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978-0-521-89509-5 - Weber, Passion and Profits: 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in Context

Jack Barbalet

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Weber, Passion and Profits

Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is one of the best known and most enduring texts of classical sociology, continually inspirational and widely read by both scholars and students. In an insightful and original interpretation, Jack Barbalet discloses that Weber's work is not simply about the cultural origins of capitalism but an allegory concerning the Germany of his day. Situating *The Protestant Ethic* in the development of Weber's prior and subsequent writing, Barbalet traces changes in his understanding of key concepts, including 'calling' and 'rationality'. In a close analysis of the ethical underpinnings of the capitalist spirit and of the institutional structure of capitalism, Barbalet identifies continuities between Weber and the eighteenth-century founder of economic science, Adam Smith, as well as Weber's cotemporary, the American firebrand, Thorstein Veblen. Finally, by considering Weber's investigation of Judaism and capitalism, important aspects of his account of Protestantism and capitalism are revealed.

JACK BARBALET is Professor of Sociology at the University of Western Sydney. He is a leading scholar of classical sociology and social theory and his previous publications include *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge, 2001).

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*For my son
Felix*

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Note on citations

In the text, reference to a source indicates the year of first publication rather than the edition used. This is to preserve something of the historical context of authors who have contributed to the discussion. The exception is reference to Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, which appears as Weber (1920) to indicate that the second rather than the first edition is quoted or referred to throughout. There are other, although very few, exceptions. The year of first publication of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, for instance, is not exactly known, and readers will have no difficulty in appreciating Aristotle's historical context, no matter how vaguely they do so.

Complete references are given in the *References* section at the end of the book, including both year of original publication and that of the edition used.