

The background of the slide features a light teal color with several thick, expressive black brushstrokes. These strokes are oriented diagonally, with some running from the top-left towards the bottom-right and others from the top-right towards the bottom-left, creating a dynamic, artistic frame around the central text.

# SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY

Max Weber

WINTER TERM 2024



What is sociology according to Weber?

What is *Verstehen*?

How we should approach social reality?

What is social action?

The role of interpretation in sociology?

(1864-1920)

MAX WEBER



# how did Weber become a sociologist?

He studied Polish poor migrants coming from Wielkopolska region to Berlin (rural areas)

The question he posed: why does some of the young men come back to their homes, after work season and other stay in Berlin?

The answer he came up with: boys from a bigger and richer farms valued more their personal freedom than economic duty towards their families.

HIGHER ASPIRATIONS

SUBJECTIVE MEANING OF SOCIAL  
ACTION

# *Verstehen*

- intersubjective meaning
- a tool for learning culture and „language“ of a given society
- interpersonal intuition

# *Verstehen*

to understand the social phenomena

hermeneutics = to understand:

actors

interaction

all human history



# ideal types

- a heuristic device

„Its function is the comparison with empirical reality in order to establish its divergences or similarities, to describe them with the most unambiguously intelligible concepts and to understand and explain them casually“ Weber 1903

# what is sociology?

1. A science
2. Concerned with causality
3. Utilizing interpretative approach

SCIENCE IS NOT A MIRROR OF REALITY



value-free sociology

the interpretation  
of action in terms  
of its subjective  
meaning



value-free  
approach towards  
the object of study

# social action

action aimed at others, intentional

4 kinds of social actions:

1. means-end rationality
2. value rationality
3. affectual
4. traditional

# authority

- legal authority
- traditional authority
- charismatic authority



*The Protestant  
Ethic and the Spirit  
of Capitalism*  
(1905)

