say that of course science, including the socio-cultural science, is oriented in terms of and dependent on the total value systems of the society and culture of the time. This almost follows from the fundamental fact that science is a human enterprise. But as noted, the interdependence is not incompatible with its essential independence.

3. *Causal explanation and generalized theory*

In the above two primary references of Weber's methodology of social science the problem has been that of relation to the wider culture. The next problem I wish to take up concerns a problem internal to the sciences, namely the relation between the status of natural and of cultural science. Here it seems to me that the crucial points are essentially very simple. Weber took very seriously indeed the proposition that *knowledge* in the empirical sense clearly implied the *causal explanation* of phenomena and events. Causal explanation, in turn, is simply not possible unless the particular facts are related, not merely in an historical sequence, but through analysis by means of a generalized theoretical scheme which is in the nature of the case abstract. Very bluntly, the conception of generalized theory as has been developed in the great tradition of the natural science is an essential component of *all* empirical science. This includes not merely definitions of generalized concepts, and classificatory schemes, but substantive propositions about the *relations* among abstractly defined variables.

The basic fallacy of 'historicism', if I am correct in interpreting what I take to be Weber's view, was the idea that, through emphatic 'understanding' of the cultural orientations of a system alone, either it was possible to *explain* action within it without reference to any analysis in terms of generalized theory, or explanation itself was thought irrelevant. Weber's position in repudiating both doctrines means that, in *this* crucial sense, there is not 'natural' or 'cultural' science, there is only science or non-science and all empirical knowledge is scientific in so far as it is valid. It is not possible here to take the space to ground this view—only to state that it was very clearly asserted by Weber, and is of the very first importance. In particular it may be noted that Marxism still adheres basically to a position of historical relativity which is incompatible with Weber's position.

The new thing in Weber, beyond this position itself, was the claim that not only was it methodologically essential, if causal knowledge of value-oriented human action was to be achieved, to develop general analytical theory in the social sciences, but it was entirely feasible, a proposition which had been vehemently denied in the historicist tradition. Indeed Weber himself tackled this task at its very core. This seems to me to have been one primary aspect of the significance of his embarking in the famous

series of comparative studies in the sociology of religion. In the essay on the Protestant Ethic he cut into the centre of a major problem of 'historical' explanation. In the older tradition the indicated procedure would have been to delve even more deeply into the specific historical antecedents both of Protestantism and of capitalism in the West. Instead, Weber quite deliberately chose to develop an 'experimental design' by which he studied the negative cases where 'capitalism' had failed, under what he showed to be comparative circumstances,¹ to develop. My essential point is that Weber chose this method not only in order to help to demonstrate his thesis about the relation between Protestantism and capitalism, but *also* to show the importance and the feasibility of generalized analytical theory in the cultural sphere. His most developed product in this respect was the section on the Sociology of Religion in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. This is elementary theory, but for more than a generation it has been far in advance of anything else in the field. Such propositions as that stating the intimate relations between a religious ethic and the phenomenon of prophecy, or with reference to the dispositions of different kinds of social strata to different religious orientations are examples of the propositional content of this scheme. Indeed there is a sense in which this was the major 'pay-off' of Weber's new orientation, the commitment to and development of a generalized analytical science in the field precisely of the cultural content which the historicist tradition had declared completely inaccessible to such methods. This, essentially, was what Weber meant by sociology as a theoretical discipline.

4. *Verstehen*

There was, however, one essential component of his methodology which has not yet been treated. Weber, that is to say, had to cope with the doctrine that the methodological dichotomy between nomothetic and ideographic orientations coincided with that between observation of 'external' realities in almost the physical sense and participation with the object of observation through *Verstehen*. It is necessary to discuss this problem briefly in order to complete the methodological picture.

It can, I think, correctly be said that Weber dealt with this

¹ The two studies of religion and society in China and India respectively. The study of Ancient Judaism belongs in a different category.

problem area as an integral part of his general methodology. First it was essential that he should make clear that *both* the understanding of cultural meaning-systems as such—e.g. mathematical-propositions—and of motivational meanings 'intended' by individual actors should be included. Without clarity on this point the essential bridge between cultural levels and those of the concrete actions of individuals could not have been built. The concept of *Verstehen* was, however, also intimately connected with all three of the other methodological doctrines which have just been reviewed.

First, let me suggest an important relation to the concept of *Wertbeziehung*. Not only are the non-scientific values of the investigator himself and his culture involved, but also those of the persons and collectivities which are the object of his investigation. At the level of *Verstehen* scientific investigation is basically a process of meaningful communication, even though, where for example the objects are dead, it is a one-way process. In principle, however, it would always be desirable to have the object available for interviews, and taking his written expressions, accounts of him by others, etc., is always second best—thus to be able to interview Brutus about Caesar's death would, from the point of view of certain definitions of that event as an 'historical individual', have been highly desirable.

We can now say that effective communication in human cultural-symbolic terms, *always* involved the sharing of values at some level and in some respects. At the same time, however, the values shared in the nature of the case cannot be those of a total cultural *Gestalt*. If this were the case the investigator would be enclosed within a basically solipsistic system, as that problem has been outlined above. What must be conceived to be shared are value-components, which are relevant to the particular investigative problems and are in principle isolable from others of the investigator's own culture. If anything Weber seems to have underestimated the possibilities of extension of understanding on these bases, as some of his remarks on the impossibility of understanding very primitive peoples seem, in the light of the development of anthropology, to indicate. From this point of view *Verstehen*, of course, is both a method and a result of the investigative process. As method it is as noted inherently dependent on the sharing of values and motivational meanings between investigator and object.

The relation of these conditions to value-freedom in turn is patent. *Only* the investigator who is capable of differentiating his role from that of simply a participant in his general culture can attain the perspective and the objectivity necessary to select out those elements which are essential to his scientific purposes from those of his own culture which are irrelevant to it. The science itself, that is, must have its *own* value-system which articulates both in that of the culture in which the investigator participates and in that of the objects he studies. The clear implication is that of a basic *universalism* of values involved in social science, which are not particular to any cultural complex. This seems to point to the grain of truth in Karl Mannheim's well-known doctrine about the special status of the 'free intelligentsia' who were not fully bound in to their cultures—however inadequate Mannheim's analysis of this phenomenon. This is a crucial sense in which Weber, as comparative sociologist, *could not* be a radical relativist with respect to values.¹

If, however, the *Wertbeziehung* of the social-scientific investigator is emancipated from boundness to any particular cultural complex, how is it to be conceived to be controlled by standards of genuine relevance? There is an entirely clear answer in Weber's scheme, namely by virtue of the generality of theoretical conceptualization and of the canons of empirical validity. Science is, precisely, one of the primary elements of a generalized cultural system which is most specifically governed by general norms, the familiar norms of objectivity both in verification of statements of empirical facts, and in logical inference and analysis. Thus once again the central importance of Weber's break with the particularism of the historicist tradition becomes evident. The general loosening up of his methodological position through differentiation keeps leading him back to the view that, if the values of science are to be differentiated from the diffused general value complex, then if their interdependence with others in defining relevance, both in the direction of the object observed and the observer himself, is taken into account, and finally if the crucial facts are to be accessible through *Verstehen*, then the process as a whole must be subject to control through general theory of the *logical* type already established in the natural sciences. In *this* crucial respect Weber aligned himself with the basic 'utilitarian' tradition,

¹ Cf. Dieter Henrich, *Die Einheit der Wissenschaftslehre Max Webers* (Tübingen, 1952).

especially with British economic theory, against both historicism and Marxism. The essential point is the basic *autonomy* of both the special values and the technical theory of science, relative both to the general culture and to the other value-commitments of the investigator, and the priority of these considerations over any particularities of *Verstehen* of particular complexes of meaning or motivation.

In conclusion of this all-too-brief sketch of some problems of Weber's methodological position, I would like to endorse emphatically the view so clearly stated by Professor Henrich that these conceptions of Weber's are couched at the level of the methodology of science, not that of epistemology. Basically Weber is not concerned with the problem of the grounds on which valid empirical science in the field of human meaning and motivated action is or is not possible. He fundamentally takes this for granted. What he presented was an ordered account of the structure of such knowledge and certain of its relations to the more general culture of which it is a part. He was no more concerned with the epistemological problem than is the modern physicist with the question of whether the physical world 'really' exists, or the biologist of whether there is any ultimate difference between living organism and lifeless 'matter'. This is perhaps the most fundamental of all the respects in which Weber carried through a basic *differentiation* of the intellectual tradition from which he started.¹

WEBER'S SUBSTANTIVE SOCIOLOGY

There seems to be no question of the immense importance of Weber's methodological position as I have sketched it. Yet had his

¹ It will be evident to the reader, especially if he is schooled in the German tradition under consideration, that the position taken in the whole of the discussion of Weber's methodology diverges very considerably from that of Karl Mannheim—in whose first seminar at Heidelberg in the summer semester 1929 I participated. In its relation to tradition of historicism and to Marxism it seems to me that Mannheim's position was retrogressive as compared with that of Weber. In this respect I agree with the judgment of von Scheling (*Max Webers Wissenschaftslehre*, Tübingen, 1934), though I would extend the criticism over a broader front than Schelting dealt with. It seems to me that Mannheim mainly made the inherent circularities of both types of position more explicit rather than finding a way to transcend them. In addition to the scheme of empirical proof which Schelting stressed so strongly, I should emphasize the role of general theoretical conceptualization. Mannheim never really faced this issue; rather than analysing, he 'delineated' the socio-cultural complexes in which ideological positions, like that of German conservative thought, were rooted.

writings been confined to these questions, the occasion we are here celebrating would have been far less significant than it is. Weber's methodology was meant, and in fact served, as the framework of a *substantive* contribution of the first importance. Its importance cannot, however, be properly assessed without seeing the connection between the two.

Of course Weber had laid very extensive and substantial foundations for his substantive sociology before the methodological revolution which began with the essays on Roscher and Knies. This phase of his work was, however, as is well known, concomitant with an equally new set of substantive investigations and analysis, the first of which was the famous monograph on the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. There is, I think, an exceedingly important set of relations between these two parts of his work.

1. *Sociology of law*

I should like strongly to suggest that the core of Weber's substantive sociology lies neither in his treatment of economic and political problems nor in his sociology of religion, but in his sociology of law. It is thus striking that, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, after the very condensed statement of his methodological position, he begins immediately to outline his classification of the types and components of *normative order* in society (Sec. II, Par. 4, beginning with the concepts of *Brauch* and *Sitte*). He comes furthermore very quickly to the concepts of *legitimate order*, which is the nodal point where the concepts of law, of political authority and of the social role of religious ethics come together.

This central emphasis is, of course, thoroughly understandable in the light of Weber's personal history, his training and early academic career in the field of jurisprudence. The tendency to dichotomize emphases as between *Idealfaktoren* and *Realfaktoren*, however, seems to have operated to obscure the continuing importance of this node, since law cannot be nearly allocated either to the one or to the other, but is the principal mediating structure between them. It is, however, very clear that Weber, precisely as a sociologist rather than a political scientist or economist, considered political and economic structures, and processes, not to be understandable without full analysis of their relation to normative order—witness the crucial role of the concept of authority in his

political analysis and, on the other hand, he did not think the analysis of religious values and meaning systems could be made relevant to understanding concrete social action without understanding how they affected conceptions of normative order and the legitimacy of its different types.¹

It is then the very centrality of the problem of the relation between the two sets of factors in human socio-cultural action which, in my opinion, underlies the centrality of the topic of law as, in advanced societies, the focus of practically significant normative order in Weber's work. It was above all by virtue of this emphasis and the substantive analyses he presented, that Weber was able to develop a fundamental resolution of the dualism which kept, figuratively speaking, the Marxes and the Hegels perpetually 'setting each other on their heads'.²

Without attempting to discuss the complex problems in detail, I may suggest that the crucial focus of Weber's sociology of law lies in the concept of *formal rationality* which, though by no means confined by Weber to the field of law, was certainly particularly strongly emphasized there. The criterion of formal rationality designates a level of differentiation of the normative order at the societal level by virtue of which it can become relatively independent in both directions in the ideal-real series. Legal decisions then are no longer a simple application of *ethical* orientations as, for example, has tended to be the case in systems of religious law such as the Jewish or the Islamic supplemented by casuistry, which often became very elaborate, while on the other hand they can become also relatively independent of more particularistic politics and economic interest-constellations.

The implication of this is that, for its full effect to be felt, the

¹ It is perhaps worth noting here that a primary focus of ambiguity in Marxian thought lies in the problem of the relation of legal order to the famous concept of the *Produktionsverhältnisse*. It has long seemed to me that Marx was simply unclear on the problem of how far the element of legal order in such structures, e.g. the *authority* of management in the firm, was a simple epiphenomenon of either his economic interests or his power position or a combination of the two. Weber's analysis came directly to grips with the core of this problem.

² It is of course clear that the logic of this dichotomy is essentially the same as the one of heredity *versus* environment in the history of biological thought. To my mind arguing whether the 'ideal' or the 'real' factors ultimately determine human action is today exactly as futile as arguing whether hereditary or environmental factors ultimately determine the nature of organic life. In both cases it is clearly a matter of complex interdependence among equally essential but differently operating factors.

system of legal norms itself must become relatively *universalistic*. It must be organized in terms of general principles when related to more particular facts. Another particularly important point is the development of procedural institutions, which emancipates the legal system from boundness to particular precepts so long as it provides procedures for arriving at legal solutions—thus though English Common Law has been less highly rationalized than Continental Roman Law in systematization of legal doctrines, it has been even more highly developed on the procedural side. Finally relative independence, both from political and from religious authority, both of the judiciary and of the private legal profession, have been very important phenomena, slowly becoming more prominent in the course of legal history.

2. *The sociology of political and economic life*

As I suggested above, Weber's sociology of law is an essential key to the understanding of his analysis of political and economic phenomena. The most important single link is perhaps the conception of rational-legal authority. This conception incorporates all the essentials of a highly developed legal order as just outlined, in specific relation to the organization of governmental authority and power. Under this pattern of authority political leadership is itself legally bound in the framework of something like a constitution, but equally by virtue of this legal framework it is in certain respects independent of ethical and religious control in either the traditionalistic or the charismatic senses.¹ It is then a characteristic of rational-legal authority that legitimation applies first to the legal or constitutional order itself, and only through it then to their incumbents. The concept of legitimation therefore is the primary link in the other direction between the legal order, and through it the political system, and the cultural system, particularly values and religious orientations. In this respect the hallmark of both traditional and charismatic authority patterns is that neither presupposes the same order of differentiated legal system as does the

¹ On a previous occasion I have attempted to show that Weber's three famous types of authority do not lie on the same level, but that the traditional and the charismatic are developmentally different from the rational-legal. Cf. my article, 'Authority, Legitimation and Political Action', which appeared originally in *Nomos I: Authority* (C. J. Friedrich, ed.) and is reprinted in my volume *Structure and Process in Modern Societies* (Free Press, 1961), chap. V.

rational-legal, but rather a much more direct legitimation of political action, on the one hand by virtue of a traditionally given diffuse status, on the other of a non-traditional assumption of moral authority. Both are, so far as they are in Weber's sense 'rational' at all, cases of 'substantive' rather than formal rationality.

Similar considerations apply to the economic field. As contrasted with the utilitarian tradition it is first notable that Weber never dealt with economic problems without careful attention to their political context. Of course, in many organizational contexts, the degree of independence of economic processes and interests, on the one hand from conditionalized and diffuse *Gemeinschaft* structures, on the other from political authority, is low. Weber was, however, particularly interested in the situations and conditions where this independence did develop and this was to him a primary aspect of modern capitalism.

Here again the legal reference was very prominent, in particular to the institutionalization of property and contract at legal levels. In terms of Weber's empirical interests it is somewhat overshadowed by his concern with the more direct effects of commitments to a religious ethic on economic behaviour, as above all in the case of the Protestant Ethic. There are, however, two things to be said in this connection. First, quite clearly the development of legal systems in the Western world, particularly perhaps in England, was closely connected with various conditions of economic development, and Weber repeatedly lists a firm legal order among the most important conditions of markets and of capitalism. The keynote here is the calculability of market chances. Secondly, where this kind of condition is not present, the orientation of action to economic considerations is in the nature of the case severely limited because of its diffuse ascription to non-economic elements such as ethnic and kinship groupings or religiously motivated collective solidarity.

One further important conclusion emerges. This is that, in the substantive sociological sense, Weber's theoretical scheme is inherently evolutionary. The comparative emphasis is legitimate and essential. There is no simple linear process at the level dealt with even by a Comte or a Marx, and many outcomes are dependent on highly variable contingencies. Nevertheless Weber was committed to the attempt to set forth a general picture of a 'modern' type of social organization which, as it happened, emerged

in its later phases primarily in the Western world, and which was qualitatively different in an evolutionary sense from anything found in other civilizations. He tended to characterize this as rational bourgeois 'capitalism', but the economic stress in the designation is not sufficient or even crucial. It was, at the very least, conceived as a very comprehensive complex of institutional components, in which universalistic law and rational-legal authority, as well as profit-oriented economic enterprise play a central part.

3. *The sociology of religion*

The third primarily important part of Weber's substantive sociological contribution is in the cultural area, centring, of course, his famous studies in the sociology of religion. Since they have already been mentioned a number of times only a few points about them need to be made. The first, of course, is to repeat that, however important Weber's historical interest in ascetic Protestantism and its relations to the rest of Christianity and to the political and economic order of Western society, the primary thrust of his concern with religion is comparative and systematic, including in the latter a pronounced evolutionary reference; I have suggested above that the programme of comparative studies in this field was meant in part as a demonstration not only of the importance but of the feasibility of generalized analysis in the cultural field, a field which had tended to be accepted as the citadel of historicist particularism.

Secondly, there is an important problem which concerns the relative priority of Weber's treatment of religion as compared with law and with the political and economic spheres. With respect to the primary differentiating influence on the development of types of culture and society, there is no doubt that Weber assigned priority to the systems of religious orientation. Incomplete as was his study in final execution, this conclusion emerges clearly from the design and findings of his series of comparative studies in the sociology of religion. Given his evolutionary perspective, this primacy with respect to the differentiation of types of socio-cultural system must of course be linked with the evolutionary strain in his thought. It seems to follow that it is in the religious sphere and subject to that, other spheres of culture like ethical conceptions and science, that we have to seek the primary loci of

the major creative innovations, whether they operate, as Weber tended to feel, by charismatic 'breakthrough' or by other types of process.¹ It should, however, be made clear that this assertion of the priority of the cultural elements in certain contexts of control and differentiation of type, does not imply a reversion to an idealistic emanationist point of view, which denies the independent causal significance of the 'real' or 'material' factors. Weber is perfectly clear on the significance of the latter in general terms, and has probably made larger contributions than any single writer of his generation, if not since, to the understanding of a wide variety of detailed problems of just how they operate.

This sense of the priority of cultural factors, and hence of the sociology of religion in Weber's work, must be carefully distinguished from the sense in which I have contended that the sociology of law, as the centrally significant aspect of normative order in social systems, is the nodal centre of his sociology as a whole. There is a very important and subtle relation here between the conception of the universalism, and at the same time the independence, of law, and the theme that the analyst of social systems should both be objective in the sense in which its relation to the concept of *Wertfreiheit* has been discussed, and that in order to do so he should operate with generalized theoretical categories.

Law, that is to say, is, as both Weber and his great French contemporary Emile Durkheim recognized, the primary structural focus of societies, the more definitely so the more advanced they are. The cultural legitimation of legal systems, however, lies in their grounding in the religious orientations of their populations and their historic antecedents. Law is thus the primary focus of the comparative and developmental analysis of societies. Interpretations of its deeper meaning, however, must rest on analysis of the cultural systems in which these meanings are grounded.

Social science, like any other rational discipline, is in the first instance grounded in culture; it is an enterprise of the human investigator in his quest for interpretation of the meanings of the

¹ This general point of view is in accord with the conception that, to use the terms of current cybernetic theory, cultural systems, as primarily systems of 'information' in a specific sense are, given the requisite conditions, capable of controlling the higher 'energy' systems of political and economic action. A succinct and illuminating account of the relevance of cybernetic theory to social and political systems is given in Karl W. Deutsch, *The Nerves of Government*, chap. V.

human condition which are relevant to him. As such there is a reference, both to the values of scientific investigation itself, in its essentially autonomous way, and behind that to the more general value system.

The structure of the scientific discipline itself, however, the more so the more mature it becomes, is defined in terms of its theoretical uniformities and generalizations. Precisely in so far as the social sciences become autonomous relative to their philosophical and other cultural groundings, this autonomous structure is to be found in the first instance in the structure of its generalized conceptual system. Weber stood somewhat hesitantly before this conclusion, and definitely did not present a 'theoretical system' in a fully developed sense. He did, however, point a direction which to me is unmistakable. In any case the congruence between the structure of his methodological position and the structural relations among the components of his substantive sociology seems to me to be of first-order significance.

WEBER AND THE PROBLEM OF IDEOLOGY

The body of this paper has been couched at the level of relatively technical, though by no means detailed, discussion of Max Weber's ideas in the fields of the methodology of social science and of his substantive sociology. We began, however, with certain major problems of the state of Western society in the present century and the relations of the prevailing patterns of social thought to these problems in the role of ideologies. In conclusion I would like to return to these themes.

First I would like to emphasize again that the three main patterns of social thought which together constituted Weber's reference system, were at the same time more technical positions on the framework of social science and foci of ideological orientations. Ideologically the idealist-historicist position may be treated as at least closely related to conservative ideologies in the European sense. These have been on the whole those which were more favourable to the old Europe and its civilization, with a certain, though by no means complete, presumption that its primary trustees should be the older aristocratic classes, particularly in their role of cultural élites. On occasion this could shift over, as in certain respects it did with the Nazis, to the view that a total

'people' should become the bearers of (in a severely vulgarized version) the great tradition.

In any case, this historicist-conservative base can plausibly be contrasted with not one, but two, directions of challenge to it and, from the point of view of its proponents, threats to its integrity. The older of these, which most Germans, and indeed Continental Europeans, felt to be basically 'foreign' to them, was what I have called the utilitarian system, especially in the form of the ideology of 'economic individualism', or more pointedly 'capitalism'. Here a particularly salient point is the *common* antagonism of continental conservatives and socialists in this ideological sense, to capitalism. The second direction of course was the socialistic, which came more and more to focus in the Marxian system.

I have already spelled out the principal respects in which Weber took a technically intellectual course which rejected acceptance of any of these three traditions, though he adopted important elements from all three. Broadly the same can be said ideologically, with an important qualification. He was almost unequivocally antagonistic to what he conceived, in the intellectual-political situation of his time in Germany, to be both the conservative and the socialist positions, though for the former he did not unequivocally repudiate nationalism, nor for the latter the theme of 'social justice'. Toward the capitalistic alternative, on the other hand, he seemed to be much more markedly ambivalent. He regarded 'capitalism', including bureaucratic organization, both private and governmental, as essentially the 'fate' of Western society, yet he had grave misgivings about its implications, especially in 'humanistic' contexts.

I wonder whether it is going too far to suggest that this indicates a rather definite attempt to break out of the idealist-materialist, or historicist-Marxist dilemma, but with a good deal of indecision as to whether it was advisable and where it could lead. Clearly to him 'capitalism' in some sense had to be accepted, but equally on a variety of grounds, scientific and ethical, the prevailing interpretations were on the one hand inadequate to the phenomenon itself, on the other out of accord with his feelings of rightness and appropriateness.

On the level of the more technical aspects of his thought, Weber clearly broke out of what I have called the 'trilemma' presented by the structure of the principal currents of social thinking of his

time. His resolution of the trilemma pointed in the direction of a new pattern of thinking in the area, of which an autonomous theoretical sociology was an essential ingredient. On this level Weber clearly converged with other parts of a major intellectual movement of his generation. Taking his contribution—which I regard as the most crucial single one—along with many others I think it can be said that the whole intellectual-social situation has been redefined in a way that makes the principal categorizations of the late nineteenth century, many of which are still widely current, basically obsolete.¹

I would go farther to suggest that Weber's 'fourth position' could not be absorbed simply into another ideology, to compete on the same level with the other three. It is, from this point of view, no accident that it is impossible to classify Weber politically as a 'conservative' in the older German tradition, as a 'liberal' in the economic individualist sense, or as a 'socialist'. His intellectual breakthrough meant, however, more than a 'neutral' personal position as among these ideological positions it was an implied assertion that the time would come when these old alignments would no longer be meaningful. To use the phrase made current in the United States recently by Daniel Bell, Weber heralded 'the end of ideology' in the sense in which that concept has been so prominent in the earlier part of the present century.

It may very well be that there is a relation between this situation and the political and social situation of our time. I noted that the outbreak of the First World War, just a half-century ago, marked the beginning of the end of the European system of national states as that had taken shape in the nineteenth century, and of its dominance in the world. The most important single source of that loss of dominance of course has been the emergence of the two supranational units, the United States to the West, the Soviet Union to the East, which are of an order of magnitude and power altogether different from the classical national state. The rapid

¹ The most comprehensive treatment of this movement so far available is, to my knowledge, H. Stuart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*. My own *Structure of Social Action* (1937) dealt with the more directly sociological aspects, especially, besides Weber, Durkheim and Pareto, and some of the relations to the tradition of economic individualism. Now it seems to me particularly that Freud, and the American pragmatists and social psychologists, such as G. H. Mead and John Dewey, have played a very important part.

decline of 'colonialism' can in turn be related to these changes, as can the European unification movement.

It is surely notable in this connection that the three principal intellectual positions which figured in the background of Weber's work, and which have been the foci of the principal modern ideologies, are very clearly related to the structure of the Western systems. First, the idealist-historicist pattern of thought has been characteristic of the centre in the first instance of Germany, particularly western and southern Germany, and in different respects of France. Then clearly the utilitarian system and the ideologies of economic individualism have been most prevalent in Great Britain, and from there the United States, at least for a considerable time. The case of Marxism may seem not to fit. With, however, its very strong emphasis on primacy of political organization, within that of authoritarianism and bureaucracy of certain types, there seems to me to be more than a little affinity between Prussianism and Soviet Marxism. It is perhaps not stretching a point too far to suggest that there is a certain symmetry between the wings of the system and that as one moved from the cultural centres of Continental Europe eastward there has been an increase in centralized political authoritarianism which is in some sense 'socialistic', whereas moving westward, the climate became increasingly 'capitalistic'. At any rate the ideological polarization of the cold war period has certainly been on the basis of the intellectual conflict between utilitarian individualism and Marxian socialism. I am inclined to regard this, however, as part of a still more general aspect of the situation of Western society in which Prussian authoritarianism has also been involved.

In the light of these considerations Weber's achievement, in the crucial field of the intellectual analysis of social and cultural phenomena, of a position which clearly transcended *all* of the three ideologically central positions in such a way as to include in relativized form contributions from all of them, takes on a special significance. It seems to me that Weber stood at a very crucial juncture in the whole development of Western civilization. He understood, as hardly any of his contemporaries did, the fact and nature of the break-up of the older system, and he contributed more than any single figure to the outline of a new intellectual orientation which promises to be of constitutive importance in defining the situation for the emerging social world.

With respect to my own country I have long felt that the designation of its social system as 'capitalistic' even in Weber's highly sophisticated sense, was grossly inadequate. It seems increasingly probable that trends in the Soviet Union will make the more stereotyped conception of it as the 'socialist' society just as inappropriate. In any case I cannot refrain from feeling that the emergence of the science of sociology, of which I regard Max Weber as one of the very few true founders, is a harbinger of these great changes, and that our science may well be destined to play a major role, not only in its primary task of understanding the social and cultural world we live in as object of its investigations but, in ways which cannot now be foreseen, in actually shaping that world. In this sense it may possibly turn out to be the most important heir of the great ideologies of the turn of the last century. This possibility is perhaps the truest measure of the greatness of Max Weber.

Value-freedom and Objectivity

MAX HORKHEIMER

I learnt about value-freedom in Max Weber's sense of the word when I was a student of his in 1919. Like many of my comrades I was deeply interested in understanding the Russian Revolution. In 1917 the Bolsheviks had been the first to call a halt to the war with their cry of 'Peace and bread!' Thus it appeared that backward Russia was to devote her energies not to final victory but to setting up a better society. The question for us was to understand what these events signified for world history, what attitude the peoples of the West, particularly Germany, should take to them. Was it possible to strengthen the positive impulses of the process and limit the negative ones, to avoid radical isolation and retrogression into a new and dangerous nationalism? The politically alert were already aware of the first signs of a development which in Russia tended towards Stalinism, and in Germany to National Socialism.

Max Weber lectured on the Soviet system. The auditorium was crowded to its doors, but great disappointment followed. Instead of theoretical reflection and analysis, which, not only in posing the problem, but in every single step of thinking would have led to a reasoned structuring of the future, we listened for two or three hours to finely balanced definitions of the Russian system, shrewdly formulated ideal types, by which it was possible to define the Soviet order. It was all so precise, so scientifically exact, so value-free that we all went sadly home.

Even later the theory of value-freedom did not become wholly clear to me. It is probably connected with the aim of philosophy. Sociology and psychology, as the last great disciplines of philosophy, have freed themselves from the attempt to look at the world as embodying meaningful behaviour. Philosophy itself, apart from restorative ontologies, became epistemology, methodology, logic and historical imitation of systems. With the resignation of philosophy, which formerly was extensively motivated by the effort to support or supersede religion, the need necessarily arose for a guiding line for action, for a basis for correct value-judgments.