



Weber, Passion and Profits: 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in Context

Jack Barbalet

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Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is one of the best-known and most enduring texts of classical sociology, continually inspirational and widely read by both scholars and students. In an insightful interpretation, Jack Barbalet discloses that Weber's work is not simply about the cultural origins of capitalism but an allegory concerning the Germany of his day. Situating *The Protestant Ethic* in the development of Weber's prior and subsequent writing, Barbalet traces changes in his understanding of key concepts including 'calling' and 'rationality'. In a close analysis of the ethical underpinnings of the capitalist spirit and of the institutional structure of capitalism, Barbalet identifies continuities between Weber and the eighteenth-century founder of economic science, Adam Smith, as well as Weber's contemporary, the American firebrand Thorstein Veblen. Finally, by considering Weber's investigation of Judaism and capitalism, important aspects of his account of Protestantism and capitalism are revealed.

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