



MAX WEBER'S THEORY OF RATIONALIZATION

(Some new perspectives on Max Weber's methodology and empirical sociology)

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SUMMARY

This dissertation seeks to provide a new consideration of Max Weber's methodology as characterized, among other elements, by 'objectivity', paradox and irony, in order to highlight some aspects of Max Weber's theory of rationalization which have remained not well-known until now. In the second part of this study I apply the concepts which are presented in the first one so as to show their centrality in Max Weber's theory of rationalization and particularly in The Protestant Ethic, which is made the object of a more detailed analysis.

PREFACE

This dissertation was the product of an insatisfaction with the bulk of the secondary literature on Max Weber. After having read Weber some of the articles and books on him were read and, for the greater part, found to miss aspects of Weber's work which appear to be essential. The aim of the study is not to radically change the usual interpretations of Weber. This would be pretentious and out of place. It seeks only to act as a provocation : for thinking, for discussing, for writing in support of it or against it. I hope it will contribute to that in some way or another.

I have to acknowledge the facilities provided by the Inter-Library Loan of the University of Sussex. I am also grateful to the staff of the Library in the London School of Economics for allowing me to do consultations on various things but mainly on the Archiv fur Sozialwissenschaft und Sozial politik.

Almost everything I know I have learnt from two persons : Joan Martinez Alier and Juan Carlos Maglia. As for sociology if I know something I owe it to Salvador Cardus and Joan Estruch. For some good discussions on many things I shall thank Enric Marin. To my supervisor, Gillian Rose, I am indebted for hundreds of ideas in seminars, lectures and tutorials. She made this year an intellectual feast.

≡ Filippo Fabrocini encouraged me very much in the process of writing. Martin Stokar von Neuforn helped me with his German and his friendship. If the English of this paper is not completely disastrous this is because of the contribution of Mike Porteous, whom I do not know how to thank. For orientation on the intricate theme of Max Weber's sociology I am grateful to Peter de Souza. Finally my particular thanks, for many, many things, are for Isabel Puig.

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'Above all, we learn from those whom we love'

GOETHE to Eckermann, 12 May 1825

INTRODUCTION

This thesis seeks to highlight some aspects of Max Weber's sociology which have remained hidden, or at least not well-known, until now. What makes this approach different from others is its focus on some of what Max Weber believed to be his main insights and discoveries, which have passed unnoticed only because they are mainly to be found in footnotes, or are repeated in different works which were translated into English over quite different periods, and without correspondence to the original chronological order of composition.

The present work will be divided into two parts. In the first one, I shall concentrate on Max Weber's methodology. I will discuss some of his well-known concepts such as 'ideal-types' and 'value-free sociology', in order to show the important role that irony and paradox play in his quest for 'objectivity' and in his understanding of sociology. The second part will be devoted to an exposition of Max Weber's theory of rationalization as

present in his writings on the sociology of religion mainly in The Protestant Ethic. In this second part, I shall try to show how Weber's substantive writings might be seen as the application of the concepts presented and explained in the first one.

Before entering the concrete subject-matter of this essay I shall present some of the methodological tools which constitute its foundation. Any study of intellectual history or of the history of social theory involves two fundamental operations: reading and writing. This is so obvious that sometimes there is the danger of forgetting it and of thinking that there is no need to reflect upon these procedures. However, it seems to me that the result of an investigation is fundamentally shaped by the rules which are - implicitly or explicitly - followed when reading and writing. Since we are committed to the Weberian principle of intellectual honesty, it appears that the best thing to do is to make explicit our own way of conceiving these two operations.

There are many ways of reading Max Weber. But there is only one way that I consider to be appropriate. It consists of a combination of what I will call 'intensive' reading and 'symptomatic' reading. By 'intensive' reading I mean the patient exercise of a 'total' reading, a reading that puts the stress not only on what appears to be the core of the argument of a particular author but on every sentence of the text under examination. This is a necessary pre-requisite of any research on Weber which seeks to be both faithful and original. The reason is a very simple one. When somebody approaches a particular author for the first time - and particularly if the author is what we call, for the sake of convenience a 'classical', author - it is very unlikely that the reader will do so without

any prejudice. One often will have some pre-conceptions afforded by teachers, commentators or secondary literature. In this case, when that person underlines a book in search of the 'gist' of a particular author it is often the case that what he/she is pursuing is not so much the central idea, as the confirmation of prejudices transmitted by others. How many 'readings' of Max Weber, are in fact, exercises of reconfirmation of prejudices, attempts to secure one's own position - which for that reason alone deserve to be named 'ideological' - instead of accepting the open challenge of an intellectual confrontation!

It is in the light of these considerations that the need for an 'intensive reading' is justified. The technique of underlining everything, of giving initially the same weight to every part of a piece of writing, affords us with the methodological device to prevent the usual distortions which result from the intrusion of preconceptions alien to the text itself. It does not suppress the problem but it certainly minimizes it. 'Intensive reading' submerges us within the author's problematic in an exercise of empathy which may appear to be uncritical at the beginning but which, by allowing us to penetrate into the many-sidedness and even contradictions of his arguments, as well as to distinguish between what he says and what he actually means, in fact prepares the ground for an appreciation which might be at the same time 'radical', 'serious' and 'objective'.¹

Although these are only some of the many pedagogical virtues attached to the 'intensive reading' method, it is important to realize that this is just a preparation for what has to follow, for what really constitutes the peculiarity of 'coming to know' an author. The next step will be that of what I named 'symptomatic reading'. 'Symptomatic reading' is only possible

and legitimate if one has first done the 'intensive reading'. By 'symptomatic reading' I mean the delicate operation of ascertaining the main lines of an author's thought. Speaking in musical terms, we shall look for the 'motif' - one or many - in the 'symphony' of his production. We might discover this motif because it often recurs. Repetition, then, will be the clue to identify what is really important - as is normally the case also in every sphere of life. Of course, it can be that the author does not write 'symphonically', but this is not the case with Max Weber. It is only at the stage of 'symptomatic reading' that we are allowed to draw such a qualitative distinction between what is fundamental and what is secondary in the material under analysis.

The fact that we have been speaking of 'intensive reading' and 'symptomatic reading' does not always imply that these are two operations completely separated in time. This is a conceptual distinction, and on the conceptual level each operation has to be viewed as independent and distinct from the other. But this does not mean that, in fact, they might not be simultaneously done, even if this is a difficult task. That the distinction suggests that we need to read at least twice the same text is basically gratifying to me since I think re-reading is the only serious way of reading.

So much for the reading techniques. Let us now say something about the problems of writing. To write is always a risky undertaking. At least if one does not want to become what Max Weber calls a 'dilettante' and write uncompromising and, because of that, unworthy things. One must also be aware of the fact that every writing involves exaggeration. In The Picture of Dorian Gray Oscar Wilde says: 'Intellect is in itself a mode of

exaggeration'. And Adorno and Horkheimer seem to add - in a sentence which is the cornerstone of his whole Dialectic of Enlightenment: 'But only exaggeration is true'. Indeed! What is not true at all is that any kind of exaggeration is true.

Consequently, we have to determine in which cases and which types of exaggeration are legitimate and necessary. When we write about something we do not write about something else; there is something which remains untreated or left behind. Our knowledge is of a fragmentary character: we can only explain something by leaving something unexplained, 'taken for granted'. That is what Wittgenstein tried to show in On Certainty, and also what is behind Max Weber's preoccupations with 'ideal-types'. Because of that there is an element of exaggeration in whatever one writes. What really matters in this case is whether the fragment which one has isolated is a 'significant' one. In a similar way to that of Weber, I will call a fragment 'significant' when it contains a high heuristic potential to illuminate the whole which we cannot directly grasp. To give an example, the economic interpretation of some particular events in history will be 'significant' if it helps us to gain a better understanding of those processes. This intended one-sidedness can only be applied ad hoc, for purely methodological purposes. As soon as it becomes a metaphysical assumption its virtues will become its vices.

What interests us here is what sort of exaggerations are allowed when writing on a particular author as Max Weber. It is not difficult to see that our reading techniques can be of some use to provide a satisfactory answer to this question. 'Symptomatic reading', by helping us to ascertain the 'motif' of an author's thought, affords the necessary methodological

ground for the selection of the 'significant' fragments which will constitute the focus of our attention. 'Intensive' or 'total' reading enables us to find out the aspects which were not considered by previous interpreters of this author's works, and at the same time provides the basis on which 'symptomatic reading' can rely. That will be the perspective adopted in the present study: I shall highlight those aspects of Max Weber's work which I think are at the same time unexplored and 'significant'.

After having said all that about the particular techniques of reading and writing which will be used here, let us conclude this - perhaps too long - introduction by examining another methodological question of interpretation. When one is confronted with an analysis of an author who is no longer alive, one must be careful to distinguish between different types of writing within his production. For instance in some cases we may be dealing with a work which was written, corrected and published during the life-time of the writer. In this case we have to assume it to be more or less the 'definitive' position of the author on this particular matter. On the contrary, we may be faced with a text which was unfinished, uncorrected and unpublished at the time of the author's death. Also to be taken into account is that the style, and even the content of a piece of writing will change considerably according to whether it was prepared for an article, a chapter of a book, a whole book, or as a contribution to an encyclopaedia.

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In the case of Max Weber all this applies to a remarkable degree. Within his writings there are works which were finished and published - or ready to be published - before his death. This is the case with Die Protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus (1904-5) and in

general with his Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie (1920-21), as well as with most of his methodological and political writings.² Then, there are those which were unfinished and unpublished, even if some fragments were already completed. The clearest example of that is Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (1922).³ Finally there are works which, in fact, were never written by Weber and which were reconstructed through the notebooks of his students, as Wirtschaftsgeschichte (1923).

Fundamental as it is to make these distinctions about what an author wrote, what he did not write is no less important. Here we have also to distinguish between what an author had never intended to write and those subjects which attracted his attention, even though he or she was unable to follow the interest through to publication. Max Weber's intellectual preoccupations, for example, will be conceived in a very different way according to the fact that we take or we do not take this into account. Besides the impressive amount of his written production, we also know that Max Weber planned to write other things. These plans were interrupted by his untimely death.

1. 'OBJECTIVITY', PARADOX AND IRONY IN MAX WEBER'S METHODOLOGY

If there is any central question which recurs in nearly all the methodological writings of Max Weber it is what I shall call the quest for 'objectivity'.¹ His very first methodological essay on Wilhelm Roscher's economics and historical method² - which is also Weber's first piece of writing after the nervous breakdown that affected him from 1898 to 1903 - is an impressive attack on Roscher's lack of 'objectivity'. And one of his most important essays on the methodology of the social sciences was published a year after, in 1904, with the title 'Die "Objektivität" Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis' (in English translation: "'Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy'). This latter article was a kind of declaration of principles of the new social science journal which Max Weber helped to create together with his friends Edgar Jaffe and Werner Sombart: the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik. The paper on 'objectivity' appeared in the first number of the Archiv, between two articles by Sombart and Ferdinand Tönnies.³ Finally, in one of his last methodological writings, published in Logos with the title 'Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" der Soziologischen und Ökonomischen Wissenschaften' (1917), ('The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics'), the question of 'objectivity' is again presented and discussed in relation to 'value-freedom'.

What Max Weber meant by 'objectivity' is not something easy to ascertain. The problem is increased in many translations of Weber by the fact that we sometimes find 'objectivity' mentioned without quotation marks. In fact, Weber used three different German words which may have the same translation in English: "Objektivität", Sachlichkeit and Unbefangenheit.

He always stressed the quotation marks in "Objektivität" and not in Sachlichkeit - which can also have the meaning of 'realism' - or in Unbefangenheit - which can be translated into English as 'impartiality' or 'lack of prejudices'. However, some translators have rendered all these words as "objectivity" - in the case of "Objektivität" - or objectivity without quotation marks - in the other two cases. In this way, they have considerably increased the confusion.

For all this, if there is any attitude which combines at the same time these three concepts, it must be the one at the end of Weber's essay on 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality"':

'We shall only state that if the professional thinker has an immediate obligation at all, it is to keep a cool head in the face of the ideals prevailing at the time, even those which are associated with the throne, and if necessary, "to swim against the stream"'

Such a conception of the task of the intellectual resembles very much those of Georg Simmel (in his well-known digression on the stranger in Soziologie (1908)), and of Thorstein Veblen (who spoke of Unbefangenheit as a need for the intellectual in his article on 'The Intellectual Prominence of Jews in Modern Europe' (1919)). It suggests that the quest for 'objectivity' is related to the problem of seeking to construct a distance between the author and the object of cognition. Though this is not all: it can also mean the intention to distance the author from his own written production somehow. And here is when irony comes to the fore.

Georg Lukacs, in a review of Thomas Mann's Royal Highness published in 1909, stated that '... objectivity can perhaps never exist without a certain irony'.⁵ As a matter of fact, Thomas Mann made a wide use of irony, as well

as of some technical literary devices, to gain such objectivity. Nevertheless he was not the first to make use of irony or to write on it. The conceptualization of irony as a cornerstone of literature goes back to the Romantic aesthetic theorists and, above all, to Friedrich Schlegel. In his Aphorisms from the Lyceum (1797) Schlegel put in relation socratic irony and ambivalence in the following way:

'Socratic irony is the only entirely involuntary and nevertheless completely conscious dissimulation. It is equally impossible to attain it artificially or to betray it. For him who does not possess it, it will remain an enigma even after the frankest arousal. It will deceive only those who consider it an illusion, who either enjoy its delightful archness of mocking at everybody or who become angry when they suspect that they too are meant. In it, everything must be just and yet seriousness, artless openness, and yet deep dissimulation. It originates in the union of a sense of an art of living and a scientific intellect, in the meeting of accomplished natural philosophy and accomplished philosophy of art. It contains and incites a feeling of the insoluble conflict of the absolute and the relative, of the impossibility and necessity of total communication. It is the freest of all liberties, for it enables us to rise above our own self; and still the most legitimate, for it is absolutely necessary. It is a good sign if the harmonious dullards fail to understand this constant self-parody, if over and over again they believe and disbelieve until they become giddy and consider jest to be seriousness, and seriousness to be jest'.

Although Max Weber was not particularly attracted by romantic theories of irony⁷ he was fully conscious of the idea behind Lukacs' observation. In this sense it is possible to say that what Max Weber contributed to sociology was very similar to what Thomas Mann did for literature. Both of them were concerned with the problem of how to gain 'objectivity', and both of them considered irony to be the key to its solution. That Weber never made his use of irony explicit, by no means implies that he never used it. I shall rather say the opposite: this 'dissimulation' even makes him more 'ironic'.

The attempts to solve the problem of 'objectivity' through irony must lead to different solutions in the case of the sociologist. He or she cannot use the same devices and techniques which are used by the artist, if the intention is to remain a scientist. Consequently, Max Weber had to develop his own methodological tools. Let us have a brief look on some of them.

First of all, there are Max Weber's techniques of writing. He often employed some particular resorts as inverted commas and word-stressing in order to qualify what he was saying. For example, as mentioned before, Weber always wrote "objectivity" and not simply objectivity. This is far from being the only case. In fact, as anyone who has carefully read Weber knows, this was a constant practice of his. Since he maintained such a custom over his whole life with an astonishing consistency and in all types of writing, I shall assume that this is not an irrelevant trait of his sociological work, but rather a central one. Max Weber's aim behind the practice was to distance himself from the conventional meaning of some words, either because he disliked them, or because he used them in a different way, with a different purpose and or with a different meaning. Therefore, the interpretations of Weber which fail to ascertain the relevance of something as apparently unimportant as his use of inverted commas, are likely to miss a key aspect of Weber's work.⁸

Whoever thinks that this is an exaggeration of mine must be addressed to the writings of Max Weber. In this case he has not to read them but to look at them. I shall explain what I mean by that. In the introduction I spoke of a technique of reading which I have named 'intensive reading', i.e. a very 'close' reading of a text. However, what is now required is exactly the opposite. We can only realize the importance of Weber's use of inverted

commas if we look at his books from far. As Chesferton said somewhere, we often do not realize something because we are too close to it. Thus, only by gaining perspective we can be aware of it. That is precisely the case here: in this sense when I speak of a view from far I mean it literally, physically. Instead of placing the book at a normal distance of more or less twenty centimetres it will now be better to place it at a distance of half a metre. By doing that, it will be possible to grasp the frequency and the importance of Max Weber's use of inverted commas. It will also be possible to see the total consistency of this exercise: words which appear between quotation marks are always used in this way. That cannot be trivial.

A glance to the writings collected in the book on The Methodology of the Social Sciences will confirm all that. The same might be said of other writings of Max Weber, as for example The Protestant Ethic. Though in this latter case we have to be careful to distinguish between Max Weber's original text in German and some translations. If we rely upon the German edition or, for example, on the Catalan version by Joan Estruch, there will be no problem. But if we only make use of the English translation all our efforts will be hopeless. Professor Parsons decided simply to throw away all the inverted commas that were present in Weber's text. I do not know why he did so.⁹

Even in the titles of Max Weber's works the inverted commas are outstandingly present: Die 'Objektivität' Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis, Roschers 'historische methode', R. Stammlers 'Überwindung' der materialistischen Geschichtsauffassung, Die Protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus, 'Kirchen' und

'Sekten', 'Geist' des Kapitalismus ... As we can see, three concepts of Weber which have been heavily criticized in the secondary literature on him, were in fact used by him in a far more cautious manner than his interpreters would allow us to suppose: 'Geist', 'Wertfreiheit', and 'Objektivität' appeared always between inverted commas. That is to say, Weber was the first one to distance himself from those expressions and to qualify the use that he made of them.

Now as far as word-stressing is concerned, Weber used it also to qualify his own arguments. Underlined words have sometimes the effect of highlighting the particular point of view which Max Weber had when looking at a particular problem. In this case, they meant something as 'x works like this provided that we keep in mind that we only consider x from a particular standpoint'. Apart from that we can also distinguish two other main uses of word-stressing by Weber: (1) when he tries to compare or contrast two different things, in which case he underlines both words; (2) when he wants to emphasize what constitutes the central steps of his analysis, as a sort of reminder for the reader.

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So far, we have been dealing with what I named Max Weber's techniques of writing. However, in his attempts to solve the problem of 'objectivity' through irony, i.e. through distancing himself from his own written production, Max Weber did not only use some technical devices as inverted commas and underlined words, but also a number of tools of a more methodological or conceptual level. Among them it will be useful to pay attention here to: (1) the concept of ideal-type, (2) what I name 'pluricausalist mode of explanation', (3) what I name 'methodological particularism' in opposition to the more common - and false, because incomplete translations of 'methodological individualism'.

The concept of ideal-type has been considered as one of the most important notions to be formulated and used by Weber. So much so that it has also been employed by a large number of other sociologists. Since, at the same time, it is one of the clearest notions in Max Weber's methodology (i.e. one of those on which there is more agreement), I shall not devote too much space to its treatment. In fact, I shall only indicate that the concept of ideal-type plays a central role in what we have been calling Max Weber's 'irony'; that is to say, in his particular way of solving the problem of 'objectivity' by, so to speak, not being fully involved even in his own writings. As said before, this is an attitude very similar to that pointed out by Simmel in his outstanding essay on the 'stranger':

'Because he is not bound by roots to the particular constituents and partisan dispositions of the group - he confronts all of these with a distinctly "objective" attitude, an attitude that does not signify mere detachment and non-participation, but is a distinct structure composed of remoteness and nearness, indifference and involvement'.¹⁰

Through his use of ideal-types Max Weber was able to reply to some of his critics that what was to be found in his own works was not a complete and, in this sense, 'true' explanation of a particular development in history or society, but something completely different. By constructing his research programme in an ideal-typical manner he selected some phenomena which appeared to him as specially significant - as, for example, the Calvinist doctrine of predestination and the early capitalist 'spirit' - and, with an intended one-sidedness, he 'artificially' stressed some correlations between them, in order to assess a posteriori the heuristic potential of this 'explanation'. When some critics confused this with a complete interpretative explanation of how de facto reality was, Max Weber very ironically replied that what he said in his text was not exactly what he meant.¹¹

The nature of those 'correlations' between different phenomena shall bring us to the next point in this discussion. The term which Weber used more often to refer to them was Wahlverwandschaften, or, in English, 'elective affinities'.¹² The ambiguity of this concept, which Max Weber derived from Goethe's well-known novel, was again intended. Max Weber sought to transcend idealist and materialist metaphysics and to use alternatively 'idealism' or 'materialism' only methodologically. And when he adopted, for just the sake of methodology, one of them, he immediately added something like 'it will also be very interesting to look at the same problem the other way round'. That is what I call a 'pluricausalist mode of explanation' in that it conceives reality as an interconnected complex and attacks any attempt to explain it by isolating a sort of independent variable which, 'in the last analysis', might be considered as the cause of everything. One of the clearest examples of Weber's advocacy of a 'pluricausalist mode of explanation' is to be found in his article on "objectivity" (1904) where he says:

'The indirect influence of social relations, institutions and groups governed by "material interests" extends (often unconsciously) into all spheres of culture without exception, even into the finest nuances of aesthetic and religious feeling. The events of everyday life no less than the "historical" events of the higher reaches of political life, collective and mass phenomena as well as the "individuated" conduct of statesmen and individual literary and artistic achievements are influenced by it. They are "economically conditioned". On the other hand, all the activities and situations constituting an historically given culture affect the formation of the material wants, the mode of their satisfaction, the integration of interest-groups and the types of power which they exercise. They thereby affect the course of "economic development" and are accordingly "economically relevant"'.¹³

Finally, and with close links to the 'pluricausalist mode of explanation', there is a third feature of Max Weber's methodology which is worth looking at in this respect. That is what I call 'methodological

particularism'. I use this concept to refer to Max Weber's tendency to accentuate the peculiarity and uniqueness of every historical and social phenomenon. Here there has also been a great deal of confusion because of the particular word which Weber used to refer to this individuality. Many interpreters have tended to accuse or to defend him as being a 'methodological individualist'. They were normally at great pains to try to prove the accusation, since many excerpts from Max Weber's works clearly show that, to the contrary, he was not a systematic follower of 'methodological individualis'.¹⁴ In fact, it is true that Max Weber was rather ambiguous on this point. As a good practitioner of irony he even seemed to enjoy this ambiguity:

'The goal of ideal-typical concept-construction is always to make clearly explicit not the class or average character, but rather the unique individual character of cultural phenomena'.¹⁵

The way Edward Shib translates this passage allows both interpretations of Weber as 'methodological individualist' and Weber as 'methodological particularist'. However the German original is a little clear, and helps to support our consideration of Weber as mainly a 'methodological particularist': the German words which correspond to 'class or average character' and 'unique individual character' are respectively 'Gattungsmässige' - which in English might be translated as 'quasi-generic' - and 'Eigenart' - which translated into English means 'peculiarity'. If we substitute, the previous quotation remains clearer:

'The goal of ideal-typical concept-construction is always to make clearly explicit not the generic character but rather the peculiarity of cultural phenomena'. (Words underlined are mine)

In other parts of his work Max Weber unmistakably spoke of 'individual' and 'individuality' - though again in German the adjective 'Einzeln' which he sometimes used may mean at the same time 'individual', 'particular' or 'single'. Nevertheless, as Bryan S. Turner says 'What Weber claims to be doing ... is not necessarily what Weber in fact does'¹⁶, i.e. that what is important to ascertain whether Max Weber is rather a 'methodological individualist' or a 'methodological particularist', is the approach which he follows in his substantive writings. As I will try to show in the next chapter, 'what Weber in fact does' might be better described with the label 'methodological particularism' - in our sense of the concept - than by 'methodological individualism'.

At this stage, it will be appropriate to bring to an end to our discussion of Max Weber's 'irony' and to return for a while to the notion of 'objectivity' in order to examine it more carefully. The reason why Weber wrote 'objectivity', instead of simply objectivity, was because he thought that a completely objective interpretation was impossible. Value-judgements will always be present in whatever writing. To be precise, even the selection of a particular theme which appears significant to us presupposes what Weber calls a 'value-orientation' (Wertbeziehung). As he says:

'... we arrive at the decisive feature of the method of the cultural sciences. We have designated as "cultural sciences" those disciplines which analyze the phenomena of life in terms of their cultural significance. The significance of a configuration of cultural phenomena and the basis of this significance cannot however be derived and rendered intelligible by a system of analytical laws (Gesetzesbegriffen), however perfect it may be, since the significance of cultural events presupposes a value-orientation towards these events. The concept of culture is a value-concept. Empirical reality becomes "culture" to us because and insofar as we relate it to value ideas. It includes those segments and only those segments of reality which have become significant to us because of this value-relevance. Only a small portion of existing concrete reality is coloured by our

value-conditioned interest and it alone is significant to us. It is significant because it reveals relationships which are important to us due to their connection with our values'.¹⁷

Therefore, since it is impossible to totally avoid making value-judgements, there are at least two rules which social scientists have to follow if they want to be 'objective'. The first one is

'to keep the readers and themselves sharply aware at every moment of the standards by which they judge reality and from which the value-judgement is derived'.¹⁸

The second one is

'that in such cases it should be constantly made clear to the readers (and - again we say it - above all to one's self!) exactly at which point the scientific investigator becomes silent and the evaluating and acting person begins to speak'.¹⁹

Although, as we have seen, value-judgements cannot be totally eliminated, the social scientist, according to Weber, must fight to reduce them to the minimum. That is the sense of the Weberian notion of 'Wertfreiheit' - again within inverted commas. In fact, Max Weber's conceptualization of the relation between science and values turned some previous treatments of the problem upside down. For the scientific view, which had been hegemonic from the Renaissance through the Enlightenment down to the nineteenth century, the scientific act of knowledge was characterized by its initial objective approach. In this sense, what distinguished episteme from doxa was the way of approaching the problem which in the case of science was 'dispassionate', 'unprejudiced' and 'exact'. However, after having examined something objectively, science should be in a position to judge what has to be done and how. Science was envisaged as a 'guide to

action' and in this sense afforded the possibility of a transition from the realm of 'what is' to the realm of 'what ought to be'. Consequently, for the scientific view, science begins 'objectively' and ends making value-judgements. And, in the most consequent and exaggerated versions, these latter evaluations belong still within the field of science. The 'total' systems of Comte or Spencer are good examples of this 'scientism'²⁰ which in some degree influenced also the origins of Marxism. Instead, Max Weber's position on this subject was completely the opposite. According to him, science begins with a value-judgement - remember: 'the concept of culture is a value-concept'. The same might be said of science - which constitutes the 'value-orientation' for the selection of the 'significant' fragments that will be examined. And it ends before passing any judgement about how things should be. All these final evaluations are not part of science for Weber. Following Kant's distinction he made a separation between the spheres of Sein and Sollen, and sustained the view that science can do nothing to overcome this dychotomy.

It was in this sense and in no other that Max Weber spoke of an 'empirical science', or, more precisely, of an 'empirical science of concrete reality' (Wirklichkeitswissenschaft).²¹ In this case, Weber wrote empirical without inverted commas and this fact has led to some misinterpretations of what he understood by an empirical science. In his Introduction (1920) to the Gerammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie, Max Weber described his studies on the economic ethics of world religions as 'strictly empirical'. One has only to read a few pages of those studies in order to realize that Weber's empirical science has nothing to do with vulgar empiricism. Nevertheless, it seems that Weber's characterization of

his work as empirical has raised problems for some commentators. Talcott Parsons, for instance, simply suppressed this reference in his English translation.²²

Max Weber drew a distinction between empirical sciences and dogmatic sciences.²³ Empirical sciences - history, sociology, ... are those interested in knowing 'what it is' and which do not consider the problem of 'what it ought to be'. Dogmatic sciences - normative ethics, aesthetics, logic - are those which are also interested in the sphere of Sollen and which think they can approach these problems scientifically. In fact, for Weber, empirical science and 'value-free' science are practically synonymous. So, for example, in the case of the history of music, says Weber,

'the empirical history of music can and must analyze [the] features of its development without undertaking, on its own part, an aesthetic evaluation of the worth of musical art'.²⁴

The same will apply for an empirical history or sociology of art. In this field Max Weber quoted as a good example of an empirical approach the well-known book of Heinrich Wölfflin Klassische Kunst.²⁵

What is the task of an empirical science? According to Weber

'all serious reflection about the ultimate elements of meaningful human conduct is oriented primarily in terms of the categories "end" and "means". We desire something concretely either "for its own sake" or as a means of achieving something else which is more highly desired. The question of the appropriateness of the means for achieving a given end is undoubtedly accessible to scientific analysis'.²⁶

An empirical science, in Max Weber's sense, should be able to judge the adequacy of some particular means for the achievement of a proposed end. When it has done so, science has finished its job, and the final act of choice, as Weber says, is left to the responsibility of the person involved.²⁷

'Strictly and exclusively empirical analysis can provide a solution only where it is a question of a means adequate to the realization of an absolutely unambiguously given end'.²⁸

I hope it is now clear what Weber meant by an empirical science. As it is obvious only an empirical science can be 'value-free' or 'objective'. There is no such thing as a 'value-free' normative ethics but it should be possible to imagine a 'value-free' sociology of the social distribution of ethical values. This 'value-freedom', this 'objectivity' is precisely what constitutes sociology as a science. It is not an immediate, absolute and easy objectivity but a constructed, relative, fragile and difficult 'objectivity' which requires the constant effort of the sociologist in trying to be as 'objective' as possible.

That is a painful process. 'Qui accroit sa science, accroit sa douleur'. Weber would have agreed with such a sentence. In fact he himself wrote:

'Nowhere are the interests of science more poorly served in the long run than in those situations where one refuses to see uncomfortable facts and the realities of life in all their starkness'.²⁹

And thirteen years later he still added: 'The fruit of the tree of knowledge ... is distasteful to the complacent but ... is, nonetheless, inescapable'.³⁰

It is also important to see that this 'objectivity' has in fact nothing to do with any kind of 'neutral' or 'middle-of-the-road' position whatsoever:

'Scientifically the "middle course" is not truer even by a hair's breadth, than the most extreme party ideals of the right or the left'.³¹

It is instead rather the opposite: a subversive predisposition might sometimes be of great use in order to make a science more 'objective' through gaining new perspectives to get knowledge from a particular reality. Thus, those who plan to act against a rule will probably know it better than those who simply accept it and who have perhaps forgotten even its original meaning.³² Max Weber illustrates this in his beautiful example of the anarchist and law, which all those who label Weber as a conservative should consider:

'One of our foremost jurists once explained, in discussing his opposition to the exclusion of socialists from university posts, that he too would not be willing to accept an "anarchist" as a teacher of law since anarchists deny the validity of law in general - and he regarded his argument as conclusive. My own opinion is exactly the opposite. An anarchist can surely be a good legal scholar. And if he is such, then indeed the Archimedean point of his convictions, which is outside the conventions and presuppositions which are so self-evident to us, can equip him to perceive problems in the fundamental postulates of legal theory which escape those who take them for granted. Fundamental doubt is the father of knowledge.'³³

Having briefly looked at 'objectivity' and 'irony' in Weber's work, we turn to a third concept, central to Max Weber's sociology: paradox. Here the idea of paradox is not exactly the same as in formal logic, i.e. a

statement which is self-contradictory with its own presuppositions and insoluble but nevertheless 'true'. There are instead two senses in which paradox is present in Max Weber's works: (1) what I shall call the Kierkegaardian sense of paradox; and (2) what I name the Chestertonian type of paradox, or, to remain within sociology, the Mertonian one.

Søren Kierkegaard often distinguished between paradox and Absolute Paradox. The Absolute Paradox referred to what Kierkegaard thought of as the central feature of modern Christianity: the fact that God exists and that Reason cannot understand this fact.³⁴ This aspect of Kierkegaard will not concern us here. Together with this more specialized meaning of paradox, Kierkegaard also used the word to mean something more general, related to the way of thinking of some particular persons. The two following quotations from different texts are illustrative:

'The paradox is the source of a thinker's passion, and the thinker without a paradox is like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity'.³⁵

What was idiosyncratic about Kierkegaard's conception of paradox was that paradox cannot be transcended, cannot be solved. A similar idea appears sometimes in the writings of Weber, when he refers to 'fate', as, for example, in his view of social conflict, and consequently coercion, as unavoidably present in any type of society.³⁶ Or in his depiction of bureaucracy as an every-increasing power which may escape the human control and create the 'iron cage'. According to Max Weber, rationalization is also a 'fateful' process³⁷ and the paradoxes which arise from it are paradoxes in Kierkegaard's sense of the word - that is to say, paradoxes which recur again and again, without a finale.

G. K. Chesterton, whom Ernst Bloch described as one of the most intelligent human beings that had ever existed,³⁸ made of paradox a Weltanschauung. What he understood by paradox is something very close to its etimological meaning: ἡ ἀπαροδοξία, 'contrary to received opinion or expectation'. From the different definitions proposed in the Oxford English Dictionary this is the more similar to Chesterton's conception of paradox:

'A statement or a proposition which on the face of it seems self-contradictory, absurd, or at variance with common-sense, though, on investigation or when explained it may prove to be well-founded (or, according to some, though it is essentially true)'.

Max Weber made a wide use of paradox in this sense through all his writings, as a large number of examples could testify. One minor illustration could be where Weber, after having said that charismatic authority has its grounds in an 'irrational' type of legitimation, adds, with paradoxical wit:

'The charismatic glorification of "Reason", which found a characteristic expression in its apotheosis by Robespierre, is the last form that charisma has adopted in its historical course'.³⁹

But among the many uses of paradox by Chesterton there is one, above all, which is interesting for us in connection with sociology in general and with Max Weber in particular. That is the paradox of the unintended consequences of social action - paradox as 'contrary to expectation'. The analysis of the unintended consequences of social action presupposes the possibility of a remarkable difference between the actor's intentions, which move him or her to act in a particular direction, and the results of action, which can be the opposite of those intended by the actor. The dissimilarity between intentions and results constitutes the paradoxical aspect of social life. This is not evident at first sight and implies that one must look

behind the appearances of social facts. Consequently this paradox of the unintended constitutes the heart of the matter of what has been called the sociological perspective. In this sense, sociology might be characterized as the study of paradox, in that a sociology without paradox, to paraphrase Kierkegaard, would be 'like a lover without feeling: a paltry mediocrity'.⁴⁰

Though Weber was one of the great practitioners of paradoxical analysis in sociology - together with Veblen, Simmel and, at times, Durkheim and Marx - he never wrote on it in his methodological writings. Maybe it was so important for him that he never felt the necessity to speak of it. The most explicit treatment of the role of the paradox of the unintended in sociology we owe it to Robert K. Merton. In his famous article on 'Manifest and Latent Functions' Merton said 'that the distinctive intellectual contributions of the sociologists are found primarily in the study of the unintended consequences (among which are latent social functions) of social practices', and spoke of paradox as the 'discrepancy between the apparent, merely manifest, function and the actual, which also includes latent functions'.⁴¹ Merton used Veblen as an example of a sociologist who dealt with the paradox of the unintended consequences of social action, but he could also say the same of Max Weber - as we will try to show. On the other hand, Weber was the first to refer to this phenomenon as 'the paradox of unintended consequences' (The Religion of China, p.238).

Merton pointed out the close links that exist between paradox and irony in the study of the unintended consequences of social action. One of the meanings of 'irony' in the Oxford English Dictionary suggests this relation with 'paradox as contrary to expectation':

'A condition of affairs or events of a character opposite to what was, or might naturally be, expected; a contradictory outcome of events as if in mockery of the promise and fitness of things'.

Max Weber was very conscious of the ironical component in the study of the paradox of the unintended consequences of social action. His clearest statement in this direction is not to be found in any of his famous books and articles on sociology but in the address delivered at Jellinek's daughter's wedding soon after his father's death in 1911. Speaking of his old friend Georg Jellinek, who was also a professor at Heidelberg, Max Weber said:

'Humour is not simply wit. Cervantes is not a mocker - and the intellectual quality of our friend that I am talking about was akin to Cervantes's sense for the grotesque as the ineluctable destiny of pure intentions when an attempt is made to realize them in the face of the limitations prevailing in the existent world. But this "humour" in its finest and highest manifestations leads to one of the last possible attitudes of a man toward life in general. After all, our actions and sufferings are woven out of meaningful and meaningless elements and shaped into "fate". And by seizing this ultimate core of life and placing it before us, genuine humour in its finest sense presents us with hearty, healthy, good, liberating laughter, which is far removed from any mockery. This is precisely what our friend was able to give us in his good hours'.⁴²

1

After making this distinction between the Kierkegaardian and the Chestertonian-Mertonian types of paradox, let us now briefly discuss the role of paradox in Max Weber's methodology. As was said before, Max Weber did not use paradox as a concept in his methodological writings. But this does not imply that it was absent from them. As a matter of fact, paradox was at the very root of Weber's conception of science, and by recognizing it we have a new perspective on the whole of Max Weber's methodology. To start with, Max Weber paradoxically asserts that though empirical science must be 'value-free' and rational, and, consequently, the opposite of superstition or

any other kind of irrational belief, science in fact is grounded on a value-judgement, and it appears only as 'true' to those who believe in it, while for those who do not believe in it, science seems a wholly irrational undertaking.⁴³ It is possible to derive from that view that Weber, who insisted on the role played by science in the on-going process of the 'disenchantment of the world', was the one who demolished the nineteenth century myth of Science and in this way acted as the Entzauberer of the new religion of the modern era.⁴⁴

Paradox is also central in what Weber saw as the task of science. As he says: 'The specific function of science ... is ... to ask questions about these things which convention makes self-evident'.⁴⁵ For science holds that 'appearances are deceitful ...'⁴⁶ and tries to differentiate between those appearances and the reality behind. Only a sociology with paradox, with this will to ask questions about what is normally taken for granted, can have the aim of being 'objective' in Max Weber's authentic meaning of the word. Though, paradoxically and ironically enough, 'partiality' and 'one-sidedness' are the prerequisites of this 'objectivity', because just a part of the whole reality might be explained and it is only possible to do that from a particular, limited standpoint.

Finally, paradox is also present in Max Weber's substantive work. It is here that the analysis of the unintended consequences of social action plays a central role. In the second part of this dissertation we occupy ourselves with an examination of Max Weber's theory of rationalization, particularly in The Protestant Ethic, paying attention, among other things, to what we shall call the paradoxes of rationalization.

2. MAX WEBER'S THEORY OF RATIONALIZATION. 'OBJECTIVITY', PARADOX AND IRONY IN MAX WEBER'S EMPIRICAL WRITINGS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO 'THE PROTESTANT ETHIC'

So far we have been speaking of 'objectivity', paradox and irony in Max Weber's methodology. Now it will be interesting to study how Weber put these concepts to work in his applied or, as he called them, empirical studies. The range of Weber's empirical studies is impressively wide. For this reason we should limit our consideration to some special fragments which appear 'significant' to us. In this sense, Max Weber's theory of rationalization is still too broad a theme, since in a way the whole of Weber's production after 1904 might be seen as being part of it. It will be appropriate, then, to select some parts of Max Weber's theory of rationalization.

I shall focus on Weber's writings on the sociology of religion and, particularly, in The Protestant Ethic. The reason for my choice is that Weber's writings on religion were nearly all written, corrected and published during Weber's life-time. The Protestant Ethic itself was the subject of continuous work by Weber who was still correcting it in 1920 for publication in the edition of his Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie. The Protestant Ethic is the first of Weber's studies in the sociology of religion. All the other works that followed originated from the questions raised in this study. It is also the clearest application of Weber's methodology and it shows the continuity and consistency of Max Weber's view throughout his whole life. As such, it deserves to be considered the Hauptwerk of Weber. Another important reason to choose The Protestant Ethic

is because, in spite of being a very famous book - or maybe because of that - it has probably suffered from more misinterpretations than any other work by Weber.

However, before entering in the concrete analysis of The Protestant Ethic in the context of Weber's theory of rationalization, it will be useful to consider first the general Weberian concept of rationalization. Without properly grasping what Max Weber means by that there is no way of understanding The Protestant Ethic or any other of his writings.

2.1 Max Weber's Theory of Rationalization

As happens with many other subjects and many other authors, Max Weber's analysis of rationalization resulted from, and was shaped by, an intellectual debate between some of the academics who were his contemporaries. This fact is normally not considered in most treatments of Weber¹ but it is nevertheless very important. Some of the people who contributed most to these debates were Max Weber's personal friends, as for example Georg Simmel, Werner Sombart and Ernst Troeltsch. Others were known to him, as for example Ferdinand Tönnies, the founding father of German sociology. Still others were from abroad, as for example the British John Atkinson Hobson or, above all, the Norwegian-American Thorstein Veblen. Nearly all of these authors knew and sometimes quoted the works of each other.²

The sociological analyses of rationality and rationalization at the time of Max Weber started with the work of Ferdinand Tönnies. Tönnies published a book in 1887 which was the first sociological work in Germany and the

discussion of which originated the movement toward sociology in German universities: the book was called Community and Association, and presented the polarity between Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft. In this book and, mainly, in a subsequent article written in 1894 with the title 'Historismus und Rationalismus' and published in the Archiv für Systematische Philosophie, Tönnies contrasted traditional, organic and communal organization on one hand with modern, mechanical and societal (Gesellschaft-like) structures on the other hand. He identified the last one with rationalization: 'The societal (Gesellschaft-like) process is essentially one of rationalization, and shares fundamental characteristics with science'.³ Rationalization in this sense is intimately connected with capitalism:

'... the businessman represents rational man in general - understood as the human being whose total effort serves as the means to one clearly defined end, namely, his personal advantage, and who consequently degrades everything - objects and men alike - to the level of means'.⁴

Georg Simmel followed Tönnies in some points and broadened the scope of rationalization as a key feature of modern society. In his Philosophy of Money (1900) Simmel undertook in fact a sociological analysis of capitalist civilization being fully conscious of the ambivalent nature of modern forms of rationality. He conceived of capitalism basically as a money-economy on the basis of which emerged a new Kultur which started a transvaluation of all values. Money was conceived by Simmel as the absolute means - using an older expression by Tönnies⁵ - and money economy subsequently implied what Simmel called 'the broadening of teleological series'.⁶ He meant by that the multiplication of the steps which were necessary in order to achieve a given end. For Simmel, human emotions are mainly connected with the pursuit and achievement of ends, meanwhile means are perceived as more 'neutral'.

Therefore, 'the broadening of teleological orders', by transforming life in a succession of means with fewer and fewer ends to be achieved, implies a human and social situation characterized by the lack of emotion and the emergence of intellectualistic and rationalistic patterns of behaviour and thought as the dominant ones. In the final chapter of Simmel's Philosophy of Money - which was much appreciated by Weber - it is possible to find a whole consideration of capitalism as a culture characterized by the predominance of matter-of-factness, intellectualism, formalism and rationality, and very far from the emotional content of previous social systems in history.

The connection between increasing rationalization and capitalism was also one of the main subjects in werner Sombart's influential Der moderne Kapitalismus (1902). Sombart was the first to use the expression 'genesis of the capitalist spirit' and to equate this spirit with economic rationalism. This notion of 'spirit', which Sombart borrowed from the German Historical School, was in turn borrowed by Weber who used it in a different sense and with a different purpose.⁴ Sombart was also the first to point out the importance of book keeping and other rationalized techniques for the origins of capitalism, a subject which afterwards attracted the attention of Weber.

Tönnies, Simmel and Sombart were concerned with the relations between capitalism and rationalization. The first one to introduce religion in the discussion was Ernst Troeltsch in a number of articles which were published in journals as, for example, the Christlichen Welt during the last decade of the XIXth century and the first one of the XXth. Troeltsch focused on the relations between protestantism, capitalism and rationalism and he summed up

all that in his book Protestantism and Progress (1906), which, although published after Weber's studies on the protestant ethic, was in fact elaborated more or less at the same time as Weber's work. The additional fact that Weber and Troeltsch were living in the same house at the time, makes Troeltsch's contributions very important for their repercussions upon Weber's writings.

Finally, another outstanding author who took part in that debate was Thorstein Veblen. The relations between Veblen and Weber are far less known than those of Simmel, Sombart, Tönnies and Troeltsch, and probably nobody would have imagined him as an important source on the rationalization problem. Nevertheless, Veblen's analysis of modern forms of rationality started in his first book, The Theory of Leisure Class (1899), and continued onwards. The clearest analysis of the problem in Veblen's writings is to be found in his chapter on the social and cultural implications of modern technology in his 1904 book The Theory of Business Enterprise - which Weber personally bought in the United States during his visit there and which he always quoted with admiration and approval. However, this was a subject which preoccupied Veblen through his whole intellectual life, and he was able to produce a new treatment of it in his 1906 article on 'The Place of Science in Modern Civilization', as well as in some chapters of his fundamental work, The Instinct of Workmanship (1914). Veblen was a dispassionate observer of the 'formal rationality' of modern capitalism, especially of the standardization of production and consumption. His judgement of the capitalist civilization as 'matter-of-fact', 'colourless' and 'non-emotional' is very close to that of Simmel. In addition his central ambivalence toward western rationalization - in a sense reminiscent of Marx's ambivalent characterization of capitalism as the most liberating

and the most enslaving form of production and social organization, in Das Kapital - was shared by Simmel, Sombart, Tönnies, Troeltsch and, above all, Max Weber.

This radically ambivalent consideration of the process of rationalization is what identifies and differentiates all these authors, and constitutes them as what Raymond Williams names a 'cultural formation'.⁸ Within this group, Max Weber emerges as the one who synthesised and deepened the treatment of rationalization in a more systematic manner. His studies on the process of rationalization and probably those in which ambivalence attains its highest peak because of his use of 'objectivity'.⁹ In that sense, they are paradigmatic of an important shift in the consideration of rationality in European thought.

The philosophy of Enlightenment enthroned Reasons - with a capital letter - as its central category. Reason was a value positively conceived; in fact it was the supreme value, the Zeitgeist of the epoch. The philosophies thought that it was the predominance of Reason that constituted the main difference between their times and all previous stages in human history. They were conscious of a qualitative historical change and they attributed it to Reason. This was a conception of Reason which in Hegelian-Marxist terms could be characterized as an universally abstract category, i.e. a disembodied notion which, as a deus ex machina, explained and dominated everything. It is not strange, then, that this idea of Reason, which included so many value-judgements, gave rise to an ideological system, namely rationalism; and that Reason in this way became a source of legitimation for the new order.

When sociology started to configurate itself as an autonomous area of study this was still the dominant conception of Reason. The pioneers of sociology as Saint-Simon, Condorcet or Comte shared in some fundamental respects the ideology of Enlightenment. The same was true of Herbert Spencer. Karl Marx was the first to think of the dark side of reason but, was still, in his global Weltanschauung, a child of the Enlightenment. Consequently, the founding fathers of sociology adopted towards Reason a positive attribute and they embraced its promises with optimistic faith.

Nietzsche's philosophical hammer radically attacked the undimensional notion of Reason by pointing out the dialectic of the Enlightenment. Nietzsche did not work in a vacuum: before him, Rousseau, Hegel and Marx had started to erode the myth. But nonetheless he was the great Eutzanterer of the new rationalist religion. Because of that he influenced a new generation of sociologists who altered the precedent views and initiated a properly sociological treatment of the question of rationality. According to these sociologists, rationality was still to be seen as the central feature of modern types of social organization but they were aware of the many-sidedness of its effects. To this group belonged those authors who were examined before - Simmel, Sombart, Tönnies, Troeltsch, Veblen - and particularly Max Weber, its greatest single exponent.

To fully understand the innovation represented by Max Weber's treatment of the problem of rationality, we have to pay attention first of all to Weber's terminology. The concepts used most often by Weber are those of rationality and, above all, rationalization. He does not speak of Reason as a monolithic and homogeneous category. Neither is he a rationalist in any fundamentalist, essentialist or absolutist sense. As always, he prevented

himself from embracing any metaphysical assumption by stressing the relativity and the plurality of meanings of the concept under analysis: in this case that of rationality. In a note of The Protestant Ethic, which constitutes the quintessence of the Weberian conception of rationality, Weber sums up in the following way:

'A thing is never "irrational" in itself, but only from a particular "rational" point of view. For the unbeliever every religious way of life is irrational, for the hedonist every ascetic standard, no matter whether, measured with respect to its particular basic values, that opposing asceticism is a "rationalization". If this essay makes any contribution at all, may it be to bring out the complexity of the only superficially simple concept of the "rational"'.¹⁰

According to Weber, rationalization has to do with the problem of means and ends and has to be conceived as a social process taking place in history. That is a concrete, empirical - in the sense explained in the first part of this dissertation - and 'objective' way of considering the modern growth of rationality. Instead of a homogeneous Reason as a transcendent force in history, we find here a plurality of concrete, particular rationalizations which are imminent to the general socio-historical movements. As Max Weber says:

'In fact, one may - this simple proposition, which is often forgotten, should be placed at the beginning of every study which essays to deal with "rationalism" - "rationalize" life from fundamentally different points of view and in very different directions. "Rationalism" is an historical concept which covers a whole world of different things'.¹¹

These 'fundamentally different points of view' of course include some which might be conceived of as 'irrational'. In fact, for Weber an 'irrational' end of institution - as, for example, religion - may be 'rationalized'. Rationality, then, has always to do with ways of organizing the pursuit of

an end, and not with the end in itself. The person who places reason as the ultimate standard of value is in fact a believer and in this sense he is not 'rational' any longer. That is the paradox of reason which is behind the whole theory of rationalization in Max Weber.

In his analysis of rationalization Max Weber assumes as an objective historical trend what Georg Simmel called 'the broadening of teleological series', that is to say the increasing complexity of the social world which results in the multiplication of the steps which are necessary to achieve a given end. Rationalization includes the intellectual and practical responses to this situation, the systematization and logical coherence of theology as well as the new forms of 'rational' organization in the production sphere. By integrating ideal and material aspects alike in his theoretical scope Weber was able to transcend the implicit functionalism of other sociological paradigms which needed to identify a sort of independent variable with imputed omniexplanatory power.

Connected with Max Weber's conceptualization of the rationalization process as a way of handling the problem of the diversification of means, there is a new examination of rationality characterized by its 'value-free' or 'objective' character. Far from implying any attempt to legitimize the capitalist and bureaucratic order, as many interpreters have suggested,¹² this 'value-freedom' is at the root of Max Weber's radicalism. By throwing away the values which contributed to the mystification of the notion of rationality Max Weber took reason for what it is, and not for what it appears to be nor for what it should be. Weber destroyed the mythology which was behind the superstitious belief in Reason and showed the role that this idea played in the legitimation of the capitalist-bureaucratic system.

In that Max Weber explained and criticized at the same time the workings of capitalism and bureaucracy. His 'objective' explanation, by revealing the ideological character of the cult of Reason, became, without the addition of any value-judgement, the most powerful critique of rationalist doctrines.¹³

Another fundamental feature of Max Weber's theory of rationalization is its universalist and non-determinist character. Max Weber conceived rationalization as a universal process in history and his account of modern Western rationalism - which he always stressed was made from the standpoint of 'universal history' (Universalsgeschichte) and through a comparative study of different civilizations - presupposed that this was only a particular case in the more general phenomenon of rationalization. Its special interest - for 'a product of modern European civilization'¹⁴ - relied on the fact that rationalization achieved in the West its fullest development until now, and that it developed along some particular directions which determined the originality and uniqueness of some civilizational products in this part of the world. That is what I have called before 'methodological particularism', which is one of the foundations of Weber's theory of rationalization. Though conceived as a process, rationalization, according to Max Weber, is not the final point in history, towards which all human evolution is tending. In this sense, it may be said that there is not any 'philosophy of history' in Max Weber. His sociology leaves human and social future open and he is not interested at all in formulating theories about 'historical stages of evolution' or in finding the 'laws of historical progress'. Because of that, his analysis of rationalization is non-determinist. Rationalization can increase and decrease and it does not progress uniformly in all the life-spheres: '.. the history of rationalism shows a development which by no means follows

parallel lines in the various departments of life'.¹⁵ This lack of finalism or teleologism in historical explanation is a basic characteristic of Max Weber's sociology which makes it different from nearly all other previous sociologists. Such a non-determinist methodological position is closely linked with Max Weber's advocacy of what I have called a 'pluricausalist mode of explanation'. For the exclusion of the possibility of identifying a final cause in social processes makes it equally impossible to adhere to any moncausalist theory which might see historical development as the actualization of such a variable.¹⁶

As was said before, metaphysics is also absent from Max Weber's theory of rationalization. Weber's distinction between 'formal' and 'substantive' rationality has not to be seen in any respect as a distinction between 'bad' and 'good' forms of rationality. Some interpretations of Weber, such as that by Karl Mannheim¹⁷ and those of some Weberian-Marxists seem to embrace this view. According to them, capitalism is 'formally rational' but not 'substantively rational' because its ends are irrational - they write this without inverted commas as if it were any objective standard of rationality: capitalism aims at maximizing profits instead of maximizing the welfare of human beings. Max Weber would never have agreed with such a view because it presupposes that there is only one substantive rationality when, in fact, there exist as many different substantive rationalities as different values are in struggle with each other. For Weber 'the concept of substantive rationality is completely ambiguous', it refers only to an orientation of social action toward some particular values 'or whatever kind' and in this 'non-limited' range of values, socialist or communist values 'are only ... a groupd among many other possible groups'.¹⁸ The central error of those interpretations of Weber referred to before is that they think that

'substantive rationality' is a category of the realm of Sollen, that it points to how things should be, while, as every category used by Weber, it belongs to the sphere of Sein and it aims to provide a better explanation of how things actually are. That contrast was stressed by Max Weber when he distinguished between 'empirical' and 'dogmatic' sciences, as was explained in the first part of this dissertation.

To conclude our discussion of Max Weber's conception of rationalization we shall pay attention to the role that paradox plays is what I call 'the paradoxes of rationalization'.¹⁹ The paradoxes of rationalization have an 'elective affinity' with that ambivalence which was at the heart of Weber's conceptualization of rationality. Max Weber conceived at the same time reason as freedom and reason as domination, and this duality is also present in his view of rationalized and rationalizing institutions as capitalism or bureaucracy. That is the superiority of his 'objective' or 'value-free' sociology over any apologetical ideology which is only able to see one side of reality. By integrating dissonance in his theory, Weber overcame the limitations of the dychotomic way of thinking which normally results in manichean judgements of social reality. What many commentators criticize as the 'ambiguity', when not the 'confusion', of Max Weber's notion of rationality, represents in fact its better quality. It is in this fundamental ambivalence that the paradoxes of rationalization are rooted. A first type of paradox comes out from the fact that there is not a clear boarder between rationality and irrationality:

'The various great ways of leading a rational and methodical life have been characterized by irrational presuppositions, which have been accepted simply as "given" and which have been incorporated into such ways of life'.²⁰

Another set of paradoxes are related to the outcomes of the rationalization process, i.e. the on-going 'disenchantment of the world', which by undermining magical and superstitious beliefs without affording a new overall interpretation, renders life meaningless.²¹ These are paradoxes in both senses of the word which were explained before: in the Kierkegaardian as well as the Chestertonian-Mertonian sense; that is to say paradoxes which always recure and paradoxes which emerge from the unintended, unforeseen consequences of the rationalization process. The basic contradiction in all this, the paradox par excellence, results from the fact that rationalization makes human beings feel an increasing need of logical coherence and of the interrelation between the different spheres of life; while at the same time it increases specialization, which is subjectively perceived as occasioning the fragmentation of the social world; and, by attacking religion, which structured the chaos of the world into a meaningful cosmos, it contributes to the general crisis of meaning which characterizes modern civilization. Because of that crisis of meaning, the world appears again as chaotic to the eyes of modern men. Rationality wanted to explain everything but in the end it cannot explain itself nor the world that resulted from its shape. '

Max Weber's 'paradoxes of rationalization' brought him closer to other social theorists in his diagnosis of the times. He had an acute sense of the antinomies of social life which prompted him to examine capitalist civilization and its contradictions, arriving at some conclusions which were similar to those of as different thinkers as Durkheim and Marx. Max Weber's insistence on the meaninglessness of modern social life, for example, was related to Durkheim's notion of 'anomy' and with Marx's theory of alienation. Marx was also connected with Max Weber's analysis of

'fragmentation' and 'objectification',²² even though Weber's first intellectual source on that were Friedrich Schiller's Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Man. Finally Georg Simmel's concept of the 'tragedy of culture', perceived as the growing opposition between 'objective' and 'subjective' culture also influenced Max Weber. However, what made Weber different from all these authors, with the only possible exception of Simmel, is that in his case he was concerned only with the diagnosis of the times, and not with providing any therapeutical indication from the scientific field.

There are many manifestations and examples of the paradoxes of rationalization through the whole of Max Weber's writings. These are only some of those which will be familiar to anyone who has carefully read Weber: the paradox of bureaucracy and democracy; the paradox of charisma in a disenchanted world and the paradox of the routinization of charisma; what Weber named the 'ethical paradoxes' of political action;²³ the paradox of 'progress' which Weber formulated in one question: 'Why does one engage in doing something that in reality never comes, and never can come to an end?';²⁴ the paradox of science ('every scientific "fulfilment" raises new "questions", it asks to be "surpassed" and outdated,²⁵); and a number of central paradoxes in The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism.

Precisely The Protestant Ethic and, in particular, the study of the role of paradox in it, will be the subject of the next section.

2.2 The Protestant Ethic

Until now, we have examined Max Weber's general theory of rationalization in the light of our consideration of his methodology as characterized by 'objectivity', paradox and irony. Now, in turn, it might be useful to choose a particular work from the substantive writings of Max Weber in order to test the validity of our assumptions. The work which has been selected is Die protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus (1904/5). The reasons for this selection have been explained before and require no further elaboration.

As with other writings by Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic - which was the first empirical work after Weber's breakdown - resulted from the interplay of several intellectual influences. Among those acknowledged by Weber himself were different writings of Eberhard Gothein, Edward Bernstein, Georg Jellinek, Georg Simmel, Werner Sombart, Ferdinand Tönnies, Ernst Troeltsch and Thorstein Veblen.²⁶ Thomas Mann in his Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen claimed that he had advanced the relation between Protestantism and Bürgertum in his novel Die Buddenbrooks (1901), but we do not know whether Weber had read Thomas Mann's book, and, if he did so, in what degree it influenced him.²⁷ Anyhow, all this is not to imply that Max Weber did only a synthesis of previous writings. In fact, what characterizes The Protestant Ethic is the originality of its conception, hypotheses, method and conclusions.

Any brief exposition of the argument of The Protestant Ethic, as the one which I undertake here, has to overcome a big problem by making it explicit: there is no way of making an abstract out of the text without impoverishing

it. To really reproduce the argument of Weber's essay in all its subtlety and complexity there is probably one solution only and this is to re-write it. Therefore, I shall limit my intentions and say that my aim will be only to highlight the role played in The Protestant Ethic, by the concepts which have been presented and analysed throughout this dissertation. I think it will be possible to do this by taking the title of Max Weber's work and examining exactly what is meant by 'protestant', 'ethic', 'and', '"spirit"', and 'capitalism'.

PROTESTANT: A great deal of confusion in the controversy on Weber's essay has arisen from the misunderstanding of the role of Protestantism in the central thesis of Max Weber. Weber never asserted that Protestantism in general had an impact on the formation of the capitalist 'spirit'. For example, Lutheranism, although it coined the important notion of Beruf - calling/profession/vocation - was in global outlook more a negative than a positive contribution to the new 'spirit'. Within Lutheran religion only some particular groups as the pietists around Philipp Jacob Spener were closer in attitude to it. What was important, according to Max Weber, were some specific variants of protestantism which he integrated under the name 'inner-worldly asceticism' (innerweltliche Askese). Ascetic protestantism included Calvinism but also non-Calvinist groups as Quakers, Mennonites and Anabaptists. In a later article which had as the definitive title 'The Protestant Sects and the "Spirit" of Capitalism', Max Weber stressed the importance of those groups for the diffusion of capitalist 'spirit'.²⁸

Therefore, to sum up Weber's study as dealing with the problem of Calvinism and Capitalism, as one of his first critics, Felix Rachfahl, did, is to distort it.²⁹

From his study of protestantism Max Weber arrived at a formulation of two distinctions which were very important for all his subsequent work on the sociology of religion. These are the polarities 'church' - 'sect', and 'asceticism' - 'mysticism'. Defining 'church' and sect he said:

'It is crucial that sect membership meant a certificate of moral qualification and especially of business morals for the individual. This stands in contrast to membership in a "church" into which one is "born" and which lets grace shine over the righteous and the unrighteous alike. Indeed, a church is a corporation which organizes grace and administers religious gifts of grace, like an endowed foundation. Affiliation with the church is, in principle, obligatory and hence proves nothing with regard to the member's qualities. A sect, however, is a voluntary association of only those who, according to the principle, are religiously and morally qualified. If one finds voluntary reception of this membership, by virtue of religious probation, he joins the sect voluntarily'.³⁰

Max Weber used sometimes the expressions 'virtuoso, and 'mass' religion as more or less equivalent to those of 'sect' and 'church'.³¹ With reference to 'asceticism' and 'mysticism' he wrote:

'... [we contrast] ... the active asceticism that is a God-willed action of the devout who are God's tools, and, on the other hand, the contemplative possession of the holy, as found in mysticism. Mysticism intends a state of "possession", not action, and the individual is not a tool but a "vessel" of the divine. Action in the world must thus appear as endangering the absolutely irrational and other-worldly religious state. Active asceticism operates within the world; rationally active asceticism, in mastering the world, seeks to tame what is creatural and wicked through work in a worldly "vocation" (inner-worldly asceticism)'.³²

Max Weber identified those currents within protestantism which in his view were relevant to the religious elitism of the 'virtuoso' religion and with the striving for action that characterized 'asceticism'. The protestant 'inner-worldly asceticism' affirmed - because of its 'inner-worldliness' - and rejected - because of its 'asceticism' - the outer

world at the same time. The ambivalence occasioned what Weber called 'the paradox of rational asceticism', which was closely connected with the origins of capitalism: 'The paradox of all rational asceticism, which in an identical manner has made monks in all ages stumble, is that rational asceticism itself has created the very wealth it rejected'.³³ This paradox, which is at the heart of Weber's argument in The Protestant Ethic, will be further analysed later on. In connection with ascetic protestantism Weber called it 'the paradox of the Puritan ethic of "vocation"'.³⁴

As might be supposed all the concepts presented until now and used by Max Weber were ideal-typical constructions. Consequently, some of the polarities are artificially stressed for heuristic reasons. The use of the ideal-type, pervasively present in The Protestant Ethic, gives to this essay its 'ironic' and 'objective' character which so many critics were unable to identify.

ETHIC: Why did Max Weber speak of the protestant ethic and not more plainly of Protestantism, as one of the sources of the capitalist 'spirit'?³⁵ The reason is very easy to understand: because he was interested only in a part of the global phenomenon of protestantism; namely, in the new set of values and practical attitudes which were stimulated and legitimized by the different religious groups which emerged after the Reformation. These different groups propagated ethical views which sometimes were remarkably heterogeneous. Max Weber selected those which he found 'significant' for his thesis and artificially stressed the logical coherence between them. Consequently, the protestant ethic, as Weber used this concept, was again an ideal-typical construct which had not a strict correspondence with historical reality.

We mentioned a few lines above that under the label of 'ethic', Max Weber included values and practical attitudes alike.³⁶ By doing so, he integrated ideal and material factors in a unique and synthetizing concept, as in the case of 'rationalization'. In that way, he superseded the traditional dichotomies of monocausalist, determinist and functionalist theories. It is possible to sum up Weber's position on this point by saying that instead of looking at the partiality of 'function; he looked at the totality of 'form'.³⁷

However, what is really crucial in understanding why Weber spoke of Protestant ethic, is the separation which he clearly made between the religious doctrine (Lehre) as such, and what he alternatively called its directions (Richtungen), consequences (Konsequenzen) or practical effects (Wirkungen), which sometimes can be very divergent from the original doctrine. This is so important that I really do not know how to indicate its centrality in the entire work of Max Weber, not only in The Protestant Ethic but in all his writings on the sociology of religion. Probably the best way to do it will be to say that Max Weber repeated this distinction at least fifteen times in the text of The Protestant Ethic. Four of them - the most ambiguous ones - have to be found in the main text, and eleven in the footnotes - the clearest distinctions between Lehre and Richtung are there. The first reference to the distinction is placed at the very beginning of The Protestant Ethic,³⁸ but the more unambiguous one is in a footnote (I quote from the German original because of the shortcomings of the English translation that were mentioned in the previous chapter).

'Das Entscheidende des Unterschiedes ist (um das vorwegzunehmen): dass eine religiös verankerte Ethik auf das von ihr herbeigerufene Verhalten gaut bestimmte, und, Glange de religiös Glaube lebendig bleibt, höchst wirksame psychologische Prämien (nicht ökonomischen Charakters) setzt,

welche eine blosse Lebenskunstslehre wie die Albertis eben nicht zur Verfügung hat. Nur soweit diese Prämien wirken und - vor allem - in derjenigen, oft (das ist das Entscheidende) von der Theologen - Lehre (die ihrerseits a auch nur "Lehre" ist) weit abweichenden Richtung, in der sie wirken, gewinnt sie einen eigengesetzlichen Einfluss auf die Lebensführung und dadurch auf die Wirtschaft'.³⁹

'This is, to speak frankly, the point of this whole essay, which I had not expected to find so completely overlooked'.⁴⁰

Although Max Weber emphasized again and again the importance of this distinction in his 'Anticritical Last Word on the "Spirit" of Capitalism', in his article on the protestant sects, or in his 'Introduction' to the studies on The Economic Ethics of the World Religions⁴¹ it is still today 'completely overlooked' in the secondary literature on Weber⁴² or, at least, it does not occupy the central role that it deserves. It is difficult to imagine the reasons for such an omission.⁴³

The methodical conduct of life (Lebensführung), which was so important for the general social process of rationalization and, particularly, for the rationalization of the economic sphere, was a practical effect of the Reformation that in its consequences (contribution to the development of the capitalist ethos and consequently of Capitalism) had very little to do with the doctrines which were propagated by preachers and theologians. Thus, the gap between Lehre and Richtung or Wirkung originated what we can call the paradox or irony (or ironical paradox) of the Protestant ethic: the fact that the contribution of ascetic Protestantism to the diffusion of an economic system which in the long run undermines any sort of religious belief was entirely unintended. But this is something which belongs indeed to the next point of the discussion.

AND: To give a separated treatment to this part of the title of Max Weber's work has not to be seen as a 'boutade'. In fact, this word 'and' refers to a very central question: the nature of the connection which Max Weber established between the protestant ethic and the 'spirit' of capitalism. This connection did not consist of an unidirectional causation. It was rather related to the Weberian method characterized by its 'pluricausalist mode of explanation' and by its use of paradox and irony.

All that is important in this respect has to be found on pages 89-92 of the English edition of Weber's The Protestant Ethic. As far as the causal mechanism is concerned anyone who has read this part of the book should be able to realize Weber's efforts to stress the complexity of the relation between ascetic Protestantism and the emergence of the capitalist 'spirit'. Max Weber warns against materialist and idealist pre-conceptions alike:

'... we must free ourselves from the idea that it is possible to deduce the Reformation, as a historically necessary result, from certain economic changes ... on the other hand, however, we have no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the "spirit of capitalism" (in the provisional sense of the term explained above) could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation, or even that capitalism as an economic system is a creation of the Reformation' (pp.90-91).

Therefore:

'in view of the tremendous confusion of interdependent influences between the material basis, the forms of social and political organization, and the ideas current in the time of the Reformation, we can only proceed by investigating whether and at what points certain "elective affinities" [Talcott Parsons translates Wahlverwandschaften as 'correlations'] between forms of religious belief and practical ethics can be worked out'(p.91)

It is easy to see how Weber qualifies his argument all the time: 'whether', 'certain' 'affinities' ... (these pages 89-92 are a continuous display of such devices). That ambiguity is the price which he has to pay in order to remain faithful to his 'pluricausalist mode of explanation.

If he finally commits himself to '... treat only one side of the causal chain'⁴⁴ ('... we shall as far as possible clarify the manner and the general direction in which, by virtue of those relationships, the religious movements have influenced the development of material culture', pp.91-92) this is just for the heuristic potential which Weber attaches to this paradoxical perspective which inverts the usual pre-conception of the economic determination of ideas. Weber, as a good ironist, enjoys inverting the traditional ways of approaching the problem. He seems to say 'let us try the other way round and see what happens'. But he is fully conscious that reality is in fact more complex:

'it would also further be necessary to investigate how Protestant Asceticism was in turn influenced in its development and its character by the totality of social conditions, especially economic'⁴⁵

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The paradoxical perspective to which we have referred - 'paradox as contrary to received opinion' - is not the only use of paradox to be found in the connection between the protestant ethic and the 'spirit' of capitalism. The paradox of the unintended consequences of social action - 'paradox as contrary to expectation' - is also present in a more fundamental sense. According to Max Weber,

'we shall ... have to admit that the cultural consequences of the Reformation were to a great extent, perhaps in the particular aspects with which we are dealing predominantly, unforeseen and even

unwished-for results of the labours of the reformers. They were often far removed from or even in contradiction to all that they themselves thought to attain.'⁴⁸

And in relation to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination he goes on to explain that

'the Calvinistic faith is one of the many examples in the history of religions of the relation between the logical and the psychological consequences for the practical religious attitude to be derived from certain religious ideas. Fatalism is, of course, the only logical consequence of predestination. But on account of the idea of "proof" the psychological result was precisely the opposite ... The practical interests cut off the fatalistic consequences of logic (which, however, in spite of everything, occasionally did break through).'⁴⁹

There are the central paradoxes of Weber's thesis. As such, they have passed unnoticed by a number of commentators who allege that Weber's argument is inconsistent with the doctrinal basis of Puritanism.⁴⁸ In turn, most of the Marxists who have dealt with The Protestant Ethic have also been unable to see Weber's point. They tediously repeat that Weber gives an 'idealist' interpretation of the origins of capitalism, aimed at fighting historical materialism.⁴⁹ However, among them, there is a very important exception: Antonio Gramsci, the leader of the Italian Communist Party, not only read Max Weber with interest while he was in prison but he basically agreed with Weber's argument in The Protestant Ethic.⁵⁰ Gramsci emphasized the paradoxical relation between the Reformation and the rising economic system in a way which is reminiscent of the last quotation of Weber reproduced above:

'Il nodo storico-culturale da risolvere nello studio della Riforma e quello dalla trasformazione della massa di fatalismo e di passività, in una pratica reale di intraprendenza e di iniziativa su scala mondiale che ne fu [invece] la conseguenza dialettica e che formò l'ideologia del capitalismo nascente'.⁵¹

'SPIRIT': Max Weber was not very happy with the expression 'spirit of capitalism', which as we said before, he borrowed from the Historical School and, above all, from his friend Werner Sombart. He always wrote 'spirit' between quotation marks, and at the beginning of Chapter II in Part I of The Protestant Ethic he ironically considered this expression as 'somewhat pretentious'. 'Spirit', for Weber, '... refers in its content to a phenomenon significant for its unique individuality'.⁵² (That is Weber's 'methodological particularism'). The 'spirit of capitalism', though, was not something easy to reduce to a conceptual definition since it included many heterogeneous elements. Max Weber opted for selecting some of these ingredients and integrating them into the conceptual whole of an ideal-type. This selection was not the only possible one: 'Other standpoints would, for this as for every historical phenomenon, yield other characteristics as the essential ones'.⁵³

Amongst the features of the capitalist 'spirit' Max Weber particularly stressed its highly ethical content. What is specific and peculiar of the new 'spirit' is that it no longer conceives the acquisition of wealth as an amoral, if not immoral, activity which in some circumstances might be tolerated, but as 'the result and expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling',⁵⁴ which has to be stimulated. A consequence of this new conception was that economic activity changed from being an occasional adventure into being a systematic, methodological and recurrent 'profession' (Beruf).

The bourgeois-capitalist ethos supported all the movements towards the rationalization of the economic sphere which constitute the preconditions for the existence of modern capitalism.⁵⁵ In that sense, the new 'spirit' -

or ethos; both terms were in most cases equivalent for Weber - legitimized the workings of the nascent economic system. Max Weber insisted throughout his writings on the important role that legitimation plays in human action.⁵⁶ That is why he considered 'significant' to study the origins of the modern western economic ethic. For Weber, such a radical change in the socio-economic order as that occasioned by the transition to capitalism was inconceivable without a reorientation of the dominant patterns of thought and behaviour of the people involved. Some of these new patterns - the most 'peculiar' ones - he collected under the expression 'spirit of capitalism'.

The fact that Weber considered 'spirit' and ethos as almost interchangeable expressions might help us to better appreciate the scope of his central thesis. What Max Weber tried to do in The Protestant Ethic was not, as some critics have maintained, to show the influence that Protestantism had on the origins of capitalism. His aim was a much more limited one: he sought to identify some elements in the practical ethic of ascetic Protestantism and to examine the paradoxical role that they played in shaping the distinctive economic ethic of the early European Bürgertum.⁵⁷ As for the relations between economic ethic and economic system, or, as Weber said, between mentality (Geist) and form,⁵⁸ he seemed to suggest that it was not so much a matter of precedence (of whether it came first the form or the mentality) as of co-occurrence (they reinforced each other, and the capitalist 'cosmos' only succeeded where they were a number of 'material' and 'ideal' preconditions).

Finally, we still have to clarify a point in relation to the capitalist 'spirit'. In The Protestant Ethic Max Weber always referred to it in connection with the inner-worldly asceticism of some Reformed groups. But

this by no means implies that contemporary capitalism still finds its main source of legitimation in the Protestant ethic. As a matter of fact, capitalist Weltanschauung has suffered important alterations through the different stages of capitalist development. Some of these new ideologies were identified by Max Weber himself:

'The religious root of modern economic humanity is dead; today the concept of the calling is a caput mortuum in the world. Ascetic religiosity has been displaced by a pessimistic though by no means ascetic view of the world, such as that portrayed in Mandeville's Fable of the Bees, which teaches that private vices may under certain conditions be for the good of the public. With the complete disappearance of all the remains of the original enormous religious pathos of the sects, the optimism of the Enlightenment which believed in the harmony of interests, appeared as the heir of Protestant asceticism in the field of economic ideas; it guided the hands of the princes, statesman⁵⁹ and writers of the later eighteenth and later nineteenth century'.

CAPITALISM: The concept of capitalism as it is used in The Protestant Ethic has been the cause of many misinterpretations. Max Weber was interested in emphasizing the specific peculiarity of Western economic organization in contrast to other economic systems in world history. For this he constructed his own concept of capitalism in an ideal-typical manner and included in this ideal-type all those elements which affirmed the uniqueness of the phenomenon which he wanted to analyze. Weber's notion of capitalism, thus, was a perfect illustration of what I have called his 'methodological particularism'. He qualified the substantive 'capitalism' by adding some adjectives to it: he alternatively spoke of a modern, Western, rational, bourgeois and industrial capitalism. These five characteristics help to identify what Weber understood by that concept.

As an ideal-type, Weber's capitalism corresponds to the same conceptual level than the Marxist notion of 'mode of production' - which is also ideal-typical - as opposed to 'social formation' - the real mixture of

different modes of production. Max Weber explicitly recognized that rational capitalism was in fact mixed up with other types of capitalism in historical reality but he isolated it only for the sake of methodology. Therefore, it is not true that Weber thought that adventure, speculation and irrationality did not have a share in contemporary capitalism. The point was rather that, being fully conscious of this fact, he recognized that there were the traits which modern capitalism had in common with all other forms of socio-economic organization. They were of no use, then, to explain why capitalism was in fact so different from all that existed before it.

Werner Sombart pointed out the double character of what he called the capitalist spirit, which contained the 'irrational' side of adventure and speculation as well as the 'rational' one of calculation and systematic order (a distinction endorsed by Veblen who spoke of 'industrial' and 'pecuniary' employments).⁶⁰ Max Weber was not against Sombart's conception: the difference was that he made a conceptual separation between these two elements and he decided that only the second one - which Sombart called 'bourgeois spirit' - was specific to modern capitalism. This is very clear in a passage from Economy and Society. After speaking of 'robber capitalism' he goes on to say:

'The double nature of what may be called the "capitalist spirit", and the specific character of modern routinized capitalism with its professional bureaucracy, can be understood only if these two structural elements, which are ultimately different but everywhere intertwined, are conceptually distinguished'. (p.1,118)

Max Weber defined capitalism in a somewhat paradoxical way. First of all, modern, Western, rational, bourgeois, industrial capitalism had nothing to do with the auri sacra fames which is 'as old as the history of man'.⁶¹

'Unlimited greed for gain is not in the least identical with capitalism, and is still less its "spirit". Capitalism may be identical with the restraint, or at least a rational tempering, of this irrational impulse. But capitalism is identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise'.⁶²

For Max Weber, then, modern capitalism, which according to him had a central feature of rational organization of (formally) free labour, was conceived in a radically different way from the usual stereotype of avarice and devotion for money.

It is equally paradoxical that Weber identified as a trait of modern capitalism the policy of fixed prices which was implemented by the Baptists. At first sight, it seems as if this person who has the ability of altering the prices for gaining more money should have a more 'capitalist' mentality than the one who keeps always the same price for the same article. However, in practice only the latter's attitude is compatible with modern capitalism, since this system fundamentally relies on accountancy and, in turn, accountancy, is only possible on the basis of fixed prices.⁶³

* * * * *

In our examining of The Protestant Ethic we have not said anything up to now on Weber's use of 'objectivity'. Nevertheless, 'objectivity' is present in that work since the beginning. Weber's study is 'objective' because it does not seek to pass a judgement on anyone of the phenomena that it analyzes. Max Weber examines Calvinism, capitalism, modern forms of

rationality ... trying not to adhere to any 'positive' or 'negative' consideration of their 'value'. He intends to explain 'how it was', not 'how marvelous it was', neither 'how awful it was', nor 'how it should have been'. It is in this sense that The Protestant Ethic is an empirical work. Weber was very explicit in his 'Author's Introduction' (1920) to the collected writings on the sociology of religion:

'He who yearns for "seeing" should go to the cinema, though it will be offered to him copiously today in literary form in the present field of investigation also. Nothing is farther from the intent of my strictly empirical studies than such an attitude. And, I might add, whoever wants a "sermon" should go to a conventicle. The question of the relative value of the cultures which are compared here will not receive a single word. It is true that the path of human destiny cannot but appall him who surveys a section of it. But he will do well to keep his small personal commentaries to himself, as one does at the sight of the sea or of majestic mountains, unless he knows himself to be called and gifted to give them expression in artistic or prophetic form. In most other cases the voluminous talk about "intuition" does nothing but conceal a lack of distance toward the object, which merits the same judgement as a similar lack of distance toward men'.⁶⁴

Only at the end of his study Max Weber dared to introduce some value-judgements in his splendid finale. It is the paradox and irony of Weber's The Protestant Ethic that precisely these few pages had become the most quoted and known of his whole production.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this dissertation has been to provide some new perspectives on Max Weber's sociology and methodology. In the Introduction the reading and writing techniques on which the subsequent work has relied were presented. The first part on methodology started by treating the central notion of 'objectivity' and argued that some problems of interpretation of this notion arose from the different German words which can be translated into English as 'objectivity'. A connection between 'objectivity' and irony in Max Weber's methodology was then proposed. By examining the technical devices of Weber's irony the important, but so far neglected, role of quotation marks and underlined words in the writings of Max Weber emerged. Subsequently attention was focussed on the conceptual tools of Weber's irony: a new way of understanding the task of the ideal-type was proposed along with the concepts 'methodological particularism', and 'pluricausalistic mode of explanation.' The discussion then returned to the question of 'objectivity' as related to 'value-free' and empirical social science, concluding the first part by emphasising the place of paradox in Weber's methodology and conception of science.

The second part looked at Max Weber's theory of rationalization. The relations between other analyses of rationality and that of Max Weber, were stressed and ambivalence identified as their common trait. Afterwards attention was turned to the specific contributions of Weber and on the 'paradoxes of rationalization' which he identified, trying to show how his theory of rationalization might be seen as an application of the concepts explained in the methodological part. A discussion of The Protestant Ethic

followed as an example of a concrete use in a book of those same concepts. Of particular interest was: (1) that not every kind of Protestantism was 'significant' for Weber but only those groups which contributed to the diffusion of 'inner-worldly asceticism', (2) the fundamental distinction between Lehre and Richtung or Wirkung, (3) the paradoxical and ironical nature of the connection between the protestant ethic and the 'spirit' of capitalism, (4) the ethical and legitimising character of the 'spirit' of capitalism, (5) the distinctive character of modern capitalism conceived as an ideal-type. A final comment was made on the 'objective' and empirical character of the Protestant Ethic.

NOTES

Introduction

1. The inverted commas are used to qualify the sense in which I spoke of a radical, serious and objective appreciation. By 'radical' I mean the need to grasp the roots, and this does not imply any value-judgement on the political position from which one may proceed. By 'serious' I do not mean not-funny or boring, but rigorous. Finally, by 'objective' I do not mean neutral or pure, but something like 'as objective as possible provided that one is conscious that the value-judgements will always fight to intervene'. On this conception of 'objectivity' - which is very close to that of Weber's - more will be said later on.

I have to add that I have consciously used the word 'appreciation' instead of 'critique'. There are two reasons for that: (a) the word 'critique' has been so used and abused that I would only be able to use it if I could qualify it very much, and such a thing will require much more space and time than I allowed myself for this introduction; (b) when its meaning is not distinct enough, 'critique' may imply a negative judgement of the author considered. I preferred the term 'appreciation' which I conceive in a similar way as has been employed by art historians, for example by Walter Pater. 'Appreciation' is more 'value-free' and if it suggests anything of a value-judgement it has a vaguely positive connotation which corresponds better with the attitude which we might adopt in the stage of 'intensive reading'.

2. The first volume of Weber's Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie was published in 1920. The two following volumes were published in 1921. Nevertheless all these studies were previously printed in the journal Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, volumes XLI (1916), XLII (1916-17), XLIV (1917-18) and XLVI (1918-19). Die Protestantische Ethik was also published in the Archiv, volumes XX (1905), pp.1-54, and XXI (1905), p.1-110. Max Weber changed some parts of this essay and increased the already high number of footnotes when preparing the edition of his Religionssoziologie in 1920.

Although the two last volumes were published in 1921, Max Weber put the title of this work and sent it to J. C. B. Mohr publishing house in Tübingen before his death, as it results from an advertisement in the back-covers of volume XLV of the Archiv.

As far as the methodological writings are concerned most of them were published also in the Archiv, and in some other journals as Logos.

Marianne Weber collected the methodological writings in a book which she named Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre (1922).

3. In Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft there is a clear difference between the first part and the rest of the book. The first part consists of a collection of short definitions and typologies which provide the analytical tools which will then be used in the next chapters. The

bulk of the book, however, contains detailed, and sometimes fragmented, socio-historical analysis of a number of different subjects. Most of this part was written by Weber in the years between 1911 and the beginning of the Great War in 1914, meanwhile the conceptual section which normally appears as the first part was in fact written later, around 1918-19.

Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (the title comes from a part of Weber's programme for this contribution) was a 'commissioned work' on which Weber never worked very systematically and that at the end of his life had the character of a disordered puzzle. Art historians and historians of music are very careful to distinguish between these works which were commissioned and those which came directly from the artist, without the mediation of any institution or patronage whatsoever. Of course, they also make a distinction between unfinished drafts and completed works, assigning a different standard of value to judge them. If sociologists were to pay more attention to the writings of their colleagues in art history they would know that, and they would be less likely to make the mistake of applying the same standards of value to so different types of works.

NOTES - FIRST PART

1. The quotation marks in the word 'objectivity' are only placed to render in a fully faithful way Weber's conception. Weber was very careful to speak always of 'objectivity' and not of objectivity without quotation marks. There is a very important reason for that which I shall explain further on in the text.
2. Max Weber, 'Roschers "historische Methode"', Schmollers Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft. Volume 25 (1903), pp.1181-1221. The conclusions of Weber's critique of Roscher are strikingly similar to the arguments presented by Thorstein Veblen in an article published two years before which also contains a criticism of Roscher's 'historico-physiological' method. See Thorstein Veblen, 'Gustar Schmoller's Economics', Quarterly Journal of Economics, November 1901, pp.69-93 (for Veblen's critique of Roscher see especially pp.74-75). On the relations between Veblen and Weber something more will be said later on.
3. Max Weber, 'Die "Objektivität" Sozialwissenschaftlicher und Sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis', Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. XXI (1904). Before Weber, Sombart and Jaffe took the editorship, the journal was named Archiv für Soziale Gesetzgebung und Statistik and edited by Heinrich Braun. Therefore one journal was the continuation of the other and they were not, as Ilse Dronberger seems to suppose, two independent journals which were co-existing at the same time. (See Ilse Dronberger, The Political Thought of Max Weber. In Quest of Statesmanship. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1971, p.404. This is only one of the many errors perpetrated in this book).

The articles by Sombart and Tönnies were: Werner Sombart, 'Versuch einer Systematik der Wirtschaftskrisen', and F. Tönnies, 'Ammons Gesellschaftstheorie'.

4. Max Weber, The Methodology of the Social Sciences. New York: The Free Press, 1949, p.47.
5. Georg Lukacs, Essays on Thomas Mann. London: Merlin Press, 1964, p.136.
6. Friedrich Schlegel, Dialogue on Poetry and Literary Aphorisms. The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1968, p.131.
7. It is possible to find a few scornful comments on 'romantic irony' scattered through the whole of Weber's writings. However, they were mainly directed against it being fashionable among particular circles in twentieth century Germany, and not so much against the original formulations.

Max Weber's relation to romanticism was a difficult and ambivalent one. This could be the subject of a whole dissertation, and a very interesting one indeed. I cannot enter here in all the details of the question, but I shall only point out that Weber's attitude towards love and erotic life should be assigned a central role in any attempt to explain that. I mean not so much Weber's erotic experiences as Weber's Sehnsucht for love. In this direction one has only to think of Weber's favourite literature: Philippe's Marie Donadieu, Goethe's Wahlverwandtschaften, Tolstoy's Anna Karenina, Flaubert's Madame Bovary, Boudelaire's Les fleurs du mal ... What all these works have in common is their highly erotic content.

Another common feature of all these works is that love is always extra-marital love.
8. Guy Oakes is one of the few commentators on Weber who has paid attention to the problem of inverted commas and underlined words. However, he basically criticizes Weber for it and considers it annoying (see Guy Oakes, 'Introduction' to Max Weber, Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics. New York: The Free Press, 1975, p.2).
9. Nevertheless, I can foresee the consequences of what Parsons did. In short, the fact that those who have only read Weber through Parsons have got a quite distorted impression. Weber for example always wrote 'Geist', that is to say 'spirit' and not, as Parsons put it, spirit. Therefore this was not Weber's terminology, he was not particularly happy with this notion which came from the German Historical School and which was connected with the concept of Zeitgeist. He also thought that it had too much of a connotation of an idealist approach which he did not want to apply, not to say, indicate, in The Protestant Ethic. All these subtleties are lost in Parsons' rendering of the book, where the word appears without inverted commas. On this concept of 'Geist' I shall comment more extensively in the next chapter.
10. Georg Simmel, 'The Stranger', in: G. Simmel, On Individuality and Social Forms. Selected Writings. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, p.145.
11. This distinction between what one says and what one actually means, which I consider a very important one, is to be found in G. K. Chesterton. See Chesterton's story 'The Invisible Man' in G. K. Chesterton, The Father Brown Stories. London: Cassell, 1929. Seventh edition: 1955, pp.64-77. For the distinction between 'to say' and 'to mean' see especially p.76.

Antonio Gramsci, a devoted reader of Chesterton, remarked this same distinction although in a rather cryptic manner. See: Antonio Gramsci, Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce. Roma: Editori Riuniti, 1977, p.44.

12. The best explanation of this ambivalent and difficult concept is to be found in Chapter IV of Part I of Wahlverwandschaften by J. W. Goethe.
13. Max Weber, Methodology, pp.65-66. By the way, see Weber's use of inverted commas in this fragment.
14. Guy Oakes has noticed this fact and he has spoken of Max Weber's 'methodological ambivalence' in a way reminiscent of Robert K. Merton. See: Guy Oakes, 'Methodological Ambivalence: The Case of Max Weber'. Social Research. Volume 49 (1982), 616-633. As Friedrich Schlegel said ambivalence is closely linked to irony - something that also Robert K. Merton has pointed out.

As an example of Weber as non-'methodological individualist' see the section on 'Hierocracy in the Age of Capitalism and Democracy' in Economy and Society, pp.1.193-1.196.
15. Max Weber, Methodology, p.101.
16. Bryan S. Turner, 'The Structuralist Critique of Weber's Sociology'. British Journal of Sociology. Volume 28 (1977), 1-16. Quotation to be found on p.9.
17. Max Weber, Methodology, p.76.
18. Ibid., p.59.
19. Ibid., p.60.
20. By 'scientism' I do not mean the same as Friedrich Hayek in his book The Counter-Revolution of Science: Studies in the Abuse of Reason. Chicago: Free Press, 1952.
21. Max Weber, Methodology, p.72.
22. Let us compare Max Weber's original fragment in German with Parsons' 'interpretation' of it. Max Weber reads like this: 'Nichts liegt den überaus nüchternen Darlegungen dieser der Absicht nach streng empirischen Studien ferner als diese Gesinnung' (Max Weber, Die Protestantische Ethik. Volume II of Johannes Winckelmann's edition in two volumes. Gütersloh: Mohn, 1981, p.23). Instead, what Weber said according to Parsons was: 'Nothing is further from the intent of these thoroughly serious studies than such an attitude' (Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism. London: Allen and Unwin, 1930. 2nd edition, 1976, p.29. Notice that Parsons was even unable to translate the title of Weber's book, since he forgot the quotation marks of the original 'Geist').
23. I shall address here to the German original again, since Edward Shils' translation does not faithfully reproduce the terms of this distinction. See then: Max Weber, Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1973, p.536. Weber's essay is 'Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" der soziologischen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften'.

24. Max Weber, Methodology, p.32.
25. Ibid., p.32.
26. Ibid., p.52.
27. Ibid., p.53.
28. Ibid., p.26.
29. Ibid., pp.57-58.
30. Ibid., p.18.
31. Ibid., p.57.
32. Max Weber, 'Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology'. The Sociological Quarterly, 22, (Spring 1981), 151-180. This example to be found on p.178,
33. Max Weber, Methodology, p. 7. It is very important to pay attention to the historical and social context of Max Weber's essay on 'value-freedom'. This essay was written in a situation characterized by the absolute hegemony of conservative ideas in German Universities, as well as by the repression of any kind of discidence within them - a repression against which Max Weber fought through his whole life, as for example his defence of Robert Michels, Georg Simmel, Werner Sombart, Otto Neurath and others show. When Weber wrote this essay for publication, in 1917, the Great War was at its peak and jingoism was pervasive in the academic milieu.

Therefore, what is normally conceived fo as a conservative, or at least literal, plea to avoid socialist views in lecture-halls, was in fact something completely different. In its historical context it is easy to realize the revolutionary character of Weber's message. As Max Weber said: 'In any case the fundamental principle which justifies the prattice of asserting value-judgements in teaching can be consistently held only when its proponents demand that the spokesman for all party preferences be granted the opportunity of demonstrating their validity on the academic platform' (Max Weber, Methodology, p.6).
34. Kierkegaard says in his Journals: '... if human science refuses to understand that there is something which it cannot understand, or better still, that there is something about which it clearly understands that it cannot understand it - then all is confusion. For it is the duty of the human understanding to understand that there are things which it cannot understand, and what those things are. Human understanding has vulgarly occupied itself with nothing but understanding, but if it would only take the trouble to understand itself at the same time it would simly have to posit the paradox'. (The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard, London: Oxford University Press, 1938, p.194).
35. The first quotation comes from The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard, p.59. The second one comes from: Søren Kierkegaard, Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1962, p.46.

36. Weber on conflict: Max Weber, Methodology, pp.26-27. Werber on coercion: Max Weber, 'Some Categories of Interpretive Sociology', p.173.
37. 'The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world"' (Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' in H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, From Max Weber, p.155).
38. Ernst Bloch, Sujeto-Objeto. El pensamiento de Hegel. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1st edition: 1949. 2nd edition: 1982, p.29. Bloch's book was originally published in Spanish.
39. Max Weber, Ec;onomy and Society, Vol. 2., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978, p.1209.
40. I tried elsewhere to speak of paradox as the cornerstone of sociology. See: Antoni Estrade, 'Paradoxes. Apunts per a una epistemologia paradoxal en sociologia'. PAPERS. Revista de Sociologia, n. 26 (forthcoming: December 1985). Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.
41. Robert K. Merton, 'Manifest and Latent Functions', Chapter III of Social Theory and Social Structure. New York: The Free Press, 1st edition: 1949, 2nd edition: 1957, 3rd edition: 1968, pp.73-138. Quotations to be found on pp.120 and 123.
42. Marianne Weber, Max Weber. A Biography, p.477.
43. Max Weber, Methodology, pp.110-111.
44. Max Weber's attack against what I have called 'the new religion of the modern era' was not only limited to the discussion of the non-rational final grounds of science. He also considered very critically the concept of 'progress' - see Max Weber, Methodology, pp.27-35 - and the notion of 'rationality' - on this there is more to come in the second part of this dissertation.
45. Max Weber, Methodology, p.3.
46. Ibid., p.28.

NOTES - SECOND PART

1. I do not know of any author who considered the whole range of contemporary intellectual influences in the writings of Max Weber. Donald Levine, for example, in his article 'Rationality and Freedom. Weber and Beyond'. Sociological Inquiry. Volume 51(1981), pp.5-25, relates Weber to Simmel and Tönnies but he does not say anything about Sombart, Troeltsch or Veblen. The relations between Simmel and Weber are also examined in a recent and interesting article by Jim Faught: 'Neglected Affinities: Max Weber and Georg Simmel'. British Journal of Sociology. Volume 36 (1985), pp.155-174. Faught is able to recognise ambivalence as a central feature of both Simmel and Weber although not irony and paradox which are strictly connected with ambivalence. In so doing he shows a better understanding of these authors than Levine, who presents an extremely simplistic view of Simmel as an enthusiastic adherent of rationality.

On Veblen and Weber see John P. Diggins, The Bard of Savagery. Thorstein Veblen and Modern Social Theory. Brighton, Sussex. The Harvester Press, 1978. Diggins does not pay enough attention to the links between Veblen and Weber's analyses of modern western rationality. He does not comment either on what seems to be central: the closeness between Veblen's conception of 'prowess' and Weber's notion of 'charisma'. A careful comparison of both terms - something that I cannot undertake here - will illuminate some hidden aspects of Max Weber's concept of 'charisma'.

2. Ernst Troeltsch lived in the same house as Weber for a number of years and accompanied him in his trip to the United States. Troeltsch's work was closely connected with that of Weber. Werner Sombart was the editor of the Archiv together with Weber from 1904 until Weber's death. Sombart and Weber discussed with each other in many books and articles. Georg Simmel's Philosophy of Money and Philosophy of History influenced Weber very much. Georg Simmel was also an intimate friend of the Weber family and he dedicated his book on Goethe (1913) to Marianne Weber.

Simmel, Sombart, Tönnies and Troeltsch took part in the first congress of the German Sociological Association in 1910 together with Weber.

J. A. Hobson wrote a book called The Evolution of Modern Capitalism (1894) and he revised it in 1906 after Sombart's Der Moderne Kapitalismus (1902) and Weber's Die Proestantische Ethik (1904/5), taking into account their investigations. Hobson also wrote a book on Imperialism (1907) and a book on Veblen (1935).

Thorstein Veblen reviewed Sombart's Der Moderne Kapitalismus and Der Bourgeois (1913) in The Journal of Political Economy. He also reviewed Hobson's book on imperialism. It is probable that Veblen read Weber's Protestant Ethic but there is not written evidence of this fact - what makes me think of that is that Veblen asked his editor to send a copy of his new book on The Theory of Business Enterprise (1904) to the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik. See: Thorstein Veblen, Essays, Reviews and Reports. Edited by Joseph Dorfman. Clifton: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1973, p.66. What is sure is that Weber read Veblen: he quoted Veblen three times at least: one in The Protestant Ethic, again in his article 'Anticritical Last Word on the "Spirit" of Capitalism', and finally in his political writings.

Weber always referred to Veblen's Theory of Business Enterprise, which appeared in September 1904, exactly the same month in which Weber arrived at the United States. Weber qualified Veblen's book as 'suggestive' and 'excellent'.

Werner Sombart referred to Veblen in the subsequent editions of his Der Moderne Kapitalismus, and he also mentioned Veblen's Theory of the Leisure Class in his Luxus und Kapitalismus (1913).

3. Ferdinand Tönnies, 'Historicism, Rationalism and the Industrial System', in F. Tönnies, On Sociology: Pure, Applied, and Empirical. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp.266-287. Quotation to be found on p.273.
4. Ibid., p.275.
5. Ibid., p.274-275.
6. Georg Simmel, The Philosophy of Money. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978. passim, but especially Chapter 3.
7. That Weber took the expression 'spirit of capitalism' from Sombart is seen in Max Weber's first reference to this concept in his 1903 essay on Wilhelm Roscher. He says in a note: 'A more thorough analysis would show that this distinction [between private and public spheres] is a consequence of ideas quite peculiar to Puritanism, ideas which were of very great importance for the "genesis of the spirit of capitalism"'. Max Weber, Roscher and Knies. The Logical Problems of Historical Economics. New York: The Free Press, 1975, p.229. The quotation marks are the evidence of the borrowing of Sombart's expression, which was the object of a polemic discussion at the time, as Sombart himself explains in Chapter 28 of his Der Bourgeois (1913).
8. Raymond Williams, Culture. London: Fontana, 1981. See especially Chapter 3. I consider Simmel, Sombart, Tönnies, Troeltsch and Weber as a cultural formation in the third sense of those proposed by Williams: '(iii) those [groups] not based on formal membership, or any sustained collective public manifestation, but in which there is conscious association or group identification ...' Williams, op cit., p.68. If it will be possible also to consider them as a cultural formation in sense (ii) - i.e. as 'organized around some collective public manifestation, such as an exhibition, a group press or periodical, or an explicit manifesto' - we should consider the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik as the periodical which united all of them. They were regular contributors to the Archiv.

I did a careful content-analysis of the Archiv. It shows that it is possible to think of a kind of research programme that all these authors shared, and which was structured around the socio-historical explanation of the origins of modernity and capitalism in the West on the basis of the rationalization process. This analysis of the Archiv also shows that all these authors had a much closer relationship with Marxism and socialism in general than the one which has been imputed until now. A large amount of the literature in the Archiv were articles on socialism and among its contributors were Eduard Bernstein, Otto Neurath, Ervin Szabo, Georg Lukacs, Ernst Bloch, Robert Michels, Luigi Fabbri, Achille Loria, Max Adler, Arturo Labriola, and the secretary of the Fabian Society E. R. Pease. After 1920 the

contributors also included Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Karl Wittfogel. The Archiv analysed the class-struggle not only in Germany but generally world-wide: it often included articles on Russia, Poland, Britain, France, Italy, Switzerland, Japan, United States, South Africa, Hungary, Finland, Rumania etc., always related with the working-class and the problems of socialism.

9. I mean 'objectivity' in the sense which was explained in the first part of the present essay. In order to understand better Max Weber's 'objectivity' it might be useful to have a look at Tönnies' analysis of rationalization and capitalism or - to put a different problem and a different author - Durkheim on anomy in Suicide. After having read Weber carefully we should realize that Tönnies and Durkheim mixed up much more often scientific explanations with value-judgements. That is the reason why irony is normally absent from their works.
10. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.194. As one may think the English translator did not see the inverted commas and the stressed words in this passage.
11. Ibid., pp.77-78. Parsons was again closing his eyes to the evidence.
12. See for example, Georg Lukacs, 'Max Weber and German Sociology', Economy and Society, Volume 1 (1972), pp.386-398; and Herbert Marcuse, 'Industrialization and Capitalism', in Otto Stammer (ed.), Max Weber and Sociology Today, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1971, pp.133-151. These are only two -probably the most famous and influential - of many examples of this criticism.
13. It is probably this characteristic of Max Weber most inspired H. M. Robertson to write: 'It is noteworthy that the writings of the religio-sociological school on the origins of the capitalist spirit are infected with a deep hatred of capitalism. The essay on "Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus" ushered in as heavy an attack on the capitalist position as the materialist writings of Karl Marx. This is not immediately apparent; but even a cursory second glance shows that its general tendency is to undermine the basis of a capitalist society'. See: H. M. Robertson, Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism. A Criticism of Max Weber and His School, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935 (1st edition: 1933).
14. Max Weber, 'Author's Introduction' (1920) to the Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie. In: Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, pp.13-31. Quotation to be found on p.13. In the second English edition of The Protestant Ethic in 1976, there is no indication that the 'Author's Introduction' is not an introduction to this work but a general introduction to Weber's collected writings on the sociology of religion.

15. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.77.
16. Thorstein Veblen very ironically characterized monocausalist theories as 'Survivals of animism', in connection with Adam Smith's 'invisible hand'. See: Thorstein Veblen, 'The Preconceptions of Economic Science' in T. Veblen, The Place of Science in Modern Civilization and Other Essays, New York: Russell, 1961 (first edition: 1919).
17. See, Karl Mannheim, 'Designation of Two Types of Rationality' in: K. Mannheim, Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1940. Although in this particular theme there is a coincidence between Mannheim and the Weberian-Marxists in general Mannheim does not seem to be a typical Weberian-Marxist.
18. Max Weber, Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. In this case I have used the complete Spanish translation of 1964: Max Weber, Economia y Sociedad. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1964. In this edition in one volume there quotations are to be found on pp.64-65. Translations into English are mine.
19. There is little to be found on the subject of Weber and paradox in this literature. Wolfgang Schluchter wrote 'The Paradox of Rationalization: On the Relation of Ethics and the World', in G. Roth and W. Schluchter, Max Weber's Vision of History. Ethics and Methods, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, pp.11-64; but apart from the title there is not very much in common with our approach. A more developed and interesting exposition can be found in the book of Gianfranco Poggi, Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit. Max Weber's Protestant Ethic. London: Macmillan, 1983, especially pp.52-53 and 86-88.
20. Max Weber, 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' (this is the 'Introduction' to Weber's The Economic Ethics of the World Religions, the biggest part of his collected writings on the sociology of religion), in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber, pp.267-301. Quotation to be found on p.281.

There is a suggestive book which deals at length with Weber's ambivalence in the treatment of rationalization. See: Rogers Brubaker, The Limits of Rationality. An Essay on the Social and Moral Thought of Max Weber. London: Allen and Unwin, 1984.

21. The meaningless of modern life was a problem which worried Max Weber very much. In this direction he supported the view of Leo Tolstoy. See Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation' in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills, From Max Weber, pp.129-156, especially pp.139-140; and Max Weber, 'Religions Rejections of the World and their Directions' in the same anthology, pp.323-359, especially p.356.

A number of commentators, with some justification have characterized Weber as a precursor of existentialism.

22. On the relations between Weber and Marx: I think Weber had a far greater knowledge of Marx and generally of socialism than that which has often been supposed.

As a matter of fact, Weber was the co-editor of a journal, namely the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft, which published theoretical articles on Marxism in almost every volume. Marianne Weber, Max Weber's wife, wrote a book published in 1900 with the title Fichtes Sozialismus und sein

Verhältniss zur Marxschen Doktrin. And, on the other hand, Max Weber was a personal friend of Eduard Bernstein, one of the leading theoreticians of the German social democracy.

The study of the relations between Weber and Marx - as well as the study of Weber's sociology in general - has suffered from the 'interpretations' of those who were interested to stress the differences between them, either from the left or from the right side of the political spectrum.

23. See: Max Weber, 'Politics as a Vocation', in: H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber, pp.77-128. This expression is to be found on p.125.
24. Max Weber, 'Science as a Vocation', in: Gerth and Mills (eds.) op.cit., p.138.
25. Ibid., p.138.
26. Eduard Bernstein, 'Kommunistische und demokratisch - sozialistische Strömungen während der englischen Revolution des 17. Jahrhunderts', in Geschichte des Sozialismus, Vol. I (1895); Eberhard Gothein, Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Schwarzwaldes und der angrenzenden Landschaften (1891-92); Georg Jellinek, The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens (1895); and the books and articles by Simmel, Sombart, Tönnies, Troeltsch and Veblen quoted before.
27. Thomas Mann, Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1956 (first edition: 1918), pp.137-138.

On the relations between Thomas Mann and Max Weber: Thomas Mann and Max Weber met in Munich during the course 1919-1920, while Weber was a professor at Munich University. The Webers were invited to tea at the Mann's house. Mann and Weber discussed Oswald Spengler's Der Untergang des Abendlandes (1918) and it seems that they agreed in their judgement. Around that time Max Weber had a personal discussion with Spengler in which he criticized Spengler in more or less the same terms as those that Thomas Mann later developed in his 'German Letter' to The Dial (Volume LXXIII, number 6, December 1922).

This encounter between Thomas Mann and Max Weber is not mentioned in any book or article either on Mann or on Weber (even Marianne Weber's biography of Max Weber does not include any reference to Thomas Mann in relation to her husband). I have obtained this information from Volume I (1918-1921) of Mann's Tagebücher (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1978). This fragment is not included in the English selection of Thomas Mann's diaries.

28. Max Weber, 'The Protestant Sects and the "Spirit" of Capitalism', in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber, pp.302-322.
29. Unfortunately this is an error which is still committed today. Gianfranco Poggi, for example, has called his (nonetheless interesting) book on Weber's Protestant Ethic, Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit.
30. Max Weber, 'The Protestant Sects', pp.305-306. This distinction is restated in: M. Weber, Economy and Society, p.1164. More on 'sects' in Ibid., pp.1204-1210. Max Weber distinguished between 'sect' and 'church' in The Protestant Ethic, pp.144-145.

Ernst Troeltsch, who was a close friend of Weber, developed this typology in his book Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen (1912).

31. Max Weber, 'The Social Psychology of World Religions', in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber, p.287s.
 32. Max Weber, 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions', in Gerth and Mills (eds.), op.cit., p.325. The distinction mysticism - asceticism is also drawn by Weber in The Protestant Ethic, pp.113-114.
 33. Max Weber, 'Religious Rejections', p.332.
 34. Ibid., p.332.
 35. It is important to stress that, as a matter of fact, Max Weber saw in the protestant ethic only one among many interconnected causal factors which helped to explain the origins of capitalism. This is coherent with his general advocacy of what I have called a 'pluricausalist mode of explanation'. In this respect see what he says in 'The Social Psychology of World Religions', p.268
 36. It seems to me that this cannot be proved with a single quotation from The Protestant Ethic. However anyone who had read the book should be able to agree with that.
 37. I am indebted to Gillian Rose's lecture on Weber at the University of Sussex (26th April 1985) for these suggestions.
 38. This is at the end of Max Weber's 1920 preface to The Protestant Ethic - which Parsons reproduces as if it were the first footnote to the first chapter of the essay" 'The author [Ernst Troeltsch] is principally concerned with the doctrines (Lehre) of religion, while I am interested rather in their practical results (Wirkung)' (Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.188, n.b. Parsons does not underline the key words as Weber did).
 39. Max Weber, Die Protestantische Ethik, Vol. I, p.89. Parsons' translation not only does not stress the words stressed by Max Weber but it is also confused.
 40. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.197 n.12.
 41. See: Max Weber 'Anticritical Last Word on the "Spirit" of Capitalism'. American Journal of Sociology, Volume 83 (1978), pp.1105-1131. The difference between Doktrin and Richtung - in this case - to be found on p.1113.
- See also, Max Weber, 'The Protestant Sects', in H. Gerth and C. W. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber, p.321; and M. Weber, 'The Social Psychology of the World Religions' - that is the English title of the 'Introduction' to which we referred, p.267.
42. I have read a substantial amount of the secondary literature on The Protestant Ethic but not the whole of it. In those articles and books that I was able to look at I did not find any clear statement of the importance of this distinction between doctrine and practical effects, which plays such a central role in Weber's essay.

43. This may have something to do with the fact that most of the important passages in which Weber refers to this question have to be found in footnotes. In the English edition all the footnotes are placed at the end of the main text. The pity is that any reading of The Protestant Ethic which does not include the notes is incomplete.
44. Max Weber, 'Author's Introduction' (1920) in : M. Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.27.
45. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.183.
46. Ibid., p.90. See John Wesley's awareness of this paradox as it is explained by Weber (op. cit., p.175 s.). This quotation from Wesley was not in the first version of The Protestant Ethic (the one which was published in the Archiv in 1904/5). Max Weber added it to his new edition of 1920.
47. Ibid., p.232 n.66. But see also what Weber said immediately afterwards in the same note.
48. As an example of this type of criticism I might mention H.M. Robertson's book (1935).
49. Lukacs' article 'Max Weber and German Sociology' - which is in fact a part of a chapter of his The Destruction of Reason - is a sad example of his literature.
50. For Gramsci's references to Weber and to The Protestant Ethic see : Antonio Gramsci, Quaderni del carcere. Roma : Editori Riuniti, 1977 (6 vols). Specially; Note sul Machiavelli (pp.116 s, 173, 411), Gli intellettuali e l'organizzazione della cultura (p.18), and Il materialismo storico e la filosofia di Benedetto Croce (pp.17-18, 22-23, 103, 110, 277, 291).
- See also : Gershom Safir, 'Interpretative Sociology and the Philosophy of Praxis : Comparing Max Weber and Antonio Gramsci'. Praxis International. Vol.5 (1985), pp.63-73.' Unfortunately the author fails to say that Gramsci read Weber and was very close to him in some fundamental points.
- On the diffusion of The Protestant Ethic in Italy see Eugenio Garin, Cronache di Filosofia Italiana. Bari : Laterza, 1966 (first edition; 1955). Vol. II, p.403 and Vol.I, p.27n.8. On the relations between the Gramscian concept of hegemony and the Western concept of legitimated domination see : Franco Lo Piparo, Lingua, Intellettuali, Egeonia in Gramsci. Bari : Laterza, 1979, pp.121-122.
51. Antonio Gramsci, Il materialismo storico, p.110.
52. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. p.47.
53. Ibid., pp.47-48.
54. Ibid., p.54.
55. Max Weber listed those preconditions. They were : (1) rational capital accounting; (2) freedom of the market, that is, the absence of irrational limitations on trading in the market; (3) rational

technology; (4) calculable law; (5) free labour; (6) commercialisation of economic life. See : Max Weber, General Economic History. New Brunswick, New Jersey : Transaction Books, 1981. pp.276-277.

56. For example in his discussion of legitimate forms of domination in Economy and Society, pp.941-1211.
57. Something similar is suggested by Gianfranco Poggi, Calvinism and the Capitalist Spirit, pp.52-56.
58. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. p.67. I translated Geist as 'mentality' because Parsons; rendering of the word (spirit) seems to me confused. It must be taken into account that this is the only time that Weber used Geist without quotation marks. Therefore he probably referred to the other meaning of the German word which can be translated as mentality.
59. Max Weber, General Economic History, pp.368-369.
60. The distinction was formulated for the first time in Sondart's Der Moderne Kapitalismus (1904) and restated in clearest terms in Der Bourgeois (1913). For Veblen see : T. Veblen, The Theory of Business Enterprise (1904).
61. Max Weber, The Protestant Ethic. p.57.
62. Max Weber, 'Author's Introduction' (1920), in : M Weber, The Protestant Ethic, p.17.
63. See : Max Weber, "The Protestant Sects and the "Spirit" of Capitalism", in : H. Gerth and C.W. Mills (eds.), From Max Weber. passim.
64. Max Weber, 'Author's Introduction' (1920), p.29.

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