

Max weber: iron cage

Life



According to him the modern era human beings, especially in the western capitalist society are increasingly being caught in the process of Rationalism and the factors related to it such as, Bureaucracy, Disenchantment and Individualism. Through this essay we intend to agree with Weber about how he thought that Modern Capitalism in which people are rational is literally inescapable process in which they are getting locked into, and this ultimately gives rise to bureaucracy.

We will give some evidences proving Weber ideas on how the protestant ethics contributed to the rise of capitalism and also show how there are no solid alternatives to this problem of bureaucracy. In his book " Protestantism and the Spirit of Capitalism", Weber told us the Protestants who started off with an Ascetic life to whom their work was there " calling" I. E. Their only purpose in life was to work all day and not get pleasure from the fruits of their labor as self consumption was considered morally wrong because they were not to enjoy the money they earn on themselves.

But later on with the emergence of the modern capitalism, the Protestants eventually ended up in focusing more on the pursuit of money. They started applying rational and scientific methods in the ways of making money to increase their profit margins. This rational way is very much evident even today because people have lost their religious values and in the capitalist society we have now, they just want to seek more and more profit and build wealth more than they possibly could require.

According to Weber this went against the traditional Catholic Doctrine where they intend to avoid materialist pursuit by adopting the spiritual way of life.

This had a huge impact on people's life because in the capitalist society today most people are not concerned with the nature of their job nor do they enjoy it much as long as their social status is maintained and their financial goals are accomplished.

Weber through his writing has explained how people especially in the west were developing this rational, methodological and a calculating approach to lead a life which had completely triumphed over the old traditional and irrational way of making money to please the God. In the process of making money, whether you like it or not you are forced to adopt this methodological way where you work day and night not to get close to God but to gain profit and this is what Weber thought as the "Iron Cage of Capitalism", in which you continually pursue your calling and the spirit of capitalism is a cage where we are imprisoned in.

However Weber felt that the protestant ethics did not directly lead to spirit of capitalism, but it is one of the main factors that lead to it. According to him the old traditional way which was based mostly on kinship and values has shifted its form to goal oriented rationality. This is where Weber is switching his writings and explaining how the modern capitalism which gave rise to strict set of rules and regulations is directly giving rise to the growth of Bureaucracy because bureaucracy is the main example of Rationalization.

Weber argued that the rational goal oriented profit seeking ways had a tremendous impact on people's lives because this had dominated their behavior so much that the old spiritual values are being lost in the modern era. People were abandoning God, religion and spirituality in the name of

freedom, insisting that it was not possible to free with the restrictions that the religions impose but they forget to realize that they themselves were becoming slaves oftener own material pursuit.

This is what he meant by " Iron Cage" of Rationalism. This had increased their interest in power and authority which has taken the form of bureaucracy. Weber also explained the long term processes of Rationalism from which the magic has taken Out Of the world and there are no intrinsic mysteries in the world because the life has become so predictable and understandable that we could know the reason behind anything in world hence it makes life very dull and boring.

According to him the modern world has lost its enchantment because people have mastered in the scientific knowledge in the rational way NDsciencehas empowered them. In the book, Max Weber: Reading and Commentary on Modernity, Bureaucracy is described as " the means of transforming social actions into rationally organized action" (pig 214). Weber now is giving the example of bureaucratic organization which is enslaving people. According to Weber, Bureaucracy does have a lot of positive implications because these are effective in reaching the goal in a rational manner.

It gives individuals more security in their respective work areas unlike the feudal system and also sakes more specialists in a particular area of the organization. However Weber also points out the negative effects of bureaucracy as well. Bureaucratic organizations are the dominant form of institution in the modern society. It involves Hierarchy in offices where there

are clear command of structures and expects the employee who is on bottom to report the higher employee and so on.

It has written documents for the rules of conduct and you have to obey whatever the organization expects from you. They are also considered as very impersonal because they take away our emotions and feelings out of the situation and force you to do exactly what is required from their job and now your " impersonal" duty of office becomes your " calling" of life, because even if you disagree with something you still have to do it because you are mandated to follow instructions and obey the authority.

In other words, in this process of Rationalization where people are forced to do whatever the bureaucratic organization expects it to do is what Weber thought as the " Iron cage" of the Bureaucracy. This restricts people to be creative and spontaneous and you are trapped into this cage forever escaping from the traditional religious ways. Weber goes on to say that this has a drastic consequences in people's lives as it had created inequality which keeps on increasing and keeps popping up, getting bigger and bigger as it is spreading everywhere.

Weber saw some alternatives to these dominant organizations such as a charismatic leader who can break away its populace from this organization because according to him it was the charismatic style of organizations that maintain social creativity by giving people more freedom from the rules and regulations. According to him a charismatic leader is a person who is creative and possess extra ordinary qualities who makes up their own rules

and this is a good solution because charismatic ruler is somewhere in between the 2 extremes forms, Bureaucratic and traditional organizations.

The big feature of expansion of bureaucracy is taking the charisma out of the organizations which trying very hard to be an alternative and opposite of bureaucratic organization. However there is also a problem associated with charismatic Organization hat it has a transitional phenomenon, which means it is very hard to make it last for a long time in its purest form because eventually it ends up becoming either Traditional or Bureaucratic.

He also explains another alternative is; for examples if you have a community involved in every single decision, it becomes very messy and hard in terms of getting things done in the right way and efficient manner because everyone has the equal calling. So these are the reasons you can't escape bureaucracy and it has become the basic feature of the modern capitalist society. As Weber states; " Once fully established, Bureaucracy is among those social Structures which is the hardest to destroy"(pig 214).