

Max Weber's Legacy and the Historical Study of Sport

by

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Max Weber's (1864-1920) work represents an attempt to transcend the philosophical positions of idealism and positivism. In the words of H. Stuart Hughes, Max Weber, more than any of his contemporaries, was eminently qualified to confront these philosophical positions and to determine in his own work, whether their differences were reconcilable. Since we believe that the social sciences are historical disciplines and we concur with C. Wright Mills who notes that "only by an act of abstraction that unnecessarily violates social reality can we try to freeze some knife-edge moment," we are of the opinion that in an attempt to understand the transition from "from what" to "to what," Max Weber's work is particularly instructive. Weber's work is insightful in that it directs our attention to certain mediators which have been instrumental in the historical transformation of modern industrial societies. Here we might specifically point to his concepts of "rational purposive action" (*Zweckrationalem*), rationalization, and routinization. The purpose of the paper, then, was to synopsise the heuristic nature of Weber's work and to show, by briefly outlining some possible research avenues, the contemporary relevance of Weber to an understanding of the historical development of organized sport.