

Introduction to One Hundred Years after Max Weber's Death

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(Translation of her intervention in A Hundred Years after Max Weber's Death)

<<https://sociologiauba.wixsite.com/socioaudiovisual/max-weber-100-anos>>

June 14, 2020 marks one hundred years since Max Weber's death.

The social and health crisis generated by the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented the multiple meetings that were planned for this year on the occasion of the centenary of his death. However, from the Chair of Weberian Thinking and at the behest of the Department of Sociology at the University of Buenos Aires, we have decided to pay a modest tribute by the virtual means that the current situation allows us.

As an introduction to what you are going to see, I would like to briefly refer to some aspects that are perhaps less known, or that may sound a bit disruptive about Weber, because they go against a vision that was long hegemonic and that still persists in the Latin American academic world, and that has to do with the legacy of the Parsonian interpretation on the author.

Talcott Parsons was, in fact, the one who read Weber as one of the founding fathers of Sociology; as a theorist of social action; as an anti-Marxist thinker and who highlighted the importance of *Economy and Society* and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as his most significant contributions.

Remembering Weber and paying him a fair tribute on his centenary implies, therefore, in these latitudes, making the effort to 'de-Parsonify' him, because it is largely an extemporaneous view of the author.

Weber studied Law and focused largely on History and Political Economy, but only later he recognized himself as a sociologist. Most of his work was devoted not so strictly to theory, but to empirical historical-sociological research.

Since the mid-1970s, the centrality of rationality and rationalization have been recognized as the common threads that give unity to Weber's work, and the importance of *Collected Essays in Sociology of Religion* has been emphasized to the detriment of *Economy and Society*, which today, strictly speaking, is not considered a work as such any longer.

Against this ideological reading of Parsons who presented Weber as an idealist and anti-Marxist thinker, a couple of things should be briefly said.

Weber considered capitalism as the power that determines the destiny of our modern life. The emphasis on *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* to speak about his vision of capitalism, leaves out other contributions where Weber adopts a very materialistic position in this regard. In fact, he tends to have a more materialistic vision.

Although he considered himself a member of the bourgeoisie and believed that capitalism was an inescapable destiny, and even the most desirable form of social organization that could be expected at the time, he was a rather bothersome thinker for the bourgeoisie, as long as he holds a very critical view of the reification tendencies that capitalism, bureaucracy and formal rationalization lead to.

He believed that it was not possible to understand modern society without the contributions of Marx and Nietzsche and that it was a true intellectual dishonesty not to recognize the influence and importance of these two thinkers to reflect on modern culture.

In summary, we want to highlight Weber's relevance and validity to explain and understand the modern capitalist society, but also to contribute to the understanding of contemporary events, as you will see in the interventions that follow in this video.

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