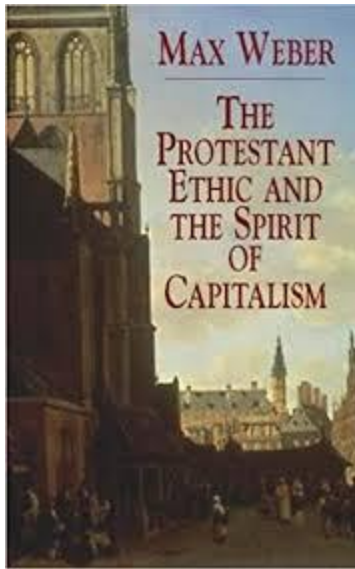


**Max Weber (1864 -1920):  
Plebiscitary Democracy & Liberal  
Democracy**

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# Max Weber (1864-1920)

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Weber was born in Erfurt in Thuringia, Germany on April 21, 1864

He was the oldest of seven children.

In college Weber studied law, economics, medieval history, and theology.

In 1893 he married his distant cousin Marianne Schnitger, who later became a feminist and author.

Along with Marx and Durkheim he is regarded as one of the founders of modern sociology.

On June 14, 1920 he died of pneumonia.



## **Weber with his students at the University in early twentieth century**

The International Sociological Association in 2011 rates Max Weber's works *Economy and Society* (1922) and *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism* (1904-1905), numbers one and four in the top ten books of the twentieth century .

**Was Weber gave an affirmative answer to the question of democracy? Is his concept of “Plebiscitary democracy” restrictive one? To what extent can Weber's “Plebiscitary democracy” contribute to the understanding of liberal democracy? Was he a liberal in the modern sense of liberty? Was he an advocate of representative democracy or direct democracy? Was he the godfather of Nazi dictatorship?**

## What Does Plebiscitary Democracy Means?

Plebiscitary as a form of democracy means, the masses choose a leader. Weber insists that the plebiscite is a form of legitimation and that it sanctions the leader as a ruler, but gives no power to the governed masses. Plebiscitary democracy - the most important kind of leader democracy - is a variant of charismatic authority, which hides behind a legitimacy that is formally derived from the will of the governed. Plebiscitary leadership is “the transformation of charisma in a democratic direction”.

**Power “*Macht*” &  
‘Domination’ “*Herrschaft*”**

# Conclusion

Weber did not anticipate a clear solution for the liberal democracy as a representative democracy, which based on the idea of government by popular consent. He has been called “a liberal in despair” , an “aristocratic liberal” (Mommensen,1974: 95), or as Christoph Steding put it “pessimistic liberal” (Beetham,1974:54), or “nostalgic liberal” (H. Gerth & C. Right Mills, 1974:50), (S. Eliaeson, 1998:47)). However, Sven Eliaeson rightly stated that “all his life Weber was a national liberal, even if he was more ‘rightist’ in the early years” (S. Eliaeson, 1998: 50). On the other hand, Weber's interpretation of charismatic leader under the condition of plebiscitary democracy as a result may be regarded as a political solution relevant to the German state rather than to Europe as a whole.