

Weber's interest in the nature of power and authority, as well as his pervasive preoccupation with modern trends of rationalization, led him to concern himself with the operation of modern large-scale enterprises in the political, administrative, and economic realm. Bureaucratic coordination of activities, he argued, is the distinctive mark of the modern era. Bureaucracies are organized according to rational principles. Offices are ranked in a hierarchical order and their operations are characterized by impersonal rules. Incumbents are governed by methodical allocation of areas of jurisdiction and delimited spheres of duty. Appointments are made according to specialized qualifications rather than ascriptive criteria. This bureaucratic coordination of the actions of large numbers of people has become the dominant structural feature of modern forms of organization. Only through this organizational device has large-scale planning, both for the modern state and the modern economy, become possible. Only through it could heads of state mobilize and centralize resources of political power, which in feudal times, for example, had been dispersed in a variety of centers. Only with its aid could economic resources be mobilized, which lay fallow in pre-modern times. Bureaucratic organization is to Weber the privileged instrumentality that has shaped the modern polity, the modern economy, the modern technology. Bureaucratic types of organization are technically superior to all other forms of administration, much as machine production is superior to handicraft methods.

Yet Weber also noted the dysfunctions of bureaucracy. Its major advantage, the calculability of results, also makes it unwieldy and even stultifying in dealing with individual cases. Thus modern rationalized and bureaucratized systems of law have become incapable of dealing with individual particularities, to which earlier types of justice were well suited. The "modern judge," Weber stated in writing on the legal system of Continental Europe, "is a vending machine into which the pleadings are inserted together with the fee and which then disgorges the judgment together with the reasons mechanically derived from the Code."

Weber argued that the bureaucratization of the modern world has led to its depersonalization.

[The calculability of decision-making] and with it its appropriateness for capitalism . . . [is] the more fully realized the more bureaucracy "depersonalizes" itself, i.e., the more completely it succeeds in achieving the exclusion of love, hatred, and every purely personal, especially irrational and incalculable, feeling from the execution of official tasks. In the place of the old-type ruler who is moved by sympathy, favor, grace, and gratitude, modern culture requires for its sustaining external apparatus the emotionally detached, and hence rigorously "professional" expert.

Further bureaucratization and rationalization seemed to Weber an almost inescapable fate.

Imagine the consequences of that comprehensive bureaucratization and rationalization which already today we see approaching. Already now . . .

in all economic enterprises run on modern lines, rational calculation is manifest at every stage. By it, the performance of each individual worker is mathematically measured, each man becomes a little cog in the machine and, aware of this, his one preoccupation is whether he can become a bigger cog. . . . It is apparent today we are proceeding towards an evolution which resembles [the ancient kingdom of Egypt] in every detail, except that it is built on other foundations, on technically more perfect, more rationalized, and therefore much more mechanized foundations. The problem which besets us now is not: how can this evolution be changed?-- for that is impossible, but: what will come of it?

Weber's views about the inescapable rationalization and bureaucratization of the world have obvious similarities to Marx's notion of alienation. Both men agree that modern methods of organization have tremendously increased the effectiveness and efficiency of production and organization and have allowed an unprecedented domination of man over the world of nature. They also agree that the new world of rationalized efficiency has turned into a monster that threatens to dehumanize its creators. But Weber disagrees with Marx when the latter sees alienation as only a transitional stage on the road to man's true emancipation. Weber does not believe in the future leap from the realm of necessity into the world of freedom. Even though he would permit himself upon occasion the hope that some charismatic leader might arise to deliver mankind from the curse of its own creation, he thought it more probable that the future would be an "iron cage" rather than a Garden of Eden.

There is yet another respect in which Weber differed from, or rather enlarged upon, Marx. In accord with his focus on the sphere of economic production, Marx had documented in great detail how the capitalist industrial organization led to the expropriation of the worker from the means of production; how the modern industrial worker, in contrast to the artisan of the handicraft era, did not own his own tools and was hence forced to sell his labor to those who controlled him. Agreeing with most of this analysis, Weber countered with the observation that such expropriation from the means of work was an inescapable result of any system of rationalized and centrally coordinated production, rather than being a consequence of capitalism as such. Such expropriation would characterize a socialist system of production just as much as it would the capitalist form. Moreover, Weber argued, Marx's nearly exclusive concern with the productive sphere led him to overlook the possibility that the expropriation of the workers from the means of production was only a special case of a more general phenomenon in modern society where scientists are expropriated from the means of research, administrators from the means of administration, and warriors from the means of violence. He further contended that in all relevant spheres of modern society men could no longer engage in socially significant action unless they joined a large-scale organization in which they were allocated specific tasks and to which they were admitted only upon condition they sacrificed their personal desires and predilections to the impersonal goals and procedures that governed the whole.

Max Weber

German Sociologist and First Analyst of Bureaucracy

Max Weber was the first to observe and write on bureaucracies which developed in Germany during the 19th century. He considered them to be efficient, rational and honest, a big improvement over the haphazard administration that they replaced. The German government was better developed than those in the United States and Britain and was nearly equal to that of France.

Weber saw that modern officialdom functioned according to six principles: (1) Fixed and official jurisdictional areas which are ordered by rules, that is laws and administrative regulations. (2) Hierarchy and levels of graded authority where the lower offices are supervised by the higher ones. (3) Management is based on official documents (the files). (4) The officials have thorough and expert training. (5) It requires the full time work of the official. (6) Management follows rules. While these principles seem obvious today, German government agencies were pioneering modern administration to replace practices dating back to the Middle Ages owing loyalty to the king, dukes and the church.

From the perspective of the official, Weber observed that office holding is a "vocation," that is it is a calling requiring a prescribed course of training for a long period of time and having examinations which are a prerequisite for employment. He is to be loyal to the office he holds, not to a patron. By virtue of his position, the official enjoys high social esteem. (Weber notes that this is especially weak in the United States.) The official is appointed by a superior official; he is not elected. Normally he works for the agency for life; he does not fear being fired for failing to please a patron. He receives a salary and an pension when he retires. The official pursues a career within the bureaucracy, moving up to more responsible positions according to his experience and ability.

When Weber wrote on bureaucracy or charismatic leadership, he was describing an "ideal type," not necessarily the form that actually occurred. He did this to clarify his explanation, not to pontificate. On the other hand, he was not totally dispassionate; he preferred the rational administration of the bureaucratic method. Weber studied and wrote extensively on religion. His concept of charisma derived from theology. His best known book is *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

Max Weber holds a leading position. He was the first to use the term "bureaucracy" as well as the first to analyze it comprehensively. Indeed analysts today speak of a "Weberian bureaucracy," meaning one that fits his ideal type closely. On the other hand, many have found negative features about bureaucracy. It can overconform to its rules and procedures, treating an individual like a number and generating red tape. It can ignore the wishes of elected leaders. It can displace goals, perhaps advancing the interests of the employees rather than the people it is supposed to serve. Weber ignores the issue of democratic control of bureaucracy.

Born in 1864, Weber held a series of academic appointments. For many years he suffered from mental illness, but recovered fully. At the end of World War I when the German

Empire collapsed totally, Weber was living in Munich. In the absence of any government, the people established their own which they called the Soviet of Munich, imitating those of the Russian Revolution the year before. Weber was elected to the Soviet where he met Kurt Eisner, its leader. Eisner was a creative and innovative man who seemed to know what to do when no one else did. Weber considered him an archetype of the charismatic leader. Weber died in 1920.

Marx's theory of human nature: alienation

Marx's conception of human nature is most dramatically put forward in the excerpts from the Economic Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 that I have assigned to you. But this work is very difficult and obscure. I have tried to select those passages that are most straightforward. But, as you will see, they are by no means very clear. Let me give you some guidelines for reading them.

These passages talk about four kinds of human alienation or estrangement: (1) from our product, (2) from our productive activity, (3) from our species being and (4) from other human beings. What I would like you to do in your first essay is to give a brief explication of three of these four types of alienation, all except (3), alienation from our species being. I will explain the third type of alienation here, which, I hope will, help you understand the other three types.

To be alienated or estranged is to be distanced, or in opposition, or somehow not in the proper relationship to something. In saying that we are alienated, Marx is claiming that we do not stand not in the proper to certain products, activities, people or features of our lives. And, for Marx, this means we are fundamentally dissatisfied and unhappy. For our basic ends or goals or wants include being in a proper relationship to these things.

All four phenomena from which we are alienated are related, in one way or another, to what Marx took to be the central feature of human life, our productive activity. Human beings are, for Marx, quintessentially beings who must be productive, who, that is, must interact with nature and other human beings to make things and effect changes in the world around us. By "species being," Marx means our essence as a species. Thus to be alienated from our species being is to be distanced from our fundamental nature as productive beings. Now how is this possible? How can we, or our lives, be in opposition to or not in the proper relationship to our very nature? To understand this, we must look a little more closely at what our nature or species being is.

Why is productive activity central to our nature? And what, precisely, does Marx mean by productive activity? For Marx, our productive activity has four essential features.

First, productive activity is necessary if human beings are to survive. We must be productive in some respect in order to live, unless we are so rich that we

simply spend our time counting the proceeds of our investments. But doing this is (minimally) productive activity. And buying and eating food, clothing and other goods is, for Marx, partly productive. The necessity of productive activity in our lives is, of course, is not distinctive to human beings. It is a trait we share with animals.

Second, we are unlike animals in that we engage in "free, conscious" productive activity. Our productive activity is distinct from animals in a number of ways. First, we make our productive activity itself a product of our will. We can make choices about what and how to produce. Animals produce only when doing so is necessary to their survival. And they produce only in ways that are fixed by their nature. But human beings can produce many kinds of goods and in many different ways. As Marx puts it, "man is capable of producing according to the standards of every species and of applying to each object its inherent standard; hence, man also produces in accordance with the laws of beauty." This is very important, because our capacity to choose how and what to produce enables us to choose what kind of individual and political and social life to live. The great diversity of forms of human life over time and space is made possible by our capacity to freely and consciously engage in productive activity.

Third, human productive activity is social in nature. This is true in a number of different respects. Much of what we produce is produced with other people either directly or indirectly. We produce with other people directly when we work with them to produce a particular good. We produce with other people indirectly when we use the products of their labor in producing goods ourselves. In addition, we produce what we do only because other people are willing to consume what we produce. As Marx puts it in the *Grundrisse*, "no production, no consumption; no consumption, no production."

Fourth, human beings find productive activity intrinsically satisfying. In part this is because productive activity allows us to develop and exercise our capacities, faculties, and abilities. Central to Marx's account of human nature is the notion that human beings are not slugs. We enjoy work that challenges and stimulates us to more effectively produce better products. And, when we can do work of this sort, we prefer work to rest. Indeed, the forms of recreation we most enjoy—when we are not entirely tired out—also challenge and stimulates us. The highest forms of consumption involves the development and exercise of our faculties and capacities and, for this reason, is a kind of productive activity. Think, for example, of how much more we enjoy music that we know and understand or how much more watching a basketball game means to someone who understands the game. In listening to music and watching a basketball game we are also developing and exercising our capacities, faculties, and abilities. Human productive activity is also intrinsically satisfying because it transforms our environment, making what is sometimes a difficult natural habitat into a partly human creation, one that is both fitted to us and our own. We work on nature, what Marx calls "man's

inorganic body," transforming it to suit our purposes. In doing so we "objectify our powers" or realize our capacities, faculties and abilities in concrete phenomena around us.

Given this account of human productive activity, we can understand what alienation from our species being is. In the conditions under which most human beings have lived—certainly under capitalism—we do not understand ourselves as Marx says we should. We do not think of productive activity as something enjoyable or as a means by which we transform our own way of life. Rather we think of it as a necessity and as drudgery. That is why Marx says that "The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions—eating, drinking, and procreating, or at most in his dwelling and adornment—while in his human functions, he is nothing more than animal." We don't think of ourselves as free, conscious, social producers but rather as being bound by the necessity to do unpleasant work that bring us into conflict with other people. Alienation from species being, then, is essentially misunderstanding our fundamental nature.

This general account of alienation from species being should help you to explain the other three kinds of alienation. Indeed, in understanding the three other kinds of alienation, you will in large part be explaining why we misunderstand our fundamental nature. You will be explaining what it is about our life that makes it hard for us to see just how central productive activity is to us.

To understand the first kind of alienation, alienation from one's product, it would be helpful to know one more thing about Marx's argument. Marx holds that in capitalist society, worker's are likely to become relatively poorer as their productive capacity increases. I give an account of Marx's argument here in the notes on Transition from Capitalism to Communism. Understanding this point will help you grasp why men and women become increasingly alienated from the product of their labor. By the way, we now know that Marx was wrong about this. Productivity increases lead to increases in absolute, if not relative wages, as we will in the notes on The Failure of Revolution. Yet it might be worth thinking about why Marx could still argue that we are all alienated from our product, at least to some extent.