

# German social scientist max weber

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Max Weber on Religion Max Weber, a German social scientist born in 1864, felt religion played an important role in society. Weber attended the University of Berlin where he studied economics and law, along with several other subjects including philosophy, religion and art. He had three tools of sociological inquiry that focused on explaining human actions. Weber's first principle of Verstehen is the German term for "understanding." This principle states that we cannot explain the actions of humans because they are not driven by external factors but by internal values held by the individual.

The second is Ideal-Typus, which states that we form a purposeful exaggeration of what should be. And lastly, his principle of Values states that when dealing with science, values should not be mixed in. Also facts and values are very different things. In Weber's first major work on religion, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, he claims "that there is a close connection between religion, the rise of economic capitalism, and the birth of modern civilization in Western Europe" (Pals 160).

He observed that the Protestants were leading in business and he concluded that they did everything following the will of God in their lives. Therefore, Weber believed that religion does affect one's behavior causing it to affect the economy. In *Sociology of Religion*, Weber focuses on three different religious leaders. The first is a magician. For Weber, religion is something that is fixed with special experiences, or "ecstatic states", and magicians are those that are put "beyond the realm of everyday activity and disclose themselves to another realm of reality" (Pals 166).

Magicians would be called to cure illnesses or assist in the growth of crops. Weber thinks that they are “ permanently endowed with charisma” which is key in a religious leader. The second religious leader that Weber talks about is a priest. They are usually in charge of religious rituals held in a temple. And lastly, the third of the religious leaders is the prophet. They are the bearers of charisma. Weber’s theory on religion is not one that I completely agree with but it is one that I found interesting.