The book introduces the reader to the work of the greatest German sociologist and one who is a key figure in the development of present-day sociological thought in this country. Weber's thought forms part of our heritage of political science, sociology, history, philosophy, and economics, as well as of art, religion, and education. The present selection of writings opens with a comprehensive biographical introductory essay on Weber's life and work. The introduction is followed by four sections: Science and Politics, Power, Religion, and Social Structures. Each section contains either essays in their entirety or extensive excerpts.

"...the writings selected are representative of a wide range of the author's exceedingly versatile and comprehensive studies."

-TALCOTT PARSONS in The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science

"...an important contribution to an important theme of modern intellectual development, ...the student of Max Weber will appreciate the tremendous effort required in the authors' attempt to transpose the German intellectual's involved ideas and sentences that are "gothic castles" into readable English prose and still remain faithful to the original meaning. This rare accomplishment is due to ideal teamwork."

-SIGMUND NEUMANN in The Yale Review

The late H. H. Gerth was born in Germany, and studied at the Heidelberg, London, Frankfurt-am-Main, and Kiel Universities. He came to this country in 1938 and was most recently Professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin. He translated a number of Weber's works and is also the author, with C. Wright Mills, of Character and Social Structure: The Psychology of Social Institutions. The late C. Wright Mills, Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, was a leading critic of modern American civilization. He is author of The Power Elite; The Sociological Imagination; White Collar: The American Middle Classes; and other books.
thereby transform these ideas into economic factors: the question concerns their economic relevance.

Having focused upon the struggle for the means of political rule, Weber sees European political history since the feudal period as an intricate parade of rulers, each attempting to appropriate the financial and military means that in feudal society were relatively dispersed. In fact, Weber formulates the very concept of the 'state' in terms of a 'monopoly' of the use of legitimate force over a given territory. The territorial aspect enters into the conception of the state in that Weber distinguishes coastal and inland states, great river states, and states of the plains. The geographical factor also seems to have a dispositional bearing in that the coastal, and hence maritime, state offers opportunities for city democracy, overseas empire; whereas the state of the plains—for example, Russia and the United States—seems to favor schematization and bureaucracy, although of course this tendency is not without exceptions.

With Marx, Weber shares an attempt to bring 'ideological' phenomena into some correlation with the 'material' interests of the economic and political orders. Weber has a keen eye for 'rationalizations,' that is, for 'fictitious superstructures,' and for incongruities between the verbal assertion and the actual intention. He fought imperial and bureaucratic bombast, and especially the phrases of the Pan-Germanists and/or revolutionary 'literati,' with a wrath comparable to Marx's campaign against Victorian cant.

The debunking technique by which ideological assertions are revealed as false cloaks for less respectable interests is obvious in Weber's attack upon the revolutionary left of 1918. Weber expressly stated at this time that Marxism is not a carriage, which one may arrest at will; he wished to extend the debunking of ideologies to include the 'proletarian interest,' and he attempted to narrow down this interest to the interests of the literati, politicians, and revolutionary guardsmen in the spoils of victory. His debunking of socialist aspirations is also obvious in his reflections on imperialism. Here he obviously accepts national units as historical ultimates that can never be integrated into more comprehensive and harmonious wholes. At best there will be strong socialist nation-states energetically exploiting weaker states. The concept of the nation and of national interest is thus the limit of Weber's political outlook and at the same time constitutes his ultimate value. Yet it is characteristic of his restless analysis that he breaks down 'national sentiment' into a composite of various communal sentiments and attitudes.

In addition to this attention to 'interests' and 'ideologies,' Weber's sociology is related to Marx's thought in the common attempt to grasp the interrelations on all institutional orders making up a social structure. In Weber's work, military and religious, political and juridical institutional systems are functionally related to the economic order in a variety of ways. Yet, the political judgments and evaluations involved differ entirely from those of Marx. For Marx, the modern economy is basically irrational; this irrationality of capitalism results from a contradiction between the rational technological advances of the productive forces and the fetters of private property, private profit, and unmanaged market competition. The system is characterized by an 'anarchy of production.'

For Weber, on the other hand, modern capitalism is not 'irrational'; indeed, its institutions appear to him as the very embodiment of rationality. As a type of bureaucracy, the large corporation is rivaled only by the state bureaucracy in promoting rational efficiency, continuity of operation, speed, precision, and calculation of results. And all this goes on within institutions that are rationally managed, and in which combined and specialized functions occupy the center of attention. The whole structure is dynamic, and by its anonymity compels modern man to become a specialized expert, a 'professional' man qualified for the accomplishment of a special career within pre-scheduled channels. Man is thus prepared for his absorption in the clattering process of the bureaucratic machinery.

The concept of rational bureaucracy is played off against the Marxist concept of the class struggle. As is the case with 'economic materialism,' so with 'class struggle': Weber does not deny class struggles and their part in history, but he does not see them as the central dynamic. Nor does he deny the possibility of a socialization of the means of production. He merely relegates this demand to a far distant future and disputes any hope of 'socialism for our time.' He does not see anything attractive in socialism. In his eyes, socialism would merely complete in the economic order what had already happened in the sphere of political means. The feudal estates had been expropriated of their political means and had been displaced by the salaried officials of the modern bureaucratic state. The state had 'nationalized' the possession of arms and of administrative means. Socialization of the means of production would merely subject an as yet relatively autonomous economic life to the bureaucratic management of the state. The state would indeed become total, and Weber, hating bureaucracy as a shackles upon the liberal indi-
vital, felt that socialism would thus lead to a further servitude. 'For the
time being,' he wrote, 'the dictatorship of the official and not that of
the worker is on the march.'

Weber thus saw himself as holding paradoxical opinions. He could
not but recognize the inevitability of bureaucratic management in public
administration, in large capitalist enterprises, and in politically efficient
party machines. During the war he personally scolded the stupidity of
the Berlin bureaucrats, yet in his classic account of bureaucracy he is
very far from John Stuart Mill's verdict against 'pedantic bureaucracy.' On
the contrary, for Weber nothing is more efficient and more precise than
bureaucratic management. Again in his pride in bureaucracy, 'in spite
of all,' one may discern an attitude comparable to Marx's admiration for
the achievements of bourgeois capitalism in wiping out feudal survivals,
the 'idiocy' of rural life, and various phantasms of the mind.

Marx's emphasis upon the wage worker as being 'separated' from the
means of production becomes, in Weber's perspective, merely one special
case of a universal trend. The modern soldier is equally 'separated' from
the means of violence; the scientist from the means of enquiry, and the
civil servant from the means of administration. Weber thus tries to
relativize Marx's work by placing it into a more generalized context and
showing that Marx's conclusions rest upon observations drawn from a
dramatized 'special case,' which is better seen as one case in a broad series
of similar cases. The series as a whole exemplifies the comprehensive
underlying trend of bureaucratization. Socialist class struggles are merely
a vehicle implementing this trend.

Weber thus identifies bureaucracy with rationality, and the process
of rationalization with mechanism, depersonalization, and oppressive
routine. Rationality, in this context, is seen as adverse to personal free-
dom. Accordingly, Weber is a nostalgic liberal, feeling himself on the
defensive. He deplores the type of man that the mechanization and the
routine of bureaucracy selects and forms. The narrowed professional,
publicly certified and examined, and ready for tenure and career. His
yearning for security is balanced by his moderate ambitions and he is re-
warded by the honor of official status. This type of man Weber decries
as a petty routine creature, lacking in heroism, human spontaneity, and
inventiveness: 'The Puritan willed to be the vocational man that we have
to be.'

2: BUREAUCRACY AND CHARISMA: A PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

The principle of rationalization is the most general element in Weber's
philosophy of history. For the rise and fall of institutional structures, the
ups and downs of classes, parties, and rulers implement the general
drift of secular rationalization. In thinking of the change of human atti-
itudes and mentalities that this process occasions, Weber liked to quote
Friedrich Schiller's phrase, the 'disenchantment of the world.' The extent
and direction of 'rationalization' is thus measured negatively in terms of
the degree to which magical elements of thought are displaced, or
positively by the extent to which ideas gain in systematic coherence and
naturalistic consistency.

The urge towards such a comprehensive and meaningful interpreta-
tion of the universe is ascribed to groups of intellectuals, to religious
prophets and teachers, to sages and philosophers, to jurists and experi-
mental artists, and finally, to the empirical scientist. 'Rationalization,'
socially and historically differentiated, thus comes to have a variety of
meanings. In this connection Weber makes a masterful contribution to
what has come to be known as the 'sociology of knowledge.'

Weber's view of 'disenchantment' embodies an element of liberalism
and of the enlightenment philosophy that construed man's history as a
unilinear 'progress' towards moral perfection (sublimation), or towards
cumulative technological rationalization. Yet his skeptical aversion to any
'philosophical' element in empirical science precluded any explicit con-
structions of historical time in terms of 'cycles' or 'unilinear' evolution.
'Thus far the continuum of European culture development has known
neither completed cyclical movements nor an unambiguously oriented
'unilinear development.'

We nevertheless feel justified in holding that a unilinear construction is clearly implied in Weber's idea of the
bureaucratic trend. Even so 'inward' and apparently subjective an area
of experience as that of music lends itself to a sociological treatment under
Weber's concept of 'rationalization.' The fixation of clang patterns,
by a more concise notation and the establishment of the well-
tempered scale; 'harmonious' tonal music and the standardization of the
quartet of wood winds and string instruments as the core of the sym-
phony orchestra. These are seen as progressive 'rationalizations.'

* We have included one chapter from Weber's study of China for the sake of acquaint-
ing the reader with this aspect of his work.
musical systems of Asia, of preliterate Indian tribes, of Antiquity, and of the Middle East are compared in regard to their scope and degree of "rationalization." The same comparative focus is of course used in the account of religious systems, as may be seen in the typological sketch contained in "The Social Psychology of World Religions."

This process of rationalization is punctured, however, by certain discontinuities of history. Hardened institutional fabrics may thus disintegrate and routine forms of life prove insufficient for mastering a growing state of tension, stress, or suffering. It is in such crises that Weber introduces a balancing conception for bureaucracy: the concept of 'charismatism.'

Weber borrowed this concept from Rudolf Sohn, the Strassburg church historian and jurist. Charisma, meaning literally 'gift of grace,' is used by Weber to characterize self-appointed leaders who are followed by those who are in distress and who need to follow the leader because they believe him to be extraordinarily qualified. The founders of world religions and the prophets as well as military and political heroes are the archetypes of the charismatic leader. Miracles and revelations, heroic feats of valor and baffling success are characteristic marks of their stature. Failure is their ruin.

Although Weber is aware of the fact that social dynamics result from many social forces, he nevertheless places great emphasis upon the rise of charismatic leaders. Their movements are enthusiastic, and in such extraordinary enthusiasm and status barriers sometimes give way to fraternization and exuberant community sentiments. Charismatic heroes and prophets are thus viewed as truly revolutionary forces in history.

Bureaucracy and other institutions, especially those of the household, are seen as routines of workaday life; charisma is opposed to all institutional routines, those of tradition and those subject to rational management. This holds for the economic order: Weber characterizes conquistadors and robber-barons as charismatic figures. When used in a strictly technical manner, the concept of charisma is free of all evaluations. Stefan George as well as Jeremiah, Napoleon as well as Jesus Christ, a ravaging berserk warrior of Arabia as well as the founder of Mormonism—all these are typified as charismatic leaders, for they have in common the fact that people obey them because of faith in their personally extraordinary qualities.

A genuinely charismatic situation is direct and inter-personal. In the contrast of the everyday life of institutions with the personalized and spontaneous nature of charismatic leadership, one may readily discern the heritage of liberalism that has always confronted similar dichotomies: mass versus personality, the 'routina' versus the 'creative' entrepreneur, the conventions of ordinary people versus the inner freedom of the pioneering and exceptional man, institutional rules versus the spontaneous individual, the drudgery and boredom of ordinary existence versus the imaginative flight of the genius. In spite of the careful nominalism of his method, Weber's conception of the charismatic leader is a continuation of a 'philosophy of history' which, after Carlyle's Heroes and Hero Worship, influenced a great deal of nineteenth-century history writing. In such an emphasis, the monumentalized individual becomes the sovereign of history.

Weber's conception of the charismatic leader is in continuity with the concept of 'genius' as it was applied since the Renaissance to artistic and intellectual leaders. Within the confines of 'moral' history, W. E. H. Lecky broadened the conception in such a way as to apply it to leaders of human conduct rather than merely to creators of symbols. Not only men of ideas but ideal men thus came into focus, as the following passage indicates:

There arose from time to time men who bear to the moral condition of their age much the same relations as men of genius bear to its intellectual condition. They anticipate the moral standard of a later age, cast abroad conceptions of disinterested virtue, of philanthropy, or of self-denial that seem to have no relation to the spirit of their time, inculcate virtues and suggest motives of action that appear to most men altogether chimerical. Yet the magnetism of their perfections tells powerfully upon their contemporaries. An enthusiasm is kindled, a group of adherents is formed, and many are emancipated from the moral condition of their age. Yet the full effects of such a movement are but transient. The first enthusiasm dies away, surrounding circumstances resume their ascendency, the pure faith is materialized, circumscribed with conceptions that are alien to its nature, dislocated, and distorted, till its first features have almost disappeared. The moral teaching, being unsuited to the time, becomes ineffectual until its appropriate civilization has dawned; or at most it faintly and imperfectly filters through an accumulation of dogmas, and thus accelerates in some measure the arrival of the condition it requires.

It is clear that Lecky was interested in the genius as an extraordinary man who transcends the bounds of everyday routines; and in this, his...
The 'philosophical' element in Weber's construction of history is the antithetic balance of charismatic movements (leaders and ideas) with rational routinization (enduring institutions and material interests). Man's spontaneity and freedom are placed on the side of heroic enthusiasm, and thus there is an aristocratic emphasis upon elites ('virtuous!'). This emphasis is intimately associated with Weber's attitude towards modern democracy, which we have already indicated.

Yet, Weber, sees in the concept of 'personality' a much-abused notion referring to a profoundly irrational center of creativity, a center before which analytical inquiry comes to a halt. And he combats this caricatured and romantic view. For his conceptual nominalism and his pragmatic outlook are opposed to all reification of 'analyzed' processes. The ultimate unit of analysis for him is the understandable motivations of the single individual. His concepts are analytical tools with which he reconstructs various mechanisms. They are not descriptive categories, with which one tries to 'read' the color and grasp the surface image of the 'spirit of the times.' They are not concepts that contemplate the supposed substances of great men and epochs. In fact, despite Weber's emphasis on charisma, he is not likely to focus on 'the great figures of history.' Napoleon, Calvin and Cromwell, Washington and Lincoln appear in his texts only in passing. He tries to grasp what is retained of their work in the institutional orders and continuities of history. Not Julius Caesar, but Caesarianism; not Calvin, but Calvinism is Weber's concern. In order to understand this fully, we have to understand his conceptual tools: the constructed type, the typological series, the comparative method.

3: Methods of Social Science

Weber's methodological reflections are clearly indebted to the philosophy of the enlightenment. His point of departure and the ultimate unit of his analysis is the individual person:

Interpretative sociology considers the individual [Einzelindividuum] and his action as the basic unit, as its 'atom'—if the disputable comparison for once may be permitted. In this approach, the individual is also the upper limit and the sole carrier of meaningful conduct... In general, for sociology, such concepts as 'state,' 'association,' 'feudalism,' and the like, designate certain categories of human interaction. Hence it is the task of sociology to reduce these concepts to 'understandable' action, that is, without exception, to the actions of participating individual men.