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978-1-107-02588-2 - Max Weber in Politics and Social Thought: From Charisma to Canonization

Joshua Derman

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Introduction*

Max Weber (1864–1920) is today regarded as one of the most important political and social thinkers of modern times. The concepts he coined or left his mark on – such as value freedom, the Protestant ethic, bureaucracy, sociology, and charisma – have become fundamental to the social sciences and part of our everyday speech. How did this idiosyncratic and reclusive German scholar manage to make such a profound impact on modern thought? How did he become a name to conjure with for historians, sociologists, economists, political scientists, and commentators on current affairs? This book answers these questions by examining a cultural axis that was decisive for Weber's emergence as a canonical figure: the transmission of political and social thought from German-speaking Europe to the United States in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> It seeks to explain why German intellectuals reached for Weber's concepts to articulate such different understandings of modern life, and how these concepts and their uses were transformed by Americans and German émigrés. Through investigating the history of Weber's transatlantic reception, this book aims to shed new light on the meaning and cultural significance of his thought, and on the generation of German and American intellectuals who developed their own ideas in dialogue with his.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, communities of Weber scholars have formed all over the world.<sup>2</sup> Considered in this global context,

<sup>1</sup> For a classic account of this phenomenon, see H. Stuart Hughes, *The Sea Change: The Migration of Social Thought, 1930–1965* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975). For recent literature on the reception of European thinkers in the United States, see François Cusset, *French Theory: How Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze, & Co. Transformed the Intellectual Life of the United States*, trans. Jeff Fort with Josephine Berganza and Marlon Jones (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008); Martin Woessner, *Heidegger in America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche: A History of an Icon and His Ideas* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> During his lifetime Weber was intensely discussed in Japan, and it was there that many of the earliest translations of his work were published. See Wolfgang Schwentker, *Max Weber in Japan: Eine Untersuchung zur Wirkungsgeschichte 1905–1995* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1998). For

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his German and American reception has been distinctive in several important ways. German intellectuals were Weber's most immediate audience and respondents: they laid the groundwork for later engagements with his work and promoted his reputation through emigration and academic exchange. Weber was read and discussed in a variety of countries in the decades after his death, but it was in the United States during the 1940s and 1950s that he was first elevated to the canonical position in the social sciences that he occupies today. As the American social sciences acquired unprecedented international prestige in the decades after World War II, so too did the authors and texts that had become seminal to their self-understanding.

Weber's popularity in the United States was so phenomenal that it often blinded scholars to the significance of his early German impact. "Weber's influence in Germany was very limited," declared the émigré political scientist Franz Neumann in the early 1950s. "It is characteristic of German social science that it virtually destroyed Weber by an almost exclusive concentration upon the discussion of his methodology. Neither his demand for empirical studies nor his insistence upon the responsibility of the scholar to society were heeded. It is here, in the United States, that Weber really came to life."<sup>3</sup> This conventional wisdom was eventually revised by historians of sociology, who demonstrated that Weber had been more important to Weimar and Nazi intellectuals than previously was understood.<sup>4</sup> Yet no one has explained what Weber meant to his German

aspects of his reception outside Germany and the United States, see Johannes Weiss, *Weber and the Marxist World*, trans. Elizabeth King-Utz and Michael J. King (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986); Petra Kolonko, "Mit Max gegen Marx? Zum Beginn einer Weber-Rezeption in der VR China," *Internationales Asienforum* 18, no. 1/2 (1987): 157–61; Monique Hirschhorn, *Max Weber et la sociologie française* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 1988); Johannes Weiß, ed., *Max Weber heute: Erträge und Probleme der Forschung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1989); and Karl-Ludwig Ay and Knut Borchardt, eds., *Das Faszinosum Max Weber: Die Geschichte seiner Geltung* (Constance: UVK, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> Franz L. Neumann, "The Social Sciences," in *The Cultural Migration: The European Scholar in America*, by Franz L. Neumann, Henri Peyre, Erwin Panofsky, Wolfgang Köhler, and Paul Tillich (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1953), 22.

<sup>4</sup> Helmut Fogt, "Max Weber und die deutsche Soziologie der Weimarer Republik: Aussenseiter oder Gründervater?," in *Soziologie in Deutschland und Österreich 1918–1945: Materialien zur Entwicklung, Emigration und Wirkungsgeschichte*, ed. M. Rainer Lepsius (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1981), 245–72; Regis A. Factor and Stephen P. Turner, "Weber's Influence in Weimar Germany," *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 18 (1982): 147–56; Stephen P. Turner and Regis A. Factor, *Max Weber and the Dispute over Reason and Value: A Study in Philosophy, Ethics, and Politics* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984); Dirk Käsler, *Max Weber: An Introduction to His Life and Work*, trans. Philippa Hurd (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), Chapter 7; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *The Political and Social Theory of Max Weber: Collected Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), Chapter 11; Carsten Klingemann, *Soziologie im Dritten Reich* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1996), Chapter 9.

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## Introduction

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contemporaries in the broadest sense.<sup>5</sup> Though he was not a household name, Weber was read and written about by some of the most important German thinkers of his time, such as Hans Freyer, Hans Gerth, Theodor Heuss, Karl Jaspers, Siegfried Kracauer, Karl Löwith, Georg Lukács, Karl Mannheim, Gustav Radbruch, Max Scheler, Carl Schmitt, Ernst Troeltsch, and Erich Voegelin. These figures served as force multipliers by virtue of their contemporary or subsequent prominence.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, Weber received serious attention from numerous scholars and journalists who never achieved fame, or whose reputations subsequently faded from historical memory.<sup>7</sup> By drawing on a wide range of sources, both published and archival, this book aims to deepen our understanding of the canonical responses to Weber and his work, and to unearth the forgotten and often surprising ways in which contemporaries engaged with his ideas.

In recent years Weber's American afterlife has received increasing attention from intellectual historians.<sup>8</sup> Much of the analysis has focused on how early English translations by Talcott Parsons, Edward Shils, Hans Gerth, and C. Wright Mills altered the meaning of Weber's texts or shunted them into unanticipated interpretive paradigms.<sup>9</sup> Instead of

<sup>5</sup> For this formulation I am indebted to Jan-Werner Müller, who has sought to explain what Carl Schmitt "meant" to European intellectuals. See Jan-Werner Müller, *A Dangerous Mind: Carl Schmitt in Post-War European Thought* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Brian Eno once said of the rock group The Velvet Underground that "hardly anyone bought the Velvet's albums when they were originally released, but everyone who did formed a band" (Elizabeth Knowles, ed., *The Oxford Dictionary of Modern Quotations* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007]). Something similar could be said of Weber's early reception, *mutatis mutandis*.

<sup>7</sup> I have profited from consulting two indispensable bibliographies of secondary literature on Weber: Hans Gerth and Hedwig Ide Gerth, "Bibliography on Max Weber," *Social Research* 16, no. 1 (1949): 70–89; and Constans Seyfarth and Gert Schmidt, *Max-Weber-Bibliographie: Eine Dokumentation der Sekundärliteratur* (Stuttgart: Enke, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> See Guy Oakes and Arthur J. Vidich, *Collaboration, Reputation, and Ethics in American Academic Life: Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Keith Tribe, "Talcott Parsons as Translator of Max Weber's Basic Sociological Categories," *History of European Ideas* 33, no. 2 (2007): 212–33; and Lawrence A. Scaff, *Max Weber in America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011). For earlier accounts, see Guenther Roth and Reinhard Bendix, "Max Webers Einfluss auf die amerikanische Soziologie," *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 11 (1959): 38–53; and Guenther Roth, introduction to *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait*, by Reinhard Bendix (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), xiii–xxxvii.

<sup>9</sup> See Gisela J. Hinkle, "The Americanization of Max Weber," *Current Perspectives in Social Theory* 7 (1986): 87–104; Peter Ghosh, "Some Problems with Talcott Parsons' Version of 'The Protestant Ethic,'" *Archives européennes de sociologie* 35 (1994): 104–23; Peter Baehr, "The 'Iron Cage' and the 'Shell as Hard as Steel': Parsons, Weber, and the *Stahlhartes Gehäuse* Metaphor in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*," *History and Theory* 40, no. 2 (2001): 153–69; Peter Ghosh, "Translation as a Conceptual Act," *Max Weber Studies* 2, no. 1 (2001): 59–63; and Jens Borchert, "From *Politik als Beruf* to *Politics as a Vocation*: The Translation, Transformation, and Reception of Max Weber's Lecture," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 3, no. 1 (2007): 42–70.

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making the problem of translation its focus, this book investigates the formative period when interest in Weber was first generated in the United States. It seeks to understand why this generation of American and émigré scholars was so interested in Weber's concepts that the translation and marketing of his texts seemed worthwhile to them in the first place. Very little of Weber's writing was available in English translation between the 1920s and the late 1940s. However, it was precisely during this period that the seminal interpretations and mobilizations of his work were made in the United States by American and émigré scholars. These individuals set in motion many of the traditions that characterized Weber's American reception for over half a century.

## THINKING WITH WEBER'S CONCEPTS

When historians of reception articulate the subject of their inquiry, they often do so in terms of the *influence* wielded by intellectuals or texts. In positing “*x* influenced *y*,” they assert a connection between *x* and *y* that falls short of being a cause in the scientific sense, but that nonetheless accounts for *y*'s intellectual production by way of reference to *x*.<sup>10</sup> This way of talking about intellectual filiation is commonplace yet problematic for the rigorous study of reception. One difficulty with influence-claims, as Quentin Skinner has argued, is that they invariably force historians into arguing something different from what they initially intended. If one entertains the possibility that *y* might have “gotten” those ideas elsewhere, or that the similarity between *x*'s and *y*'s work was purely coincidental, then any attempt to demonstrate that it really was *x* who influenced *y* becomes tantamount to demonstrating that *x* was a necessary condition for *y*'s work – and this sounds very much like a conventional causal argument.<sup>11</sup> Aside from the ambiguity of their logical structure, influence-claims pose another challenge for the historian: the empirical evidence necessary to confirm them can be extremely difficult to find. To prove that “*x* influenced *y*,” historians must first isolate the relevant doctrine *A* that is characteristic of both authors. Then they must demonstrate that *y* could have found doctrine *A* only in *x*; that *y* did indeed read *x*; and that the similarities between *x* and *y* could not have been merely accidental. Conclusive evidence to support such claims, Skinner has argued, is rarely available.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Quentin Skinner, “The Limits of Historical Explanations,” *Philosophy* 41 (1966): 204.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 209.

<sup>12</sup> Quentin Skinner, “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,” *History and Theory* 8, no. 1 (1969): 26–7.

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While there is a good case to be made that influence-claims are less problematic than Skinner suggests, it is not the logical status or the empirical rigor of such claims that leads me to question their value for reception history.<sup>13</sup> The major problem is that influence does not adequately capture how intellectuals engage with the work of other intellectuals. In claiming “*x* influenced *y*,” the historian places in the active role not the person who is thinking, writing, or arguing, but rather the absent interlocutor who is incapable of doing anything at all.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, what are we to make of cases in which *y* cites or mobilizes *x*’s arguments incorrectly, or with willful distortions? Does it make sense here to say that *y* was influenced by *x*, or that *x* influenced *y*? In light of such complications, Conal Condren has recommended that we talk instead about the ways in which authors “use” each other:

If we replace influence with usage, at least the formal confusion is avoided, and usage by being a general term covering a multitude of possibilities also invites immediate specification – how and in what way and to what extent did *y* in fact use *x*? Influence, by connoting a firm imprint, and the expectation of characteristics transferred, makes it all too easy to overlook just what in fact was done by the active partner (*y*) cast in the passive role.<sup>15</sup>

This book seeks to understand how intellectuals used Weber, even if it means occasionally maintaining a position of agnosticism as to whether he was the unique source of the ideas they expressed. My aim is to ascertain what Weber’s readers actually did with him and not only what they thought of him. Why and in what contexts did they avail themselves of his arguments? When did they invoke him as an authority? How did they mobilize and appropriate his views? What did his works enable them to express that they could not have done otherwise? I call this range of activities “thinking *with*” an intellectual. The study of the ways in which intellectuals thought with Weber illuminates his significance for intellectual life in German-speaking Europe and the United States.

Some historians of reception have abjured the goal of offering “authoritative” readings against which subsequent interpretations of an author’s writings can be measured.<sup>16</sup> That will not be the approach taken here.

<sup>13</sup> For a critique of Skinner’s argument, see Francis Oakley, “Anxieties of Influence: Skinner, Figgis, Conciliarism and Early Modern Constitutionalism,” *Past and Present* 151 (1996): 60–110.

<sup>14</sup> Conal Condren, *The Status and Appraisal of Classic Texts: An Essay on Political Theory, Its Inheritance, and the History of Ideas* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 135–6.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 136.

<sup>16</sup> See, e.g., Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890–1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 3.

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This book commits itself to understanding Weber's authorial intentions as well as the new meanings that readers generated from his texts.<sup>17</sup> Many of Weber's readers ascribed a sense to his writings quite different from the one he intended. They mobilized his concepts for causes he did not sanction and attributed them to phenomena he would not have anticipated. Furthermore, his contemporaries were eager to tweak or distort his claims to further intellectual agendas of their own. Their uses of Weber and his texts were part and parcel of what he meant to German and American intellectuals in the first half of the twentieth century. By devoting attention to the careful reconstruction of Weber's arguments, the tensions that existed between his own projects and the uses to which his ideas were put can be explained. This requires that we do justice to the contexts in which Weber first framed his ideas, as well as to the fact that, as Pierre Bourdieu has observed, "texts circulate without their context."<sup>18</sup>

How, then, should we go about understanding the ways in which German and American intellectuals thought with Weber? A central aim of this book is to show how the process of reception can be understood by studying it on the level of the history of concepts.<sup>19</sup> When intellectuals think with other intellectuals, they tend to engage with only a limited number of propositions at a time. If these propositions are sufficiently general or abstract, "concentrated" in a complex of interrelated elements and identified by a single word or a short phrase, we call them *concepts*. It is in this sense, for example, that we speak of the concepts of capitalism, democracy, revolution, objectivity, and justice.<sup>20</sup> These concepts

<sup>17</sup> For a critique of reception histories that disregard "authorial intended meanings," see Martyn P. Thompson, "Reception Theory and the Interpretation of Meaning," *History and Theory* 32, no. 3 (1993): 248–72.

<sup>18</sup> Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Conditions of the International Circulation of Ideas," in *Bourdieu: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Shusterman (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 221.

<sup>19</sup> My thoughts on the connections between reception history and the history of concepts have been greatly stimulated by Martin Burke, "From the Margins to the Center? Conceptual History and Intellectual History" (paper presented at the Tenth Conference of the International Society for Intellectual History, Verona, May 26, 2009).

<sup>20</sup> See Reinhart Koselleck, "Einleitung," in *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe: Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, ed. Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, and Reinhart Koselleck (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1972), Vol. 1, xxii–xxiii; Reinhart Koselleck, "Begriffsgeschichte und Sozialgeschichte," in *Vergangene Zukunft: Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 118–20; and Reinhart Koselleck, "A Response to Comments on the *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*," in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts: New Studies on Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington, DC: German Historical Institute, 1996), 64–5. It is important to distinguish between words (or terms) and concepts. It is possible that the same concept may be designated by more than one word, or that an individual can be said to possess a concept without necessarily knowing the right word for it. See Quentin Skinner, "The Idea of a Cultural Lexicon," in *Regarding Method*, Vol. 1 of *Visions of Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 159–60. Finally, it

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and others like them serve as “pivots” around which political and social controversies turn; in times of crisis, intellectuals contest their meaning and usage to legitimize or challenge the status quo.<sup>21</sup> By investigating the distinctive character of Weber's conceptual usages and innovations, and then by ascertaining how and why his contemporaries appropriated them, we can understand what it meant for intellectuals to think with him.

Few modern thinkers have left as powerful an imprint on our political and social vocabularies as Weber. His major scholarly and political innovations went hand in hand with the creation of new terms and concepts, or the deployment of old concepts with new meanings and new evaluative connotations.<sup>22</sup> Throughout his career Weber was deeply preoccupied by the role that concepts (*Begriffe*) ought to play in the cultural sciences (*Kulturwissenschaften*). In opposition to contemporaries who believed that societies could only be understood on their own cultural or historical terms, he insisted that a comparative theoretical framework was necessary for purposes of comparison and causal attribution. In his view, the unceasing development of the cultural sciences depended on the transformation and repositioning of their theoretical concepts, a fate determined by the changing cultural perspectives that scholars brought to their work.<sup>23</sup> To understand how German and American intellectuals thought with Weber, this book proposes to analyze his reception in terms of the concepts he coined and redefined, or were ascribed to him by contemporaries. Weber's writings became seminal for the way German and American intellectuals conceived the *value freedom* of scholarship, the meaning of *modern capitalism*, the task of *sociology*, and the *charisma* of their political leaders. When they considered Weber's heroism in the face of the seemingly insuperable challenges of modern life, contemporaries were struck by his *skepticism* about utopian political movements, but they also ascertained that he possessed a peculiar *faith* in the face of adversity. Each of the main chapters of this book examines how one

should be noted that the definition of concept employed in this study differs from the one used by linguists, psychologists, and philosophers, who equate concepts with the mental representations underlying cognition.

<sup>21</sup> Koselleck, “A Response to Comments,” 65; Melvin Richter, *The History of Political and Social Concepts: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 42.

<sup>22</sup> Kari Palonen, “Die Umstrittenheit der Begriffe bei Max Weber,” in *Die Interdisziplinarität der Begriffsgeschichte*, ed. Gunter Scholz (Hamburg: Meiner, 2000), 145–58; Kari Palonen, “Max Weber als Begriffspolitiker,” *Etica & Politica* 7, no. 2 (2005), [www2.units.it/etica/2005\\_2/palonen.pdf](http://www2.units.it/etica/2005_2/palonen.pdf), accessed November 21, 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Max Weber, “Die ‘Objektivität’ sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis” (1904), in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1988), 207 (MSS, 105).



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or an interrelated set of Weber's concepts was mobilized by a variety of intellectuals across a span of several decades, in some cases from Europe all the way to the United States.

Since the outbreak of World War II, the significance of Weber's political thought has been interpreted chiefly through the lens of National Socialism. The first to link Weber with fascist ideology was the philosopher Karl Löwith, who argued that Weber "positively paved the way for an authoritarian and dictatorial leadership state [*Führerstaat*] by supporting irrational, 'charismatic' leadership and 'leadership democracy' [*Führerdemokratie*] with a machine," and negatively through the deliberate lack of content, through the formality of his political ethos, whose final authority was only the decisive choice of one value among others, regardless which."<sup>24</sup> Another early admonition came from the Marxist historian Jürgen Kuczynski, who studied in Heidelberg and attended Marianne Weber's salon.<sup>25</sup> Kuczynski spent the war years in Britain, where he published a German-language brochure, *On the Impracticability of the German Intellectual*, which blamed Weber's value freedom for weakening the resolve of German intellectuals to resist National Socialism:

Max Weber, one of the leading German democrats, one of the personally most upstanding individuals – well traveled in all fields of German culture, at home in the works of German literature and philosophy, jurisprudence and art, historiography and natural science – is the incarnation of all the weaknesses of our great thinkers. He is the last great scion of that great series of poets and thinkers whose strengths are the healthy basis for a new Germany, and whose weaknesses constitute the network in which the perverse system of fascism has captured our intelligence. Banished from Germany thirteen years after his death in 1920, he [Weber], the greatest pride of our universities in this century, blindly and fanatically opened the door to National Socialism.<sup>26</sup>

When Gerth and Mills published their first Weber translation in 1944, they drew a passionate response from Meyer Schapiro, a leading art historian at Columbia University. While he acknowledged that Weber had rejected "racist explanations of culture" and would have been "firmly

<sup>24</sup> Karl Löwith, "Max Weber und seine Nachfolger" (1939/40), in *Hegel und die Aufhebung der Philosophie im 19. Jahrhundert – Max Weber*, Vol. v of *Sämtliche Schriften* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1988), 413.

<sup>25</sup> On his student days in Heidelberg, see Jürgen Kuczynski, *Memoiren: Die Erziehung des J. K. zum Kommunisten und Wissenschaftler* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1972), 60–6.

<sup>26</sup> Jürgen Kuczynski, *Über die Unpraktischkeit des deutschen Intellektuellen* (London: Free German League of Culture in Great Britain, 1944), 14. On Kuczynski's time in British emigration, see Axel Fair-Schulz, "Jürgen Kuczynski: A German-Jewish Marxist Scholar in Exile," in *German Scholars in Exile: New Studies in Intellectual History*, ed. Axel Fair-Schulz and Mario Kessler (Lanham, MD: Lexington, 2011), 137–58.



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against Nazi barbarity and anti-Semitism” had he lived to experience them, Schapiro insisted that Weber’s intense nationalism, “fear of the left,” and “respect for the strong leader with ‘charismatic’ qualities” led him to “speak in a way that anticipates the Nazis.” Had Weber not died so early, Schapiro speculated, “it would have been a cruel dilemma for him whether to accept or reject the man who was reestablishing German power and preparing for a war against the national enemy.”<sup>27</sup>

The most thoroughgoing post-World War II critiques of Weber’s political thought were conducted by the West German historian Wolfgang Mommsen, most notably in his 1959 book *Max Weber and German Politics*.<sup>28</sup> Over half a century later, it is clear to us that Weber was not just a defender of the Weimar Republic and a champion of the socially marginalized, but also an extreme nationalist, a proponent of imperialism, and on some occasions a racist. Rather than focus on the question whether Weber was contaminated with the bacillus of fascism, a political movement he never lived to experience, my primary goal is to understand how intellectuals used Weber’s concepts to think politically and socially. As a consequence, this book investigates the reception of his concepts not only among intellectuals sympathetic to National Socialism, who did indeed make use of them, but also among intellectuals across the ideological spectrum, in both German-speaking Europe and the United States.

## MAX WEBER IN POLITICS AND SOCIAL THOUGHT

This book begins by surveying the social contexts in which Weber’s contemporaries encountered his personality and written work, and the conditions under which they disseminated and translated his texts. After falling ill with depression in his mid thirties, Weber spent most of his life as a private scholar, known only to a relatively small number of friends and colleagues. In later years he attained wider visibility on the basis of his published works and political involvements, but he died before he could fully re-establish his career. Chapter 1 examines his interventions as a teacher, scholar, and political leader, and explains why the longevity of his reputation stood in jeopardy at the time of his death. It shows how personal and academic networks ensured that his concepts and texts would

<sup>27</sup> Meyer Schapiro, “A Note on Max Weber’s Politics,” *Politics* 2, no. 2 (1945): 44.

<sup>28</sup> Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik, 1890–1920* (Tübingen: Mohr [Siebeck], 1959).

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nonetheless survive long after him, and traces the paths that brought his texts and his admirers to the United States.

Weber's contemporaries were fascinated by his conviction that scholarship was incapable of yielding norms to guide action, and by his insistence that scholars must keep the ascertainment of facts and the judgment of the desirability of those facts rigorously separate. Weber condensed these two claims into his famous concept of the "value freedom" (*Wertfreiheit*) of scholarship. When pressed to defend value freedom, Weber ultimately appealed to what he called the "polytheism" of modern life – the notion that the highest values capable of guiding human action were locked in a conflict so fundamental that no scholarship was capable of mediating among them. Chapter 2 surveys the polemical purposes for which Weber invoked value freedom and polytheism throughout his career, and then analyzes the ways in which these concepts were mobilized and appropriated by German intellectuals in the generation after his death. For all the resistance that Weber's views encountered, this chapter explains why a surprising number of intellectuals – both in the Weimar Republic and under National Socialist rule – availed themselves of his concepts to articulate some of the earliest statements of modern existentialism, to promote a new social order based on racial homogeneity, and to defend a new "political scholarship" based on *völkisch* values.

Chapter 3 explores the divergent legacies of Weber's theses on the meaning of modern capitalism. It begins by explicating the argument behind *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* and situates it within the context of *fin-de-siècle* discussions about the origins of the modern economy. Next, the chapter investigates the academic and cultural controversies that erupted over Weber's writings on capitalism. It argues that the popularity of *The Protestant Ethic* derived not only from the audacity of its historical claims, but also from the ease with which intellectuals could mobilize it to promote German exceptionalism or champion the superiority of their respective religious faiths. In the United States and elsewhere, Weber has often been portrayed as an anti-Marxist theorist who emphasized the economic consequences of religious values and institutions. His reception in German-speaking Europe followed a surprisingly different course: some of his most prominent contemporaries were inspired to reconcile his work with the tradition of historical materialism, or otherwise to mobilize his ideas for heterodox Marxist purposes. Finally, this chapter explains why Weber's concept of a capitalist *Betrieb* captivated German contemporaries, and why it was left to the American sociologist Talcott