Sociology 617
Fall 2014

Sociological Theory I

Week 9. Weber: Authority, Bureaucracy, Rationalization

1. What various meanings and connotations does Weber give to the concept of "rationalization?" Do these various meanings form a coherent whole, or are there inconsistencies among them? In what sense and for what reasons, according to Weber, is there a trend toward rationalization in human history? <u>What are the tensions or contradictions produced by increasing rationalization? Illustrate Weber's concept of rationalization (and its discontents) with reference to contemporary American society</u>.

2. What are the characteristics of the "ideal typical" bureaucracy, according to Weber? To what does Weber attribute the spread of bureaucratic organization and authority? What does he see as the positive and negative consequences of the spread of bureaucracy? <u>What importance does the concept of bureaucracy have in Weber's generally pessimistic vision of the future of industrial societies? What criticisms can be raised against Weber's analysis of bureaucracy</u>?

3. Summarize the key points of Weber's analysis of American democracy in "Politics as a Vocation." How accurate is Weber's analysis as applied to contemporary U.S. politics? Weber mentions three possible bases of political authority: traditional, charismatic, and rational-legal? <u>Why is there no place for "democratic authority" in Weber's schema? What barriers does Weber see to the realization of the ideals of democracy? Do these barriers appear to be insuperable from Weber's perspective</u>?

4. What role does "charisma" play in Weber's overall analysis of politics and social change? How does charisma relate to the process of rationalization? Why, according to Weber, is charismatic authority inherently self-limiting? <u>How can Weber's concept of charisma be applied to analyze specific issues in contemporary American politics</u>?