

Block 3

Max Weber



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UNIT 9 PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS OF MAX WEBER'S WORK*

Structure

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe biographical details of Max Weber;
- outline main ideas and perspectives that influenced his writings; and
- explain central ideas in his writings.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

We will begin this unit with a brief biographical sketch of Weber's life and times. This will enable you to identify the intellectual ideas and perspectives that influenced his thought. In this Unit, we will discuss how Weber conceptualised Sociology as a mode of inquiry distinct from the natural sciences, with a distinctive subject matter concerning the meanings attributed by social actors to their actions in a specific historical context.

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9.2 BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF MAX WEBER

Max Weber was born on 21st April 1864 in Erfurt town of Thuringa, Germany, in a prosperous Protestant household. His father was a politician, and very much a part of the political establishment of the day, leading a luxurious lifestyle. His mother, Helene, was a deeply religious person whose values were opposed to those of her husband. Weber's parents had a strained marital relationship. This difficult relationship deteriorated over the years and had its impact upon their children, including young Max, whose divided loyalties to his parents later led to much psychological distress. Let us refer to Box 9.1 in order to look at early socialization and schooling of Weber.

Box 9.1 Early Socialization and Schooling of Weber

"Weber was a weak child, who suffered from meningitis at the age of four. He preferred books to sports. In early adolescence he read extensively and developed intellectual interests of his own. He was brought up in an intellectually stimulating atmosphere. At an early age he met celebrated historians like Trietschke, Sybel, Dilthey and many others. He also studied Goethe, Spinoza and Kant. He received an excellent secondary education in languages, history and classics. However, Weber was shy and withdrawn by nature in his school days. School teachers frequently complained about Weber's indiscipline and his lack of respect for authority.

In 1882, Max Weber went to the University of Heidelberg at the age of eighteen. Here the shy and withdrawn Max Weber suddenly became active and began to mix socially. In the university he became popular among the students. However, he did not complete his education and after three terms he left for military service in Strasbourg.

After two years of military service Weber returned to his parents in 1884. He joined the University of Berlin to complete his education. He also studied in the University of Goettingen." (Biographical Sketch: Max Weber (1864-1920), Block 4, ESO 13:4)

A brilliant student, Weber studied at the University of Heidelberg and thereafter, read economic and legal history at the University of Berlin where he later taught jurisprudence. His PhD thesis was on the History of Commercial Societies in the Middle Ages, and his post-doctoral study was on Roman Agrarian History. He married Marianne Schnitger who was a distant cousin. He attained the position of a Professor in the German University system when he was only in his early thirties. He demonstrated his academic brilliance and scholarship in various lectures and addresses; most famous was his 1895 public lecture on the National state and Economic Policy which is popularly known as 'the Freiburg address'.

Even as his academic achievements took him to great heights, his personal life underwent a deep crisis due to his conflict with his father, whose sudden death after an argument with his son, upset Max Weber deeply. In fact, he held himself

responsible for his father's demise and suffered from feelings of intense guilt as a result. For several years, Weber suffered from mental breakdowns which eventually lead to him resigning from his professorship at the University of Heidelberg. It was only in 1903 that he was able to resume his scholarly work again, but he did not return to teaching for several years. His awful personal ordeal however did not prevent him from producing some of the greatest scholarly work that is remembered and admired even today. The themes he tackled included the interrelationship between religious ideas and economic and social change; the growth of 'rationality' as the defining feature of modernity; power and authority and the control of the modern state over the individual.

In 1904 Weber published his important essays pertaining to social and economic issues, the question of objectivity in social sciences and the first section of his famous work, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* which was published in 1905. He visited America the same year, and this visit deeply influenced his interest in the various issues of a capitalist economy and political organisation. Many of his important theoretical formulations on these issues are rooted in his visit to America. Weber's academic output increased greatly in the later years. Some of his path breaking contributions included his studies on the religions of China, Confucianism and Taoism (published in 1915); and the religions of India, Hinduism and Buddhism, and ancient Judaism published in 1916-17. In 1919, Weber delivered an important lecture *Science as a Vocation and Politics as a Vocation* in the University of Berlin, which articulated his political and intellectual positions in a time of great political upheaval in Germany. He also worked extensively on his work *Economy and Society* which he was unable to complete and which was published posthumously. According to Poggi (2006:16), his major contributions can be classified under the following categories:

- Writings on economic history
- Writings based upon his empirical studies on rural workers, industrial work conditions and the German stock market
- Writings on the 'cultural sciences' and their methodology
- Writings on the sociology of religion, including Calvinism (a Protestant Christian sect), Confucianism and Taoism (ancient Chinese religions), Hinduism and Buddhism and ancient Judaism
- Writings on general sociology particularly the relationship between economic, religious, juridical and political systems

He died in 1920 at a relatively young age of 56, after a fever which was later diagnosed as pneumonia.

9.3 SOCIO-HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Weber was also a public intellectual who passionately engaged with and participated in the political sphere. A nationalist, he volunteered for military

service when the First World War broke out, even though he was fifty. He was however, deeply critical of the German leadership and war policies and advocated an overhaul of the political system, which made him very unpopular with the ruling dispensation. After Germany's humiliating defeat in the First World War in 1918, Weber argued for sobriety in politics and assisted in the drafting of a new constitution and the founding of the German Democratic Party. He was known to take the side of social and political causes that were not popular or mainstream, and thus he was viewed with suspicion by the political elites of the day. Let us refer to Box 9.2 in order to find out Weber's political interests.

Box 9.2 Political Interests of Weber

"Weber was appointed a Professor of Economics at the University of Freiburg. Here he demonstrated his superb scholarship in various lectures and addresses. His address of 1895 on The National State and Economic Policy attracted the attention of various scholars. In 1896, Weber was appointed a Professor of Economics in Heidelberg. Gradually he emerged a central figure among the intellectuals there.

Weber started taking interest in politics and was active in Christian Social Political Circle. He published numerous papers pertaining to the socio-political situation of Germany of the period.[....]

Weber was a nationalist. When the World War 1 began he was fifty. However, he volunteered for military service ignoring his health condition. Though Weber was a nationalist, he was dissatisfied with the War policy of German leaders. He attacked the conduct of the war and the ineptitude of Germany's leadership. However, the leadership in power never accepted his advice and ideas. Rather, the government thought of prosecuting Weber for his advocacy of total change in the political structure of Germany, responsible parliamentary government and limited power to the Kaiser and the chancellor. However, in spite of all threats and challenges Weber kept on advocating for a liberal political system in Germany.

In the period between 1918 and 1920 Weber entered active political arena. He became a founding member of Deutsche Demokratische Partei, an advisor to the German delegation to the Versailles Peace Conference in 1919, and a participant in the preliminary work of writing a new German constitution. In this period he also addressed several student and academic groups to explain the national-democratic goal of German political system. However, the political ideas and actions of Max Weber faced severe resistance from the German leadership in power on the one hand, and from the leftists on the other." (Biographical Sketch: Max Weber (1864-1920), Block 4, ESO 13:5 and 6)

Weber engaged with almost all the contemporary issues and debates of his times and his work captures the great shifts taking place in the society and history of

the period. As we have already mentioned above, Weber's work poses a very interesting contrast to that of Karl Marx, whose materialist conception of history was marked by economic determinism. Weber in contrast theorised the fundamental role of values and belief systems in shaping the contours of material existence and provided a corrective to the Marxian model. We shall now discuss some of the key ideas that were to lay the philosophical foundations of his work.

9.4 INTELLECTUAL INFLUENCES

Weber's work can be appropriately understood in light of the intellectual context from which it emerged. Let us now look at the intellectual ideas that influenced Weber.

9.4.1 Debate between Natural and Social Sciences and the Subject Matter of Sociology

The philosophical climate of Germany in the latter part of the 19th century probably had the most outstanding system of higher education in the world, and the highest standards of research in both, the natural sciences (physics, chemistry, physiology) as well as other disciplines like philosophy, law, theology and history. The natural sciences, or *Naturwissenschaften* were juxtaposed with those disciplines that were concerned with human culture and human behaviour, i.e. the *Geisteswissenschaften* or *Kulturwissenschaften* or sciences of human history and culture. As you have read in earlier Units in this course, the Natural Sciences aimed at making accurate predictions and generalisations based upon empirical observations, and are thus considered 'exact' sciences. The positivist world view, particularly in England and France, also held that the study of social or cultural phenomena should be guided by the principles of the Natural Sciences. However, many scholars in Germany rejected this view and stressed upon the contextual and historically specific nature of social phenomena, and the ways in which they differ across time, space and historical circumstances. For instance, in studying economic phenomena, British or Austrian scholars would work with the notion of the rational 'economic man' using deductive reasoning to show how such an actor would attempt to maximise utility, regardless of the specific historical situation or the morals and values in force in society. German scholars of the 'historical school' of economics, on the other hand, attempted to build up a science of economic phenomena inductively, by piecing together the available data, studying the various social, political and other circumstances that influenced human behaviour and the various meanings that actors gave to their activities in a particular place at a particular time (Poggi, 2006) .

These two styles of understanding resulted in a lively and ongoing discussion and debate amongst German scholars about the appropriate method for studying social and cultural phenomena, and in particular, the importance of the specific

values and preferences of the person studying these phenomena. Weber played an important role in these debates. He rejected the positivist notion that the cognitive aims of the natural and social sciences were basically the same; he also challenged the German historicist view that stated that it was impossible to accurately predict or generalise about the nature of human activity as human behaviour was not governed by the same kinds of laws as the natural world. He argued that the scientific method always takes recourse to abstraction and generalisation. At the same time, to understand human beings and their actions, it was necessary to also understand their motivations, which were not observable like outward or overt behaviour. Weber played a major role in proposing a methodology that would enable the social scientist to understand the constructed nature of social reality from the perspective of the social actor or individuals living in society as well as the larger or macro processes at the societal level. In particular, his ideas on the role of value judgments in conducting sociological research was an important methodological and philosophical contribution.

As we have seen above, Weber was concerned with the debate concerning science and history, and attempted to establish a foundation for sociology which took into account both individuality and generality. The German idealist tradition, whose major proponent was the philosopher Immanuel Kant, made a clear cut distinction between the biological or physical dimension of human existence and the spiritual or idealistic dimension. These influences can be seen in Weber's approach to methodology, understanding and social action. As thinking beings are free subjects, who can freely participate in the domain of ideas and exercise their choice and agency. Thus the methods appropriate for studying the physical and natural world, and the application of laws of nature were inappropriate to the study of human society. Thus to understand human beings and their culture and history, an empathetic understanding of the reasons behind human actions and an understanding of the overall cultural patterns was essential.

The ideas of the German philosophers Wilhelm Windel band, Heinrich Rickert and Wilhelm Dilthey greatly influenced Weber. Windelband posited that the aims and objectives of natural and cultural sciences were different. While the former aimed at generating universal laws, i.e. were 'nomothetic' in scope; the latter aimed at more particularistic understanding of unique phenomena, i.e. they were 'idiographic'. Dilthey believed that to properly undertake a study of human society and culture, it was not enough to study it from the outside, like a physical or natural phenomenon, but rather, from the inside, through experience and subjective understanding. In other words, the social scientist must try and put himself/herself in the shoes of the subject of the study and attempt to understand

or re-live their experiences and thus understand them empathetically. Weber's notion of *verstehen* or 'empathetic understanding' was deeply influenced by Dilthey's formulations. However, he conceived of empathetic understanding as only the first step in sociological analysis of a phenomenon, to be followed by a causal explanation that was closer to the positivist and empirical tradition of the natural sciences. You will learn more about what Weber meant by *verstehen* in Unit 12.

9.4.2 Causality and Probability

There is sometimes a misunderstanding that Weber, in tune with the German idealistic tradition, rejected the notion of causality, however, this is inaccurate as Weber firmly believed in both historical and sociological causality. However, due to the extreme difficulty in making straightforward causal links in something as complex as the social world, Weber uses the concept of 'probability' instead. Probability implies that in a given social situation, human beings are likely to respond in a particular manner which is governed by the norms of society. However, this cannot be guaranteed with complete certainty for all actors, because there may be certain unique circumstances that may result in them behaving or acting differently. Weber distinguishes between historical causality and sociological probability. Historical causality refers to the unique causes that give rise to a particular event; while sociological probability refers to the connection or interrelationships between two phenomena. Establishing causality requires that we perform 'mental experiments'. For instance, we may say that the use of animal fat in the cartridges supplied in the British army resulted in the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857. We have to then ask ourselves if the revolt would have taken place without the issue of the cartridges. If we reach the conclusion that the 1857 revolt would have taken place regardless of this incident, because the level of dissatisfaction and feeling of oppression amongst those who revolted was so intense, then we can rule it out as a causal factor. With regard to sociological causality, Weber uses probabilistic frameworks. For instance, in his famous thesis on the emergence of capitalism, Weber proposed that a certain type of personality was required, that was shaped by the Protestant teachings. The proposition is proved when through mental experiments or by comparative study in different cultures, the sociologist is able to show that capitalism could probably not have developed without such personalities. Thus, the Protestant ethic may be viewed as one of the causes, rather than the sole and only cause, for the development of capitalism. We can see that Weber attempted to reconcile the subjective and interpretative understanding of social and historical phenomena with a rigorous scientific method based upon causal analysis. In fact, on the very first page of his work *Economy and Society* Weber defines Sociology as 'a

science which aims to understand clearly social behaviour and thus give a causal explanation of its course and results' (Bogardus, 1960: 477). While sociology must be concerned with empirical analysis of society and history, the method of sociology would have to be different from that of the natural sciences. Sociological analysis would have to examine social action within a context of social interaction, and would have to be interpretive, not viewing people as objects just driven by impersonal forces outside their purview.

In order to understand social behaviour or human actions, it is imperative that the social scientist engages with the values and beliefs that underlie the behaviour of human beings in society. At the same time, the researcher herself/himself brings on board their own personal beliefs, orientations and values, that may affect the way in which they themselves interpret and understand reality. Weber does not see this as a disadvantage. In fact, research in the social sciences can not only see the unfolding of events from the outside, but also contribute a deeper understanding of the motives, values and orientations that influence these events. Poggi (2006) gives the example of a person chopping logs of wood. A researcher may describe the external actions of a person chopping wood as an objective, external activity. But by looking at the underlying motivations for this activity, the researcher may consider the need for preparing fuel for the winter, or the need to keep oneself fit through this physical activity or even take out one's anger on one's neighbour by chopping wood instead. Thus, we see that Weber played a major role in developing an 'hermeneutic' tradition in social science, which emphasised the role of individual subjectivity as the starting point of social relationships and processes.

9.4.3 Objectivity and Values in Social Sciences

Weber was clear that there was no such thing as an 'objective' science of society, unlike the earlier founders of Sociology. As we have discussed earlier, one of Weber's major concerns was the relation between science and human action. While emphasising the importance of values in understanding social behaviour, he was also equally clear that the personal evaluations of the sociologist must be separate from the analysis of the society and processes under study. He distinguished between 'value relevance' and 'value neutrality'. In other words, even if a researcher selects a particular problem for investigation because of his/her interest or value orientations, the process of inquiry and the study of the phenomenon at hand must be strictly in accordance with the value-neutral principles of science. In other words, the researcher cannot twist or manipulate the findings to suit his or her own ideology or value system. Value neutrality highlights the gap between 'facts' and 'values'; Weber held that an empirical science can never advise a person what s/he should do; however, it can clarify for that persons what s/he can or wants to do (see Coser 1997: 221-222). According to Weber, the role of the scientist was not to engage in moral debates or to act

like prophets or sages, but rather, to throw light upon facts and their interrelationships. Let us refer to Box 9.3 to understand the place of values in social sciences.

Box 9.3 Values in Social Sciences

“Science is often described as an ‘objective’ search for truth. It is supposed to be value-free, unbiased, impartial. You have seen how Durkheim advocates objective understanding of social facts and how he recommends that the sociologist free himself/herself from prejudice and pre-conceived notions. Is an ‘objective’, ‘value-free’ science, natural or social, really possible? According to Weber, values play an important role in choosing a particular topic of study. Why have you chosen sociology as a course? Certain values have guided you. You might have thought it interesting, or easy, or may be you did not like the other elective courses. Similarly, if a scientist decides to study, say, the behaviour of an atom or the life and customs of rural Indians, he/she has been guided by certain value orientations.

But Weber makes a clear distinction between value-orientations and value judgments. The researcher or scientist may be guided to undertake a particular study because of certain value-orientations, but, according to Weber, he/she must not pass moral judgments about it. The researcher must observe ethical neutrality. His/her job is to study phenomena, not pass judgments about whether they are ‘good’ or ‘evil’.[....]

Weber assigns to the sociologist the task of interpretative understanding of the motives of human actors. The humanness of the sociologist can prove an asset in understanding society and culture because the sociologist can examine phenomena from the inside. He/she can attempt causal explanations by using ideal types and historical comparison. But ethical neutrality must be maintained.” (ESO 13, Block 5: 17)

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) State whether the following statements are True or False.
 - a. Max Weber strongly believed that the cognitive aims of the natural and social sciences were basically the same. (T/F)
 - b. Weber’s thinking emphasised the role of individual subjectivity as the starting point of social relationships and processes. (T/F)
- 2) Explain the difference between ‘value relevance’ and ‘value neutrality’ as explained by Weber.

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9.5 CENTRAL IDEAS

Let us understand some of the important ideas in Weber's writings.

9.5.1 Ideal Types

Weber emphasised the need for the researcher to separate his/her 'value judgments' from 'judgements of fact', by rigorous examination of factual data and the development of clearly defined concepts which help us to understand the different configurations of a social phenomenon under specific circumstances. This led him to develop his formulation of the 'ideal type', about which you will study in detail in another Unit of this Course. Ideal type is a methodological tool in which a certain model or construct of the reality to be studied is formulated by the researcher, by abstracting the most prominent features of that phenomenon. It acts as a measuring rod to compare the similarities and differences between the 'real' and the 'ideal, and enables the researcher to construct hypotheses linking them with the conditions that led to a particular phenomenon or event becoming prominent, or the consequences resulting from the emergence of a particular phenomenon. For instance, if you wish to study the functioning of parliamentary democracy in a society, it will be advisable, following Weber, to construct an ideal type of parliamentary democracy, abstracting its most prominent features and constructing a model or an image of its most significant aspects. Then by comparing the empirical reality with this 'ideal type', you will be able to gain an insight into the historical reasons for its emergence as well as a better understanding of how it actually operates in a specific socio-historical context. We will learn more about ideal types in the next Unit.

9.5.2 Social Action

Max Weber conceived of sociology as a comprehensive science of social action. This is a crucial factor in understanding the philosophical foundations of his work. In this sense, he diverged from thinkers like Marx and Durkheim who, as you have read, placed greater emphasis on social structure rather than individual action in shaping human behaviour. Weber's sociological work was geared towards understanding "the subjective meanings that human actors attach to their actions in their mutual orientations within specific social-historical contexts" (Coser, 1977: 217). In comparison with Durkheim and Marx, Weber also emphasised the roles of values and culture in orienting human behaviour. While Durkheim focused on the society and 'social facts' which had both exteriority and constraint, Weber also focused on the individuals and their actions; and while Marx argued that the material world was more important than the world of ideas, Weber argued that ideas were the motivating factors that shaped the actions of individuals.

Durkheim was concerned with institutional arrangements that maintained the cohesion of social structures, while Marx devoted attention to class struggles, and to changing social and economic structures. "In contrast, Weber's primary focus was on the subjective meanings that human actors attach to their actions in their

mutual orientations within specific social-historical contexts.” (ibid, p 217). Weber identified four major kinds of social action-traditional, emotive/affective value oriented rational action and goal -oriented rational action. While traditional action is based upon values and customs of the society; affective action upon the emotional state of mind of the individual at a particular time. Rational action entails pursuing certain goals using rational means. Value-oriented rational action involves the pursuit of certain values or goals that may not be ‘rational’, e.g., spiritual goals, through means that are designed to achieve the goal, e.g., prayer, meditation etc. Finally, Goal-oriented rational action, wherein goals and means are rationally chosen (e.g., an engineer building a structure using the most efficient means available), is regarded as the defining feature of modern Western society, about which Weber wrote and theorised extensively. Weber held that it was this distinguishing way of acting in all the realms of social life that made modern Western societies qualitatively different from non-Western ones.

You have read in the Blocks 1 and 2 on how Marx and Durkheim attempted to account for major historical or evolutionary changes in society by referring to structural change; e.g., mechanical solidarity to organic solidarity, as explained by Durkheim. Weber, however, brought into his analysis the dimension of human action, and considered the concrete, acting individual as the unit of analysis for understanding human history and society. His interpretative Sociology considers the individual and his/her action to be the basic unit or atom, and the only carrier of meaningful conduct.

Weber used his typology of forms of social action to understand social change. Weber was deeply concerned with the problems of modern civilisation. He believed that the shift from traditional to rational action was crucial in the development of a rational economic system like capitalism, a theme which he explored in his famous text *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* which we referred to earlier. He also used it to understand power relationships in societies by developing a typology of authority; charismatic, traditional and rational-legal. Charismatic authority derives from the ‘charisma’ or special qualities of leaders and visionary figures; traditional authority, which is typical of pre-modern societies, derives from a belief in the importance of traditions; however, it is ‘rational-legal authority’ which predominates in modern societies, which have a modern system of government and a well-developed administrative bureaucracy.

9.5.3 Rationality

Many scholars have remarked upon the central themes of rationality and rationalisation as fundamental to understanding Weber’s work. By rationality Weber referred to logical and coherent ideas and behaviour that govern human activity. Rationalisation is the process by which rationality applies to different aspects of life. Let us refer to Box 9.4 in order to understand in detail what is meant by rationality and rationalisation.

Box 9.4 Meaning of Rationality and Rationalisation

According to Weber, the contemporary world is characterised by rationality. Max Weber believed that the key to understand modern society is to be found in its rational features and rationalising forces. For him, the modern Western world is characterised by rationality. As a result of this, human activity is marked by methodical calculation. Quantification, predictability and regularity become important. Individuals rely more on logic, reason and calculation than on supernatural beliefs. To Weber rationalisation means that “principally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious power existed” (Weber 1946: 139, cf. Hearn 1985: 76). Let us take an example. If a farmer wants to reap a good harvest, he can spend time, energy and money on conducting *poojas* and prayers. On the other hand, he can utilise the same effort and expense in digging irrigation canals or a tube-well so that his crops may thrive. In the first case, he is dependent on “mysterious incalculable forces”; in the second case he is using rational calculation.

To Weber rationalisation is the product of scientific specialisation and technological differentiation of western culture. He describes rationalisation as striving for perfection, as an ingenious refinement of the conduct of life and the attainment of mastery over the external world (see Freund 1972: 18). Demystification of beliefs and secularisation of thought are important facets of rationalisation which assist in attaining mastery over the world. Rationalisation also involves formalisation of laws and organisations. (ESO 13, Block 4: 50)

According to Weber, the growth and spread of rational action and rationalisation of all aspects of life under modernity resulted in ‘disenchantment’ of the world. Human life becomes so predictable and regulated that it loses its charm. Coser (1977: 233) writes: “The world of modernity, Weber stressed over and over again, has been deserted by the gods. Man has chased them away and has rationalized and made calculable and predictable what in an earlier age had seemed governed by chance, but also by feeling, passion and commitment, by personal appeal and personal fealty, by grace and by the ethics of charismatic heroes.” Weber attempted to illustrate this through his studies of various social institutions. His studies in the sociology of religion document the rationalisation of religious life. He also studied the process of rationalisation in the sphere of law, political authority, and even in the world of music -Western classical music is marked by strict rules and standardised procedures of performance, unlike the more spontaneous systems of music in Asia and Africa.

As we have seen earlier, Weber’s vision of the future was that of a world so highly regulated and rationalised, that we would become prisoners of our own device, trapped in an “iron cage” of our own making. Weber’s analysis of the effects of the iron cage of bureaucracy on individuals and society draws attention

to the way the bureaucratic rationality of modern Western societies exerts such control that it delimits human freedom and possibilities. The rational, organising principles of modern bureaucracy include a system of hierarchical roles, a high degree of specialisation and compartmentalisation of knowledge, 'merit -based' employment based upon rules and regulations, and a rational-legal authority structure. This rational, bureaucratic system, common to most modern states, develops a life and legitimacy of its own and cannot be questioned by the people who it is supposed to serve. Thus it becomes constraining and limiting rather than empowering and enabling, crushing individual autonomy and freedom. This pessimistic vision of the future of humankind would be interesting for the learners of the present times to discuss and debate, particularly in the light of their own experiences of living in a modern state.

9.5.4 Religion and Economy

At the outset, it seems difficult to see a connection between religion and economy. Many of us would think that religious beliefs and values have nothing to do with economic activities. Well, Weber held a different view. Let us refer to Box 9.4 in order to understand Weber's perspective on religion and economy.

Box 9.5 Weber's Perspective on Religion and Economy

"According to him, it was the ideas, beliefs, values and world-view of human societies that guided the way their members acted, even in the economic sphere. As has already been mentioned, religion prescribes certain guidelines of behaviour. It is in accordance with these guidelines that followers direct or orient their activities. These guidelines are incorporated in the body of religious ethics of each religious system. [...]"

The term "ethic" is not restricted to religion alone. You can speak of business ethics, political ethics and so on. Ethics is related to social structure because it affects in some way the social behaviour of individuals in society. Ethics is important because it sets certain standards of thought and behaviour, which are used to evaluate or judge actual behaviour. Ethical codes, in other words, represent what "ought" to be done. They reflect the particular values and beliefs of the social groups of which they are part.

According to Max Weber, there were certain affinities between the Protestant religious ethics and the economic system known as capitalism. These affinities, said Weber, helped capitalism to grow in the western world." (ESO 13, Block 4: 24).

While Marx provided a systematic model of capitalism and capitalist development, Weber provided a wider and broader analysis, drawing attention to those aspects and concepts that were not given emphasis by Marx. Weber examined the historical unfolding of capitalism by paying due attention to economic and political factors along with the role of cultural factors like values, ideas and religious beliefs. Unlike Marx who gave primacy to economic factors,

Weber gave emphasis to cultural factors which shaped the way human beings thought about a particular activity (in this case economic activity) and thus influenced their actions. Weber's thesis on the development of capitalism, unlike Marx, did not just focus on the material dimensions and technological factors, but the realm of ideas that human beings held and how these ideas prompted them to act. After carefully studying the factors that lead to the growth of capitalism in the west, Weber proposed the hypothesis that it was the 'Protestant ethic' that broke the hold of traditional ways of thinking and acting, and propelled an entirely new way of working and accumulating wealth.

Let us understand what Protestant ethics refer to. At the root of Protestant ethics is the belief that the ultimate goal of human life is salvation. In order to achieve salvation it is necessary to practice rigorous self-control, and lead a frugal life. Expectedly, those who follow Protestant ethics are extremely hard working and have a strong sense of responsibility, self-disciplined, and forgo enjoyment of luxuries in life. In Europe many Protestant sects came up. Calvinism was one of them. Calvinism stressed that people should work hard and generate profit. It, however, forbid them to spend the profit that they earn on worldly pleasures and luxuries. The only option before them was to re-invest the profit money and generate more money. In this way, rational capitalism was promoted.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the types of social action identified by Weber? Which one of them is a feature of modern Western society?
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- 2) How was Weber's understanding of the development of capitalism different from that of Karl Marx?
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9.6 LET US SUM UP

This Unit introduced you to some of the major ideas of Max Weber, who is regarded along with Emile Durkheim and Karl Marx as one of the founding fathers of Sociology. We discussed the biographical and social factors that shaped his work and ideas, and highlighted his participation in the politics of the

9.7 REFERENCES

- ## 9.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

- 1) Weber identified four major kinds of social action-traditional, emotive/affective, value oriented rational action and goal -oriented rational action. Goal-oriented rational action, wherein goals and means are rationally chosen (e.g., an engineer building a structure using the most efficient means available), is regarded as the defining feature of modern Western society.

- 2) Karl Marx emphasised the role of economic factors in the development of capitalism. Weber's ideas on the development of capitalism, unlike Marx, did not just focus on the material dimensions and technological factors, but also on the realm of ideas that human beings held and how these ideas prompted them to act. Weber studied the development of capitalism by paying due attention to economic and political factors along with the role of cultural factors like values, ideas and religious beliefs.



UNIT 10 SOCIAL ACTION AND IDEAL TYPES*

Structure

10.0 Objectives

10.1 Introduction

10.2 Social Action

10.2.1 Role of Values and Beliefs

10.2.2 Types of Social Action

10.3 Ideal Types: Meanings, Construction and Characteristics

10.3.1 Meaning

10.3.2 Construction

10.3.3 Characteristics

10.4 Purpose and Use of Ideal Types

10.5 Ideal Types in Weber's Work

10.5.1 Ideal Types of Historical Particulars

10.5.2 Abstract Elements of Social Reality

10.5.3 Reconstruction of a Particular Kind of Behaviour

10.6 Let Us Sum Up

10.7 References

10.8 Answers to Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you should be able to:

- outline Weber's concept of social action;
- discuss the meaning and characteristics of ideal types;
- describe the purpose and use of ideal types in social sciences; and
- narrate Max Weber's use of ideal type in his major works.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit deals with concepts of social action and ideal type as part of Max Weber's concern with methodology of social sciences. This unit gives a perspective and a background to analyse the major theoretical formulations of Max Weber.

*Adopted from IGNOU Course Material: Units 14 and 16 OF *Sociological Thought* (ESO 13) with modifications by Nita Mathur

In this unit first we clarify the general meaning of social action and ideal type. This is followed by discussion on the role of beliefs and values in influencing social action. Thereafter, we highlight types of social action outlined by Weber. Subsequently, we discuss the concept of ideal type and characteristics of ideal-type as reflected in the writing of Max Weber. Here we also answer two questions as to how and why of social scientists' construction of ideal type in their researches. Weber used ideal type in three distinctive ways. We explain these three ways of use of ideal type in Weber's work in terms of (a) ideal types of historical particulars, (b) ideal types of abstract elements of social reality and (c) ideal types relating to the reconstruction of a particular kind of behaviour. We examine each of these kinds with suitable illustrations.

10.2 SOCIAL ACTION

According to Mitchell (1968: 2,) 'social action denotes social behaviour. This concept is used both by social psychologists and sociologists. Many social scientists regarded social action as the proper unit of, observation in the social sciences. Action is social when the actor behaves in such a manner that his action is intended to influence the action of one or more other persons. In sociology it was Max Weber who first explicitly used and emphasised social action as the basis for sociological theory'. (Mitchell 1968: 2).

10.2.1 Role of Values and Beliefs

According to Max Weber (1964: 128-129) "Sociology is a science which attempts the interpretative understanding of social action in order thereby to arrive at a causal explanation of its cause and effects".

Here we can point out the following important elements of social action

- i) social action includes all human behaviour.
- ii) social action attaches a subjective meaning to it.
- iii) the acting individual or individuals take into account the behaviour of others.
- iv) social action is oriented in its course.

You may learn about Weber's theory of social action in Box 10.1.

Box 10.1 Weber's Theory of Social Action

'Weber wanted to develop social theory in a way that tried to examine social action from the point of view of social actor. Although Weber shares with Marx a desire to develop what we can call a theory of social action, that is, a coherent account of how and why social actors act as they do, aspects of Weber's explanation differ from that offered by Marx. Whereas Marx describes motivation as the expression of human-beingness through productive activity and the desire to survive and prosper, Weber argues that social action also provided social actors with opportunities to live out their values and beliefs. There is no question that social actors act in order to survive, but for many the quality of life

also depends on some of the more esoteric and abstract aspects of human consciousness, qualities that are often expressed as values and beliefs. For example, if a group of social actors share a particular set of religious or spiritual beliefs, notwithstanding the fact that they still need to survive, such beliefs are likely to shape the way in which they manage their survival. Even the concept of 'survival' might be modified to include ideas about spiritual well-being. A social theory that seeks to explain social action in that context has to include some account of needs and desires, which exist alongside basic economic ones.

Following this line of argument, and placing this in the context of his analysis of the relentless spread of instrumental rationality in the modern world, Weber's theory of social action centres around an analysis of the rationality of otherwise of different types of action. If individuals are indeed immersed in a rationalised and rationalising social world, then presumably this has an important impact on the way they act. The basic point of departure of Weber's theory of social action is that actions can be distinguished one from the other depending on which kind of rationality the actor is trying to express. Unsurprisingly he concludes that in modern society the variety of rationality that most often guides social action is instrumental rationality. Being modern or acting in a modern way means acting according to the modern principles of instrumental rationality'.

(Ransome 2011: 119)

10.2.2 Types of Social Action

Weber has talked about four types of social actions. These are classified according to their modes of orientation:

i) Zweckrational or rational action in relation to a goal

Rational action with reference to goals is classified in terms of the conditions or means for the successful attainment of actor's own rationally closed ends. An example of this is an engineer constructing a bridge. He uses certain materials in a certain manner to achieve a goal. This activity is directed towards obtaining that goal, namely, completing the construction.

ii) Wertrational or rational action with reference to a value

Rational action with reference to value is classified in terms of rational orientation to an absolute value, that is, action which is directed to overriding ideals of duty, honour or devotion to a cause. Here one may give the example of a soldier laying down his life for the country. His action is not directed towards attaining a specific material goal like wealth. It is for the sake of certain values like honour and patriotism.

iii) Traditional Action

Traditional action type is classified as one which is under the influence of long practice, customs and habits. This is an action, which is guided by customs and longstanding beliefs which become second nature or habit.

Greeting elders with folded hands, for example, is almost a second nature to many Indians.

iv) Affective Action

Affective action is classified in terms of affectual orientation, especially emotional, determined by the specific states of feeling of the actor. Affective action is classified in terms of affectual orientation especially emotional, determined by the specific states of feeling of the actor.

Since reality presents a mixture of the four pure types of action, for our analysis and understanding we separate them analytically into pure or ideal types. For instance, the use of rational ideal types can help in measuring irrational deviation and we can understand particular empirical action by interpreting as to which of the four types of action it most closely approximates.

In order to understand better the types of action, identified by Max Weber, it is a good idea now to complete Activity 1.

Activity 1

List two examples from your day-to-day life for each of the four types of action identified by Max Weber. Compare your note, if possible, with the notes of your co-learners at the Study Centre.

10.3 IDEAL TYPES: MEANING, CONSTRUCTION AND CHARACTERISTICS

To Max Weber, the term 'ideal type' has a distinctive meaning and there are certain underlying principles pertaining to its construction. Here in this section we shall explain the general and Weberian meanings of the term 'ideal type', its construction and characteristics.

10.3.1 Meaning

Let us begin with the dictionary meaning of the terms 'ideal' and 'type'. According to New Webster's Dictionary (NWD 1985), 'ideal' is a 'conception or a standard of something in its highest perfection'. It refers to a mental image or conception rather than a material object. It is a model. The Collins Cobuild English Language Dictionary says: 'Your ideal of something is the person or thing that seems to you to be the best example of it'.

The term 'type' means a kind, class or group as distinguished by a particular character (NWD 1985). Thus, generally speaking, we may conceptualise ideal type as a kind, category, class or group of objects, things or persons with particular character that seems to be the best example of it.

Weber used ideal type in a specific sense. To him, ideal type is a mental construct, like a model, for the scrutiny and systematic characterisation of a concrete situation. Indeed, he used ideal type as a methodological tool to understand and analyse social reality.

Methodology is the conceptual and logical research procedure by which knowledge is developed. Historically much of the methodological concern in the social sciences has been directed towards establishing their scientific credentials (Mitchell 1968: 118). Max Weber was particularly concerned with the problem of objectivity in social sciences. Hence he used ideal type as a methodological tool that looks at reality objectively. It scrutinises, classifies, systematises and defines social reality without subjective bias. The ideal type has nothing to do with values. Its function, as a research tool, is for classification and comparison. To quote Max Weber (1971:63).

“The ideal typical concept will develop our skill in imputation in research. It is not a description of reality but it aims to give unambiguous means of expression to such a description”.

In other words, ideal types are concepts formulated on the basis of facts collected carefully and analytically for empirical research. In this sense, ideal types are constructs or concepts which are used as methodological devices or tools in our understanding and analysis of any social problem.

To understand ideal types, as used by Max Weber, we explain how ideal types are constructed.

10.3.2 Construction

Ideal types are formulated by the abstraction and combination of an indefinite number of elements, which though found in reality, are rarely or never discovered in specific form. Therefore, Weber does not consider that he is establishing a new conceptual method. He emphasises that he is making explicit what is already done in practice. For the construction of ideal types, the sociologist selects a certain number of traits from the whole which is otherwise confusing and obscure, to constitute an intelligible entity. For example, if we wish to study the state of democracy in India (or for that matter of secularism, communalism, equality a court of law) then our first task will be to define the concept of democracy with the help of its essential and typical characteristics.

Here we can mention some of the essential characteristics of democracy, namely, existence of a multi-party system, universal adult franchise, formation of government by peoples representatives, peoples participation in the decision making, equality before law, respect to majority verdict and each others' views as well. This formulation of a pure type or an ideal type concept of democracy will guide us and work as a tool in our analysis. Any deviation from or conformity to it will unfold the reality. Ideal types, therefore, do not represent the common or the average characteristics but focus on the typical and the essential characteristics. For instance in his book *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Weber analyses the characteristics of the 'Calvinist Ethic'. These characteristics are taken from various historical writings and involve those

components of Calvinist doctrines which Weber identifies as of particular importance in relation to the formation of the capitalist spirit. Ideal types are thus a selection of certain elements, certain traits or characteristics which are distinctive and relevant to the study undertaken. However, one thing which should be kept in mind here is that though ideal types are constructed from facts existing in reality, they do not represent or describe the total reality, they are of pure types in a logical sense. According to Weber 'in its conceptual purity, this ideal mental construct cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality'. This then is the way in which ideal types are constructed. To facilitate our understanding later in this unit we will take up those ideal type concepts which have been used by Weber.

10.3.3 Characteristics

From the above discussion we can draw some important characteristics of ideal types.

- i) Ideal types are not general or average types. That is, they are not defined by the characteristics common to all phenomena or objects of study. They are formulated on the basis of certain typical traits, which are essential to the construction of an ideal type concept.
- ii) Ideal types are not a presentation of total reality or they do not explain everything. They exhibit partial conception of the whole.
- iii) Ideal types are neither a description of any definite concept of reality, nor a hypothesis, but they can aid both in description and explanation. Ideal types are different in scope and usage from descriptive concepts. If descriptive concepts can be used, for instance, in the classification of different sects, and if one wants to apply the distinction in order to analyse the importance of these for the economic activity, then one has to reformulate the concept of sect to emphasise the specific components of sectarianism which have been influential in the economic pursuit. The concept then becomes an ideal typical one, meaning that any descriptive concept can be transformed into an ideal type through abstraction and recombination of certain elements when we wish to explain or analyse rather than describe a phenomenon.
- iv) In this sense we can say that ideal types are also related to the analytic conception of causality, though not, in deterministic terms.
- v) They also help in reaching to general propositions and in comparative analysis.
- vi) Ideal types serve to guide empirical research, and are used in systematisation of data on historical and social reality.

After learning about the meaning, construction and characteristics of ideal type it will not be difficult for you to complete Check Your Progress 1.

Check Your Progress 1

1) Tick mark the correct answer to the following question.

What are ideal types?

- a) Ideal types are general types.
- b) Ideal types are average types.
- c) Ideal types are pure types.
- d) Ideal types are normative types.

2) Tick mark True or False box given below each of the following statements.

- | | |
|--|------------|
| a) Ideal type is a description of reality. | True/False |
| b) Ideal type helps in the analysis and explanation of a social phenomenon. | True/False |
| c) Ideal types are constructed by selection of typical and essential traits. | True/False |
| d) Ideal types are hypotheses | True/False |
| e) Ideal types represent a total reality | True/False |
| f) Ideal types help in the causal and in comparative analysis | True/False |

10.4 PURPOSE AND USE OF IDEAL TYPES

Ideal types are constructed to facilitate the analysis of empirical questions. Most researchers are not fully aware of the concepts they use. As a result their formulations often tend to be imprecise and ambiguous, or as Weber himself says, 'the language which the historians talk contains hundreds of words which are ambiguous constructs created to meet the unconsciously conceived need for adequate expression, and whose meaning is definitely felt, but not clearly thought out' (Weber 1949: 92-3).

It is however the job of social scientists to render subject matter intelligible by avoiding confusion and obscurity. For example, we may talk about the construction of ideal types of authority. Weber distinguishes three types of authority, namely, rational, legal, traditional, and charismatic, each of which was defined by the motivation of obedience or by the nature of legitimacy claimed by the leader. Reality presents a mixture or confusion of the three ideal types and because of this very reason we must approach the types of authority with a clear idea. Because these types merge in reality each must be rigorously defined.

Ideal types are not formed out of a nexus of purely conceptual thought, but are created, modified and sharpened through the empirical analysis of concrete problems. This, in turn, increases the precision of that analysis.

We can therefore say that, ideal types are a methodological device which not only help us in the analysis of empirical questions, but also in avoiding obscurity and ambiguity in the concepts used, and in increasing the accuracy of our analysis. Completing Activity 2 at this stage will help you appreciate the process of construction of an ideal type.

Activity 2

You may be aware of the functioning of the institution of Village Panchayat in the rural areas and that of the Municipal Corporation in the urban areas. If you are living in a rural Area, construct an ideal type of a Village Panchayat. If you are living in an urban area, construct an ideal type of a Municipal Corporation. Exchange your note, if possible, with the notes of your co-learners at the Study Centre.

Ideal type, a key term in Weber's methodological essays has been used by him as a device in understanding historical configurations or specific historical problems. For this he constructed ideal types, that is, to understand how events had actually taken place and to show that if some antecedents or other events had not occurred or had occurred differently, the event we are trying to explain would have been different as well. For example, because of the implementation of the land reform laws and penetration of other modernising forces, like education, modern occupation etc., the joint family system has broken down in rural India. This means that there is a causal relation between the event (land reform, education and modern occupation) and the situation (the joint family). In this way ideal type concept also helps in the causal explanation of a phenomenon.

This, however, does not mean that every event has a particular or a specific cause. Weber does not believe that one element of society is determined by another. He conceives the causal relations both in history and sociology as partial and probable relations. It means that a given fragment of reality makes probable or improbable, favourable or unfavourable to another fragment of reality. For instance, certain Marxists would say that private ownership of the means of production makes inevitable the political power of the minority possessing these means. Weber would say that an economic regime of total planning makes a certain type of political organisation more probable. In Weber's work such analysis of causal relations was related to his interest in worldwide comparisons or in analysis of events and establishment of general preposition. That is, he used ideal types to build up a conception of a particular historical case, and used the same ideal type conceptions for a comparative analysis. This interdependence of history and sociology appears most clearly in Weber's conception of the ideal type.

Besides examining any particular historical case Max Weber also used ideal types to analyse the abstract elements of social reality and to explain particular kinds of social behaviour. We shall discuss these in greater detail in the following section, dealing with ideal type in the body of Weber's work.

Check Your Progress 2

1) How do we construct ideal type?

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2) What is the purpose of constructing ideal type?

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10.5 IDEAL TYPES IN WEBER'S WORK

Weber used ideal types in three distinctive ways. Indeed, his three kinds of ideal types are distinguished by three levels of abstraction. The first kind of ideal types are rooted in the historical particularities namely, Western city, the Protestant ethics etc. In reality, this kind of ideal types refer to the phenomena that appear only in the specific historical periods and in particular cultural areas. The second kind relates to the abstract elements of social reality, for example, the concepts of bureaucracy or feudalism. These elements of social reality are found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. The third kind of ideal type relates to the reconstruction of a particular kind of behaviour (Coser 1977: 224). In the following subsections we shall be dealing with each of these kinds of ideal types.

10.5.1 Ideal Types of Historical Particulars

According to Weber capitalism has been fully realised in modern western societies. Weber constructs an ideal type of capitalism by selecting a certain number of traits from the historical whole to constitute an intelligible entity. This was to show that there was a spiritual affinity between Calvinism and the economic ethics of modern capitalist activity. For this he identified those components of Calvinist doctrine which he considered as of particular and significant importance in the formation of capitalist spirit.

The essence of capitalism according to Weber is embodied in that enterprise whose aim is to make maximum profit or to accumulate more and more. These are based on the rational organisation of work and production. It is the conjunction of desire for profit and rational discipline which constitutes the historically unique feature of western capitalism. The desire for profit is satisfied not by speculation or conquest or adventure, but by discipline and rationality. This is possible with the help of legal administration of the modern state or rational bureaucracy. Hence capitalism is defined as an enterprise working towards unlimited accumulation of profit and functioning according to bureaucratic rationality.

Weber tried to show that there was a close affinity between this type of economic activity and elements of Calvinist doctrine. According to the Calvinist ethic, God is all powerful and above common man. Man has to work for God's glory on earth and this can be done through hardwork and labour which are rational, regular and constant. The calling of the individual is to fulfil his duty to God through the moral conduct of his day to day life whether he is rich or poor. For him work is worship and there is no room for idleness and laziness. This specific character of Calvinistic belief accounted for the relation between Calvinist doctrine and the spirit of capitalism which was characterised by a unique devotion to the earning of wealth through legitimate economic activity. This is rooted in a belief in the value of efficient performance in the chosen vocation as a duty and a virtue.

The affinity between the two and the emergence of Capitalist economic regime as defined by Weber existed only in the west, which made it a historically unique phenomenon. In Calvinist ethic, religious and economic activities are combined in a way not found either in Catholicism or in any other world religion like Hinduism, Islam, Confucianism, Judaism and Buddhism of which Weber made a comparative analysis.

10.5.2 Abstract Elements of Social Reality

These elements of social reality are found in a variety of historical and cultural contexts. Bureaucracy and types of authority and types of action are important examples of these abstract elements. Let us examine these three examples.

i) Bureaucracy

Weber pointed out that bureaucracy was the best administrative form for the rational or efficient pursuit of organisational goals. See Box 10.2 to understand what bureaucracy means.

Box 10.2 Bureaucracy

General meaning of the term bureaucracy is the rule by departmental or administrative officials following inflexible procedures. Max Weber emphasized the indispensability of bureaucracy for the rational attainment of the goals of any organization in industrial society (Mitchell 1968:21)

Weber's ideal type of bureaucracy comprised various elements such as (a) high degree of specialisation and a clearly-defined division of labour, with tasks distributed as official duties, (b) hierarchical structure of authority with clearly circumscribed areas of command and responsibility, (c) establishment of a formal body of rules to govern the operation of the organisation and administration based on written documents, (d) impersonal relationships between organisational members and the clients, (e) recruitment of personnel based on ability and technical knowledge, (f) long term employment, promotion on the basis of seniority and merit, (g) fixed salary and the separation of private and official income.

Though examples of developed bureaucracies existed in different parts of the world prior to the emergence of modern capitalism, it is only within this that organisations are found which approximate to this ideal typical form. Weber used these abstract elements of bureaucracy to explain a concrete phenomenon.

ii) Types of Authority

To understand the various aspects of authority Max Weber constructed its ideal types in terms of three types of authority. These are traditional, rational and charismatic.

Traditional authority is based upon the belief in the sanctity of age- old customs and rules. Rational authority is maintained by laws, decrees, regulations. Charismatic authority is characterised by exceptional virtue possessed by or attributed to the leader by those who follow the leader, have confidence in the leader and are devoted to the leader.

10.5.3 Reconstruction of a Particular Kind of Behaviour

This ideal type includes those elements that constitute rationalising reconstructions of a particular kind of behaviour. For example, according to Weber, all propositions in economic theory are merely ideal typical

reconstructions of the ways people would behave if they were pure economic subjects. These include laws of supply and demand, marginal utilities etc. Supply of commodity in the market governs prices in relation to demand. Similarly, utility of a commodity for consumption is higher or lower depending upon the units available for consumption. Economic theory rigorously conceives economic behaviour as consistent with its essence. This essence is often defined in a precise manner (Weber 1964: 210). It is now time to complete Check Your Progress 3.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) In what sense Weber used the concept of ideal type to show the relationship between Calvinist ethic and the spirit of capitalism?

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- 2) What are the major characteristics of ideal type of bureaucracy as outlined by Max Weber?

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- 3) What are the four ideal types of social actions stated by Max Weber?

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10.6 LET US SUM UP

This unit began with a clarification of the general meaning of the terms ‘ideal’ and ‘type’. We discussed the concept and characteristics of ideal type as associated with Max Weber’s writings. Ideal types are those constructs or concepts which are formulated for interpretation and explanation of social reality. Weber used ideal types in three distinctive ways. First, he used ideal types of historical particulars to explain Protestant ethics that appeared only in specific historical periods and in particular cultural areas. Secondly he used ideal type to explain abstract elements of social reality, namely, bureaucracy, types of authority, social action and so on. His third kind of ideal type relates to the reconstruction of particular kind of behaviour. We examined in detail the use of ideal type in Weber’s work in this unit.

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10.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) c
- 2) a) False
b) True

- c) True
- d) False
- e) False
- f) True

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Ideal types are constructed by selecting those characteristics or elements of an object of study, which are considered essential or typical to it.
- 2) Ideal types are formulated, first, to understand and analyse a particular social phenomenon or problem; secondly, to avoid confusion or obscurity in the concepts used and thirdly, to increase the precision and accuracy of the analysis.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Weber constructed ideal type of capitalism and identified those components of Protestant ethic which he thought were of significant importance in the formation of capitalist spirit and was responsible for the rise of modern capitalism in the West.
- 2) According to Max Weber the ideal typical characteristics of bureaucracy are: division of labour and specialisation, work distributed as official duties, hierarchy or offices with clearly defined areas of command and responsibility, formal body of rules to govern, written documents, impersonal relations, recruitment on the basis of merit, separation of private and official income, promotion and fixed salary.
- 3) Max Weber has talked about four types of social actions. These are as follows:
 - a) Rational Action with reference to Goal — e.g. the action of the collector who makes preparation for the coming election.
 - b) Rational Action with reference to value — e.g. the action of the soldier who risks his life for one's country.

Max Weber

- c) Affective Action — e.g. the abuses given by the bowler to the empire in a cricket match for not giving the batsperson out.
- d) Traditional Action — e.g. the action of taking bath by an individual after coming from the cremation ground.



UNIT 11 POWER AND AUTHORITY*

Structure

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Concepts of Power and Authority

11.2.1 Elements of Authority

11.3 Types of Social Action and Types of Authority

11.3.1 Types of Social Action

11.3.2 Types of Authority

11.4 Bureaucracy

11.4.1 Major Features of Bureaucracy

11.4.2 Characteristics of Officials in Bureaucracy

11.5 Let Us Sum Up

11.6 References

11.7 Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe concepts of power and authority as explained by Max Weber;
- show the connections between Weber's types of social action and types of authority;
- describe the three types of authority namely, traditional, charismatic and rational-legal; and
- describe bureaucracy as the instrument for the operation of rational-legal authority.

11.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Unit, you will find some of Weber's important contributions in understanding **power** and **authority**. In the first section (11.2), there is a brief discussion of the sociological concepts of power and authority with special reference to Weber's understanding of the terms. The second section (11.3) will mention the types of social action that Weber identifies and the types of authority that flow from them, namely, traditional, charismatic and rational-legal authority. The third section (11.4) will focus on the instrument through which rational-legal authority is exercised, namely, bureaucracy.

* Adopted from IGNOU course material : Unit 16 of Sociological Thought (ESO 13) with modification by Nita Mathur

11.2 CONCEPTS OF POWER AUTHORITY

Let us now examine the key concepts of power and authority. We have discussed concepts of power and authority both, in the general sociological sense as well as in the specific Weberian context in Unit 2 of the course: Sociology of Religion (BSOC 106). Let us review the concepts briefly here.

When we say that a particular person has power, it usually implies that he/she has the capacity to influence the behaviour of others. It is expected that such a person is able to impose his/her will on others. From this understanding, three conclusions emerge: (i) power implies a social relationship between at least two persons; (ii) the social relationship based on power is asymmetrical i.e., while one person has power, the other one is subordinate to him/her; and (iii) power is exercised over someone-it could be a single person or a group of people. You might wonder why some people hold power while others do not? While some people are able to command while others obey? Some of you might argue that those who are physically strong are the ones who hold power. Well, this is not always true. Gerth and Mills (1953) explain that power is simply the possibility that one person or a group of people will behave in the way that another one wishes. This obedience could be due to fear, anticipation of some kind of advantage, loyalty or any other reason. It is also found that those who have control over resources are the ones who hold power. The impact of power varies from situation to situation. On the one hand, it depends on the capacity of the powerful individual extent to which power is opposed or resisted by others.

When power obtains justification or legitimacy from some source, it is understood as authority. Consider the case of traffic police who regulate traffic at busy roads. Vehicles move and stop at his/her command. Why does this happen? Why do people stop their cars when he/she signals them to do so? It happens because his/her power is legitimized by virtue of the position he/she holds in the organization and the work assigned to him/her by the Department of Traffic Enforcement. Hence, we say that traffic police has the authority to fine drivers who do not follow traffic rules. In formal organizations, authority is clearly specified (i.e., each person is aware of his/her own authority as also that of others in the organization) and is executed through rules of that organization. In informal settings, authority is bestowed by tradition, charisma of a person and many other ways.

Let us now see the elements that constitute authority.

11.2.1 Elements of Authority

For a system of authority to exist the following elements must be present.

An individual ruler/master or a group of rulers/masters.

- i) An individual/group that is ruled.

- ii) The will of the ruler to influence the conduct of the ruled which may be expressed through commands.
- iii) Evidence of the influence of the rulers in terms of compliance or obedience shown by the ruled.
- iv) Direct or indirect evidence which shows that the ruled have internalised and accepted the fact that the ruler's commands must be obeyed.

We see that authority implies a reciprocal relationship between the rulers and the ruled. The rulers believe that they have the legitimate right to exercise their authority. On the other hand, the ruled accept this power and comply with it, reinforcing its legitimacy.

It is time to complete Activity 1 and Check Your Progress 1.

Activity 1

Give examples of at least five authority from your daily life. What are the elements involved in them? Prepare a note of one page on them. Exchange your note, if possible, with co-learners at your Study Centre.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Define the concept of power.

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- 2) Describe two important sources of power.

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- 3) Point out three important elements of authority.

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11.3 TYPES OF SOCIAL ACTION AND TYPES OF AUTHORITY

We have discussed the Weberian concept of social action earlier. Max Weber describes sociology as a comprehensive science of social action (Aron, 1967: 187). He presents a typology of social action, which we will now briefly discuss.

11.3.1 Types of Social Action

Weber identifies four distinct types of social action. They are:

i) **Zweckrational action or rational action in relation to a goal** An example of this is an engineer constructing a bridge, who uses certain materials in a certain manner to achieve goal. This activity is directed towards obtaining that goal, namely, completing the construction.

ii) **Wertrational action, or rational action in relation to a value**

Here, one may give the example of a soldier laying down his life for the country. His action is not directed towards attaining specific material goal like wealth. It is for the sake of certain values like honour and patriotism.

iii) **Affective action**

This kind of action results from the emotional state of mind of the actor. If someone is teasing a girl in a bus, she may get so irritated that she may slap the offending person. She has been provoked so much that she has reacted violently.

iv) **Traditional action**

This is an action, which is guided by customs and longstanding beliefs, which become second nature or habit. In traditional Indian society, doing '*pranam*' or '*namaskar*' to elders is almost second nature needing no prompting.

One may find that the above typology of social action is reflected in Weber's classification of types of authority. We will discuss this in the following sub-section (11.3.2).

11.3.2 Types of Authority

As you have already read earlier, authority implies legitimacy. According to Weber, there are three systems of legitimation, each with its corresponding norms, which justify the power to command. It is these systems of legitimation which are designated as the following types of authority.

- i) Traditional authority
- ii) Charismatic authority
- iii) Rational-legal authority

Let us describe each of these types in some detail.

i) Traditional Authority

This system of legitimation flows from traditional action. In other words, it is based on customary law and the sanctity of ancient traditions. It is based on the belief that a certain authority is to be respected because it has existed since time immemorial.

In traditional authority, rulers enjoy personal authority by virtue of their inherited status. Their commands are in accordance with customs and they also possess the right to extract compliance from the ruled. Often, they abuse their power. The persons who obey them are 'subjects' in the fullest sense of the term. They obey their master out of personal loyalty or a pious regard for his time-honoured status. Let us take an example from our own society. You are familiar with the caste system in India. Why did the 'lower' castes bear the atrocities inflicted by the 'upper' castes for centuries? One way of explaining this is because the authority of the 'upper' castes had the backing of tradition and antiquity. The 'lower' castes some say had become socialised into accepting their oppression. Thus, we can see that traditional authority is based on the belief in the sacred quality of long standing traditions. This gives legitimacy to those who exercise authority.

Traditional authority does not function through written rules or laws. It is transmitted by inheritance down the generations. Traditional authority is carried out with the help of relatives and personal favourites.

In modern times, the incidence of traditional authority has declined. Monarchy, the classic example of traditional authority still exists, but in a highly diluted form. The Queen of England is a traditional figure of authority but as you may be aware, she does not actually exercise her authority. The laws of the land are enacted in her name, but their content is decided by the legislators, the representatives of the people. The queen has a parliament, which governs the kingdom, but she does not appoint ministers. She is a nominal head of state.

Briefly, traditional authority derives its legitimacy from longstanding traditions, which enable some to command and compel others to obey. It is hereditary authority and does not require written rules. The 'masters' exercise their authority with the help of loyal relatives and friends. Weber considers this kind of authority as irrational. It is therefore rarely found in modern developed societies.

ii) Charismatic Authority

Charisma means an extraordinary quality possessed by some individuals (see Box 11.1). This gives such people unique powers to capture the fancy and devotion of ordinary people. Charismatic authority is based on extraordinary devotion to an individual and to the way of life preached by this person. The legitimacy of such authority rests upon the belief in the supernatural or magical powers of the person. The charismatic leader 'proves' his/her power through miracles, military and other victories or the dramatic prosperity of the disciples. As long as charismatic leaders continue to 'prove' their miraculous powers in the eyes of their disciples, their authority stays intact. You may have realised that the type of social action that charismatic authority is related to is affective action. The disciples are in a highly charged emotional state as a result of the teachings and appeal of the charismatic leaders. They worship their hero.

Box 11.1

Charismatic

Dictionary meaning of the term charisma is a divinely inspired gift. It is gift of divine grace. This term is used by Weber to denote kind of power over others which is often understood as authority. The authority of the person who holds might be interpreted in terms of myth of the divine mission, insight or moral attributes.

Charismatic authority is not dependent on customary beliefs or written rules. It is purely the result of the special qualities of the leader who governs or rules in his personal capacity. Charismatic authority is not organised; therefore there is no paid staff or administrative set-up. The leader and his assistants do not have a regular occupation and often reject their family responsibilities. These characteristics sometimes make charismatic leaders revolutionaries, as they have rejected all the conventional social obligations and norms.

Based, as it is, on the personal qualities of an individual, the problem of succession arises with the death or disappearance of the leader. The person who succeeds the leader may not have charismatic powers. In order to transmit the original message of the leader, some sort of organisation develops. The original charisma gets transformed either into traditional authority or rational-legal authority. Weber calls this **routinisation** of charisma.

If the charismatic figure is succeeded by a son/daughter or some close relative, traditional authority results. If, on the other hand, charismatic qualities are identified and written down, then it changes into rational legal authority, where anyone acquiring these qualities can become a leader. Charismatic authority can thus be described as unstable and temporary. We can find examples of charismatic leaders throughout history. Saints, prophets and some political leaders are examples of such authority. Kabir, Nanak, Jesus, Mohammed, Lenin and Mahatma Gandhi, to name a few were charismatic leaders. They were revered by people for their personal qualities and the message they preached, not because they represented traditional or rational-legal authority.

Box 11.2

Rotutinisatoin

Weber used routinisation to mean the “transformation of charismatic leadership into institutionalised leadership where one office takes the place of a personality as the focus of authority” (Scruton, 1982: 415).

Check Your Progress 2

Power and Authority

- 1) Tick mark the correct answer.

Which one of the following is not a type of authority according to Weber?

- a) Traditional authority
- b) Rational-legal authority
- c) Charismatic authority
- d) Personal authority

- 2) Tick mark the correct answer.

When the original charisma of a leader gets transformed into traditional or rational-legal authority, what does Weber call it?

- a) Routinisation of one's power to capture devotion of ordinary people
- b) Routinisation of legitimacy
- c) Routinisation of one's ability to lead
- d) Routinisation of one's capacity to control the behaviour of others against their will

- 3) Tick mark the correct answer.

Traditional authority derives legitimacy from

- a) Law of the land
- b) Long standing customary law
- c) Outstanding performance of the leader
- d) All of the above.

iii) Rational-legal Authority

The term refers to a system of authority, which are both, rational and legal. It is vested in a regular administrative staff who operate in accordance with certain written rules and laws. Those who exercise authority are appointed to do so on the basis of their achieved qualifications, which are prescribed and codified. Those in authority consider it a profession and are paid a salary. Thus, it is a rational system.

It is legal because it is in accordance with the laws of the land which people recognise and feel obliged to obey. The people acknowledge and respect the legality of both, the ordinance and rules as well as the positions or titles of those who implement the rules.

Rational-legal authority is a typical feature of modern society. It is the reflection of the process of rationalisation. Remember that Weber considers rationalisation as the key feature of western civilisation. It is, according to

Weber, a specific product of human thought and deliberation. By now you have clearly grasped the connection between rational-legal authority and rational action for obtaining goals.

Let us look at examples of rational-legal authority. We obey the tax collector because we believe in the legality of the ordinances he enforces. We also believe that he has the legal right to send us taxation notices. We stop our vehicles when the traffic policeman orders us to do so because we respect the authority vested in him by the law. Modern societies are governed not by individuals, but by laws and ordinances. We obey the policeman because of his position and his uniform which represents the law, not because he is Mr. 'X' or Mr. 'Y'. Rational-legal authority exists not just in the political and administrative spheres, but also in economic organisations like banks and industries as well as in religious and cultural organisations.

From the above discussion on the types of social action and types of authority one may find that traditional authority corresponds to traditional action, rational-legal authority corresponds to rational action in relation to goal and charismatic authority corresponds to affective action or emotional action. However one easily finds that Weber distinguishes four types of social action and only three types of authority. The lack of conformity between the typology of social action and the typology of authority is a subject for open discussion.

In order that you might clearly grasp the manner in which rational-legal authority functions it is necessary to examine the institution of 'bureaucracy'. Bureaucracy is the medium through which rational-legal authority is carried out and it is the subject matter of the next section (11.4). Before going to the next section, complete Activity 2.

Activity 2

Give an example of rational-legal or a traditional authority from your own society with special reference to the basis of legitimacy of that authority. Prepare note of one page. Exchange your note, if possible, with the notes of your co-learners at your Study Centre.

11.4 BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucracy, as just mentioned, is the machinery, which implements rational-legal authority. Max Weber studied bureaucracy in detail and constructed an ideal type which contained the most prominent characteristics of bureaucracy. Let us examine this ideal type which reveals to us the major features of bureaucracy.

11.4.1 Major Features of Bureaucracy

- i) In order that the bureaucracy may function adequately, it relies on the following rules and regulations.

- a) The activities which comprise bureaucracy are distributed among the officials in the form of official duties.
- b) There is a stable or regular system by which officials are vested with authority. This authority is strictly delimited by the laws of the land.
- c) There are strict and methodical procedures which ensure that officials perform their duties adequately.

The above mentioned three characteristics constitute 'bureaucratic authority', which is to be found in developed and modern societies.

- ii) The second feature of bureaucracy is that there is a hierarchy of officials in authority. By this we mean that there is a firmly built structure of subordination and super ordination. Lower officials are supervised by higher ones and are answerable to them. The advantage of this system is that governed people can express their dissatisfaction with lower officials by appealing to the higher ones. For instance, if you are dissatisfied with the behaviour or performance of a clerk or a section officer in an office, you can appeal to the higher official to seek redress.
- iii) The management of the bureaucratic office is carried out through written documents or files. They are preserved and properly kept by clerks who are specially appointed for this purpose.
- iv) The work in the bureaucratic office is highly specialised and staff is trained accordingly.
- v) A fully developed bureaucratic office demands the full working capacity of the staff. In such a case, officials may be compelled to work over-time.

Having looked the main features of a bureaucratic set-up, let us now learn something about the officials that you have found repeatedly mentioned above.

11.4.2 Characteristics of Officials in Bureaucracy

Weber mentions the following characteristics of officials in a bureaucratic set-up:

- i) Office-work is a 'vocation' for officials.
- ii) They are specially trained for their jobs.
- iii) Their qualifications determine their position or rank in the office.
- iv) They are expected to do their work honestly.

Their official positions also have a bearing on their personal lives. Let us see how.

- i) Bureaucratic officials enjoy a high status in society.
- ii) Often, their jobs carry transfer liabilities. By this we mean that they may be transferred from one place or department to another leading to some instability in their professional and personal lives.
- iii) Officials receive salaries not in accordance with productivity but status. The higher their rank, the higher their salaries. They also receive benefits like pension, provident fund, medical and other facilities. Their jobs are considered very secure.
- iv) Officials enjoy good career prospects. They can move from the lower rungs of the bureaucratic ladder to higher ones if they work in a disciplined manner.

It is time to complete Check Your Progress 3.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Bureaucracy is an example of
 - a) traditional authority
 - b) rational-legal authority
 - c) charismatic authority
 - d) none of the above.
- 2) Mention the important features of bureaucratic authority.

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- 3) Discuss the important characteristics of the officials of bureaucracy.

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11.5 LET US SUP UP

This Unit began with a discussion of the Weberian concepts of ‘power’ and ‘authority’. It then went on to discuss the types of social action identified by Max Weber, followed by the types of authority described by him. Next you studied traditional, charismatic and rational-legal authority in some detail. Finally, the unit focused upon bureaucracy as the instrument through which rational-legal authority operates. Not only did the unit outline the features of a bureaucratic office but also the officials or staff that constitute it.

11.6 REFERENCES

- Bendix, Reinhard, 1960. *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*. Heinman: London
- Freund, Julien 1968. *The Sociology of Max Weber*. Random House: New York
- Indira Gandhi National Open University Course material (2005), *Sociological Thought* (ESO 13), IGNOU; New Delhi

11.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Power is one's capacity to impose his or her will on others.
- 2) Power can be derived from a constellation of interests that develop in a formally free market situation. Power can again be derived from an established system of authority that allocates the right to command and duty to obey.
- 3) a) Presence of individual ruler/master or a group of rulers/masters.
b) Presence of an individual/group that is ruled.
c) Evidence of influence of the rulers in terms of compliance and obedience shown by the ruled.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) d)
- 2) a)
- 3) b)

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) b
- 2) Important features of bureaucratic authority are:
 - a) it operates on the principle of jurisdictional area which relies on certain administrative regulations,
 - b) there is a stable regular system by which officials are vested with authority, and
 - c) there are strict and methodical procedures which ensure that officials perform their duties adequately.

- 3) Important characteristics of the officials of bureaucracy are:
- a) office work is a vocation for the official,
 - b) officials are especially trained for their job,
 - c) their qualifications determine their position or rank in the office,
and
 - d) they are expected to do work honestly.



UNIT 12 RELIGION AND ECONOMY*

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 Weber's Perspective on Religion

12.2.1 West and the East

12.2.2 Catholics and Protestants

12.2.3 Spirit of Capitalism

12.2.4 Sense of Calling

12.2.5 Calvinism and Worldly Asceticism

12.3 Weber's Perspectives on Economy

12.3.1 Understanding Capitalism

12.3.2 Weber's Views on Capitalism

12.4 Let Us Sum Up

12.5 References

12.6 Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe the relationship between religion and economic order;
 - discuss the role played by religion in the development of capitalism; and
 - discuss why capitalism failed to originate in India.
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12.1 INTRODUCTION

Many of us would agree that religious beliefs and values affect our words and deeds. In the course: Sociology of Religion, we learnt that Karl Marx understood religion as a veil over the exploitative conditions of society. For him, religion is only an imagination which will vanish when conditions of exploitation in society are removed. In contrast to the viewpoint of Karl Marx, we will discuss Max Weber's famous thesis on the protestant ethic and spirit of capitalism. This Unit explains the relationship between religion and the economic order. We will focus attention on one particular model of economic life, namely capitalism. Its relationship with religion will be discussed. It will be pointed out that Calvin's interpretation of certain doctrines had the potentiality to generate impulses for the origin of capitalism. Weber's analysis of the protestant ethic made him realize that ideas can play an effective role in development.

* Adapted by Nita Mathur from IGNOU Course Material: Unit 10 of *Society and Religion* (ESO 15) written by Michael Kennedy with modification by Nita Mathur

12.2 WEBER'S PERSPECTIVE ON RELIGION

Weber applies his concept of rationalization to understand changes in religion, science, arts, administration and politics. For Weber, capitalism itself was born out of a highest degree of economic rationalization.

Weber argues and demonstrates that ideas can become major force in the development process. In the development of capitalism, the ideas supplied by the protestant sects played a major role.

12.2.1 West and the East

When contrasted with the East, Weber finds that rationalization has reached a high degree only in the West. Take for example, science, Weber says that only in the Western civilization, science has reached a high stage of development. In his eyes, though India, China and Egypt had great traditions of knowledge, due to the lack of experimental method, they lagged behind in economic development. In various spheres such as music, architecture, legal system, printing system, bureaucracy and capitalism, the West has reached a higher degree of rationalization. Weber points to three aspects, which mark the emergence of rational capitalism: firstly, "rational capitalistic organization of free labour", secondly, "rational industrial organization tuned to regular market" and thirdly "technical utilization of scientific knowledge". Cost-benefit calculation, book-keeping, counting of balance are some indicators of capitalistic organization. Before the arrival of capitalism, there were many magical and religious forces. The protestantism gave rise to an economic spirit, which could overtake all the traditional magico-religious forces and thus paved the way for capitalism.

12.2.2 Catholics and Protestants

Catholics and Protestants were deeply influenced by their religious beliefs in the choice of occupation and type of education. Citing data, Weber says that while protestants sent their children to technical institutions, industrial and commercial training institutes, the catholics sent their children only to humanities education. Protestants outnumber Catholics, among the skilled labourers and administrators.

12.2.3 Spirit of Capitalism

Protestantism, especially Calvinism had an economic ethic conducive for the development of capitalism. The words of Benjamin Franklin such as "Time is Money", "Credit is Money" and "Money can beget money" capture the essence of ascetic protestantism. Earlier in a traditional set-up, people earned for living. But now after the arrival of protestantism, earning becomes a virtue; an end in itself; it shows one's proficiency in his "calling". The labour too becomes an end in itself. After Protestantism, people earned a lot but did not spend lavishly, people worked hard but did not consume luxuriously. This 'spirit of capitalism', had its roots in ascetic protestantism, whose adherents mainly were the rising strata of the lower industrial: middle classes.

12.2.4 Sense of Calling

There are major differences in understanding 'calling' as well as 'labour', between Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Calvinism. For the Catholic Church, calling meant the renunciation of the world in favour of monastic asceticism, whereas for Luther, values which were necessary for the growth of capitalism were not 'natural' but the outcome of historical development; thirdly, both of them agreed that the "new capitalist entrepreneurial classes did not come from the pre-capitalist financial or merchant classes... (rather) the new capitalist class was a rising one..." Apart from these, 'calling' meant the fulfillment of obligations attached to one's position. 'Labour' is the 'product of selfishness' according to Catholicism, and it is an 'expression of brotherly love' according to Lutheranism. Luther said that the division of labour, forces every individual to work for others. Luther's concept of 'calling' only means that one has to accept his position in the world and hence its 'economic ethic' was not progressive. It was Calvin, whose interpretation of 'calling', coupled with the 'Doctrine of Predestination', generated intense drive for development of capitalism in countries like Holland, Netherlands, Switzerland etc.

12.2.5 Calvinism and Worldly Asceticism

The 'Doctrine of Predestination' holds the key, to the understanding of capitalist spirit generated by Calvinist ethic. The doctrine of predestination states that God has already chosen some men for eternal life (salvation) and some men for eternal death (condemnation). Those who are chosen by God form the invisible church of God. According to Calvin, it is impossible to know God's plan and it is not good to know that. Because, God's grace will not be available to those who are not chosen by them for salvation, whatever they might do. Man has to believe that he is chosen by God and has to work for the glory of God, and thus prove his 'faith'.

The doctrine of predestination creates many social psychological impacts: firstly, the individual is left alone because there is nobody to mediate between him and the God, neither the priest nor the church; secondly, the individual has to find his ways himself, for there is no magical way to attain salvation, like sacraments, religious ceremonies, etc. Now, every Puritan has only one question, at his heart, "Am I one of the God's chosen people?" But, there is no answer for this question; not even, through one's deeds can you guess whether he or she is chosen.

The only option left for the Puritan is to believe that he is chosen. Believing so, he has to avoid all sensuous pleasures and enjoyments and has to fight against all sorts of temptations with confidence. The only way to gain this confidence, is hard work for the glory of God. In doing so, it is established that God is acting through the hardworking, confident, ascetic Puritan. A Puritan has to create the conviction of salvation for himself, and behave carefully at every step in life, for if he commits mistakes there is no place for repentance and rectification. A Puritan practices self-control, but works tirelessly to demonstrate his 'faith' that he is one among the "chosen."

When a puritan works hard and earns a lot of money, but avoids luxury, naturally capital accumulates. This can be used for further productive investment. Thus the protestant sects had an economic ethic, which helped the growth of capitalism, particularly in Western European countries.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What is the similarity between commodity and religion?

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- 2) What are the social impact of the doctrine of predestination?

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12.3 WEBER'S PERSPECTIVE ON ECONOMY

Weber explained religion in relation to economic, political and historical factors. He saw religion as part and parcel of a larger historical trend, namely, the move towards capitalism, industrialisation and rationality. He was concerned with the role of religion in making the world-view of individuals in different societies favourably or unfavourably inclined towards capitalism and rationalisation.

Birnbaum (1953) points out that Weber agreed that capitalism is not a mere economic system, but it permeates and spreads throughout the society; 'social values' which necessary for the growth of capitalism were not 'natural' but the outcome of historical development; and the "new capitalist entrepreneurial classes did not come from pre-capitalist financial or merchant classes....." Weber agreed with Marx on the idea that capitalist class was the rising class.

Weber considered ideas to be important for development. He did not establish a one-to-one relationship between religion and development. Weber's thesis allows us to say that, after a certain stage of development, religion may serve as the ideology of those who benefitted out of the development. He asserted the criticism of religion from within. His view of religion as a bearer of ideas for potential development applies to specific historical-cultural systems. In Weber's thesis, we find the emphasis on 'individual'.

For Weber, capitalism is the specific stage one long drawn out historical process called 'rationalization'. Capitalism is not just an economic system or social system alone for Weber, for him capitalism is also a cultural system marked by rationalization in all walks of life--namely, administration, judiciary, science etc.

12.3.1 Understanding Capitalism

Tom Bottomore (1973) in His Dictionary of Marxist Thought sets down some of the main features of capitalism. As a mode of production, capitalism is characterised by the following features:

i) Production for sale rather than for self-use

By this we mean a shift from a subsistence economy. In most pre-capitalist economies, production is undertaken for direct consumption. For instance, in agricultural economies, farmers grow crops for their own use, only a small surplus is available for sale. This is because technology is not so advanced and domestic or family labour is used for farming. Such is not the case in a capitalist economy. Here, a large number of workers gather together in a factory. With the help of machines and through division of labour, goods are produced on a mass scale. They are produced for sale in the market. For instance in a factory producing soap, the output is not for the self-use of the producers. It is for sale in the market.

ii) The existence of a market where labour-power is bought and sold

According to Marx, workers are regarded only in terms of their labour-power. The capitalist or owner hires their labour-power by paying them wages. Workers can sell their labour power or withhold it because they are legally free. Unlike in the earlier stages of human history, workers are not forced to work like slaves or serfs. Sheer economic need forces them to work. They must either work or starve. So, although they are legally free to enter or not enter into contracts with the capitalist, they are not free from hunger, which forces them to sell their labour.

iii) Exchange takes place through money

As we have seen in point (1) production is undertaken for sale, and sale is transacted through the use of money. Money is the social bond that ties together the various elements in the capitalist system. Hence the role of banks and financial institutions becomes important in the system.

iv) The capitalist controls the production process

Not only does the capitalist control the hiring and firing of workers, but also decides how production is to be carried out. He decides what is to be produced, the composition of raw materials and machines, and the manner in which the output is to be marketed.

v) The capitalist controls financial decisions

This is related to the earlier point. Decisions regarding pricing of the product, wages of the workers and the amount of financial investment are taken by the capitalist.

vi) Competition

Since the whole idea of capitalism is production for sale, there is bound to be competition between capitalists. Whose products will sell the most in the market? Whose profits will be the maximum? This leads to a situation in which each tries to outdo the other. The consequences could be innovation or the use of the latest technology. Competition could also result in the formation of ‘monopolies’ or ‘cartels’, where a single producer or group of producers try to dominate the market by pushing or forcing out competitors.

This leads to further concentration and centralisation of capital in a few hands. Capitalism thus is a system, which according to Marx symbolises the most acute form of exploitation, inequality and polarisation of classes. By this is meant that the social distance between the owners of the means of production (i.e., the bourgeoisie) and the working class (the proletariat) becomes greater and greater.

12.3.2 ‘Weber’s View on Capitalism

The following sub-sections on Max Weber’s analysis of capitalism will make clear how Max Weber takes an independent and more complex view of capitalism. Weber speaks of a special kind of capitalism, namely, ‘rational capitalism’. Rational capitalism, according to him, is a uniquely western development (by the west we refer to West Europe and North America). This is because the idea of rationality and the process of rationalisation too are distinctively western.

It is important to bear the link between ‘rationality’ and ‘rational capitalism’ constantly in mind. For this purpose we will now discuss Max Weber’s views on rationality.

i) Weber on ‘Rationality’

To understand Max Weber’s ideas regarding capitalism, it is important to first review his understanding of rationality. The growth of ‘rationality’ in the western world is closely connected with capitalism as you shall soon see. What did Weber mean by rationality and rationalisation? As you have already studied in Unit 7, rationality is a product of the scientific specialisation which is an important feature of western culture. It involves gaining mastery or control of the external world. It involves the organisation of human life in such a manner that greater efficiency and productivity can be attained.

Briefly, rationalisation means an attempt by humans to control the environment by organising and coordinating human activities in a certain regular and predictable manner. Events are not left to chance or to nature. Human beings have gained such a degree of understanding about the world around them that nature is no longer regarded as ‘mysterious’ or ‘incalculable’. Through the use of science and technology, written rules and laws, human activity is systematised. Let us take an example from our day-to-day life. There is a vacancy in an office. One manner of filling the vacancy would be to appoint one’s friend or relative. But this is not ‘rational’ in the Weberian sense. Another way would be to

advertise in the newspapers, hold a competitive examination and an interview and select the candidate with the best result. In this method, certain rules and codes have been applied. A certain regularisation, which the first method did not have, has been introduced. Weber would call this an example of rationalisation.

ii) Rationalisation and Western Civilisation

According to Weber, rationalisation has been the most distinctive feature of western civilisation. It is rationality, which marks out a number of distinct traits or features, which are not to be found at one and the same time anywhere else in the world. These features include:

- a) Science, a body of verifiable knowledge well developed in the west.
- b) A rational state with specialised institutions, written laws and a constitution, which regulates political activity.
- c) Art like western music, for example which has a system of notation, simultaneous use of a number of instruments and so on which are not be observed to the same extent in other systems of music.
- d) Economy which is characterised by rational capitalism. We will study this in detail in the following sub-section.

Rationality, as you can see, is not just restricted to a few aspects of human life. Rather, it penetrates and influences all areas of life. It is the most distinctive characteristic of western society (see Freund, 1972:17-24).

iii) Traditional and Rational Capitalism

Does capitalism merely mean a system for the creation of profit? Is greed or desire for wealth the only characteristic of capitalism? In that case, capitalism existed in most parts of the world. It existed amongst the merchants of ancient Babylon, India and China and Medieval Europe with its powerful merchant guilds. But it was not 'rational' capitalism.

In traditional capitalism, most households are self-sufficient and produce for self-consumption the basic necessities of life. Traditional capitalists mostly trade in luxury goods. Their markets are thus restricted to a few products and a small, select group of clients. Overseas trade is a risky business; in their hunger for profits, traditional capitalists sell goods at exorbitant rates. Business is a gamble. If successful, the gains are great and so are losses if business fails.

Modern or rational capitalism is not restricted to the production and sale of just a few luxurious or rare commodities. It includes everything; all the ordinary goods in everyday use from bread to cloth to utensils and tools. Unlike traditional capitalism, rational capitalism is dynamic and constantly expanding. New innovations, new methods of production and new products are constantly being invented. Rational capitalism depends on mass production and distribution. Goods must be exchanged in a predictable and repeatable way. Business is no longer seen as a gamble. The modern capitalist does not sell a few products to a

few people at a high cost. The idea is to have plenty of customers buying plenty of goods which all can afford.

In short, traditional capitalism is restricted to a few producers, a few commodities and a few clients. The element of risk is high. Business is a gamble. Rational capitalism on the other hand, aims at making all goods marketable. It involves mass production and distribution. Business becomes methodical and regular. In the above discussion, we studied the difference between traditional and rational capitalism.

i) Pre-conditions for Rational Capitalism – In What Sort of Socio-economic Milieu can Capitalism Develop?

The basic principle underlying modern capitalism, according to Weber, is the rational organisation of productive enterprises, which supply society with its everyday wants. In this sub-section, we shall see what preconditions or socio-economic milieu is necessary for the development of rational capitalism:

- a) Private ownership of material resources necessary for production (e.g. land, machines, raw materials, factory buildings etc.): The ownership of the means of production by private producers enables these producers to organise a business or enterprise. They can assemble the means of production and initiate the process of production of commodities because they own the means of production.
- b) Free market: There should be no restrictions on the flow of trade. The political situation should be more or less peaceful. This will allow economic activity to go on undisturbed.
- c) Rational techniques of production and distribution of goods: This includes the use of machines to speed up production and the application of science and technology in production and distribution of commodities so that a greater number and variety of goods may be produced with maximum efficiency.
- d) Rational legislation: There should be a system of laws, which apply to all the members of society. This would simplify the making of economic contracts. Each individual would have certain legal obligations and rights, which would be codified or written down.
- e) Free labour force: Labourers have the legal freedom to work where and when they want to. Their relationship with the employers is contractual, not obligatory. However, though legally free, Weber like Marx is aware that economic compulsions and sheer hunger will make them work. Their “freedom” is thus formal freedom only. In practice, necessity dictates that they work.
- f) Commercialisation of the economy: To make rational capitalism possible, there must be opportunities for everyone to participate in an enterprise. Individuals can buy stocks, shares bonds etc. and thus become part of the enterprise.

Briefly, rational capitalism is an economic system, which requires that the means of production be privately owned and controlled. With the help of rational technology, goods are produced and freely traded in the market. Workers enter into contracts with their employers, as they are legally free. As all individuals are governed by a common legal system, the making of business contracts is made easy. This system is thus qualitatively different from any other that existed before it.

Let us now study how Weber explains the rise of the rationalisation of the economic system. As we shall see in the next sub-section, Weber views capitalism as too complex a phenomenon to be explained away by a single factor. The development of rational capitalism is spurred on by multiple factors, all acting and reacting with each other and producing a certain blend of features, which characterise rational capitalism. We shall be considering the economic, political and cultural or religious factors, which Weber discusses.

ii) Factors Contributing to the Growth of Rational Capitalism

It is a common misconception held by some students and scholars that Weber neglects economic factors in his discussion of capitalism. This is not correct. It is only that he does not emphasise economic factors to the extent that Marx does. Let us briefly highlight Weber's view on the role of economic and political factors in the growth of capitalism:

- a) **Economic Factors:** Weber mentions the gradual separation in Europe between the 'household' and 'trade' or business. The process of small-scale domestic production of items for self-consumption gives way to mass production in factories. The spheres of household activity and work become distanced. The growth of transport and communication also contributes to rationalisation of the economy. The use of a common currency and the practice of book-keeping make economic transactions easier.
- b) **Political Factors:** The rise of modern western capitalism is closely connected with the growth of the bureaucratic rational-legal state. The idea of citizenship assumes prominence. Citizens are given certain legal rights and obligations. The bureaucratic state helps to break down feudalism and to free land and labour for the capitalist market. The bureaucratic state helps to pacify and politically control large territories. This provides a climate of relative political peace for business to be conducted smoothly. Rationalisation finds full expression in the rise of the bureaucratic state, which in turn contributes to the growth of rational capitalism.

In the above discussion, we have seen how Weber tries to describe the rise of rational capitalism in terms of economic and political factors. We have seen how the shift from domestic to factory production, widespread use of currency, communication and technology helps to shape the new economic system. We have also seen how the bureaucratic state provides certain legal

rights and safeguards and a favourable political environment in which business can prosper.

But these explanations alone are not adequate, according to Weber. Human behaviour according to him is a reflection of the meanings human beings ascribe and ideas human beings have about their situation. Underlying human action is a certain ethos, a certain world-view, in keeping with which humans orient their activities. What was the ethos of the earliest Western capitalists? How did they view the world around them and how did they locate their own positions in it? Weber found out an interesting statistic, namely, that the majority of leading businessmen, professionals and bureaucrats of that time were Protestants. This led him to speculate on whether the teachings of Protestantism had any bearing on economic behaviour.

c) Religious/Cultural Factors - The Protestant Ethic Thesis: At the very outset it must be pointed out that the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism (by which Weber referred to an ideal type of the main features of capitalism) do not have a mechanical or mono causal relationship. The Protestant ethic according to Weber is one of the sources that bred rational capitalism.

Calvinism, one of the Protestant sects that Weber spoke of, referred to 'predestination'. This refers to the belief that certain individuals were 'elected' by god to attain salvation. This led to a rejection of the sacraments by its followers. Rituals and prayers stopped being so important. The doctrine of predestination created an enormous amount of anxiety and loneliness. The early Protestants sought signs of their election by god by striving for professional success. The notion of calling resulted in relentless pursuit of hard work and optimum use of time. Individuals led a highly disciplined and organised lifestyle. Constant self-control through systematic effort of will resulted in the rationalisation of individual conduct. This reflected in the way business was conducted. Profits were not wasted on worldly pleasures. They were reinvested so that they could be purposefully used to further expand business. Thus, the this-worldly asceticism that Protestantism preached led to rational organisation of every-day affairs. Asceticism or rigorous discipline and self-control were no longer restricted to monks or priests. It became the "mantra" of ordinary human beings who sought to discipline both themselves and the environment. The idea of mastery over the environment was an important idea, which characterised capitalism. In this manner, the ethos or world-view promoted by the Protestant ethic helped to shape rational capitalism.

iii) The Future of the Rationalised Western World: The 'Iron Cage'

As we have seen in the above discussion, Weber views rationality as a key process of western civilisation. The rationalisation of economy, polity, cultures and day-to-day existence has important implications. Rationalisation leads to disenchantment of the world. Because science seems to have answers for almost

everything, human beings lose their reverence and awe for the world. Rationalisation of day-to-day life traps human beings into routines. Life becomes mechanical, predictable and systematic and hence dull. This can have the effect of making human beings less creative and reluctant to break routines and schedules. Human beings get caught in a prison of their own making, an iron cage from which there seems to be no escape. Rational capitalism and its partner, the rational bureaucratic state, perpetuate a certain life-style in which the roles of human beings are robbed of creativity and adventure. The world around us loses its charm. It reduces humans to automatons. Basically, it is an alienative system.

We have just studied how Max Weber tried to explain the rise of the complex phenomenon known as rational capitalism. Weber did not restrict his explanation to just economic or political factors. He did not discount or neglect these factors, but he did emphasise the importance of the psychological motivations underlying the development of rational capitalism. These motivations resulted from the changing worldview. Human beings no longer viewed themselves as the passive victims of the whims of nature. They adopted an ethic of mastery or control both over the outside world and their inner selves. The message preached by Protestant sects like the Calvinist sect had a major role to play in shaping this changing world-view. The notions of pre-destination and 'calling' (a strong urge towards a particular way of life or career) made followers anxious to prosper on earth and master it. This helped in development of an economic ethic, which emphasised on rational conduct of both personal life and business. It viewed work not as a burdensome necessity but a sacred duty. The notion of calling helped in building up the disciplined army of labour which is so necessary for capitalism to flourish. Weber's multi-layered analysis thus tried to study the growth of capitalism in terms of changing material and political conditions as well as changing values and ideas.

Weber paints a gloomy picture of the future. Rationality which reflects in economic and political structures will make life routinised and monotonous. Because human beings have explanations for almost everything, life ceases to be interesting and exciting. Human beings will thus be trapped in an iron 'cage' of their own making.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Fill in the blanks.
 - i) According to Weber, Protestant ethics bred the..... .
 - ii) Weber maintained the rationality will make life and
- 2) Define rationalization.

.....

12.4 LET US SUM UP

Weber explained religion in relation to economic, political and historical factors. He saw religion as part and parcel of a larger historical trend, namely, the move towards capitalism, industrialisation and rationality. He was concerned with the role of religion in making the world-view of individuals in different societies favourably or unfavourably inclined towards capitalism and rationalisation.

His comparative studies of world religion show how religious ethics in India prevented the growth of capitalism, which basically requires an ethic of mastery, of rational calculation. It is only the Protestant ethic, which provided the appropriate world-view for rational capitalism. Science, as Weber views it, is an expression of rationality and a challenge to the traditional and mystical claims of religion. Science provides empirical knowledge or verifiable factual information, which helps human beings to know and master the world. Thus science and religion, in Weber's view, exist in contrast to each other.

12.5 REFERENCES

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12.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Commodity and religion, both are man's creation but, they exist over and above him and sedate him.
- 2) The social impact of predestination is:
 - the individual is left alone because there is nobody mediate and there is no magical cure.
 - work becomes an end in itself. A puritan has to work for the greater glory of God.
 - conviction of salvation has to be demonstrated through work and self-control.
 - when a puritan earns but desists from spending, monet accumulates which can be productively invested.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) (i) Spirit of capitalism
(ii) Routinised, monotonous
- 2) Rationalization denoted two almost simultaneous processes (i) Displacement of magical thought and action; and (ii) the process thought which ideas attain systematic coherence and natural consistence. Rationalization is the unifying theme of Weber's scholarship.

GLOSSARY

- Affective Action** : It is that type of action, which is carried out under the sway of some sort of emotional state or condition.
- Ancient Mode of Production** : Refers to a production system where the master has the right of ownership over the slave and appropriates the products of +his labour through servitude, without allowing the slave to reproduce.
- Anomie** : This term is used by Durkheim to convey a situation in which the individual does not feel integrated in society. Social norms and values seem unclear and disjointed. The individual does not feel morally involved with the affairs of society. There is breakdown of or confusion regarding group rules that regulate the behaviour of individuals. It is a state of normlessness. In such a situation, an individual does not feel integrated with or morally involved with the affairs of society.
- Assembly Line** : A feature of the modern factory system wherein workers assemble or put together the various parts of a commodity or perform certain operations on it. Each has a specific task to ho. This speed up the production.
- Asiatic Mode of Production** : Refers to community-based production system where ownership of land is communal and the existence of is expressed through the real or imaginary unity of these communities.
- Authority** : When power is legitimised it becomes authority. It is the legitimate capacity of an individual/group to influence or control the behaviour of others. According to Weber, there are three types of authority: traditional authority, charismatic authority, and rational-legal authority.
- Belief** : A statement about reality that is accepted by individuals true and regarded as factual.
- Bourgeoisie** : Also known as ‘Haves’ are those people who own the means of production for example – landowners, capitalists in industrial societies.
- Bureaucracy** : A system of administration based on the division of labour, specialisation, hierarchy of officials, formal body of rules to govern, written documents, impersonal relations, recruitment and promotion on the basis of ability and separation of private and official income etc.
- Calling** : Following a profession or doing work as a sacred duty which god has ‘called’ an individual to do regarding work as more than just an economic necessity, but a religious duty.

- Calvinism** : One of the four main streams of Protestantism besides Methodism, Pietism and Baptism. Calvinism has three major important tenets: that the universe is created to further the greater glory of God; that the motives of the almighty are beyond human comprehension; and that only a small number of people are chosen to achieve eternal grace i.e. the belief in predestination.
- Capitalism** : It is one of the historical stages of society in which the means of production (i.e., capital, labour and machinery) are privately owned.
- Capitalists** : The ruling class in capitalism who control the means of production.
- Capitalist Mode of Production** : Refers to a production system where the owners of means of production, capitalists, extract surplus labour from the proletariats in the form of profits.
- Cartel** : A group of industrialists who have come together to monopolise or gain complete control over the market.
- Charismatic Authority** : In this type of authority, commands are obeyed because followers believe in the extraordinary character of the leader.
- Clan** : Descent from a common ancestry; now, often applied to any group of people who count descent unilineally from a common ancestor (actual or mythical). The ancestor in simple societies may be represented by totem such as animal, plant or sources of natural forces. Common ancestor signifies a relationship through blood. Hence, marriages within group are prohibited.
- Class** : When people share the same relationship to the means of production and also share the similar consciousness regarding their common interest, they constitute a class.
- Class-conflict** : When two classes having basic antagonism of class interests struggle or clash in order to safeguard their class interests then it is called class conflict.
- Collective Conscience** : A set of beliefs and customs, which on an average are common in a society and form a determinant system which has its own style of life. The collective conscience according to Durkheim is the body of beliefs, practices and common sentiment held throughout society and it gives social purpose and structures social life.
- Collective** : A combined action, idea or norm formed by people interacting with each other.

Commodity	: A commodity is a thing outside the human being which satisfies human needs. A commodity is associated with both use value and exchange value in capitalist society.
Complementary	: Something that helps, supports e.g., the role of a nurse is complementary to that of a doctor.
Custom	: The term refers to the established mode of behaviour, thought and action, which are practised from generation to generation. Violation of this mode of behaviour is socially not accepted because of societal constraints. Customary forces are sometimes more binding than the orders of the state.
Dialectical Materialism	: It is the Marxian theory that seeks to explain everything in terms of change which is caused due to constant contradiction of mutually opposite forces found in matter.
Dialectics	: The conflict between two mutually opposite forces or tendencies.
Disenchantment	: It is a sense of disappointment and lack of interest in something that one has admired and/or looked up to.
Economic structure	: Sum total of relations of production i.e., social relationships that people have to enter into for production of material conditions of life.
Empirical	: Based on observed facts.
Ethical prophets	: These are persons who give people a powerful message, usually a religious one. They usually call for an overthrow of an existing social order, which they be regard as evil and give their followers an alternative which they often claim has been revealed to them by god. Religions like Judaism, Islam and Christianity are 'prophetic' religions.
Exchange Value	Exchange value is associated with a commodity in capitalist society. Exchange value implies that a quantitative proportion of one commodity can be represented in relation to the value of a quantitative proportion of another commodity.
Fetish	: Fetish is the belief that is associated with commodities on the ground that they possess extraordinary powers.
Feudalism	: It is also one of the historical stages of society where the means of production are mainly land and labour.
Feudal Mode of Production	: Refers to a production system where the lords appropriate surplus labour from the serfs in the form of rent.
Horde	: Small band of people related through kinship ties. They are found among nomadic hunters and food gatherers.

Ideal type	: A methodological tool developed by Weber through which the most commonly found features of a phenomenon are abstracted. Ideal type is an analytical construct with which the social scientist compares existing reality.
Infrastructure	: According to Marx, the materialistic structure or economic structure is the foundation or base of society. In other words, it is also called the infrastructure. The superstructure of society rests on it. Infrastructure includes mode of production and hence forces of production and relations of production.
Labour Power	: It refers to the capacity of labour to work. This includes physical strength, skills and technical expertise).
Legal-Rational Authority	: This involves obedience to formal rules established by regular public procedure.
Life-Chances	: The opportunities that an individual gets during the various stages of life are referred to as life-chances. Consider the case of a labourer's son. He avails certain kind of education and learns specific skills that prepare him for a particular kind of vocation. Of course, here we are not referring to many exceptions wherein education and skills that an individual avails are different from those of his/her parents. Weber maintained that life-chances was an important aspect of class. People belonging to a class share similar life-chances. They also have similar relation to the market which is referred to as market situation.
Market Situation	: The possibilities that exist of exchanging an object for money.
Masters	: The ruling class in slavery who exercise control over slaves.
Means of Production	: It includes all the elements necessary for production, e.g., land, raw material, factory, labour and capital, etc.
Mode of Production	: It refers to the general economic institution i.e., the particular manner in which people produce and distribute the means that sustain life. The forces of production and the relations of production together define the mode of production. Examples of modes of production are capitalistic mode of production, feudal mode of production, etc.
Money-economy	: Any economic transaction made in terms of money.
Negation of Negation	: When something that came into existence as negation of the old, is in turn replaced by the new. It is a qualitative change.

Negation	: A new stage which is a product of a qualitative change and it is a progressive change to replace the old.
Norm	: It is a specific guide to action. It defines what is appropriate and acceptable behaviour in specific situations.
Polysegmental	: More than one segment.
Power	: One's capacity to impose his or her will on others.
Profane	: The elements of a social system, which are not connected with religion or religious purposes. In other words, they are secular.
Proletariat	: These people are also known as 'Have-nots' and these are the people who do not own any means of production except their own labour power. Hence all the landless peasants or agricultural labourers in feudal societies and industrial workers in capitalist societies are the proletariat.
Protestant Ethic	: A doctrine of Christianity which provided much of the cultural content of capitalism like individualism, achievement motivation, hostility to inherited wealth and luxury, emphasis on work and profit, opposition to magic and superstition and commitment to rational organization.
Qualitative Change	: Appearance of new or disappearance of old is a qualitative change.
Quantitative Change	: All the changes, whereby different parts or aspects of an object become rearranged, increase or decrease while the object undergoing change retains its identity.
Relations of Production	: According to Marx, the forces of production shape the nature of the 'relations of production'. These are, in fact, the social relations found in production i.e., economic roles, e.g., labourer, landowner, capitalist, etc.
Revolution	: It is the sudden, total and radical change in society brought in by the matured conditions of class conflict.
Routinisation	: A process of transformation of the charismatic authority either into traditional or rational legal authority.
Sacred	: Those elements of a social system which relate to religion or are set apart for the worship of deity.
Sacred and profane	: The two polar opposites into which the world is divided, according to Durkheim. The 'sacred' refers to holy, pure, superior things; the 'profane' refers to ordinary, mundane ones.
Sanction	: Reward or punishment to enforce norm. Former is called positive sanction, the latter negative sanction.

Serfs	: Class of producers in the feudal mode of production whose surplus labour is appropriated through rent.
Slaves	: Class of producers in the ancient mode of production, who are directly controlled by the masters as their private 'property'.
Social Solidarity	: The condition within the group in which there is social cohesion and cooperation, and the collective action is directed towards the achievement of group goals and in which social organisation is shown by permanency. These conditions are changeable according to the social conditions. That is why Durkheim proposes two types of solidarity (mechanical and organic).
Socialisation	: The process by which individuals learn the culture of their society.
Solidarity	: It refers to the condition of overall unity, social cohesion and cooperation in society.
Status Group	: It refers to a group of people who share common status situation. Status situation of a person is refers to the evaluation that other people make of him/her and of his/her social position. Unlike class, people who belong to a particular status group are conscious of their common position. Often, status groups exhibit their distinctiveness by adopting a particular lifestyle and manner of interaction with others.
Sui generis	: That which generates itself; that which exists by itself; that which does not depend upon some other being for its origin or existence. Durkheim considered society as sui generis. It is always present and has no point of origin.
Superstructure	: According to Marx, all institutions other than economic institutions constitute superstructure of a society. All social, political and cultural institutions of societies excepting economic institutions constitute the superstructure of a society.
Totemism	: A religion in which an animal, plant or some object is held as sacred and from which the group claims descent.
Use Value	: Use value refers to the utility that a particular commodity fulfils. A commodity has use when useful labour is expended on it and it has social use value.
Workers	: Class of producers in the capitalist mode of production who have nothing except their labour power as their only means of livelihood. Their surplus labour is appropriated by the capitalists through profit.

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