

Whimster, Sam (Ed.) (2004) *The Essential Weber: A Reader*, New York: Routledge.

Weber is increasingly being recognized as the theorist of modernity. Avoiding the mistakes of other classical thinkers, his sociological analysis has an increasing validity and relevance. Weber explained the work ethic, impersonal bureaucracy, the criteria for profit maximization, charismatic and legal rulership, the fate of salvation doctrines and the place of science. With the triumph of capitalistic modernity his writings on disenchantment, the force of community, the separation of law and justice, and the reduction of personality to instrumental expertise have a ring of prophecy.

The Essential Weber, selected by one of the world's leading Weber scholars, introduces the work of this key thinker to a new generation of readers. Central themes highlighted in the collection are: the developmental logic of world religions; the rise of modern capitalism; the multi-dimensionality of power in societies; the dilemmas of modernity; the theory of social action; ideal types and the objectivity of knowledge.

The majority of the readings have been specially translated for this collection both to improve accuracy and to make Weber speak anew in the twenty-first century. Each part opens with a short introduction explaining the sequence of readings, the flow of ideas and their intellectual context, and concludes with a guide to further reading.

Author Sam Whimster is Reader in Sociology at London Metropolitan University and editor of Max Weber Studies.