of public life are overloaded by the concept of a "proletarian public sphere," by which is meant the form in which the universal interests of the producing class are the driving force, as a "block of real life" whose homogeneity is constituted by its opposition to the "profit-maximizing interest" as such. Öffentlichkeit und Erfahrung, pp. 163, 107. Kluge's more recent attempt to define a genuine, oppositional public sphere as a form of commonly shared experience that does not entail "exclusions" is equally misleading; see his discussions with Klaus Eder, published in Klaus Eder and Alexander Kluge, Über Dramaturgie: Reihenübersicht (Munich, 1980). In view of the highly differentiated character of both those who are subordinated and those who resist, the belief that there exists a single revolutionary class or group that is presently enduring a trial of powerlessness so that it can later become capable of a generalized critique of all powerlessness must be given up as dogmatic prejudice. Any political or theoretical attempt to impute or articulate the autonomous movements' "universal" (say, as citizens, "working class," or "humanity") is not only bound to privilege the claims and organizational power of one fragment of these movements at the expense of others; such imputation also typically generates the chauvinistic (and potentially authoritarian) anticipation of a future world stripped of all ambiguity and social division, a universe that is structured only by nonantagonistic contradictions and peaceful relations between "people," "workers," "human beings," and so on. This prejudice, which jeopardizes the possibility of a plurality of autonomous public spheres, has been a constant feature of critiques of bureaucracy since Lenin's The State and Revolution. It continues to be evident in a surprising number of recent discussions of the new autonomous movements' resistance to bureaucratic domination; in addition to Negri and Kluge, see, for example, Toni Negri, "Capitalism, Domination and Working Class Sabotage," in Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis (London, 1979); James O'Connor, "The Fiscal Crisis of the State Revisited: Economic Crisis and Reagan's Budget Policy," Kapitalistate, vol. 9 (1981), pp. 41-61; and Touraine, La Voix et le regard.

2. The Legacy of Max Weber

1. Describing the aims of the Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik after its editorship was transferred to Edgar Jaffé, Werner Sombart, and Max Weber, Weber himself stressed: "Our aim is the understanding of the characteristic uniqueness of the reality in which we move. We wish to understand on the one hand the relationships and the cultural significance of individual events in their contemporary manifestations and on the other the causes of their being historically so and not otherwise" (The Methodology of the Social Sciences, ed. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch [New York, 1949], p. 72 [hereafter cited as MS]).

2. Max Weber, Gesammelte Politische Schriften (Tübingen, 1928), p. 60 (hereafter cited as GPS); cf. GPS, pp. 60-61: "It is highly judicious to impute to modern high capitalism... any elective affinity with 'democracy' or even 'freedom' (in any meaning of the word)."


5. MS, pp. 71ff, 139-67; cf. GAW, pp. 327ff.


9. FMW, pp. 297-8. The propriety of bureaucratic systems for emancipating themselves from the "motivational structure" of their members is a favorite theme of Niklas Luhmann; see his The Differentiation of Society (New York, 1982), ch. 3.

10. FMW, pp. 214, 228, 233-6. It must be noted that, especially in his discussions of political events in Germany and Russia, Weber tends to weaken this explanation of the advance of bureaucratization under modern conditions. Not only technical competence, but also the arrogant will to power of bureaucratic elites, is reckoned to be a fundamental source of their power. See, for instance, GSP, pp. 82-3, 140-1, 276, and 31-2, note 1, where, speaking of the 1865 Russian events, Weber refers to the "enlightened" bureaucracy, which quite naturally looked down scornfully on the "muddling through" and impractical "stubbornness," the "private interests," the "stupidity" and egoism, the "utopian dreams" of the intelligentsia, the self-governing bodies, the "cliques" of the Press — from its point of view, all this continually impeded its promotion of the utilitarian happiness of the people, and thwarted the appropriate respect for authority required by "reasons of state."

11. FMW, pp. 105, 225. Weber here discusses several other examples of these technical imperatives. The bureaucratization of legal procedures in late Rome, he argues, was necessary because of the increasing complexity of both practical legal cases and the increasingly specialized economy. Similarly, he explains the emergence of machine politics in nineteenth-century England as an effort of the people's need to win the masses through the technical efficiency of a "tremendous" bureaucratic apparatus that relied (after 1868) on the census system.

12. Ibid., pp. 223-4. Thus Weber sees the "irresistible demand" for certain types of education as linked with opportunities for high status and salaried positions within expanding bureaucracies, and not with some disinterested thirst for education or a desire for cultivation and good learning; see, for example, ibid., pp. 240-4, and GPS, pp. 235-6.


15. This was first published in 1900, and translated as The Philosophy of Money (London, 1978); see the critique of Simmel in PE, p. 185, note 2. Weber also wielded this argument against Lujo Brentano's Die Anfänge des modernen Kapitalismus. According
to Weber (PE, p. 198, note 13), Brentano “has thrown every kind of struggle for gain, whether peaceful or warlike, into one pot, and has then set up as the specific criterion of capitalism (as contrasted, for instance, with feudal profit-seeking, its acquisitiveness of money (instead of land)).”

16 ES, p. 86. Conversely (ES, pp. 100f.), Weber insists that rational capital accounting of economic activity is impossible in principle if calculations are in kind.

17 PE, p. 58; cf. PE, p. 69.

18 ES, p. 159.

19 FMW, p. 366; PE, p. 181; ES, p. 140.


21 “Socialism,” p. 208; ES, p. 140.

22 PE, pp. 17, 64.

23 ES, pp. 91ff., 154–5.

24 The capitalist monopoly of the physical means of production, Weber argues (ES, pp. 147–8), was the effect of the complex ensemble of modern developments, including the effective monopolization of monopoly by entrepreneurs; the appropriation of product marketing rights (e.g., through the formation of monopoly guilds or through privileges granted by political authorities in return for periodic payments and loans); the subjective discrimination of putting-out system workers by means of entrepreneurial control of the supply of raw materials; and finally, the development of workshops marked by the appropriation of all means of production by capitalist entrepreneurs.


26 ES, p. 162; cf. “Socialism,” p. 201: “A modern factory proprietor does not employ just any worker, just because he might work for a low wage. Rather he puts the man in the machine on piece-wages and says: ‘All right, now work, I shall see how much you earn’; and if the man does not prove himself capable of earning a certain minimum wage he is told: ‘We are sorry, you are not suited to this occupation, we cannot use you’. He is dismissed because the machine is not working to capacity unless the man in front of it knows how to utilise it fully.”

27 PE, p. 22; cf. ES, p. 92.

28 GASS, pp. 396f.; cf. the description of the modern factory (GASS, pp. 224–5), with its “hierarchic authority structure, its discipline, its chaining of the men to the machines, its spatial agglomeration and yet isolation of the workers (in comparison with the spinning rooms of the past), its formidable accounting system that reduces down to the simplest hand movement of the worker.”

29 ES, p. 137. In only a few passages (e.g., ES, pp. 92, 99–100) does Weber discuss the modern corporations’ propensity for bureaucratically manufacturing opportunities for selling the goods they produce. (The consequences and limitations of this corporate, bureaucratic stimulation of wants later became of central concern to Adorno, whose theses are analyzed in Essay 3.)


31 ES, pp. 92, 108, and 93: “Capital accounting in its formally most rational shape...presupposes the battle of man with man.”

32 “Socialism,” pp. 210, 211.

33 ES, pp. 108, 110, 150–1: “Socialism,” pp. 201–2, 209–11. Weber’s emphasis on the last-mentioned condition is linked with his belief that it was “the dictatorship of the official, not that of the worker which, for the present at any rate, is on the advance” (ibid., p. 209).

34 ES, p. 162.

35 PE, pp. 24; see also PE, p. 75; and FMW, p. 131.

36 ES, pp. 67, 121, 135, 162.

37 Ibid., p. 92.

38 Ibid., p. 94.

39 This point is well emphasized in David Beetham, Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics (London, 1974).


41 Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in Selected Works, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1942), pp. 110–11. Cf. the later discussion of Carey, Bastiat, and the United States in Karl Marx, Grundrisse (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 884–9, and Capital, vol. 1 (Moscow, 1970), p. 703, where Marx notes that “the power of the State” is “the concentrated and organized force of society.” His typical account of the bourgeois state as superstructural is analyzed more thoroughly in my “The Legitimacy in Political Economy: Thinking with and against Claus Offe,” Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory & Revue canadienne de théorie politique et sociale, vol. 2, no. 3 (1978), pp. 50–5. Of course, it should be added that Marx elsewhere pointed to frequent instances in which the bourgeoisie continued to hinder the achievement of bourgeois hegemony; and (3) the failure of one particular class (or class fraction) to attain dominance over the others. These exceptions can be interpreted as anomalies with which classical Marxism never satisfactorily dealt.

42 MNS, pp. 70, 188.


44 Stammelr, p. 87.

45 FMW, p. 212; ES, pp. 1150–6.

46 FMW, p. 218.

47 Though the principle and practice of a “law without gaps” was (and still remains) hotly contested, Weber remarks (FMW, p. 219) that the early modern legal system more and more came to depend upon the modern judge, who resembles “an automaton into which the “laws and the force are thrown in order that it may spill forth the verdict at the bottom along with the reasons, read mechanically from codified paragraphs.”


49 FMW, p. 77; cf. ES, p. 84, where Weber elaborates Franz Oppenheimer’s distinction between “economic” and “political” means, the latter being understood as synonymous with the direct appropriation of goods by force and with the direct coercion of others by threats or (actual use) of force.

50 See FMW, p. 78, where Weber expresses one of his most famous theses: “The state is a relation of humans dominating humans, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e., considered to be legitimate) violence.”

51 Ibid., pp. 97–8.

52 Ibid., p. 108; cf. ES, pp. 284–8; and FMW, pp. 109–10: “The typical boss is an
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absolutely sober man. He does not seek social honor; the ‘professional’ is despised in respectable society. He seeks power alone, power as a source of money, but also power for power’s sake... the boss has no firm political ‘principles’; he is completely unprincipled in attitude and asks merely: What will capture votes?”

53 FWM, pp. 102ff. Weber’s criticism of legislatures as “bananas” assembles incapable of generating political leadership is particularly evident in his last writings (see GPS, p. 488).

54 “Socialism,” p. 197; PE, p. 16.

55 FWM, p. 88.

56 ES, p. 162.

57 GPS, p. 259; ES, p. 929; “Freiburg,” passim.

58 In at least one place (ES, p. 199), Weber does, however, anticipate the possibility of fiscal problems of the modern state. In the event of such problems arising, Weber argued for a form of corporatist rearrangement of state policy making: “One might proceed... in the ‘socialization’ of the capitalistic enterprises of individual branches, by imposing compulsory cartels or combinations with obligations to pay large sums in taxes. Thus they could be made useful for fiscal purposes, while production would continue to be oriented rationally to the price situation.”

59 FWM, p. 208; ES, p. 167.


61 FWM, p. 213; cf. “Socialism,” p. 199, where Weber insists that bureaucratic concentration of tools within all spheres (the factory, the state administration, the army, university faculties) is due in part to the nature of modern tools.

62 FWM, p. 215.

63 ES, p. 228.

64 FWM, p. 213.

65 ES, p. 1394; cf. FWM, pp. 81, 131; and “Socialism,” p. 199.

66 On the background to controversies between the conservative and liberal factions of the Verein für Sozialpolitik see Dieter Lindenlaub, Rechtsgüterkämpfe im Verein für Sozialpolitik (1890–1814), 2 vols. (Wiesbaden, 1967); and Beetham, Max Weber, ch. 1 and pp. 63ff.

67 GASS, p. 415.

68 ES, pp. 85–108.

69 FWM, p. 213.


73 “Freiburg,” p. 441.

74 Cf. Weber’s early inversion of this evolutionist assumption: “Abandon hope all ye who enter here; these words are inscribed above the portals of the unknown future history of humanity” (ibid., p. 437).

75 See, for example, Karl Kautsky, The Labour Revolution (London, 1925); and Lenin’s polemic—directed at “autonomism,” “anarchism,” and bourgeois intellectuals who accept organizational relations platonically—in support of the thesis that bureaucracy is “the organizational principle of revolutionary Social Democracy” (“One Step Forward, Two Steps Back,” in Selected Works, vol. 1 [Moscow, 1970], pp. 275–7, 403ff., 430–1).


77 GPS, pp. 474 and 448: “The Communist Manifesto rightly emphasized the economically—not politically—revolutionary character of the project of bourgeois capitalistic entrepreneurs. No trade union, even less a state socialist functionary, can replace these entrepreneurs and perform this role for us.”

78 ES, pp. 110 and 151: “Other things being equal, positive motives for work are, in the absence of direct compulsion, not obstructed to the same extent as they are for unfree labour.”

79 Ibid., p. 128.

80 GASS, pp. 107–12.

81 “Socialism,” pp. 197, 214–15; ES, pp. 139 and 148, where Weber notes that, in the contemporary capitalist world, this expansion of an administrative strata was already evident in the restructuring of capitalist enterprises into associations of stockholders.

82 GASS, p. 414.


84 “Socialism,” p. 204; GPS, p. 242. Weber considered that this tendency for state bureaucracy to weaken private economic power was already at work within the period of “high capitalism.” Stadism was also a decisive characteristic of Rome during its decline: “Bureaucracy stifled private enterprise in Antiquity. There is nothing unusual in this, nothing peculiar to Antiquity. Every bureaucracy tends to intervene in economic matters with the same result. This applies to the bureaucracy of modern Germany too” (Agrarian Sociology, p. 365).

85 “Freiburg,” p. 440.

86 PE, For an account of the early polemics (between 1904 and 1910) concerning this thesis, see J. Winckelmann, Max Weber: Die protestantische Ethik II: Kritiken und Antikritiken (Munich, 1968); more recent controversies are analyzed in Gordon Marshall, In Search of the Spirit of Capitalism (London, 1982).

87 PE, p. 36.


89 PE, p. 53; cf. PE, p. 153. Weber elsewhere (ES, p. 100) speaks of a “natural economy” (Naturlirtschaft) to designate forms of economic life from which money as a medium of exchange is absent, either because there is no exchange at all or because exchange is only by barter.

90 PE, pp. 171, 250, note 152, 263–4, note 22.

91 Ibid., p. 177. Weber is overly ambiguous about the degree and scope of this self-rationalization process. His comment that the “treatment of labor... as a calling became as characteristic of the modern worker as the corresponding attitude toward acquisition of the business man” (ibid., p. 179) seems rather exaggerated. Elsewhere, for example, he proposes (with reference to the squerarchy, the original bearers of “merrie old Engeland”) that the elements of an “unspoiled naive joy of life” remain a crucial aspect of English national character (ibid., pp. 173, 279, note 91).

92 Ibid., p. 176.

93 Ibid., p. 182; cf. ibid., pp. 54, 70–2, 188, note 3.

94 FWM, p. 117; MSS, p. 144.

95 MSS, pp. 134–5, 139.