

Third Roxbury Edition

MAX WEBER

The Protestant Ethic and the
Spirit of Capitalism

The Expanded 1920 Version
Authorized by Max Weber
for Publication in Book Form

New Introduction and Translation by
Stephen Kalberg
Boston University

Includes Weber's Essays
'The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism'
and
'Prefatory Remarks' to Collected Essays in the
Sociology of Religion



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Advance Praise for
The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism
Third Roxbury Edition

“Stephen Kalberg has produced a book that teachers and students will find invaluable. What an excellent idea, to combine a new translation of Max Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* with other closely related writings of Weber’s, including a detailed and accessible introduction and supporting background information on Weber the man, on the book, and on its place in contemporary social science. Kalberg’s comprehensive introduction manages to be informative and scholarly while remaining a clear and intelligible guide to the book. The introduction offers an accurate and refined statement of Weber’s important and influential (if often misunderstood) thesis, placing it in the context of its era and to Weber’s general idea of sociology. This new version of *The Protestant Ethic* should greatly improve upon its predecessor and clear up misunderstandings of Weber’s meaning which the earlier translation may have engendered.”

—Wes Sharrock, *University of Manchester*

“This new translation of Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic*, one of the most important social science works of the twentieth century, is a welcome and worthwhile enterprise. It carefully presents the numerous and important nuances of Weber’s text, giving a clear idea of the place of this text in the intellectual framework of his time. Professor Kalberg’s introduction provides a very interesting commentary on this text as well as the place of Weber’s work in the history of sociology and its relevance to the central problems of contemporary sociology theory. [The book] is a distinct contribution—and a tool for students of sociological theory and its history.”

—S. N. Eisenstadt, *The Hebrew University of Jerusalem*

About the Translator

Stephen Kalberg is the author of *Max Weber’s Comparative-Historical Sociology* (1994), *Max Weber’s Sociology of Civilizations* (forthcoming), and numerous articles on Weber. He is the editor of *Max Weber: The Confrontation with Modernity* (2003). He teaches at Boston University, where he is Associate Professor of Sociology. He is also co-chair of the German Study Group at Harvard University’s Center for European Studies.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TRANSLATION*

Stephen Kalberg

The only heretofore existing translation into English of Max Weber's renowned study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*¹ (*PE*), is now over seventy years old. Ideally, classic works should be retranslated every generation. As translations age, they become less accessible to younger audiences. Languages changed especially rapidly in the twentieth century and many terms and expressions quickly acquired a hollow ring. Moreover, whereas the 1930 translation of *PE* was oriented mainly to scholars and students steeped in a liberal arts canon, today's readership is more general and less acquainted with the great works of the past. This new translation is long overdue.

It has been guided by two goals. First, I have sought to render Weber's text more accessible to the many audiences it has now acquired: scholars, students, undergraduate instructors, and not least, the general reader. Second, I have attempted to retain the integrity of Weber's study by offering a close-to-the-text translation. The full substance of his thought must be conveyed and his nuanced, complex reasoning must be captured accurately. Indeed, I have sought to provide a translation that offers the reliability of meaning and precision of intention, especially in respect to Weber's fine-grained causal lines of argument, indispensable to scholars of his works. In sum, I have placed a premium upon *both* readability and accuracy. For many texts, fulfillment of both of these goals would not present a large challenge to a translator. Unfortunately, in this respect, *PE* deviates from the norm and strays far afield from the "user-friendly" ideal.

Published in 1904–05 in two parts in a social science journal,² Weber knew that his audience of scholars would be conversant with the entire landscape of Western history. As difficult as it may be for us to imagine today, his readers were quite capable of tracing the ebb and flow of Western civilization's unfolding since the ancient Greeks. All had attended elite schools (Gymnasien) that emphasized philosophy, litera-

* This is the third printing of the Roxbury Third Edition (June, 2002). A number of printer's errors have been corrected. Three passages that included translation errors have been revised.

ture, and languages, and all had benefited from three cycles of instruction, over a nine-year period, on the entire history of the West. Weber was well aware that his short-hand references—whether to ancient Greek mythology, medieval monastic orders, or civil wars in England—would be readily understood.³ Moreover, in keeping with the format of scholarly writing in Germany at the time, he knew that “matters of presentation” required little attention. Unfortunately, publishers in Weber’s time in Germany did not employ copyeditors.⁴

Weber’s study not only lapses occasionally into abbreviated formulations and fails to provide identifying cues to obscure persons and places, it also confronts the reader frequently with sentences one-half page in length and paragraphs two or three pages long. Multiple clauses reside within each sentence, as Weber continuously struggles to lay out his theme in all its complexity. Yet even when he succeeds in doing so in a nuanced fashion, he frequently calls attention to qualifications and emphasizes the milieu-specific contingency of his statements.

Any attempt by a translator to render Weber’s text in a way that exactly captures his own manner of writing will stand opposed to the first goal mentioned above: readability and accessibility. This aim has required conformity to a practice frequently followed in German-English translations, namely, the radical shortening of sentences and paragraphs. In addition, in order to designate more clearly major and minor emphases, I have occasionally inserted parentheses into long sentences that proved impossible to shorten.

However, it soon became apparent that my goal of readability and accessibility would not be adequately achieved through these measures alone. Hence, several propaedeutic aids became indispensable:

- Persons, places, groups, and documents have been identified in short bracketed phrases inserted into the text.
- Some persons, places, groups, and documents have been further identified in new endnotes; [sk] follows these endnotes.
- Occasional endnotes that clarify Weber’s argument have been added; [sk] follows these endnotes.
- Short supplementary phrases have occasionally been added into the text, in brackets, on those occasions where Weber’s shorthand formulations require clarification.⁵

- Translations, in brackets, of foreign language passages have been added. *All passages in brackets in the text and endnotes are mine.*
- Terms that are key to Weber's argument, as well as several historical terms, have been defined in a glossary; their first usage in each chapter has been set in bold type.
- With only a few exceptions as required by context, the translation of all key terms has been standardized throughout the book. In this manner, Weber's forceful call for terminological precision in the social sciences has been respected and the major threads of his argument can more easily be followed.
- Innumerable partial bibliographical entries have been adjusted and completed.

In two important ways Weber *did* assist his audience. First, he did so through regular italicization. Although italicization at the level he practiced is generally not permitted today in English publications, Weber's frequent italicization is retained. He regularly orients and guides his reader to concepts, themes, and distinctions central to his argument through this mode of emphasis. Second, Weber inserts nuance through regular use of inverted commas ("national character"). This practice has also been retained, as it indicates his unwillingness to accept fully a number of commonly used concepts and his awareness of their problematic and controversial character.

Finally, this translation designates the paragraphs and endnotes that Weber added in 1920 when he prepared *PE* for publication in his three-volume series, *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*.⁶ All such paragraphs and endnotes are followed by [1920].⁷ These additions mainly involved: (a) responses to criticism of *PE* published in journals and newspapers from 1907–10;⁸ (b) responses to books by his colleagues Sombart and Brentano; (c) independent clarifications of his argument;⁹ (d) comparisons of ascetic Protestantism to Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Confucianism; (e) reference to an overarching process in the developmental history of Western religions according to which magic became eliminated (*Entzauberung*) as a viable mechanism to assist the search for salvation; and (f) extensions of bibliographical sources.

This new edition also includes a new translation of Weber's introduction to his *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion* series (1920; see pp. 149–164). His essay on the Protestant sects and churches in America, written shortly after his visit in the United States and translated by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, is reprinted (1906; see pp. 127–147). Only slight alterations of their translation, on behalf of terminological consistency, have been undertaken.

Throughout my work on this new translation I have been the fortunate recipient of a completely unexpected outpouring of generosity from friends, colleagues, and specialists. It has far exceeded any claims for assistance that a translator might reasonably expect, and it has sustained me.

I am very pleased to acknowledge the vital assistance of Susan Converse Winslow and Jim Ballinger of Roxbury Publishing Company. The entire Roxbury staff mobilized behind this book in an extraordinarily impressive fashion. I am especially grateful to Roxbury's president, Claude Teweles, for having the vision to see the importance of this new translation and the patience to see the project through to its proper conclusion.

A number of persons offered specialized assistance at various points along my journey: Juliane Brandt, Josef Chytry, Jeff Coulter, Lewis A. Coser, Gail Hartman, John Heecht, Adam Kissel, Donald Levine, Charles Lindholm, Sandro Segre, Guenther Roth, David N. Smith, Paul Windolf, and Kurt H. Wolff. Their helpfulness has been a source of inspiration to me.

Robert J. Antonio, Ira J. Cohen, Lyn Macgregor, and Michael Moody read an entire early draft of the text and offered comments that altered the direction of my work. My bicultural assistant, Jessica Horst, tirelessly tracked down dozens of references in Boston-area libraries and on the internet. Ulrich Nanko, a theologian in Stuttgart, located innumerable obscure persons and documents in the best German encyclopedias. John Drysdale, a native speaker of English, closely evaluated the entire translation; his suggestions were always beneficial and almost always accepted. Finally, I owe my greatest debt to Michael Kaern, a native speaker of German who checked the translation line by line. He unfailingly answered my many questions, large and small, and counseled on a

daily basis with patience, insight, and high generosity of spirit. He did so, as we debated the merits of various English translations for technical terms, on the basis of an intimate knowledge of the world inhabited by German scholars 100 years ago.

I am grateful to all. They have improved this translation far beyond what it otherwise would have been.

Endnotes

1. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Talcott Parsons. New York: Scribner's, 1930. Various publishers have reissued this translation over the last twenty years. For a commentary on this translation, see Kalberg, "The 'Spirit' of Capitalism Revisited: On the New Translation of Weber's *Protestant Ethic* (1920)." *Max Weber Studies* 2, 1 (Dec., 2001): 41–58.
2. As I note in my introduction, Weber revised the text in 1920. This translation, as was the earlier translation by Parsons, is based upon the 1920 text. This is the only version that Weber authorized for publication in book form. See *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol. 1, pp. 17–206 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1920). I have consulted throughout the later German paperback edition of 1979 edited by Johannes Winkelmann (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus).
3. Approximately 1 percent of youth attended these elite schools. Graduation from this type of school alone allowed admission to a university. Fritz Ringer has referred to this closed, highly educated circle as "German mandarins." See *The Decline of the German Mandarins* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).
4. In any case, owing to the extremely high social prestige of professors in Weber's Germany, editing of manuscripts by publishers, as is common today, would have been impossible.
5. Explanatory passages have been added in particular whenever Weber uses phrases such as "of interest to us *here*" and "for *our* theme" without identifying clearly his point of reference.
6. Single sentences and words altered or added in 1920 are *not* designated. However, Weber's major additions were in full paragraph form. Weber deleted or altered 1904–05 passages and words only extremely rarely.
7. A recent German edition has distinguished the 1904–05 and 1920 versions. See Max Weber, *Die protestantische Ethik und der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus*, edited by Klaus Lichtblau and Johannes Weiß (Bodenheim: Athenäum-Hain-Hanstein, 1993).
8. Most of these criticisms, and Weber's answers, have been collected now in two separate volumes. See Peter Baehr and Gordon C. Wells, eds. and trans., *Max Weber—The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism and Other Writings* (London: Penguin, 2002), and David Chalcraft and Austin Harrington, eds., *The Protestant Ethic Debate': Max Weber's Replies to his Critics, 1907–10* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2001).
9. These are fairly rare (for example, the contrast between asceticism and mysticism). ♦

INTRODUCTION TO *THE PROTESTANT ETHIC*

Stephen Kalberg

For sure, even with the best will, the modern person seems generally unable to imagine how large a significance those components of our consciousness rooted in religious beliefs have actually had upon culture . . . and the organization of life. (p. 125)*

First published in 1904–05, revised in 1920, and translated into English in 1930, Max Weber’s famous study, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism (PE)*, is one of the most enduring books of the twentieth century and a major classic in the social sciences. Its focus on values and ideas as sources of social change set off an intense discussion. The controversy has continued to this day almost unabated.

Although *PE* has often been understood as providing an explanation for the rise of **modern capitalism**,** and even for the origin of our secular, urban, and industrial world today, its aim was actually far more modest. Weber wished to demonstrate that one important source of the modern work ethic and orientation to material success, which he calls the “spirit of capitalism,” is located *outside* the realm of “this-worldly” utilitarian concerns and business astuteness. Even human avarice, the evolutionary course of progress, or the economic interests of heroic capitalists cannot explain its origin. Rather, this spirit, he contends, to a significant extent grew out of “the Protestant ethic” of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century **Puritan** churches and sects: Calvinists (today known as Presbyterians), Methodists, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, Independents, and Mennonites. These **ascetic Protestants** forcefully placed work and material success in the middle of their lives; little else seemed to matter greatly to them, not even family, friendship, leisure, or hobbies. Any discussion of the spirit of capitalism’s origins, Weber insists, must acknowledge this *central* religious source.

He freely admits that this argument may appear today quite unorthodox. “We moderns” only infrequently explain human behavior, let alone economic activity, by reference to religion. In our epoch dominated by a

* Otherwise unidentified page numbers in parentheses refer to the text below.

** Terms defined in the Glossary, when first used in each chapter, have been set in bold type.

worldview anchored in the social and natural sciences, belief in the supernatural is seldom viewed as a causal force. Instead, we generally award priority to structural factors (such as social class and level of education), economic and political interests, psychological and biological forces, power and external constraint, and unencumbered, rational choices. Yet Weber insists that social scientists must seek to understand the activities of others contextually by reference to the world in which *they* lived and the nature of *their* motives for acting. Scholars must do so especially when investigating groups living in distant epochs and foreign lands, however difficult it may be to perform the indispensable leap of imagination into an unfamiliar universe. In times past, Weber speculates, religious belief possessed a greater influence on daily life than today. Moreover, if **carried** along by powerful social groups, many patterns of religion-oriented action formulated centuries ago, he contends, cast long and wide shadows. Indeed, their impact in some cases may endure into the present, even though these patterns of action may today be underpinned by entirely nonreligious motives.

Although the question grounded in “other-worldly” religious concerns that, Weber believes, ultimately directed the Puritan faithful toward work and material success—Am I among the few who are saved?—is no longer of burning urgency in the nation most influenced by Puritanism, the United States, Americans’ dedication to work and success is still influenced by this ascetic Protestant tradition. This nation is frequently described today as a work-obsessed society. In 1999 the United States replaced Japan as the worldwide leader in number of hours worked per person per year; Europeans, in contrast, work approximately two-thirds as many hours per year as Americans. Americans read daily on the one hand of people who are exhausted and deprived of sleep and on the other of people who “love their work.” Expressions that reflect the centrality of work in our lives are pervasive: we arrange “working lunches,” we “work out” daily, we “work” on love, our relationships, our personalities, and our tans. We praise the work ethic of our peers and “hard workers” are generally assumed to be people of good character. A salary increase is awarded often to the “most dedicated” employee—a person who works, with pride, not only days but also nights and weekends. If we take naps, they must be “power naps.” “Workaholics” take “working vacations.” Many people define self-worth, and even their own identity, according

to their success in a profession.¹ A steady orientation to career goals and the disciplined organization of one's life to that end are praised.²

Were he alive today, Weber would see these pivotal features of American society as secularized legacies of ascetic Protestantism. However, fascinated by the enduring impact of the Puritan heritage in the United States (see p. 233 [note 53]; see also "The Protestant Sects" essay [pp. 127–147]; 1985), his quest in *PE* was primarily that of an historical sociologist: (1) to discover the *sources* in the past of the idea that life should be organized around systematic work and material success, and (2) to argue that this manner of organizing life played a significant part in calling forth the spirit of capitalism. To him, this particular focusing of life appeared originally in a specific historical epoch and in identifiable groups. These were religious groups, he contends, and they introduced the Protestant ethic. As first manifest in the spirit of capitalism and visible even today in the ways in which Americans conduct their lives, the legacies of this ethic have proved long-lasting. In the end, as we shall see, both the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism placed into motion significant thrusts that facilitated the rise of modern capitalism.

Max Weber: The Man and His Central Concerns

Five years after his birth in Erfurt, Germany, in 1864, Max Weber moved with his family to Berlin. His ambitious father, soon elected to seats in the Prussian state government and the Reichstag, became a key figure in the Berlin city government. The social conscience of Max's well-educated mother, who descended from a long line of distinguished scholars and successful businessmen, was highly influenced by mid-century American Unitarian and English Progressive theology. After raising seven children, she became an activist in progressive religious circles. While the father's intense engagement in the political issues of the time followed an ethos of pragmatism and realism, the mother's example conveyed to young Max a heightened sensitivity to moral questions, an appreciation of the ways in which a life of dignity must be guided by ethical standards, and a respect for the worth and uniqueness of every person.

A precocious child, Weber early on developed a strong love of learning. His rigorous, elite high school (*Gymnasium*) in Berlin emphasized a

classical curriculum—history, philosophy, literature, and languages—and the regular writing of interpretive essays. Upon graduation he studied law and economic history at the universities in Heidelberg, Berlin, and Göttingen. At the unusually young age of 30, Weber was appointed to a full professorship at the University of Freiburg. Called to a chair in economics two years later, he moved to the University of Heidelberg, where he remained until 1919. He died in Munich in 1920.

A significant incident occurred during a visit by his mother to his home in Heidelberg in the summer of 1897. Weber's father appeared and a heated argument ensued between father and son. The young Weber, who had passively witnessed his mother's mistreatment for years, then evicted his father from his home. The father's death seven weeks later seems to have served as the catalyst for a paralyzing mental illness that afflicted Weber for more than five years. By 1903 he had regained much of his strength, and a three-month journey with his wife in the fall of 1904 throughout the American East, Midwest,³ and South further raised his spirits. Nonetheless, he did not teach again until the last two years of his life.

Weber's generation stood between two worlds and thus found the "past" and "future" starkly demarcated. The German agrarian countryside of feudal manors and small, self-contained villages had remained basically unchanged for centuries, while industrialization proceeded rapidly in Europe's cities throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. The pulsating pace of change left Weber and many of his colleagues with a deep sense of foreboding. Fully uncharted waters seemed ahead. Urbanization,⁴ bureaucratization, secularization, and a massive expansion of capitalism took place on such a vast scale that a clear continuity between past and present appeared to have vanished forever.

Seeing vividly before them a new era in opposition to familiar traditions and values extending back over 2,000 years of Western history, Weber's contemporaries began to ask a series of fundamental questions. What will be left to guide our lives in this new epoch? How can we live under capitalism, which gives priority to the laws of the market over long-standing traditions, ethical values, and personal relationships? Does the new order rest upon a stable foundation? As the philosopher Wilhelm

Dilthey asked: “Where are to be found the instruments for surmounting the spiritual chaos which threatens to engulf us?”

Among scholars, these urgent concerns led naturally to questions regarding the *origin* of this new “cosmos.” What were its early sources? What *causal forces* drove the making and unfolding of the industrialized world? What were the origins of modern capitalism? If these questions could be answered, the nature of this new universe would be better understood. Not least, the parameters would be charted within which possible change could realistically take place.

Weber did not share the extremely bleak “cultural pessimism” of many of his contemporaries, especially Georg Simmel and Friedrich Nietzsche (Kalberg, 1987, 2001). And he refused to lend support to the many Romantic movements of his time, all of which sought, in one way or another, to retreat into the “simpler” world of the past. Indeed, he welcomed emphatically the freedoms and rights the modern world bestowed on the individual, arguing that “it is a gross deception to believe that without the achievements of the [Enlightenment] Age of the Rights of Man any one of us, including the most conservative, can go on living his life” (1968, p. 1403). He spoke and wrote tirelessly on behalf of strong and contending political parties and advocated an “ethic of responsibility” for politicians, constitutional guarantees for civil liberties, an extension of suffrage, and strong parliaments. In addition, he sought to erect mechanisms that would sustain pluralistic, competing interest groupings in order to check the power of bureaucracies, for “we ‘individualists’ and supporters of ‘democratic’ institutions are swimming ‘against the stream’ of material developments” (1978, p. 282).⁵

Nevertheless, and despite indefatigable political activism, Weber’s view of the twentieth century is pervaded by skepticism and ambivalence. His scholarship arose out of questions similar to those asked by his more fatalistic colleagues. What “type of person” will inhabit this new universe? How, amidst the overwhelmingly material and pragmatic character of everyday life in industrialized societies, will persons be able to orient their lives to *ethical values*? Especially now that religion has been weakened, will not the sheer instrumental-rational calculations typical of the modern capitalist economy push aside *all* ethical values?

A “practical rational” way of life grounded in utilitarian considerations, juxtaposed with a rigidly bureaucratized workplace, Weber feared, would eventually call forth a society of highly conforming per-

sons lacking noble ideals and individualism. If this occurred, a sense of ethical responsibility for one's actions would not be cultivated and the autonomy of individuals would gradually fade. Finally, without ethical values how could compassion, charity, and the ethos of brotherhood survive (see 1946a)? Although ascetic Protestantism had introduced onto the stage of history a "type of person" firmly oriented to ethical values, today only remnants of this mode of organizing life remain. Has the Puritan "devotion to a cause" disappeared, supplanted by pleasure-seekers on the one hand and the utilitarian calculations of "organization men" on the other (pp. 122–24)?

These broad-ranging questions and dilemmas stand behind *PE*. They capture Weber's overarching concerns, ones he will explore in roughly 15 volumes of sociological writings. *PE* constitutes his first major investigation of these themes. It analyzes how methodical work becomes endowed with significant meaning and moves to the very center of the lives of a specific group of people. *PE* can even be seen as Weber's earliest, and partial, attempt to define clearly the uniqueness of the modern West and to identify the major causal forces that drove its development (see "Prefatory Remarks" below, pp. 149–164). These themes continued to dominate his scholarship until the end of his life.

The first part of *PE* (pp. 3–50) was written in Heidelberg in the summer of 1904. It was printed a few months later in a journal when Weber and his wife were traveling in the United States. Finished in early 1905 upon his return to Germany, the second part (pp. 53–125) appeared in June, 1905, in the same journal.⁶ Although Weber noted that the libraries at Colgate and Columbia universities, as well as the libraries of small colleges "scattered all over the country," would be of use for his "cultural history" study, he managed to conduct very little research during his visit. As he reported in a letter, "I did not see much more than where the things are that I ought to see" (Marianne Weber, 1988, p. 304; see also p. 253).⁷

PE is a difficult text. An understanding of its complex analysis can be facilitated by, first, a brief overview of the axes around which it is organized and the intellectual context within which Weber wrote. The next section turns to these themes. The subsequent two sections summarize and comment upon *PE*'s frequently misunderstood argument. Although

lengthy, these sections offer only highlights of Weber's analysis; they fail to capture its extreme subtlety and cannot substitute for a reading of the text. *PE* is then examined by reference to central axes in Weber's sociology as a whole. This introduction concludes with brief comments on two famous essays by Weber included in this volume ("The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism" and "Prefatory Remarks" to *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*), a few tips on reading this classic study, short descriptions of an array of interesting *PE* endnotes, and a listing of suggested further reading. A glossary of key terms follows this introduction.

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: Organizational Axes and the Intellectual Context

Organizational Axes

The distinction between "capitalism" and "modern capitalism" stands at the foundation of Weber's entire analysis in *PE*. Capitalism, as involving the exchange of goods and calculations of profit and loss balances in terms of money, has existed in civilizations in all corners of the globe, from ancient times to the present. The assessment of balances has been more efficient in some epochs and societies than in others, where it remained "primitive" and approximated guesswork. However, a calculation of income and expenses, or "capital accounting," has been found universally, as has "the expectation of profit based upon the utilization of opportunities for exchange" (p. 152). Moneylenders, merchants engaged in trade, entrepreneurs investing in slaves, and promoters and speculators of every sort have calculated profits and losses in every epoch (pp. 20–21, 152–156; 1927, p. 334; 1968, p. 91).⁸

Weber turns quickly away from such "adventure capitalism" and "political capitalism" to a discussion of the distinguishing features of *modern* capitalism: a relatively free exchange of goods in markets, the separation of business activity from household activity, sophisticated bookkeeping methods, and the rational, or systematic, organization of work and the workplace in general. Workers are legally free in modern capitalism rather than enslaved. Profit is pursued in a regular and continuous fashion, as is the maximization of profit in organized, productive businesses (see pp. 152–157; 1927, pp. 275–351; 1968, pp. 164–66; Kalberg, 1983, pp. 269–276).

Nevertheless, Weber insists that this definition of modern capitalism is incomplete, for it refers to formal aspects only (the “**economic form**”). It is important to recognize, he argues, that modern capitalism *also* involves the organization of economic activity in terms of an “economic ethic.” This *ethos* legitimates and provides the motivation for the rigorous organization of work, the methodical approach to labor, and the systematic pursuit of profit typical of modern capitalism. It implies: “the idea of the *duty* of the individual to increase his wealth, which is assumed to be a self-defined interest in itself” (p. 16; *emph. in original*); the notion that “labor [is] an absolute end in itself” (p. 24); the desirability of “the acquisition of money, and more and more money, [combined with] the strictest avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of it” (p. 17); the view that the “acquisition of money . . . is . . . the result and manifestation of competence and proficiency in a vocational calling” (p. 18); and a “particular **frame of mind** that . . . strives systematically and rationally *in a calling* for legitimate profit” (p. 26).

Weber called this “modern economic ethic” the “spirit of capitalism.”⁹ Its violation, he asserts, involves not merely foolishness but “forgetfulness of *duty*” (p. 16; *emph. orig.*). The eighteenth-century American printer, inventor, entrepreneur, businessman, and statesman Benjamin Franklin, according to Weber, embodied the essence of this *ethos*, as apparent from his attitudes toward work, profit, and life in general (pp. 14–15). As Weber notes in his “Prefatory Remarks” essay below:

The origin of economic rationalism [of the type which, since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has come to dominate the West] depends not only on an advanced development of technology and law but also on the capacity and disposition of persons to **organize their lives** in a practical-rational manner. (p. 160; see 1946c, p. 293)

Typically, Weber isolates the distinctive qualities of the spirit of capitalism through comparisons, above all to the **traditional economic ethic**. He does so mainly along two axes: attitudes toward work and the business practices of employers.

Wherever the spirit of capitalism reigned, work was perceived as a noble and virtuous endeavor; one who engaged in it was respected throughout the community and believed to be of good character. Work played a central role in the formulation even of a person’s sense of dignity and self-worth. This “elevation” of work to a special position in one’s life resulted, Weber contends, from an array of modern historical

conditions; work never held such importance for adherents to the traditional economic ethic. They regarded work as involving drudgery and exertion; it was a necessary evil to be avoided as soon as customary and constant economic needs were met. Thus, such people approached labor in an unfocused and lackadaisical manner. Moreover, they understood work as only one arena of life, deserving of no more attention, concentration, or time than other important arenas, such as the family, hobbies, friendship, and leisure in general. Not surprisingly, those who understood work in this way could not be induced to increase productivity even if employers introduced a piece-rate system that provided monetary incentives for faster and more efficient labor. On the contrary, because employees viewed work negatively and other activities positively, a higher piece-rate led to less work: employees could earn the amount of money necessary to fulfill their accustomed needs in a shorter period of time. They would then have more time to pursue leisure activities. As Weber notes:

The opportunity of earning more appealed to him less than the idea of working less. . . . People do not wish 'by nature' to earn more and more money. Instead, they wish simply to live, and to live as they have been accustomed and to earn as much as is required to do so. (pp. 22–23; see pp. 21–25; 1927, pp. 355–56)

The traditional economic “spirit” also held sway over persons engaged in business until relatively recently in human history. Whereas employers imbued with the spirit of capitalism sought profit systematically, organized their entire workforce according to the rules of productive and efficient management, reinvested profits in their companies, and saw themselves as engaged in harsh, competitive struggles, economic traditionalism implied a more comfortable and slow-paced manner of conducting business. Set by long-standing custom rather than by the laws of the market, prices and profits generally remained constant. The circle of customers did not vary, and relations between workers and owners were regulated largely by tradition. There was always time for friends and long meals, for the workday lasted generally only five to six hours. Although capitalistic in terms of the use of capital and the calculation of income and expense, a leisurely ethos characterized the entire approach to moneymaking and to business (pp. 22–29).

Weber is proposing that these differences between the traditional and modern orientations toward work and business management are not

insignificant. Moreover, although economic forms and economic ethics “exist generally in . . . a relationship . . . of ‘adequacy’ to each other,” there is no “‘lawful’ dependency,” and they may exist separately (pp. 26–28; 1946c, pp. 267–68). On the one hand, even though the spirit of capitalism strongly infused Benjamin Franklin’s habits and general way of life, the operations of his printing business followed those typical in handicraft enterprises (pp. 26–27). On the other hand, the traditional economic ethic might combine with a highly developed capitalist economy (e.g., Italian capitalism before the Reformation). After comparing the widespread capitalism in Florence in the fourteenth and fifteen centuries (where activity directed toward profit for its own sake was viewed as ethically unjustifiable) with the economic backwardness of eighteenth-century Pennsylvania (where a spirit of capitalism was “understood as the essence of a morally acceptable, even praiseworthy way of organizing and directing life”), Weber concludes that capitalism itself did not produce the spirit of capitalism (pp. 34–37).

How did the “revolution” (p. 27) that brought economic traditionalism to an end take place? What are the sources of this monumental shift to a modern economic ethic? And how did it happen that work moved to the center of life? To Weber, the approach to work “as if [it] were an absolute end in itself . . . is not inherently given in the nature of the species. Nor can it be directly called forth by high or low wages. Rather, it is the product of a long and continuous process of education and socialization” (p. 24; see p. 174, note 17). In light of the extreme immutability and endurance of the traditional economic ethic, Weber is convinced that only persons of unusually strong character were capable of banishing it (p. 29). Yet such an orientation of activity toward hard work appears fully “irrational” and unnatural viewed from the perspective of the spontaneous enjoyment of life (pp. 24, 30–31, 33, 37).

This is Weber’s modest concern in this “essay in cultural history.” Rather than investigating the origins of modern capitalism, the rise of the West, or capitalism as such, this case study seeks to discover the specific “ancestry” of the *spirit* of capitalism (pp. 37, 49–50, 54–55). In defining this task, Weber was responding critically to a heated discussion in German scholarship. The unorthodox focus of “the Weber thesis” on the importance of a spirit of capitalism separated *PE* clearly from the

major orientation of this debate toward capitalism as an economic form. In fact, the explorations by his colleagues into the origins of modern capitalism usually denied the salience of an economic ethic. By explicitly seeking to broaden the boundaries of this controversy in an unwelcome direction, *PE* immediately set off a furor. Before turning to Weber's analysis of "the Protestant ethic's" origins, a glance at the main contours of this debate is indispensable. Doing so will situate *PE* within the intellectual currents of its time and demarcate its uniqueness.¹⁰

The Intellectual Context: The Controversy Over the Origins of Capitalism and Industrialism

Nearly all participants in the debate on the origins of modern capitalism and industrialism 100 years ago in Germany offered explanations that neglected cultural forces. The six explanations that dominated this controversy can be mentioned only briefly.

The intensification of avarice. A number of German scholars at the end of the nineteenth century argued that, in earlier times, the "acquisitive instinct" (p. 20) was less developed or even nonexistent. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, they saw avarice and greed as becoming stronger. They believed that modern capitalism resulted from an intensification of the "acquisitive instinct [and the] pursuit of gain" (p. 152).

This characterization of more recent centuries as ones in which the "striving for . . . the greatest profit" (p. 152) has been more widespread, Weber contends, does not bear up once experimental comparisons are undertaken. The "greed for gain" can be found among "all sorts and conditions of men at all times and in all countries of the earth, wherever the objective possibility of it is or has been given" (p. 152). To him, the "*greed* of mandarins in China, of the aristocrats in ancient Rome, or the modern peasant is second to none" (p. 20). Because such an *auri sacra fames* (greed for gold) has existed universally and is "as old as the history of man," it fails to offer a causal explanation for his *specific* problem: the rise of a spirit of capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the West. Finally, Weber will argue that the rise of modern capitalism involves a "tempering" of all acquisitive desires; indeed, such a "restraining" of avarice—and its channeling into a methodical orientation toward work—is indispensable for the

systematic organization of work and production in permanent businesses (pp. 19–21, 152; 1927, pp. 355–56).

The adventure and political capitalism of charismatic entrepreneurs. Other scholars in Germany were convinced that the desire of great charismatic entrepreneurs for riches pushed economic development past the agrarian and feudal stages to mercantilism and modern capitalism. Typically engaged in gigantic commercial ventures often involving the continent-spanning trade of luxury items, these unscrupulous and ego-centric promoters, financiers, bankers, merchants, and speculators ushered in the modern epoch simply on the basis of their extraordinary energy (pp. 16–17, 20–21).

Again, however, Weber discovered this adventure and political capitalism universally. Yet these types of capitalism never called forth *modern* capitalism. Furthermore, he refused to view the exceptional commercial daring of these sporadically appearing “economic supermen” as implying the continuity of disciplined action requisite for shattering the traditional economic ethic. Isolated individuals alone could never call forth this monumental transformation; rather, an organizing of life common to whole “*groups of persons,*” all *intensively* oriented toward profit and the rational organization of labor and capital, would be necessary (pp. 19, 21).

Evolution and progress. In *Der moderne Kapitalismus* (1902), Werner Sombart, Weber’s colleague and friend, held that the expansion of production, trade, banking, and commerce could best be understood as clear manifestations of a society-wide unfolding of “rationalism” and progress in general. In this view, the spirit of capitalism constituted simply further, and not unusual, evidence of a general evolution. To Sombart, societal progress as a whole deserved explanation rather than the separate component elements in this broad-ranging evolutionary process.

Weber opposed Sombart vehemently. “Society” was too global a level of analysis, he claimed. Instead, the separate societal “realms” (*Lebensbereiche*), “orders” (*Lebensordnungen*), or “spheres” (*Lebenssphären*), which together comprise a “society,” must be examined. If one proceeds in this manner, a *nonparallel* development in the various realms becomes evident, Weber insists, rather than a general evolutionary process. For example, a systematization, or “**rationalization,**” in the sphere of law (in the sense of increasing conceptual clarity and the refinement of the content of the law

based upon a fundamental written source, such as a constitution) reached its highest point in the Roman law of later antiquity. On the one hand, however, this type of law remained far less developed in a number of countries where a rationalization of the *economy* advanced farthest. In England, for example, a less rationalized form of law—Common law—prevailed. On the other hand, Roman law remained strong throughout southern Europe, an area where modern capitalism developed quite late (pp. 34–37). In neither region did the law and economy realms develop in a parallel fashion.

These and similar observations persuaded Weber to reject the notion of “general evolutionary progress” and to focus his attention on a variety of societal orders rather than “society” as an organic whole. He investigated the realm of religion in *PE* and later, in his three-volume analytic treatise, *Economy and Society* (1968), the domains of law, rulership (*Herrschaft*), economy, status groups, and “universal organizations” (the family, the clan) (see Kalberg, 1994b, pp. 53–54, 103–117; 1996, pp. 50–51; 1998, pp. 221–25).

The Jews as the carriers of modern capitalism. Sombart’s book, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* (1913), argued that the Jews as a group were the major social carriers of modern capitalism. He viewed the putatively typical business dealings of Jews as decisive: the loaning of money for interest, continuous speculation, and the financing of wars, construction projects, and political activities. In addition, Sombart argued that an “abstract rationalism,” which allegedly characterized Jewish thinking, was identical with the “spirit of capitalism” of English Puritans. The wish to make money dominated in both groups.

Weber disagreed forcefully on all points both in *PE* and in later writings (see pp. 111; 234–35, notes 66 and 67; 1968, pp. 611–23, 1202–04; 1927, pp. 358–61).¹¹ He viewed the innovation-averse economic ethos of the Jews as “traditional” and noted their absence among the heroic entrepreneurs in the early stages of Western European capitalism. Furthermore, he saw the capitalism of the Jews as a form of the speculative capitalism that had existed universally rather than as involving a systematic organization of production, labor, and the workplace in general (pp. 110–112; 234–35, note 67). Finally, Weber argued, the outcaste position of the Jews kept them outside the pivotal craft and guild organizations of the medieval period, and their double ethical standard, which followed from this outcaste position (strong

ethical obligations to other Jews, yet quite different practices in economic relationships with non-Jews), hindered the unfolding of measures of economic efficiency across the economy.

Historical materialism, economic interests, and the power of the dominant class. Although the “internal contradictions” of capitalism constituted the major concern of Karl Marx, his writings clearly yield an analysis of its origin. For him, the rise of modern capitalism can be equated with the overthrow of the feudal aristocracy and the hegemonic rule of a new class: the bourgeoisie. Ownership of the means of production (property, factories, technology, tools, etc.) by this class, as well as its economic interests, were believed to be crucial; they stood as foundational ingredients in the quest of capitalists to acquire more and more wealth. Moreover, the desire of the bourgeoisie to pursue profit and sheer greed served this class well. As it became larger and more powerful, trade, banking, production, and commerce expanded. Eventually, factory-based capitalism came into being.

A “spirit of capitalism” could play no part in the historical materialism of Marx. Had he been alive to address the Weber thesis, Marx surely would have viewed this ethos as arising directly out of the economic interests of the bourgeoisie; the set of values it implied would be understood as nothing more than an expression, in abstract form, of the economic interests of this class. Such an “ideology” served, Marx argued frequently, following Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), to justify the hegemony of the dominant class and to sedate workers into accepting the misery and exploitation.

Despite his agreement on certain points with Marx, in *PE* Weber rejected this analysis completely. He insists that economic interests of this class did not give birth to the spirit of capitalism. Franklin himself offers evidence against this position: his economic ethos far preceded the formation of a bourgeoisie (pp. 19, 32–33). Moreover, Weber rejected a pivotal Marxian assumption: the capacity of social groupings to call forth uniform action:

The assumption is . . . by no means justified *a priori* . . . that, on the one hand, the technique of the capitalist enterprise and, on the other, the spirit of ‘work as a vocational calling,’ which endows capitalism with its expansive energy, must have had their *original* sustaining roots in the same social groupings. (p. 175, note 24; *emph.* in original; see, e.g., 1946c, pp. 268–71, 292; 1968, pp. 341, 577)

As noted, even those members of the bourgeoisie who proved to be economic supermen were incapable, Weber contended, of the sustained effort necessary for a rupturing of economic traditionalism. Finally, Weber found that the spirit of capitalism was formulated and cultivated not by the entrepreneurs of a commercial elite (the “Patrician merchants”) but above all by self-made parvenus from the modest circumstances of the **middle classes** (pp. 26–27, 158 *et passim*). To him, the “youth of the ‘capitalist’ spirit is altogether more thorny than was assumed by the ‘superstructure’ theorists” (p. 19 *et passim*).¹²

Miscellaneous forces. Many historians and economists emphasized the importance for economic development of technological innovations, geographical forces, the influx of precious metals from the New World, population increases, and the growth of cities and science. Weber examined all of these arguments. Through scrutiny of comparative cases, he deduced that favorable technological and scientific inventions, population changes, and climatological and other factors had existed in the Middle Ages in the West, in the ancient world, and in a number of epochs in China and India—yet modern capitalism had failed to appear first in these civilizations.¹³

In these ways,¹⁴ *PE* seeks fundamentally to recast the ongoing debate toward an exploration of the origins of a “rational” economic ethic, or spirit of capitalism (pp. 19–37). Weber laments the exclusion of this factor, and thus the inadequacy of the major explanations for the rise of modern capitalism; all these explanations attend to modern capitalism mainly as an “economic form.” By insisting that a modern economic ethic must be acknowledged as a sociologically significant causal force in modern capitalism’s early development and that an exploration of its origins must take place, he seeks (1) to bring values and ideas unequivocally into the debate and (2) to legitimize an investigation of their causal origins.

Weber is attempting to persuade his readers that cultural values must not be left out of the equation. However complicated it may be to investigate their origins and to assess their influence, to him values should not be regarded as passive forces generally subordinate to social structures, power, classes, evolution and progress, and economic and

political interests. He insists that the spirit of capitalism had significant noneconomic and nonpolitical roots.

Empirical Observations, the Turn Toward Religion, and the Aim of *PE*

In searching for the sources of the spirit of capitalism, Weber never pursued a trial-and-error pathway. Rather, he took the view, not uncommon in the Germany of his time, at the outset that *religious belief* influenced work habits and approaches to business, as well as life in general.¹⁵ Hence, an exploration of differences between Protestants and Catholics appeared to him a quite plausible and natural orientation for his research. Indeed, he had been reading theological literature, including the American Unitarians William Ellery Channing and Theodore Parker, since his teenage years.¹⁶

Although a relationship between occupational status and educational attainment on the one hand and Catholicism and Protestantism on the other was acknowledged among journalists and the educated public in Germany in the 1890s, as well as earlier,¹⁷ very little social science research had addressed this theme. As he pondered English and American Puritanism in the mid-1890s, Weber read the massive study by the economic historian Eberhard Gothein, *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Schwarzwalds* (1892) (Economic History of the Black Forest), which called attention to Calvinism's strong role in spreading capitalism (pp. 9–10). He praised Gothein, but was even more struck by Georg Jellinek's *Die Erklärung der Menschen- und Bürgerrechte* (1901) (The Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizens), which "stimulated [me] to study Puritanism again."¹⁸ Jellinek's documentation of how devout Dissenters in seventeenth-century England had been central in the emergence of the notion of fundamental political rights and liberties impressed Weber and aroused his curiosity:

[Jellinek's] proof of religious traces in the genesis of the Rights of Man . . . gave me a crucial stimulus . . . to investigate the impact of religion in areas where one might not look at first. (Marianne Weber, 1988, p. 476)

In the late 1890s, Weber encouraged his student Martin Offenbacher to examine the influence of religion on social stratification in the southwest German state of Baden. Offenbacher's statistical investigation concluded that distinct differences existed between Protestants and Catholics in regard to occupational choices and levels of education: Protestants domi-

nated as owners of industrial concerns, while Catholics were more often farmers and owners of businesses utilizing skilled labor. Protestants' generally higher levels of education accounted for their disproportionately high employment as state civil servants and their unusually high earnings if they remained in the working class (1900, pp. 63–64).¹⁹ Weber used his student's "facts and figures" in order to outline his research agenda and central questions (see ch. 1).

Despite his crippling mental illness, he had completed his research on the economic ethic of the Quakers by the late 1890s.²⁰ The publication in 1902 of Sombart's two-volume work, *Der moderne Kapitalismus*, appears to have motivated Weber to intensify his own research. In his chapter on the origin of the capitalist spirit, Sombart had dismissed the role of Protestantism, especially Calvinism and Quakerism, as "too well-known to require further explanation." Instead, he discovered "empirical proof" of capitalism's origins in the high esteem accorded to the possession of money, indeed the addiction to "sparkling gold" (*auri sacre fames*) that appeared in the European Middle Ages. To Sombart, "the Protestant religion was not the cause but the result of modern capitalist thinking." He provoked his readers to discover "empirical proof of *concrete-historical contexts* to the contrary" (1902, vol. 1, pp. 380–81; *emph. in original*; see vom Brocke, 1987; Lehmann, 1993, pp. 196–98).²¹

Weber took up the challenge, completing the research for *PE* in 1903.²² His response to Sombart is vigorous. Even external social structures of extreme rigidity, such as those typical of religious sects, Weber asserts, should not be viewed as themselves calling forth homogeneous patterns of action.²³ How then could capitalism do so? The studies he had read in the 1890s pointed in a different direction. As well, Weber noted the unusually methodical and conscientious work habits of young women from Pietistic families in Baden (pp. 24–25). Even this:

Analysis derived from [early twentieth-century] capitalism has indicated to us yet again that it would be worthwhile simply to *ask* how these connections between people's capacity to adapt to [modern] capitalism, on the one hand, and their religious beliefs, on the other, could have been formulated during the youth of [modern] capitalism. (p. 25; *emph. in original*)

He then explicitly states his aim in *PE*:

It should here be ascertained only whether, and to what extent, religious influences *co-participated* in the qualitative formation and quantitative expansion of this 'spirit' across the globe. (p. 49; *emph. in original*)

Whether religious beliefs constitute the “specific ancestry” of the spirit of capitalism must be investigated.²⁴

Weber responds to Sombart’s provocation even more directly when he describes his step-by-step procedure. He will first investigate whether an “elective affinity” (*Wahlverwandtschaft*) exists between certain religious beliefs of the Reformation and a vocational ethic (*Berufsethik*). If this “meaningful connection” (*sinnhafter Zusammenhang*) can be established, he will then be able to clarify the “way” and “general direction” in which religious movements, as a result of this elective affinity, influenced the development of *material culture*, or practical, workaday life.²⁵ Only then will it be possible to assess “to what degree the historical origin of the values and ideas of our modern life can be attributed to religious forces stemming from the Reformation, and to what degree to other forces” (p. 50). Weber’s complex and multidimensional analysis in *PE* can be broken down into two major stages: (1) his investigation of the origins of the Protestant ethic and (2) his linkage of the Protestant ethic to the spirit of capitalism.

The Origins of the Protestant Ethic: Weber’s Analysis

In searching for the spirit of capitalism’s ancestry, Weber scrutinizes medieval Catholicism, Lutheranism, and the ascetic Protestant churches and sects from two perspectives: the extent to which religious belief calls forth motivations that give rise to a methodical-rational **organization of life**, and the degree to which religious belief places **psychological rewards** directly upon systematic economic activity. He is convinced, as discussed, that only methodical activity of extreme rigor and continuity in large *groups* of people had the capacity to call forth a “revolution” against the traditional economic ethic (pp. 27–30). Instrumental action on behalf of a goal to accumulate wealth does not possess the indispensable sustaining power to do so.

The lay Catholicism of the Middle Ages never linked the important question—am I among the saved?—to economic activity. On the contrary, the faithful believed themselves to be saved if they regularly prayed, confessed their sins, sought to uphold the commandments, and engaged in “good works.” Moreover, Weber emphasizes, the church acknowledged human imperfection and provided a mechanism to ame-

liorate the sinner's anxiety: the sacrament of confession. By unburdening their conscience to a priest and performing the penance he imposed, the devout were enabled to conduct their lives in an "accounting" fashion: sinful behavior, however reprehensible, could be balanced out over the long run by repentance and the more frequent practice of charitable good works as penance. A cycle of sin, atonement, and forgiveness—a "series of *isolated* actions" (p. 69)—characterized lay Catholicism rather than the placing of uninterrupted psychological rewards upon a systematized, rigorously directed way of life. Only the "religious 'virtuosi' "—monks and nuns—organized their lives in a methodical-rational manner, yet they remained in monasteries "outside the world" (pp. 69–70).

Finally, Catholicism maintained a highly negative image of merchants and businessmen in general. Their perceived lust for gain placed riches above the kingdom of God and thereby endangered the soul, and their exploitation of persons on behalf of economic gain opposed the Christian ethic of brotherhood and group solidarity. An unequivocal axiom prevailed: *homo mercator vix aut numquam potest Deo placere* (the merchant may conduct himself without sin but cannot be pleasing to God) (p. 33; 1927, pp. 357–58; 1946a, pp. 331–32; 1968, pp. 583–87, 1189–91). To Weber, a traditional economic ethic prevailed in Catholicism.

In banishing the Catholic confessional and the parallel salvation paths for lay and virtuoso believers, Lutheranism distanced itself from medieval Catholicism. In doing so, and in introducing the idea of salvation through faith—penitent humility, an inward-oriented mood of piety, and trust in God—as its doctrinal fulcrum, Lutheranism placed qualitatively different psychological rewards on the believer's action (pp. 58, 66–67). Moreover, and salient to Weber, Luther introduced the idea that work in a "calling" (*Beruf*) was given by God. Believers, in essence, had been *called* by God into a vocation, or specific line of work, and hence were duty-bound to it.

Nevertheless, Weber failed to discover the religious origins of the spirit of capitalism here (pp. 39–45). Because all callings for Luther were of equal value (p. 41), there were no psychological rewards for occupational mobility. In addition, Luther never extolled "success" in a vocation or an intensification of labor beyond the standards set by each calling. Instead, one's religious duty involved a reliable, punctual, and efficient performance of the tasks and obligations required by the voca-

tion itself. Indeed, a “moral legitimation of vocational life” now appeared (p. 41), and the mundane work-life of all believers became penetrated by a religious dimension. Thus a dramatic step away from Catholicism had been taken. A systematization of life as a whole, however, did not occur in Lutheranism. Finally, because God firmly defines the boundaries for each vocation and station in life (*Stand*), Luther saw the acquisition of goods beyond this level as morally suspect and sinful (pp. 42–43). Weber concludes that the economic ethic of Lutheranism in the end remained basically traditional, all the more because it retained the Catholic ethic of brotherhood and thus opposed the impersonal exchange characteristic of relationships in the marketplace (pp. 43–45; see 1968, pp. 514, 570, 600, 1198).

Weber then turned to *ascetic* Protestantism: the Puritan sects and churches of the seventeenth century, most prominently Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism, and the adult baptizing denominations (the Baptists, the Quakers, and the Mennonites). He believed that the Protestant ethic of Calvinism most clearly expressed the origins of the spirit of capitalism. How did this *Protestant ethic* originate? Only a sketch of Weber’s argument can be offered here.

Calvinism and Puritanism

In the sixteenth century John Calvin formulated a religious doctrine built on two pillars. First, in opposition to Catholicism and Lutheranism, he accepted the Old Testament’s view of God as an all-powerful and omniscient deity, far superior to all previous gods and separated from earthly mortals by an unbridgeable chasm. This “fully transcendent,” majestic God was also a wrathful and vindictive deity, prepared at any moment to express His anger against sinful human beings. Because He was a distant being, His motives for doing so could never be understood by lowly humans (pp. 57–60). Second, Calvin argued that this inscrutable God had “predestined” for all time, and unalterably, only a tiny minority to be saved; everyone else was condemned to eternal damnation. The activities of believers, whether they confessed sins, performed good works, or donated to charity, would not change this “double decree” (i.e., saving a few, damning all others). One’s salvation status had been preordained. The confession of sins and the sinner’s absolution by a priest were no longer possible, for Calvin had abolished the sacrament of confession (pp. 60–61).

Weber saw that the doctrine of predestination, especially when combined with the concept of an omnipotent and vengeful yet unknowable God, led logically to massive fatalism, loneliness, and anxiety among the faithful. In an epoch in which an overriding question—“am I among the saved?”—dominated the lives of believers to a degree scarcely comprehensible today, the despair of the devout became unbearable (pp. 57–61).

Ascetic Protestants after Calvin, the Puritans, with whom Weber was concerned, sought to address the doctrine of predestination’s bleak outcome in a variety of ways.²⁶ Undoubtedly, if congregations hoped to retain their membership, revisions had to be undertaken. Weber sees that, remarkably and unexpectedly, reformulations of Calvin’s teachings in the seventeenth century led believers eventually to uphold an ethos of “world mastery” and to orient their entire lives toward work and material success. Puritanism gave birth to a “Protestant ethic.” Weber’s explanation of how this took place can best be examined by scrutiny of two themes: (1) the strict organization by believers of their conduct with the result that they came to lead tightly controlled, methodical-rational lives; and (2) the *directing* of these systematically organized lives toward work in a vocational calling, wealth, and profit.²⁷

How the Ascetic Protestant Faithful Came to Lead Methodically Organized Lives

According to Weber, despite God’s incomprehensible decree of predestination, Puritan believers felt compelled, in order to alleviate their overwhelming anxiety, to seek signs of their membership among the chosen few. Although His motives could not be known, God obviously desired action in strict conformity with His commandments and laws. Yet virtuous conduct, in light of the sinful character of the human species, proved difficult. Indeed, taming all wants and physical desires, and then orienting life in a consistent fashion to His laws, required heroic efforts of discipline. Nevertheless, according to Puritan doctrine, righteous conduct must be undertaken and an overcoming of impulsive and spontaneous human nature—the **status naturae**—must be achieved, for this vain and angry Puritan God demanded that His will be honored and His standards upheld. The purpose given to God’s terrestrial creatures—to honor and glorify Him—could be fulfilled *only* in this manner. Thus, despite the double decree, believers were expected as an absolute duty to

consider themselves among the chosen, and as such to conduct their lives according to this divinity's commandments. Indeed, an inability to muster the requisite self-confidence to do so or to combat doubts was believed to indicate "insufficient faith," a condition that surely would not characterize one of the saved (pp. 65–66).

Of course, the concentration of their entire energies on behalf of God's laws did not guarantee the salvation of the devout. The predestination decree could not be changed by the actions of mere mortals, even if pleasing to this vindictive deity. However, the revisions of Calvin's doctrines by Richard Baxter and other seventeenth-century "Puritan Divines"²⁸ persuaded the faithful that, *if they proved capable* of mastering their selfish desires and leading righteous, dignified lives oriented unequivocally to God's commandments, *then* they could assume that the *capacity* to do so had been in fact bestowed upon them by their deity, who after all was omniscient and all-powerful. The devout knew that their energy derived from the very strength of their belief, and they were further convinced that unusually intense belief emanated from God, whose will was operating within them (pp. 67–69). They could then conclude that God, naturally, would convey powerful belief and energy only to those He had "favored," that is, predestined, for salvation.

Hence, the faithful now knew what was necessary in order to answer the crucial question regarding the "certainty of salvation" (*certitudo salutis*): they must **strive to** live the "sanctified," or holy, life. A continuous "monitoring of their own pulse," to insure that actions remained consistent with God's laws, became necessary. Although even the most dutiful and disciplined believers could never know *with certainty* that they belonged among the elect few, they could still comprehend their own devout and organized conduct as a *sign* of their saved status. *God's* hand, acting within the predestined by bestowing intense belief, had rendered them capable (as His "tools" on earth) of obeying His laws (pp. 64–65, 67, 77–78, 85; see 1968, p. 572).

In sum, by virtue of this nonlogical, psychological dynamic,²⁹ believers created for themselves, as a consequence of their conduct in conformity with the good Christian ideals that serve God's glory, "*evidence* of their own salvation" (pp. 68, 85). By organizing their lives on behalf of God's laws, the faithful were able to "bear witness" through this methodical conduct, or **testify** to their membership among the elect "saints." In this way, believers could *convince themselves* of their favor-

able salvation status. Moreover, their upright conduct could be recognized by others as a sign of their membership among the chosen few.

This achievement answered the crucial question—“am I among the saved?”—affirmatively and thus held in check the tremendous anxiety and fatalism that resulted logically from the doctrine of predestination. Simultaneously, and of pivotal concern to Weber, this accomplishment gave birth to a frame of mind that he saw as specifically Puritan: the tempered, **dispassionate**, and restrained disposition that completely tamed the *status naturae*. A systematic rationalization of life now took place. The rigorous and focused conduct of these ascetic saints contrasted dramatically with the unsystematized lives of Catholics and Lutherans.

The believer could receive and above all recognize his call to salvation only through consciousness of a central and unitary relation of this short life toward the supra-mundane God and His will; in other words, through striving toward ‘sanctification.’ In turn, sanctification could testify to itself only through God-ordained activities and, as in all active asceticism, through ethical conduct blessed by God. Thus, the individual could gain certainty of salvation only in being God’s tool. The strongest inner reward imaginable was thereby placed upon a rational and moral systematization of life. Only the life that abided by firm principles and was controlled at a unitary center could be considered a life willed by God. (1951, pp. 239–40; translation altered)

Yet the Puritan’s organization of life as a whole proved fragile. A perpetual danger remained: temptations might threaten the commitment of the devout to God’s laws and the modes of taming the *status naturae* might prove ineffective. Even the sincere faithful might still draw the logical conclusions from the predestination decree: fatalism and despair.³⁰ In fact, Weber saw that a more solid foundation for the methodical-rational organization of life crystallized once the writings of the Puritan Divines connected the all-important *certitudo salutis* question directly to methodical work in a vocation and the systematic pursuit of wealth and profit. This connection stood at the center of Weber’s interests and at the core of his argument regarding both the overcoming of economic traditionalism and the birth of the Protestant ethic.

How the Ascetic Protestant Faithful Came to Direct Their Methodically Organized Lives Toward Work in a Vocational Calling, Wealth, and Profit

The orientation toward work. Ascetic Protestant theologians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries emphasized that the world exists in order to serve God's glory (p. 63). The purpose of this short life was to render a contribution toward the creation of His kingdom on earth. God's goodness and justice would surely be served if His earthly cosmos became one of wealth, abundance, and the common good. The exemplary "city on the hill" must be built by believers *in majorem Dei gloriam*, or for God's glory; a kingdom of poverty and destitution would only dishonor this majestic deity. As a crucial means of creating His prosperous kingdom and the common good, work acquired a special dignity. It served to increase God's magnificence (pp. 63, 104–105).

Baxter and the Puritan Divines also emphasized that God ordained the faithful to work. He "willed" and desired them to work (pp. 105–06). Even methodical work in a vocational calling "is commanded to all," for sustained work not only enables a focusing on the "impersonal societal usefulness" that promotes God's glory but also keeps in check all ego-centric wishes (pp. 63, 106–08). In other words, rigorous work in a calling provides regularity to the believer's life and combats confusion (p. 107). God decrees that even the wealthy must work, and St. Paul's maxim—"He who will not work shall not eat"—is understood by the Puritans as God's law (pp. 105–06). And God is pleased by the active execution of His will by believers in vocational callings: "The entire corpus of literature on asceticism . . . is permeated with the point of view that loyal work is highly pleasing to God" (p. 121; see pp. 104–06).

This focusing, through continuous and systematic work, of the energies of the devout upon God and His plan serves the further purpose of taming creaturely desires. As a mechanism opposing the "unclean life" and all sexual temptation, work provides moderation to life, thereby further assisting the concentration upon God and the soul's "uplifting" (pp. 105–06). Not least, "intense worldly activity" dispels the overwhelming doubt, anxiety, and sense of moral unworthiness that follows from the doctrine of predestination. Finally, diligent work in a calling enhances the self-confidence that enables the faithful to consider themselves among the chosen (pp. 65–66).

For all these reasons industrious work acquired an unequivocal meaningfulness to the Puritan devout of the seventeenth century. Psychological rewards, Weber emphasized, originating from the domain of religion, were bestowed on labor, even rendering it methodical. Work now directly became sanctified, or **providential**; it acquired a religious value. Nevertheless, he perceives that an even stronger linkage between systematic work and religious belief arose out of Calvinism when the idea of “testifying to belief” became interwoven securely with labor. The great capacity of this idea to organize the believer’s entire life around disciplined work resulted simply from its power *to convince* the faithful of their membership among the predestined few, thereby answering *the* burning question: Am I among the saved? The devout, according to Weber’s exploration of the subjective predicament they confronted, could acquire *evidence* of their chosen status not only by adhering strictly to God’s laws, but also by methodical work in a vocation.

Methodical work as a sign of one’s salvation. For all the reasons mentioned above, work had become important in the religious lives of Calvinists. Its general prominence insured its centrality in all discussions among theologians and pastors regarding the urgent question of whether signs of one’s chosen status could be discovered and uncertainty regarding one’s salvation could be lessened. The idea that systematic work might constitute a sign of one’s salvation arose mainly out of the practical problems confronted by pastors seeking to offer, through “pastoral care,” guidance to believers.

As noted, the continuous orientation to God’s laws required unusual effort and the successful upholding of His decrees involved heroic faith. The devout even believed that the source of their intense belief, and their subsequent energy to maintain righteous conduct, derived solely from the presence of divine powers acting within them. They came to view the capacity to sustain a methodical orientation to work in the same way. One’s energy to perform hard and continuous labor in a vocational calling must come ultimately from intense and sincere belief, and such belief originated from the favoring hand of an omnipotent God. Indeed, rigorous work *testified*, to the devout themselves as well as to others, to an inner, spiritual relationship with Him and to His assistance. Anyone capable of rejecting the confusion of irregular work, not to mention the *status naturae*, and of adopting a systematic orientation to work could do so only because of His blessing. God must be “operating within” such

a person. Surely this omniscient divinity would choose to help only those he had predestined for salvation (p. 116; 1968, p. 572).

In this manner, the capacity for constant work further acquired a religious halo. If the faithful made an effort to work in a methodical manner, and discovered an ability to do so, a sign of God's favor had been given them, it could be concluded. In an epoch when anxiety about salvation dominated the lives of the faithful and threatened their mental stability, the search for a sign of God's blessing contained a mighty power to motivate believers to undertake disciplined work in a vocation. As Weber notes,

[A] psychological *motivation* . . . arose out of the conception of work as a *calling* and as the means best suited (and in the end often as the *sole* means) for the devout to become certain of their state of salvation. (p. 121)

And:

The religious value set on restless, continuous, and systematic work in a vocational calling was defined as absolutely the highest of all ascetic means for believers to testify to their elect status, as well as simultaneously the most certain and visible means of doing so. (p. 116)

Methodical work now became deeply hallowed, and “the view of work as a ‘vocational calling’ [for the modern worker] became . . . characteristic” (p. 121; see also pp. 120–21; 1968, p. 1199). Obviously, the understanding of work carried out in this manner—appropriately performed in a systematic fashion and correctly placed at the very core of the believer's life—served as a powerful lever to dislodge the traditional economic ethic.

This close linkage of religious belief and economic activity, founded on the idea that work in a vocation testified to membership among the elect few, constituted a cornerstone of Weber's explanation for the origin of the Puritan's dispassionate and restrained frame of mind. A further argument proved crucial for persons oriented to business. The connection, most evident in Calvinism, of a methodical striving for wealth and profit with a favorable answer to the *certitudo salutis* question gave these believers a subjective reassurance of salvation and thus served as an additional fundamental source for the Protestant ethic.

Wealth and profit as signs of one's salvation. A further adjustment of Calvin's doctrine of salvation by Baxter and the Puritan Divines proved significant for an understanding of the striving for wealth and profit among people oriented to business. Although believers could never

know with certainty their salvation status, they could logically conclude, in light of God's desire for an earthly kingdom of abundance to serve His glory, that the actual production of great wealth by an individual for a community was a sign that God favored that individual. In effect, personal wealth became, to the faithful, actual *evidence* of their salvation status. An omnipotent and omniscient God would never allow one of the condemned to praise His glory. Surely, "the acquisition of wealth, when it was the *fruit* of work in a vocational calling, [was a sign of] God's blessing" (p. 116). Similarly, the opportunity to compete with others to make a profit did not appear by chance; rather, it constituted an opportunity given by God to acquire wealth:

If God show you a way in which you *may*, in accord with His laws, acquire *more profit* than in another way, without wrong to your soul or to any other and if you refuse this, choosing the less profitable course, *you then cross one of the purposes of your calling. You are refusing to be God's steward, and to accept his gifts.* (p. 109; *emph. in the original* [this is a quote from Baxter]; see also pp. 116–17)

Weber emphasizes repeatedly that, for the Puritans, a psychological certainty of salvation was crucial. The exercise of astute business skills and the acquisition of money were not ends in themselves. On the contrary, to strive for riches in order to live well and carefree could only be considered sinful. All covetousness—the pursuit of wealth for its own sake—and frivolous indulgence must be condemned as a deification of human wants and desires. Instead, the Puritans viewed riches as an unintended consequence of their major quest, namely, to acquire the certainty of salvation. Wealth, which was received exclusively through the favor of an omnipotent God, in the eyes of the sincere faithful was important evidence of religious virtue, and it was valued in this sense alone (pp. 107–08, 114–17; 1951, p. 245; 1968, p. 1200). According to Weber:

In no other religion was the pride of the predestined aristocracy of the saved so closely associated with the man of a vocation and with the idea that success in *rationalized* activity demonstrates God's blessing as in Puritanism. (1968, p. 575; *emph. in original*; see also p. 556)

Thus, business-oriented believers could now seek to produce the evidence—literally, wealth, profit, and material success generally—that would convince them of their status as among the chosen. Accordingly, riches acquired, uniquely, a *religious* significance: they constituted signs

that indicated one's salvation. For this reason they lost their traditionally suspect character and became sanctified.

Three Central Aspects

In sum, Weber offers a complex and multidimensional explanation for the origins of the Protestant ethic. It has been examined here by reference mainly to, first, the question of what motivated the devout to organize their lives in a methodical manner and, second, what motivated them to direct their systematized conduct toward work, the acquisition of wealth, and material success in a vocation.³¹

Weber's many critics have often simplified (and then attacked) his analysis. Some have failed to see either the centrality of the *certitudo salutis* question or its powerful capacity—grounded in the doctrine of predestination, an Old Testament view of God, and pastoral care concerns—to give an impetus to religious development from Calvin to seventeenth-century Puritans. Others never acknowledge that, despite the logical consequences of the doctrine of predestination, conduct oriented to God's laws and disciplined work was understood by the Puritans as *testifying* to intense belief, which was believed to emanate originally from God. Many interpreters have neglected Weber's analysis of how believers seek to serve God as His "tools" and then to systematize their entire lives, to unusual degrees, around work and His laws. Still others have been unaware of the several ways that the devout discover signs of God's favoring hand and the manner in which these signs motivate the organization and direction of their activity. Weber's early critics (see Chalcraft and Harrington, 2001), as well as many later commentators (see Lehmann and Roth, 1993), refused to take cognizance of his pivotal distinction between action guided by *values* and oriented to the supernatural and other, basically utilitarian, action. Finally, Weber's emphasis on how motivations for action arise through religious belief, and the capacity of belief to call forth psychological rewards that direct action, has been often downplayed.

All of these themes will continue to capture our attention. Before turning to the urgent question that must now be addressed—How did Weber link the Protestant ethic to the spirit of capitalism?—three central aspects of his analysis of the origins of the Protestant ethic must be briefly highlighted.

(1) Weber insists that the Protestant ethic, as carried by groups of seventeenth-century Puritans, involves a methodical-rational organization of

life. An unusual, and extreme, *internal* systematization of energies is apparent, and the impulsive and spontaneous *status naturae* is overcome and replaced by a tempered, restrained, and dispassionate frame of mind. Weber calls this taming a “reversal” of the “natural” life and argues that it rests on a firm orientation by sincere believers to the supernatural realm, without which such an implausible reversal would be meaningless (pp. 16–17, 30–31, 77–78). Now as tools of God’s will and His commandments, the faithful have become ascetic saints.

Puritan asceticism . . . worked to render the devout capable of calling forth and then acting upon their ‘constant motives,’ especially those motives that the believer, through the practice of asceticism itself, ‘trained’ against the ‘emotions.’ . . . The goal was to be able to lead an alert, conscious, and self-aware life. Hence, the destruction of the spontaneity of the instinct-driven enjoyment of life constituted the most urgent task. (p. 72; see also 1951, p. 248; 1968, pp. 572–73)

The entire existence of the devout now became radically penetrated by religious values. A “meaningful total relationship of the organization of life to the goal of religious salvation” came into existence (1968, p. 478). For Puritan believers, labor in a calling existed only as an expression of their striving for other-worldly salvation. This methodical-rational organization of life must be qualitatively distinguished from the frame of mind of the lay Catholic rooted in a “series of isolated actions,” the Lutheran’s penitent humility and inward-oriented mood of piety, and the common “affirmation of the world” typical of all utilitarian, means-end rational action (pp. 15–17, 78–80).

(2) Although in an earlier epoch work had been elevated to the center of life and had become capable of internally rationalizing the believer’s entire conduct, these developments took place in the seventeenth century in a qualitatively new fashion. Weber stresses that a comprehensive organization of life also characterized medieval monks. Yet these *other-worldly* ascetics lived “outside the world” in monasteries, while the Puritans were engaged in **earning a living** in commerce, trade, and all the endeavors of the workaday world; they lived “*in* the world.” Nevertheless, owing to their ultimate focus on God’s laws and salvation in the next life, the values of the Puritans belonged “beyond” the workaday world, namely, to the religious realm. Ascetic Protestants, Weber contends, acted *in* the world, but their lives neither emanated from this world nor were lived *for* it (pp. 70–71, 101; 1968, p. 549).³² Still, as instruments of an eth-

ical and commanding deity, believers were expected to carry God's laws *into* the routine and practical activities of everyday life, and as His tools to transform, even revolutionize, its haphazard events on His behalf. God's glory—the mastery of the world (*Weltbeherrschung*) for His sacred aims—deserved nothing less. Moreover, because earthly life exists as the single field for testifying to membership among the elect, a mystic flight from the world could never constitute a viable option.

Thus, although the *inner-worldly* asceticism of the Puritans devalued terrestrial life in comparison to the next life, they nonetheless oriented their lives *to* the world and acted within it in a methodical and ethical manner. Weber argues that because a psychological certainty of salvation can be found only in such a “**surpassing**” of the customs and morality of everyday routines, “perhaps there has never been a more intense form of religious valuation of moral *action* than that which Calvinism produced in its followers” (p. 69; see 1968, pp. 498, 619).

The special life of the saint—fully separate from the ‘natural’ life of wants and desires—could no longer play itself out in monastic communities set apart from the world. Rather, the devoutly religious must now live saintly lives *in* the world and amidst its mundane affairs. This *rationalization* of the organized and directed life—now in the world yet still oriented to the supernatural—was the effect of ascetic Protestantism's *concept of the calling*. (p. 101; see also pp. 72–73; 1946c, p. 291; 1968, pp. 546, 578)

In this context Weber cites the maxim of the sixteenth-century German mystic Sebastian Franck: “*Every Christian must now be a monk for an entire lifetime*” (p. 74).

(3) Closely related is his emphasis on how a whole series of heretofore mundane activities become, as the Protestant ethic spread, sanctified, or “providential.” In the traditional economic cosmos, work, wealth, profit, and competition, for example, were all closely tied to utilitarian action. Now, with the Puritans, all acquired, remarkably, a religious significance. To the same extent they became severed from the “worldly” realm of pragmatic considerations. In other words, from the vantage point of the all-important *certitudo salutis* question, these practical activities became, to the devout, endowed with **subjective meaning**. Even an unwillingness to work and a lapse into begging assumed a providential meaning.³³ People engaged in business and oriented to profit were no longer scorned as calculating, self-interested actors; rather, a good conscience was now bestowed upon them and they became perceived by others as honest employers engaged in

a task given by God (pp. 109–10, 120). Similarly, the reinvestment of profit indicated loyalty to God’s grand design, and because all income and profit came from His grace, the devout practiced frugality and avoided ostentation (pp. 114–15). Indeed, because “this world” constituted the field for impersonal service to God’s glory and for testifying to one’s elect salvation status, routine conduct in general acquired a greater focus and intensity (p. 77–78; see 1968, p. 543).³⁴ It became enveloped in a religious halo.

These three central aspects of Weber’s analysis—the taming of the *status naturae* and the appearance of inner-worldly asceticism, the Protestant ethic’s *this*-worldly orientation, and the providential rendering of heretofore mundane, utilitarian activities—are central to his study of the origins of the Protestant ethic. Moreover, all contribute mightily to the capacity of this ethic, on the one hand, to confront and banish the traditional economic ethic and, on the other hand, to give a positive thrust to the development of modern capitalism.

In *PE*, this thrust flows into the “spirit of capitalism.” Weber maintains that the Protestant ethic, as noted, “co-participated” in the formation of the spirit of capitalism.

From the Protestant Ethic to the Spirit of Capitalism

That ‘objective’ formulae for determining points of demarcation do not exist in the attribution of historical cause is not of my doing. (1972, p. 325)

This section will first acknowledge the unusual capacity of the Protestant ethic to displace economic traditionalism, which is always highly resistant to change. Then it will quickly recapitulate the way the Protestant ethic offered a “push” to modern capitalism. Finally, it will sketch the pathway from the Protestant ethic to the spirit of capitalism.

The Protestant Ethic, the Traditional Economic Ethic, and the Push to Modern Capitalism

As noted, the banishment of age-old, obdurate economic traditionalism required patterns of action qualitatively more systematic and intense than means-end rational action oriented to economic interests and profit-making. After all, Weber reasoned, as discussed above, trade, commerce, and the pursuit of wealth have existed universally. Entrepreneur-

ial astuteness and “business savvy,” as well as all intelligent modes of making one’s way in the world (*Lebensklugheit*), can be found in every epoch and civilization (pp. 16, 20–21, 152). Nonetheless, the traditional economic ethic was only rarely uprooted. Even charismatic adventure capitalists, who can be found universally also, failed to weaken economic traditionalism.

Weber insists that the extreme methodicalness of the Puritan’s orientation toward work, wealth, and profit, anchored ultimately outside the mundane world in the salvation question, proved decisive in bringing about change. Action motivated by religious values, and the concerted bestowing of religion-based psychological rewards on economic activity in a vocation, alone managed to uproot the traditional economic ethic. Unified and focused ethical action, which characterized this *coherent group* of persons, had to be clearly distinguished, he argues, even from intensified means-end rational action. The tenacity and “lasting resilience” (p. 30) of Puritan employers and workers who succeeded in replacing economic traditionalism with the Protestant ethic was anchored in a methodical-rational organization of life. Work motivated “from within,” by an “internally binding” set of religious values, introduced the “life organized around ethical principles” that banished the traditional economic ethic (p. 76, see pp. 76–80). As Weber notes elsewhere:

The true Christian . . . wished to be nothing more than a tool of his God; in this he sought his dignity. Since this is what he wished to be, he was a useful instrument for rationally transforming and mastering the world. (1951, p. 248)

The ethical dimension that penetrated the Puritan’s economic activity not only constituted a “revolutionary” force against economic traditionalism; it also pushed forward the development of modern capitalism. Weber sees the Protestant ethic as doing so for all the reasons discussed above. In particular, he emphasizes, of course, the methodical organization of the lives of ascetic believers and the vigorous direction of focused energies, in a vocational calling, toward work, wealth, and profit. He repeatedly notes the necessity of testifying to belief through conduct, the search for signs of one’s salvation status, the providential rendering of heretofore purely utilitarian activities, and the new-found clear conscience of the capitalist in search of profit.

Weber calls attention as well to the Puritan’s preference to live modestly and frugally, to restrict consumption (especially of luxury goods), to save, and to invest surplus income, which, the faithful knew, came

from the hand of an omnipotent deity and must be utilized on behalf of His purposes only (pp. 114–17). To indulge desires and to pursue an ostentatious mode of living would distract the devout from their exclusive orientation to God’s will and from their task, as His instruments, to create the righteous kingdom on earth. Believers viewed themselves as the earthly trustees of goods that came from God and hence the enjoyment of wealth became “morally reprehensible” (p. 104). Only activity, not leisure and enjoyment, serves to increase the majesty of God (pp. 104–06, 115).³⁵

Moreover, owing to the Puritan perception of the feudal aristocracy as lacking an orientation to God and as decadent, the purchase of titles of nobility and imitation of the feudal lord’s lifestyle, as commonly occurred among the *nouveaux riches* in Europe, could not appeal to these social carriers of the Protestant ethic (pp. 117–18). They disapproved of this “feudalization of wealth” because the acquisition of a country estate and the building of a mansion would preclude the reinvestment of wealth in business. Property, they knew, must be used for purposes of production and to increase wealth (p. 109).

Weber emphasizes also that the Protestant ethic called forth an unusually industrious labor force. Because they were convinced that diligent labor served God’s design, devout workers were not only disciplined and reliable but also willing. Their “*exclusive* striving for the kingdom of God . . . through fulfillment of the duty to work in a vocational calling . . . must have promoted the ‘productivity’ of work” (p. 121). The Puritans “took pride in their own superior business ethics” (p. 122).

In sum, and although the Puritans’ radical rationalization of world-oriented action was eventually “routinized,” or weakened, this ascetic Protestantism called forth an organized, directed life that, Weber contends, stands at the very root of today’s “economic man” (p. 118). As the “only consistent carrier” of this methodical-rational orientation to life, the Puritans “created the suitable ‘soul’ for capitalism, the soul of the ‘specialist in a vocation’ ” (1972, p. 168). An inner **affinity** between the ethically-rigorous devoutness of ascetic Protestantism on the one hand and “the modern culture of capitalism” and “economic rationalism” on the other hand can be said to exist (p. 11; see 1968, pp. 479–80). To Weber, the rational work ethic of the Puritans gave a strong boost to the development of modern capitalism, and the “significance [of the Protestant

ethic] for the development of [modern] capitalism is obvious” (p. 115; see 1968, pp. 1200, 1206).

That being said, *PE* never attempts to establish either the precise impact of the Protestant ethic or its exact causal weight compared to “external” factors, such as economic, political, or technological forces. To do so would require, Weber knew well, a multicausal and comparative theoretical framework beyond the scope of this “essay in cultural history” (see pp. 149–64; Kalberg 1994a, 1994b, pp. 50–78, 143–92; 1999). He defines his aim in *PE* in more modest terms, seeking to assess, as noted, only the extent to which *religious* beliefs stand at the origin of the spirit of capitalism,³⁶ which encompasses far larger groupings of people than does the Protestant ethic. In studying the rise of modern capitalism, reference to utilitarian calculations, adventure capitalists, material interests, avarice, the business transactions of Jews, or general evolution will not tell the whole story. To Weber, the Protestant ethic also played a significant role.

The Religious Ancestry of the Spirit of Capitalism

The Protestant ethic spread throughout several New England, Dutch, and English communities in the seventeenth century. Disciplined, hard labor in a calling and the wealth that followed from a steadfast adherence to Puritan values marked a person as among the chosen elect. By Franklin’s time, one century later, the Protestant ethic was cultivated not only in churches and sects but also throughout entire communities. Its expansion, however, had weakened and transformed its religion-based ethical component into an ethos with a utilitarian accent (pp. 16, 119–20, 122–24). Weber refers to this ethos as the spirit of capitalism: a configuration of values that implied the individual’s duty to increase his capital, to see work as an end in itself to be performed rationally and systematically in a calling, to earn money perpetually (without enjoying it), and to view material wealth as a manifestation of “competence and proficiency in a vocational calling” (p. 18). Adherents to this spirit, like Franklin, rather than viewed by others as among the saved, were believed to be simply community-oriented citizens of good moral character. Their stalwart demeanor, which was immediately recognizable, no longer served to testify to firm belief; it indicated instead respectability, dignity, honesty, and self-confidence.³⁷

Rather than being a believer, Franklin, the embodiment of this spirit, was a “bland deist” (p. 18). Weber contends that the *origins* of Franklin’s conduct, however, were not located only in pragmatic considerations, business astuteness, utilitarian calculations, or greed; ascetic Protestantism also played a part. Indeed, the ethical element in Franklin’s manner of organizing and directing his life, Weber argues, confirms such an interpretation (pp. 16–18). Yet here a conundrum appears. How had the ethical dimension in the Protestant ethic, now shorn of its legitimating certainty-of-salvation component and lacking a sustaining *religious* community, survived into the eighteenth century?

Long before the religious roots of ethical action had become weakened, the Puritan’s ethical values had expanded beyond their original social carriers—ascetic Protestant churches and sects—to another carrier grouping: Protestant families. For this reason, these values remained central in childhood socialization *even* as a gradual secularization occurred. Parents taught children to set goals and organize their lives methodically, to be self-reliant and shape their own destinies, to behave in accord with ethical standards, and to work diligently. They encouraged children to pursue careers in business and see virtue in capitalism’s open markets, to seek material success, to become upwardly mobile, to live modestly and frugally, to reinvest their wealth, to look toward the future and the “opportunities” it offers, and to budget their time wisely—just as Franklin admonished in his writings (pp. 14–15). Families stressed, as well, the importance of honesty and fair play in business transactions, individual achievement, ascetic personal habits, systematic work in a vocation, and hard competition. Children were socialized, through intimate, personal relationships,³⁸ to conduct themselves in a restrained, dispassionate manner, and to do so by reference to a configuration of guiding values.

In this way, an entire array of ethical values and modes of conduct were passed on from generation to generation. Sects and churches were no longer the exclusive social carriers of this organized life; families, and even constellations of community organizations, including schools, also cultivated its typical values and conduct. Hence, new generations continued to be influenced. Indeed, action oriented toward a configuration of values originally carried by ascetic Protestant sects and churches endured long after these religious organizations had become weakened. Protestantism’s “sect spirit,” (see pp. 127–48) now routinized into max-

ims, community norms and values, and familiar customs and traditions, remained integral in Franklin's colonial America. Yet the ancestry of this spirit of capitalism, Weber contends, was not "this-worldly" but "other-worldly," namely, the Protestant ethic: "The Puritan's sincerity of belief must have been the most powerful lever conceivable working to expand the view of life that we are here designating as the spirit of capitalism" (p. 116).

One of the constitutive components of the modern capitalist spirit, and, moreover, generally of modern civilization, was the rational organization of life on the basis of the *idea of the calling*. It was born out of the spirit of *Christian asceticism*. (p. 122; emph. in original)

At this point, Weber rests his case regarding "the way in which 'ideas' become generally effective in history" (p. 48). He has traced the lineage of the spirit of capitalism and discovered that the Protestant ethic, indeed, "co-participated" in its formation. Yet Weber moves a step further. He contends also that he has, in *PE*, discovered the "ethical style of life 'adequate' to the new capitalism" (1972, p. 286) and he is convinced that the spirit of capitalism accelerated, albeit in nonquantifiable terms, the growth of modern capitalism.³⁹ It did so in a manner parallel to that of the Protestant ethic, although now on a broader scale. He speaks of a relationship of "adequacy" (p. 26) between the spirit of capitalism and modern capitalism as an economic form. This spirit, in other words, provided the "economic culture" that served as a legitimating foundation for modern capitalism:

[The] spirit of (modern) *capitalism* . . . finds its most adequate form in the modern capitalist company and, on the other hand, . . . the capitalist company discovers in this frame of mind the motivating force—or spirit—most adequate to it. (pp. 26–27)

The final pages of *PE* diverge from the main task of this study. Weber here leaps across the centuries in order to quickly survey, in broad strokes and unforgettable passages, modern capitalism two centuries after Franklin's birth. Firmly entrenched after the massive industrialization of the nineteenth century, "victorious capitalism" now sustains itself on the basis of *means-end* rational action alone, he argues. In this pres-

ent-day urban, secular, and bureaucratic milieu, neither Franklin's spirit nor Baxter's this-worldly asceticism endows methodical work with subjective meaning. These supporting religious roots for modern capitalism have faded. Activity originally motivated by values and ideas has "collapsed" and become "routinized." The means-end rational action characteristic of sheer utilitarian calculations "surreptitiously shoved itself under" (p. 121) the original constellation of ideas and **value-rationalization**, and now alone carries methodical work. Today, an inescapable network of pragmatic necessities overwhelms the individual.

People born into this "powerful cosmos" are coerced to adapt to the impersonal laws of the market in order to survive. In this "steel-hard casing" of "mechanized ossification," the motivation to work—its *subjective meaning*—is rooted exclusively in constraint and means-end rational calculations. A "mechanical foundation" is in place and "the idea of an 'obligation to search for and then accept a vocational calling' now wanders around in our lives as the ghost of beliefs no longer anchored in the substance of religion." In one of his most famous passages, Weber succinctly captures the significant transformation that has occurred at the level of motives: the Puritan "*wanted* to be a person with a vocational calling; today we *are forced* to be" (p. 123; see pp. 123–24; 1972, pp. 319–20).

If this brief commentary upon advanced capitalist societies is acknowledged, four stages to Weber's analysis in *PE* now become apparent (see chart on next page).

***PE* as an Example of Weber's Sociology**

The discipline of sociology was in its infancy when *PE* was written. Trained as an economic and legal historian, Weber began to call his own research sociological only about 1911. The term *sociology* is never used in *PE*. In other writings he refers to this volume as an "essay in cultural history" or simply as a "sketch" on the relationship between religious belief and conduct. Nevertheless, central aspects of Weber's sociological approach, which he designated **interpretive understanding** (*Verstehen*), are quite apparent in *PE*. In fact, among Weber's many works, *PE* is perhaps the best and most vivid example of how he combines his major methodological tool, the **ideal type**, with his methodology of interpretive understanding designed to grasp subjective meaning

(see 1949, pp. 42–45, 85–110; 1968, pp. 3–26). His entire sociology is driven by a wish to understand how social action, often viewed by observers as irrational, foolish, and strange, becomes plausible and altogether “rational” once its subjective meaningfulness is comprehended.

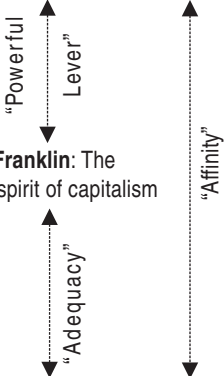
A brief discussion of several ways in which Weber’s procedures in *PE* illustrate his general mode of conducting sociological research will assist a clearer understanding of this classic volume and of his sociology of interpretive understanding.

Frame of Mind

Throughout *PE*, as well as in his sociology as a whole, Weber demarcates, from vantage points of interest to him, “frames of mind.” As they relate to economic activity, he discusses the frames of mind of adventure

The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism:
Stages of Weber’s Analysis

	Period	Organization	Types of Action	Religious Belief
I. Calvin: Fatalism as result of doctrine of predestination	16 th cen.	small sects	value-rational	yes
II. Baxter: The Protestant ethic (Puritanism)	17 th cen.	churches and sects	value-rational (methodical this-worldly activity)	yes
III. Franklin: The spirit of capitalism	18 th cen.	communities	value-rational ⁴⁰ (methodical this-worldly activity)	no
IV. The “ specialist ”: capitalism as a “cosmos”	20 th cen.	industrial society	means-end rational	no



Adapted from Kalberg, ‘On the Neglect of Weber’s *Protestant Ethic* as a Theoretical Treatise’ (*Sociological Theory*, 1996, p. 63), with permission from the American Sociological Association.

capitalists, medieval entrepreneurs (Jakob Fugger), feudal aristocrats, Puritan employers and workers, workers and employers immersed within economic traditionalism, and the patrician capitalists of the seventeenth century. The frames of mind of the Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist, Pietist, Methodist, Baptist, Quaker, and Mennonite faithful capture his main attention.

Weber articulates major components of each group's subjective meaning; how it occurs, for example, that Calvinists view methodical work seriously and orient their entire lives accordingly. His concern is to understand the meaningfulness of systematic work to this group of people rather than to evaluate or judge it; he seeks to do so by investigating the motivations that underlie the rigorous work patterns of these believers. Instead of referring to the unconscious, however, as a disciple of Freud would do, Weber attempts to comprehend how work becomes meaningful by analyzing the beliefs, and the psychological rewards they imply for specific conduct, of an ideal type—or an unusually representative figure—of Calvinism, such as Baxter.

For this reason Weber studies the historical-cultural context within which the beliefs of Calvinists crystallized: the sermons they listen to, the Bible passages and doctrinal statements they read, the character of their religious community. Indeed, in seeking to convey to his reader the frame of mind of these believers, through this method of interpretive understanding, Weber avoids the domain of psychology proper. He also rejects, as explanatory concepts, national character, genetic makeup, innate disposition (greed and lust for gain), and developmental-historical laws. Economic and political interests must be considered, according to Weber, but they do not alone offer adequate explanations for the Calvinist's conduct and frame of mind. Throughout his sociology, Weber attends to the extent to which a particular frame of mind implies an uprooting of persons from the *status naturae* on the one hand and purely this-worldly, utilitarian calculations on the other, and then an organization of life around ethical values.

Owing to its focus on arrays of specific groups and the psychology of motives for their members, this procedure avoids reference to the global concepts utilized in organic holism theorizing (society, community, tradition, modernity, particularism, universalism, evolution, or progress), all of which Weber finds too diffuse. His methodology also forcefully rejects a focus on charismatic figures. Instead, he chooses an “intermedi-

ary” level of analysis between global concepts and “great men” theories of historical change: the subjective meaning of persons in groups as captured by ideal types and explored through interpretive understanding.

Case Studies

The task of sociology involves the causal explanation of specific cases, according to Weber, rather than the discovery of history’s developmental tendencies or the formulation of general laws that predict future events. Even Weber’s systematic treatise, *Economy and Society*, does not seek to discover general laws. Instead, it charts out empirically-based ideal types that, as heuristic tools, assist researchers to undertake causal analyses of specific cases (see 1949, pp. 56–57, 72–84; 1968, p. 10; Kalberg 1994b, pp. 81–142; 2000, pp. 157–59).

In *PE* Weber offers a causal explanation for the rise of a particular case, here the spirit of capitalism. He attempts to identify its religious sources and persuade his readers, through both empirical documentation and logical argument, that these sources are plausible causes. In his terms, he seeks to demonstrate that the Protestant ethic constitutes an “adequate cause” for the spirit of capitalism.

Weber’s orientation to causal explanations of specific phenomena is often neglected, not least because of the massive scale of the cases he chooses to investigate. For example, in his *Economic Ethics of the World Religions* volumes he studies the origins of the caste system in India (1958), the rise of monotheism in ancient Israel (1952), the rise of Confucianism in China (1951; see Kalberg 1994a; 1994b, pp. 177–92; 1999) and even the rise of the modern West (see pp. lviii–lxiv).

The Influence of Culture

PE emphatically calls attention to the influence of cultural values on action. Weber addresses one aspect of culture, religious belief, and its impact on economic activity. Even “purely” means-end rational action in reference to the laws of the market possesses a cultural aspect. Market-oriented activity, he insists in *PE*, is played out not merely according to economic interests but also to an economic culture, and work today in a vocation “carries with it an *ascetic* imprint” (p. 123; *emph.* in original). Yet Weber unveils the cultural forces that underlie and legitimate everyday activity not only in *PE* but throughout his sociology. In addition to a broad array of economic cultures, he explores, for example, a variety of

political cultures “behind” the exercise of power (see, for example, 1968, pp. 980–94, 1204–10, 1381–1462; 1985; Kalberg, 1997, 2001) and an array of legal cultures that legitimate the orientations of persons to laws (see 1968, pp. 809–92).

Weber’s cognizance of the causal capacity of cultural forces is apparent as early as *PE*’s first chapter. The assumption that the *origins* of an economic ethic, whether traditional or modern, can be explained by reference to social structures—an “economic form”—is rejected. To him, as noted above, even identical external structures of extreme rigidity, such as those typical of religious and political sects, let alone those of the factory and the bureaucracy, fail to call forth homogeneous patterns of action. The Calvinist, Methodist, Pietist, and Baptist sects all advocated distinct doctrines, as did sects in India (1946c, p. 292), and believers oriented their lives accordingly. The same must be said, Weber is convinced, of strata and classes (pp. 34–35, 175 [note 24]; 1946c, pp. 268–70). Similarly, although he acknowledges the influence of institutions (such as schools, churches, families, the state, the military) on action, he notes repeatedly how cultural contexts, often rooted in regional religious traditions, have an independent impact upon institutions (pp. 5–12, 32–33). This impact is so prevalent that, viewed comparatively, quite different patterns of action are apparent even in institutions possessing very similar structures.

Weber’s articulation of the capacity of cultural forces to shape social contexts also places his sociology in direct opposition to rational choice, neo-Marxist, and “economic man” theories. *PE*, as well as an array of Weber’s other writings, argues, for example, that sustained economic development, whether occurring today in Asia, Latin America, or central Europe, is a complex process not moved along only by economic interests, market calculations, or wage incentives.

PE contends that a sociology oriented exclusively to economic and political interests, social structures, classes, power, organizations, or institutions is theoretically inadequate. The diverse ways in which cultural values form the context for conduct, albeit often obscure and scarcely visible, runs as a major thread throughout his works.

The Interpenetration of Past and Present

Weber refused in *PE* to take the immediate present as his point of reference. Indeed, his analysis rejects the idea of a disjunction between past and present and offers a host of examples that demonstrate their

interwovenness. He emphasizes in *PE*, as well as in his sociological writings generally, that recognition of history's impact remains indispensable for an understanding of the present and that radical change, although possible, is rare. This holds despite his acknowledgment of the heroic capacity of charismatic leaders to sever past and present abruptly, given facilitating conditions (see 1968, pp. 1111–19). Even in those eras in which massive structural transformations have occurred (urbanization, industrialization, secularization), the past lives on into the present as an influential force: “That which has been handed down from the past becomes everywhere the immediate precursor of that taken in the present as valid” (1968, p. 29; translation altered). Cultural forces in particular often survive great structural metamorphoses, thereby linking past and present.

In general, Weber's “open” theoretical framework grounded in multitudes of specific groups (as captured by ideal types), and his position that the domains of religion, law, domination, and the economy develop at uneven rates (pp. 35–37; 1968), place his “view of society”—an array of multiple, dynamically interacting “parts,” each endowed with an autonomous causal thrust and unfolding along its own pathway—in opposition to other approaches. First, approaches that elevate a single variable (such as class or the state) to a position of general causal priority are opposed, as are, second, all schools of thought that conceptualize social life by reference to sets of encompassing dichotomies (such as tradition-modernity, particularism-universalism, and *Gemeinschaft-Gesellschaft*). To Weber, these exclusive concepts focus too much on cross-epochal disjunctions and downplay the deep interlocking of past and present. Moreover, because to him very few significant developments from the past ever die out fully, he argues that a charting in the immediate present of economic and political interests on the one hand, or “system needs” and “functional prerequisites” on the other hand, can serve sociological analysis only in a preliminary, trial-and-error fashion (1968, pp. 14–18).⁴¹ To Weber, the past always penetrates deeply into the present, even molding its core contours. His concepts “social carrier” and “legacy” illustrate how this penetration takes place.

The Linking of Past and Present: Social Carriers and Legacies

Weber's analysis of how the Protestant ethic survives, in secularized guise as a spirit of capitalism carried by families, schools, and communities rather than by churches and sects, offers a vivid illustration of the

way in which cultural values and ideas from the past endure, for him, as legacies that influence the present. The crystallization of a new status group, organization, or class to cultivate and carry cultural values and ideas is crucial if these values and ideas are to remain viable. Thus, *PE* explores ideas and values *in reference to* the churches, sects, organizations, classes, and strata that bear them, rather than exclusively focussing on ideas and values. This theme also is found at a variety of places in Weber's sociology.

He especially emphasizes in *PE* how values and ideas either resonate with pastoral care practices in churches or else become transformed by pastors attentive to the "religious needs" of believers. A back-and-forth movement characterizes his analysis. Although values and ideas retain an autonomous capacity, they must become located in strong carrier groups in order to become effective. At times, just the sheer logical rigor and persuasiveness of ideas regarding salvation may *themselves* call forth values and a carrier group (see pp. 56, 74–75). If they are to endure, however, values and ideas must, even in these cases, eventually stand in a relationship of elective affinity with the religious needs of members of a carrier group (see 1946c, pp. 268–70).

In general, Weber is convinced that patterned action of every imaginable variety has arisen in every epoch and civilization. Yet, if a particular conduct is to become prominent in the social fabric, cohesive and powerful social carriers for it must crystallize. Only then can its influence range across decades and centuries. As Weber notes,

Unless the concept 'autonomy' is to lack all precision, its definition presupposes the existence of a bounded group of persons which, though membership may fluctuate, is determinable. (1968, p. 699; translation altered)

He defines a wide variety of carrier groups in *Economy and Society*. Regularities of action in some groupings can be recognized as firm, and carriers can be seen, in some cases, as powerful; others fail to carry conduct forcefully and prove fleeting. Patterned action may fade and then, owing to an alteration of *contextual* forces, acquire carriers and become reinvigorated, influential, and long-lasting. At times coalitions of carriers are formed; at other times carriers stand clearly in a relationship of antagonism to one another. The view of society that flows out of *Economy and Society*—as constructed from numerous competing and reciprocally interacting patterns of social action "located" in carrier groups—easily

takes cognizance of the survival of certain conduct from the past and its significant influence, as a legacy, upon action in the present.

Weber often charts such legacies from the religious domain. He does so not only in regard to work in a vocation. In the United States, innumerable values, customs, and practices deriving from Protestant asceticism remain integral even today (see below, p. lvi; also pp. 127–48). The “direct democratic administration” by the congregation practiced in Protestant sects, for example, left a legacy crucial for the establishment of democratic forms of government, as did the unwillingness of sect members to bestow a halo of reverence upon secular authority (1985; 1968, pp. 1204–10).⁴² The Quakers in particular, by advocating freedom of conscience for others as well as for themselves, paved the way for political tolerance (pp. 210–11, note 129; see 1968, pp. 1204–10; Kalberg 1997).

The Routinization and Sublimation of Motives, the Maxim of Unforeseen Consequences, and the Aims of Interpretive Understanding

Weber depicts the transformation from Franklin’s spirit of capitalism to today’s “victorious capitalism” (see pp. xlvi–xlvii above) as involving a routinization of the motives behind economic activity from value-rational to means-end rational. The alteration of motives in *PE* moves in the diametrically opposite direction when Weber emphasizes that great variation exists across Catholicism, Lutheranism, and ascetic Protestantism in the extent to which they sublimated the *status naturae*. Did religious doctrines call forth the methodical-rational organization of life among the faithful that tamed impulsive and spontaneous human nature?

Both the routinization and sublimation interpretations of motives prove pivotal in *PE*. However, a focus on the way in which motives for action vary across a spectrum and the significance of this variation for the continuity of action and even for the *ethical* organization of life, as well for economic activity, stands at the foundation of Weber’s entire sociology. Sociologists who wish to practice his method of interpretive understanding, he asserts, must be attuned to these distinctions.

Weber stresses in *PE*, as well as elsewhere in his works, that such shifts at the level of motivation are frequently unforeseen; they are often blatantly antagonistic to the intentions of persons at the beginning of the process. Surely Weber’s Puritans, who worked methodically as a consequence of *other-worldly*

considerations, would be appalled to see that their systematic labor and profit-seeking eventually led to a degree of wealth threatening to their frugal and modest style of life oriented to God (pp. 118–19; 1968, p. 1200). Moreover, their riches created a highly advanced technological cosmos anchored ultimately by laws of science based on empirical observation rather than by the laws of God and methodical *ethical* conduct oriented to Him. A scientific world view, cultivated and developed by the modern capitalism that ascetic Protestantism helped to call into existence, opposes in principle—for it refuses to provide legitimacy to a “leap of faith”—all worldviews rooted in religion (see 1946b, pp. 148–54).

Finally, Weber emphasizes in *PE*, as well as throughout his sociology, that those born into today’s “powerful cosmos,” where pragmatic necessities, sheer means-end calculations, and secularism reign, can scarcely imagine the actual contours of the religion-saturated world of the past. Even with the best of wills, “the modern person” can barely conceive of work in a vocation as motivated by that crucial query in the lives of the seventeenth century devout: “Am I among the saved” (see p. 125; 1946b, pp. 142–43)? The dominance today of radically different assumptions regarding typical motives for action, Weber believes, obscures our capacity to comprehend how conduct was differently motivated in the distant past. Indeed, sociologists often unknowingly impose present-day assumptions on action in the past.

For this reason also Weber calls for a sociology of interpretive understanding that seeks to comprehend, “from within,” the subjective meaning of persons through detailed investigation of *their* milieu of values, traditions, emotions, and interests. This procedure, he is convinced, will extend the sociologist’s capacity to grasp the meaning of action. Determined to comprehend human beings as “meaning-seeking creatures” (see Salomon, 1962, p. 393) and to understand how people in various epochs and civilizations endow their actions with meaning, Weber hoped that his method of interpretive understanding would be used in this expansive manner. Furthermore, he hoped that, through comparisons, the unique features and parameters of eras, civilizations, and distinct groupings would be isolated. Important insight would be gained in the process (see 1946b, pp. 150–53).

‘The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism’⁴³

The “Sects” essay reprinted in this volume (pp. 127–47) was written soon after Weber’s return to Germany from the United States. Published

in 1906 in two newspapers in abbreviated form,⁴⁴ he now sought to reach a much broader German audience. Weber hoped, through a close-up view of the United States in 1904, to confront an array of stereotypes widespread in Germany.

“Sects” is far less scholarly than *PE*. Informal in tone, it is built around Weber’s perspicacious social observations as he travels through the Midwest, the South, the Middle Atlantic states, and New England. His delightful commentary, however, should not be understood as providing merely fragmented “impressions of American life.” Instead, Weber brings his audience up to date in respect to the fate of Puritan beliefs in the United States 250 years after their origin.

On the one hand, *PE* provided an historical investigation of believers’ orientations to particular religious doctrines, an overview of the inner psychological dynamics and anxieties of the devout in search of salvation, and a scrutiny of the influence of belief and pastoral practices upon economic activity in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the United States, England, Holland, and Germany. The “Sects” essay, on the other hand, at the dawning of the twentieth century, examines the ways in which ascetic Protestantism in America has influenced communities. Weber addresses the social psychology of group membership and the playing out, even in interaction, of the ascetic Protestant stress on work and economic activity (see Berger, 1971). The spirit of capitalism has now “entered the world” even more than in Franklin’s time, and Weber wishes to summarize briefly its major impact. In this manner, “Sects” complements *PE*’s orientation to the origins of the spirit of capitalism and the differences, in regard to the connection of belief and conduct, between Catholics, Lutherans, and Puritans. For this reason, it has been selected for inclusion in this volume.

Weber retains a steady focus throughout “Sects” on the “straight derivatives, rudiments, and survivals [in American society] of those conditions which once prevailed in all ascetic sects” (p. 144; see also pp. 134–36; 1972, pp. 173–74). Multiple legacies of the “sect spirit,” Weber argues, form the sociological underpinnings of, for example, social trust, skeptical attitudes toward secular authority, the practice of self-governance, and the nimble capacity of Americans to form civic associations (see also 1968, pp. 1204–10).

Only the latter residual of the sect spirit can be addressed here (see also Kalberg, 1997). Weber emphasizes that the Protestant sects were

the original social carriers of the idea that membership in a social group testifies to a person's respectability, honesty, and good character. As "exclusive" organizations, the original sects allowed membership only on the basis of sincere belief. Rigorous scrutiny of candidates' moral character took place before a decision was made. Hence, membership automatically bestowed on a person a reputation of integrity. And the sect, owing to its capacity to exert immediate social pressure on those members who might be tempted to deviate from the righteous path, was quite capable of guaranteeing respectable conduct among its members.

Weber argues that the badges and lapel pins worn by Americans in 1904, all of which denoted membership in a secular club or society, involved a similar attempt by persons to establish social honor and personal integrity through group membership. An elevation of one's social status even occurred with membership in civic groups; persons were now "certified" as trustworthy and as "gentlemen." Indeed, membership proved indispensable if one hoped to be fully accepted in one's community (pp. 134–36; 1985, pp. 7–8; 1968, p. 1207). In this way, the influence of ascetic Protestantism, manifest in 1904 as community norms of "involvement" and "service," contributed to the formation of diverse civic associations "between" the distant state and the individual standing alone. This achievement of the sect spirit forms the foundation for American society's unique proclivity to create a multitude of such associations.⁴⁵ In turn, this capacity comprises a pivotal component in its political culture of participation and self-governance.

Today, large numbers of 'orders' and clubs of all sorts have begun to assume in part the functions of the religious community. Almost every small businessman who thinks something of himself wears some kind of badge in his lapel. However, the archetype of this form, which *all* use to guarantee the 'honorableness' of the individual, is indeed the ecclesiastical community. (1985, p. 8, *emph. in original*; see pp. 146–47)⁴⁶

To Weber "no one doubts the decisive role of Puritanism for the American style of life" (1972, p. 300).

In drawing out this feature of the American social landscape, he wished to confront widespread stereotypes held by Germans and, more broadly, to confront a common image of "modern society." It was widely believed in Europe that the advance of capitalism, urbanism, and industrialism severed individuals from "community" (*Gemeinschaft*), leaving them adrift and cut off from others in "society" (*Gesellschaft*).

Without viable social ties, persons wandered aimlessly as unconnected “atoms.” To Emile Durkheim, this situation led to anomie and high suicide rates (1951). Others spoke of the “anonymity” of modern life.

Europeans, and Germans in particular, viewed the United States, which they considered as the nation where capitalism had developed to the farthest extent, in precisely this manner—as a “sand pile” (*Sandhaufen*) of individuals lacking personal, nonmarket connections to others (see 1985, pp. 10–11). In noting the broad tendency among Americans to form associations, and the particular importance they attributed (deriving out of their unique religious traditions) to membership, Weber wished to confront this European stereotype directly. Moreover, as a sociologist oriented to cases rather than to general “developmental laws,” he desired to point out how modern nations vary, despite a common experience of capitalism, urbanism, and industrialism, as a consequence of specific historical legacies anchored in religion. Case-by-case analysis would reveal, he maintained, how each developing nation followed its own pathway. To his German countrymen Weber wished to convey that the origins of the nightmare scenario they associated with the “atomized” *Gesellschaft* may have in part arisen out of constellations of historical and cultural forces specifically German (see Kalberg 1987, 1997, 2001).

‘Prefatory Remarks’ to The Economic Ethics of the World Religions (1920)

After writing *PE* and “Sects,” Weber’s research on the relationship between religious belief and economic activity became radically comparative. About 1911 he began a series of studies on Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and ancient Judaism. First published separately as articles in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, these investigations were later given the title Economic Ethics of the World Religions (EEWR) and prepared in 1919 and 1920 for publication in book form.⁴⁷ The complete three-volume enterprise, which placed *PE* and “Sects” at its beginning, was published after Weber’s death in 1920 under the title *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*.⁴⁸ Written late in 1919,⁴⁹ the “Prefatory Remarks” (“PR”) essay included below is the general introduction to this entire set of

essays.⁵⁰ It indicates to us one prominent path taken by Weber's sociology after *PE*.⁵¹

Weber's studies on the "world religions" in China, India, and the ancient Near East have often been understood as mirror images of *PE*. That is, they have been viewed as placing the emphasis on the "ideas" side of the causal equation—the religious doctrines and their influence on the conduct of believers—and as neglecting "interests." Interpreters of Weber then asserted that, according to him, modern capitalism failed to develop first in India or China because no "functional equivalent" of the Protestant ethic ever existed in the religions of these civilizations. On the basis of this reading, several generations of scholars sought through empirical studies to disprove (or prove) "the Weber thesis" by discovering (or failing to discover) equivalents in Asia. If to develop at all, they asserted modern capitalism required a counterpart to ascetic Protestantism. Conversely, to these scholars, the absence of such an equivalent explained "economic backwardness."

This unilinear manner of utilizing Weber, we now understand, fundamentally distorted his argument both in *PE* and in *EEWR*. *PE*'s unforgettable concluding passage—where Weber emphasizes the incomplete and "one-sided" nature of his analysis—rejects all such "idealist" versions of historical change (p. 125). This same disavowal thoroughly penetrates the *EEWR* volumes.⁵² Although continuing to investigate the world religions by reference to the ways in which belief influences economic activity, Weber adds the "other side" of the causal equation: the influence of "interests" (or "external forces") on ideas ("internal forces") becomes just as apparent in *EEWR* as the influence of ideas on interests. Indeed, Weber's stress on the full intertwining of interests and ideas precludes any quick-and-easy formula. As he notes in *Economy and Society*:

Religion nowhere creates certain economic conditions unless there are also present in the existing relationships and constellations of interests certain possibilities of, or even powerful drives toward, such an economic transformation. It is not possible to enunciate any general formula that will summarize the comparative substantive powers of the various factors involved in such a transformation or will summarize the manner of their accommodation to one another. (1968, p. 577; see also p. 341; 1946c, pp. 267–70)

Hence, Weber himself would be the first to question the validity of research oriented exclusively toward possible functional equivalents of ascetic Protestantism, and to criticize—as monocausal and "one-sided"—

all explanations for economic development that refer to ideas alone (see also pp. 155–157). Despite a continued orientation in EEWR to the influence of belief on economic conduct, “PR” unequivocally conveys EEWR’s fundamental broadening, in just this manner, of *PE*. EEWR offers complex, multidimensional causal arguments.

EEWR expands upon *PE* in a directly related manner as well: the EEWR studies explore causality also contextually. Ideas are now *situated* within complex contexts of economic, political, stratification, and legal forces; and complex contexts of economic, political, stratification, and legal forces are now *situated* within ideas. As Weber asks, in discussing the causal origins in the modern West of a type of law based upon formal rules and administered by a stratum of specially-trained jurists, hence a type of law that served the interests of businessmen owing to the stability and calculability it provided for economic transactions, “Why then did capitalist interests not call forth this stratum of jurists and this type of law in China or India” (p. 159)? Similarly, he contends that the technical application of scientific knowledge was determined by economic interests and opportunities, yet the existence of these “rewards” did not derive merely from constellations of interests; rather, “[they] flowed out of the particular character of the West’s *social order*.” Hence, “It must then be asked: From *which* components of this unique social order did these rewards derive?” (p. 159). One of the major tasks of “PR” is to set the stage for EEWR’s contextual, multicausal, and conjunctural causal analyses.⁵³

“PR” also delineates several further ways that EEWR moves beyond *PE*. As in *PE*, Weber offers a definition of *modern Western* capitalism and vigorously contends that this type of economy, in contrast to capitalism generally (which appeared universally), arose first in the modern West and acquired aspects found only in the West. As he states in the “Social Psychology of the World Religions” essay (1946c), “We shall be interested . . . in the **economic rationalism** of the type which, since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, has come to dominate the West” (1946c, p. 293; transl. altered).

Unlike *PE*, however, Weber now seeks in EEWR to offer a complex analysis for the rise of modern Western capitalism, one rooted in ideas *and* interests on the one hand and the methodology of the comparative

experiment on the other hand.⁵⁴ Population growth, technological innovations, and the presence of raw materials, for example, are all rejected as powerful causal forces behind economic rationalism, for these phenomena were not exclusively present in the West and absent elsewhere. Geographical factors and biological heredity are downplayed as well (pp. 163–164). Again Weber asserts that *constellations* of forces must be scrutinized rather than single factors, as well as their conjunctural interaction in delineated contexts and the ways in which, consequently, unique configurations are formulated. In EEWK he identifies in each civilization a vast array of types of domination, religion, social status, law, and forms of the economy. He found that the many clusters conducive to the unfolding of modern capitalism in China, India, and ancient Israel were in the end outweighed by a series of opposing constellations.

For example, Weber notes a variety of nonreligious obstacles to economic development in China, such as extremely strong sibling ties and an absence of a “formally guaranteed law and a rational administration and judiciary” (1951, p. 85; see also pp. 91, 99–100). Obstacles were apparent also in India: the caste system placed constraints upon migration, the recruitment of labor, and credit (1958, pp. 52–53, 102–06, 111–17). Yet he discovers also in both countries an entire host of conducive material forces that nonetheless failed to bring about modern capitalism—such as, in China, freedom of trade, an increase in precious metals, population growth, occupational mobility, and the presence of a money economy (1951, pp. 12, 54–55, 99–100, 243). However, in a pivotal passage in “PR,” Weber insists that a further constellation must also be considered, namely, internal forces:

Every attempt at explanation, recognizing the fundamental significance of economic factors, must above all take account of [economic conditions]. However, the opposite line of causation should not be neglected if only because the origin of economic rationalism depends not only on an advanced development of technology and law but also upon the capacity and disposition of persons to organize their lives in a practical-rational manner. Wherever magical and religious forces have inhibited the unfolding of this organized life, the development of an organized life oriented systematically toward *economic* activity has confronted broad-ranging internal resistance. Magical and religious powers, and the ethical notions of duty based on them, have been in the past among the most important formative influences upon the way life has been organized. (p. 160)

Weber was quite convinced that modern capitalism could be *adopted* by—and would flourish in—a number of Eastern civilizations. Indeed, he identified the forces that would allow this to occur in Japan (see 1958, p. 275; see also pp. 270–82). Yet adoption, he insisted, involved different processes than those that concerned him in *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*: the *origin*, in a specific region and epoch, of a *new* economic ethos and a *new* type of economy.

“PR,” however, not only introduces the “rise of modern capitalism” theme by reference to ideas and interests and an experimental comparative methodology; it also turns to an even broader theme, one that moves the EEW studies still further beyond *PE*. Weber now wishes, through the comparative vantage point offered by the EEW studies, to isolate in detail that which is specific to the modern West, or in his terms, the “characteristic uniqueness of modern Western rationalism.”

At the outset, “PR” forcefully addresses this theme by examining features of Western art, music, science, and architecture that are not found elsewhere. Weber then demarcates the ways in which the modern Western state, its civil service stratum, and modern capitalism are specific to the West (pp. 151–58). Impressive in its sweeping range, his definition of modern Western rationalism remains also concise and firmly anchored in historical observation.

Nonetheless, also in respect to this expansive theme, Weber is not content to offer definitions alone, however broad-ranging. The clearly formulated concept constitutes to him simply the first step in comparative-historical research. Thus, “PR” quickly alludes to a further large task. *Why* did modern Western rationalism develop when and where it did? What were the “ideas *and* interests” that caused it? Although Weber’s analysis in EEW of the origins of modern Western capitalism succeeds to a certain extent,⁵⁵ his investigation of Western rationalism’s sources remains fragmented and incomplete. Unfortunately, a reconstruction cannot be attempted here.⁵⁶

Despite Weber’s underlying orientation to the uniqueness of modern Western rationalism, the EEW studies cannot be viewed (as they often have been) simply as “contrast examples” written with the single aim of defining precisely the West’s unique development. Rather, as is apparent even from “PR,” EEW provides independent portraits of “Chinese

rationalism,” the “rationalism of India,” and the “rationalism of the ancient Near East.” The uniqueness of *each* of the EEWL civilizations is rendered. On this basis Weber then seeks to formulate *both* comparisons and contrasts to modern Western rationalism *and* to provide explanations for the particular routes of development followed by *each* great civilization. EEWL conducts, from *his* particular vantage point, *civilizational* analysis. Hence, even while failing to offer an adequate level of detail in respect to the rise of modern Western rationalism, Weber’s EEWL studies yield tremendous insight into the different developmental pathways followed in the East as well as in the West (see p. 257, note 26).

Precisely this insight led him to worry about the West’s present course of development. While pluralistic conflict between relatively independently unfolding societal spheres distinguished the Western developmental path (see pp. 35–37; 1968, pp. 1192–93), as well as a societal flexibility that facilitated gradual social change, Weber views, in 1920, Western societies as losing their dynamism and comparative openness. Conceivably, a new “Egyptianization” and societal ossification might ensue, carried along by a bureaucratization under modern industrialism pervading all societal domains. This scenario constituted a nightmare for him, for he was convinced that without the dynamism which results from competing domains and value spheres, a massive stagnation would soon follow (1968, pp. 1399–1404; 1978, pp. 281–84). If societal ossification descends, people would cease, Weber feared, to defend *ethical values*—and values alone offer dignity and a sense of self-worth (see 1946d, pp. 117–25; Kalberg, 2000, pp. 185–91).

Weber acquired insight, clarity, and knowledge from his EEWL studies regarding the specific “tracks” within which a number of major civilizations had developed (see 1946b, p. 150–51; 1946c, p. 280). He argued that these tracks called forth in the West in the twentieth century the dominance of an impersonal and nonethical “formal rationality” in the domains of law, politics, and the economy, and a “theoretical rationality” in the domain of science that *cannot*—and *must not*—provide people with a new set of values (1946b; 1946a, pp. 331–40, 350–57; 1949). Great consequences followed, Weber insisted repeatedly, regarding the “type of person” (*Menschentyp*) that *could* live under modern

Western rationalism (see Löwith, 1970; Mommsen, 1970; Kalberg, 1980, 2001).

Finally, the EEWV volumes assisted Weber to answer three further burning questions, all of which originated from his foreboding, as expressed at the end of “Science as a Vocation” (1946b), “Politics as a Vocation” (1946d), and *PE*, regarding Western civilization’s “progress.” First, in light of the modern West’s distinct features, what is the nature of the social change that can take place in the modern West? Second, how do persons in different social contexts, and in different civilizations, form meaning in their lives? Under what circumstances does, for example, methodical work become viewed as personally meaningful? Finally, what patterned regularities of action have become meaningful in each of the major civilizations, and how did they come into being?

Because Weber viewed the political, economic, and religious context out of which compassion, ethical action, and a reflective individualism had arisen in the West as having largely disappeared, hence endangering their viability, answers to these queries became especially urgent. Would ethical values continue to orient human action? To him, the immediacy of these questions itself served to call forth the Herculean motivation required to conduct the EEWV investigations.

Reading *The Protestant Ethic*: The Text and the Endnotes

Weber presents his major argument in *The Protestant Ethic* in Part I (chapters 1 through 3) and in Section A of chapter 4. Here he examines Calvinism, which provides the most stark example for his thesis. He then draws all the threads together in a masterful concluding chapter.

Weber offers support for his argument in his massive endnotes as well as in the body of the text. The student who wishes to acquire a higher level command of his thesis cannot avoid serious study of these notes. Moreover, they are of great interest not only as documentary materials, but also in a wider sense: in dozens of insightful and broad-ranging commentaries, Weber draws out the frame of mind of the Puritans and contrasts their mode of organizing life to that of a variety of other groups. The various ways in which ascetic Protestantism introduced new ideas and values become evident only through a detailed reading of the endnotes. This being said, many endnotes move beyond Weber’s theme

proper and render commentaries upon dozens of aspects of modern life in general.

A word count reveals that the endnotes are longer than the text. Thus, a short sampling of a number of their major subjects seems feasible, if only to assist the reader in locating themes of particular interest. This section conveys only a rough sketch of their contents.

Chapter 1

Endnotes 15 and 25, pages 167 and 168: On the work ethics of immigrants.

Chapter 2

Endnote 10, page 170: The “rational” and “irrational” depend upon one’s vantage point.

Endnote 12, pages 170–74: On the work ethic of the Middle Ages.

Endnote 17, page 174: Low wages and high profits do not call forth modern capitalism, as widely believed.

Endnote 18, pages 174–75: On how industries select new areas for relocation.

Endnote 28, page 175: The quality of aesthetic design declines with mass production techniques.

Chapter 3

Endnote 32, page 188: Church membership is less central for an organizing of the believer’s entire life than a religion’s values and ideals.

Endnote 41, page 188: On the national pride of the English.

Chapter 4

Endnote 7, page 189: On the greater influence of salvation rewards upon action than rules for appropriate conduct.

Endnote 8, page 190: On the slowness of the inter-library loan system in Germany.

—, page 190: On the denial in the United States of its sectarian past and a consequence for scholarship: libraries have not retained documents relating to this past.

Endnote 32, page 194: On trusting friends and taking revenge.

Endnote 34, pages 194–95: On the uniqueness of social organizations in those cultures with a Puritan past.

Endnote 35, page 195: On how the anti-authoritarian character of Calvinism opposed the development of the welfare state.

Endnote 39, page 195: On the intensity of community-building when Calvinism constitutes a strong influence.

—, page 195: On the suspect character of purely feeling-based relationships.

—, page 196: On the Calvinist’s striving to make the world rational.

- , page 196: On the overlap of Calvinism’s view of the “public good” with that of classical economics.
- , page 196: On the comparative immunity to authoritarianism of political cultures influenced by Puritanism (see also note 205.)
- Endnote 43, page 197: On the ideas behind Christian missionary activity.
- , page 196: On loving one’s neighbor.
- Endnote 74, page 202: Goethe on how one knows oneself.
- Endnote 76, page 202: On why fatalism does not follow, for the Calvinist, from the doctrine of predestination.
- , page 202: On William James’ pragmatic view of religious ideas as an outgrowth of the world of ideas in his Puritan native land.
- Endnotes 83 and 115, pages 204 and 207: On the checking-account manner of living (balancing out sins with good works, and vice-versa), and how this was no longer an option for the Puritans.
- Endnote 95, page 205: On the emphasis on reason and the downplaying of the emotions among the Puritans.
- Endnote 129, page 210: Calvinism as a social carrier of the idea of tolerance.
- , page 210: On the origins of the idea of tolerance generally and the importance of religious ideas.
- Endnote 133, page 212: On the limitations of psychology, given its state of advancement, to assist Weber’s research.
- Endnote 138, page 213: On our indebtedness to the idea of basic human rights (one source of which is Puritanism).
- Endnote 169, page 216: On the predilection of ascetic Protestants for mathematics and the natural sciences (see also ch. 5, note 83).
- , page 216: On the driving religious forces behind the scientific empiricism of the seventeenth century (see also ch. 5, note 83).
- , page 217: On the implications that follow for the educational agenda of ascetic Protestantism.
- Endnote 199, page 221: On how to define a sect.
- Endnote 206, page 222: On asceticism’s hostility to authority.
- , page 222: On the uniqueness of democracy, even today, among peoples influenced by Puritanism (and the differences between these democracies and those that flowed out of the “Latin spirit”).
- , page 222: On the “lack of respect” at the foundation of American behavior
- Endnote 222, page 224: The “truthfulness,” “uprightness,” and candor among Americans are all legacies of Puritanism.

Chapter 5

- Endnote 22, page 228: On Puritanism’s view that proximity to a large city may enhance virtue.
- Endnote 27, pages 228–29: On the Puritan view of marriage and “the sober procreation of children,” and the visible legacies of this view in Benjamin Franklin’s “hygienic utilitarian” view of sexual intercourse.

- , 229 page: On the part played by the baptizing churches and sects in protecting women's freedom of conscience.
- Endnote 37, page 230: On Hinduism and economic traditionalism in India.
- Endnote 39, pages 230–31: On economic utilitarianism as deriving ultimately from an impersonal formulation of the “love thy neighbor” commandment.
- Endnote 47, page 231: Milton's view that only the middle class (between the aristocracy and the destitute) can be the social carrier of virtue.
- Endnote 48, page 232: Weber states his interest in how the religious orientations of believers exercise a practical effect upon their vocational ethic.
- Endnote 53, page 233: On the American lack of respect for inherited wealth.
- Endnote 67, pages 234–35: Comparing Jewish and Puritan ethics (including economic ethics).
- Endnote 77, pages 236–37: On the lesser development of Protestant asceticism in Holland.
- , page 237: On the formality of the Dutch as a mixture of middle-class “respectability” and the consciousness of status among the aristocracy.
- Endnote 83, page 238: On the influence of Puritanism on the development of the natural sciences.
- Endnote 87, page 239: On the resistance of ascetic Protestants to culinary delights (oysters).
- Endnote 89, page 239: On the two (very different) psychological sources of the wish to accumulate wealth.
- Endnote 92, pages 239–40: To the Quakers, all “unconscientious” use of possessions must be avoided.
- Endnote 94, page 240: Economic development very importantly influences the formation of religious ideas, yet ideas for their part carry within themselves an autonomous momentum and coercive power.
- Endnote 101, page 241: That the “character disposition” of the English was actually less predisposed toward penitence than the “character disposition” of other peoples.
- Endnote 102, page 241: On the colonization of different New England regions by different groups of people.
- Endnote 118, page 243: An example of how Protestant asceticism socialized the masses to work.
- Endnote 119, page 243: On the medieval craftsman's putative enjoyment of “that which he produced himself.”
- , page 244: On Puritanism's glorification of work and capitalism's capacity today to coerce a willingness to work.
- Endnote 123, page 244: On the origins in England of powerful public opposition to monopolies; on the belief that monopolistic barriers to trade violated human rights.
- Endnote 126, page 244: On the parallel development of the “lofty profession of spirituality” among Quakers and their “shrewdness and tact in the transaction of mundane affairs.”
- , page 244: On how piety is conducive to the businessperson's success.

Suggested Further Reading

The Protestant Ethic Thesis

- Eisenstadt, S. N., ed., *The Protestant Ethic and Modernization*. London: Basic Books, 1968.
- Lehmann, Hartmut and Guenther Roth, eds., *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1987.
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Max Weber: Life and Work

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- Schroeder, Ralph, ed., *Max Weber, Democracy and Modernization*. London: Macmillan, 1998.
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- Whimster, Sam and Scott Lash, eds., *Max Weber, Rationality and Modernity*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1987.

Endnotes

1. Thus, as a matter of course, newly introduced persons in the United States quickly query one another regarding the type of work each does. In contrast, in most of Europe, to turn the topic of conversation to work immediately after an introduction is considered rude.

2. Schor's book (1992) illustrates the endurance of the ascetic Protestant heritage in dozens of ways. See also Hochschild (1990) and Kalberg (1992).
3. Weber journeyed as far west as the railroad could take him at the time. However, he didn't stay long at the end of the line in Guthrie, Oklahoma. Noting the guns strapped around the waist of his innkeeper, he hurried back, in panic, to the train station, arriving just in time to catch his train, now headed east. See "A German Professor's Visit at Guthrie was Suddenly Terminated," in *The Daily Oklahoman* (Guthrie, Oklahoma), September 20, 1904, p. 1.
4. Fritz Lang's classic film on the modern city, *Metropolis*, although made in 1926, vividly depicts the bleak vision of the future widespread in turn-of-the-century Germany.
5. This statement takes as its point of reference Weber's fear that the bureaucratization indigenous to industrial societies will—because it leads to a great concentration of power in massive organizations—effectively disenfranchise citizens. Democratic governance will then be curtailed.
6. This translation, however, is based on the expanded version of 1920 (see "Translator's Preface" above). For a comparison of the 1904/1905 and the 1920 texts, see Lichtblau and Weiss (1993b). A translation of the original *PE*, published in the journal Weber coedited, *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (vol. 20 [1904]: 1–54; vol. 21 [1905]: 1–110), is now available (see Baehr and Wells 2002).
7. *PE* does not include Weber's many insights into the workings of American society. Rather, they are summarized in the two essays he wrote shortly after his return to Germany. See "The Protestant Sects" below and its earlier version (1985). See also Marianne Weber (1988), pp. 281–304. On Weber's views of the USA generally, see Mommsen (1974), Roth (1985), Scaff (1998), Berger (1971), and Rollman (1993). On his analysis of American political culture, see Kalberg 1997; 2001.
8. In a number of further writings, Weber returns fairly frequently to arguments formulated originally in *PE*. At times his points are more clearly rendered in the later texts. References to these later relevant passages are occasionally provided.
9. Following Weber, the terms *modern economic ethic*, *rational economic ethic*, and *spirit of capitalism* will be used as synonyms. *Ethos* and *ethic* are also synonymous terms. It must be kept in mind that, *for Weber*, "rational" never evokes "better." Rather, the term merely implies a systematic, even methodical element (see Kalberg, 1980).
10. The major criticisms, and Weber's replies, have been published separately (see Weber 1972). For translations of Weber's essays in this volume, see Chalcraft and Harrington (2001) and Baehr and Wells (2002). In his 1920 revisions to *PE*, Weber added many comments (mostly in the footnotes) addressed to his critics. (His 1920 additions to the endnotes and the text are designated throughout this edition; see p. vii.)
11. In order to strengthen his argument against Sombart, Weber significantly expanded the endnotes on this theme in his 1920 revisions. These endnotes are marked. In a letter to Sombart in 1913, Weber states: ". . . *perhaps not a word* is correct [in your book] concerning Jewish religion" (see Scaff, 1989, p. 203n.). On Sombart and Weber generally, see Lehmann (1993).
12. See also, for example, 1968, pp. 70, 341, 480, 630; 1972, pp. 31, 171. Sombart supported also this Marxian analysis. Weber's rejection in *PE* of "developmental

laws” or “laws of economic development,” as explanations for historical change, is directed against Marx, though also against an array of German and English scholars.

13. This theme constitutes a background theme in *PE*. It is only infrequently discussed directly. It appears, however, in numerous passages throughout Weber’s other writings. See, for example, 1927, pp. 352–54; 1968, p. 1180; 1972, pp. 323–25, 344. His vehement rejection of such causal forces as sufficient constitutes a foundational point of departure for his *Economic Ethics of the World Religions* series (see pp. lviii–lxiv).
14. These positions were central in the debate on the origin of modern capitalism and industrialism during Weber’s time. Weber also argued in *PE* against minor streams in this ongoing controversy (especially in the endnotes added in 1920), such as Lamprecht’s biology-based evolutionary determinism (see p. 212, note 133), all proponents of “national character” (p. 47), the many theorists who understood social change as resulting from changes in laws, and, finally, Hegelians who viewed ideas as causal forces. (Weber insists that Hegelians neglected the crucial questions. Did social carriers crystallize to bear the ideas? Did they exist as cognitive forces only? Or did ideas also place **psychological rewards** upon action? See below.)
15. The centrality of religious affiliation was acknowledged as well by Durkheim in France. He hypothesized, at roughly the same time, that suicide rates would vary according to religious belief (see 1951).
16. On Anglo-American religious influences on the young Weber, see Roth (1997).
17. A pamphlet written in 1887 by Weber’s uncle, the Reformation and Counter-Reformation historian Hermann Baumgarten, who was very close to his nephew, notes this theme in a vivid passage:

Where Protestants and Catholics live together, the former occupy predominantly the higher, the latter the lower rungs of society. . . . Where the Catholic population flees higher education or cannot attain it, the Protestants must inevitably gain a considerable lead in public administration, justice, commerce, industry, and science. (Marcks 1894, p. 16)
18. Weber deleted this remark when he revised *PE* in 1920. It appeared originally in the second installment of *PE* (1905, p. 43).
19. Chapter 1 of *PE* borrows its title, “Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification,” from Offenbacher’s book.
20. Personal communication from Guenther Roth (February 22, 1999).
21. On the background to the writing of *PE*, see Poggi (1983); Lichtblau and Weiss (1993); Lehmann and Roth (1993).
22. Personal communication from Guenther Roth (February 22, 1999).
23. For a later formulation of this point, see Weber 1946c, p. 292.
24. For Weber’s restatement of this aim at the end of *PE*, see pp. 122–23. See also pp. 15–16, 19, 34–35, 37, 48–49. See further the numerous statements in the essays in response to his early critics where he restates his goal in *PE* (1972, pp. 163, 169, 173, 285–86, 302–07). Many of these passages illustrate Weber’s awareness of the multiplicity of causes for historical events, as well as of the importance of viewing single factors within configurations of factors.
25. This is nearly a literal rendering of Weber’s passage below at pp. 49–50.

26. Calvin himself saw no problem with the predestination double decree, for he considered himself among the elect (p. 64).
27. Of course, as will be noted later, these themes are intertwined.
28. As most succinctly brought together in the Westminster Confession (1648).
29. This conclusion—the necessity of living the holy life—did not follow logically from the predestination doctrine.
30. One might be inclined *today* to conclude that, if only a few are chosen and nothing can change God's decree, then one might as well live according to the pleasure principle. However appropriate such a conclusion might be to us now, the Puritans were denied this option—for they lived (unlike “we moderns”) in a *milieu* dominated by religion and, specifically, *the* foremost question: Am I among the saved? One of *PE*'s underlying messages can be stated succinctly: Social scientists must exercise caution whenever tempted to assume that persons in the past lived according to the same values as persons in the present.
31. This analytic distinction, as we have seen, has not always held up in the course of the exposition of Weber's analysis above. These two threads of his argument interweave repeatedly.
32. Weber here refers to inner-worldly asceticism as “Janus-faced” (*Doppelgesicht*): to focus on God and the question of salvation, a turning *away* from the world and even rejection of this random, “meaningless, natural vessel of sin” (see, e.g., 1968, p. 542) was called for. On the other hand, a turning toward and mastering of the world was necessary, on behalf of ethical values and the creation on earth of God's kingdom (see 1946a, p. 327). This Janus-faced character of action in the world itself bestowed a methodicalness on this action that separated it from utilitarian worldly action motivated by sheer economic interests, as well as practical concerns generally. See below.
33. The devout could understand an “unwillingness to work [as] a sign that one is not among the saved” (p. 106), and those living in poverty could not possibly be among the saved (pp. 109; 258, note 114). Thus, being poor indicated not laziness alone but also a poor *moral* character.
34. “Only in the Protestant ethic of vocation does the world, despite all its creaturely imperfections, possess unique and religious significance as the object through which one fulfills his duties by rational behavior according to the will of an absolutely transcendental God” (1968, p. 556).
35. To Weber, “[The effect of] the stricture against consumption with this unchaining of the striving for wealth [led to] *the formation of capital*. . . . [which] became used as *investment capital*. . . . Of course, the strength of this effect cannot be determined exactly in quantitative terms” (pp. 116–17; *emph.* in original). See also p. 240, note 95.
36. That Weber acknowledges the existence of other origins of this spirit is apparent. See p. 49; 1972, pp. 28, 285.
37. The origins of the American emphasis on honesty toward all as a central aspect of “good character,” to be manifested both in personal conduct and even in the political realm (as an ideal), must be sought here. For the Puritan, righteous conduct that testified to one's elect status emanated ultimately from God's presence *within* the believer (see above, p. xxxii), and He could not be other than honest and candid. For the same reason, persons speaking to Puritans would not dare speak dishonestly.

38. Weber argues elsewhere that the teaching of *ethical* values, if it is to occur, necessarily involves a strong personal bond. See, for example, 1927, pp. 357–58; 1946a, p. 331; 1968, pp. 346, 585, 600, 1186–87.
39. The issue here is the same as that surrounding the impact of the Protestant ethic (see above, pp. xliii–iv). Weber is well aware that an assessment of the spirit of capitalism’s precise impact would require a more ambitious investigation, one that examined multiple causal forces and provided experimental comparisons. See below (pp. lviii–lxiv) and the “Prefatory Remarks” essay in this volume.
40. Significantly, the value-rational action—the spirit of capitalism—of Franklin is oriented, as the Protestant ethic, *both* to individuals (their salvation status) *and* to a community (pp. 108–09, 115), while the means-end rational action of the individual entrapped within the “powerful cosmos” of industrial capitalism is oriented merely to the individual’s survival. For recent discussions of this significant shift, see Bellah (1985), Putnam (2000), Hall and Lindholm (1999), Etzioni (1996), and Kalberg (1997, 2001).
41. The interweaving of past and present is a complex and important theme throughout Weber’s writings. Unfortunately, it cannot be addressed in detail here. See Kalberg, 1994b, pp. 158–67; 1996, pp. 57–64; 2000, pp. 176–79.
42. As did Lutheranism, Weber points out, in Germany (p. 84; see 1968, pp. 1198).
43. The single existing translation of this essay, by Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, is retained here. A few terms have been altered in order to establish terminological consistency with *PE*. See the essay’s first endnote (p. 247) for bibliographical information.
44. Two translations of the earlier articles are now available; see Weber (1985); Baehr and Wells (2002). The version presented here was expanded significantly by Weber in 1920. Additions were too numerous to note.
45. Of course, Tocqueville had earlier emphasized just this developed capacity of American society (1945). His explanation, however, for this proclivity to form associations (which opposes a tendency in the United States toward a “tyranny of the majority”) varies distinctly from Weber’s; Tocqueville refers to egalitarianism, commercial interests, and the interests of the individual whereas Weber turns to the ascetic Protestant religious heritage. See Kalberg, 1997.
46. The extreme importance, for one’s social status, of admission into a community’s churches and clubs (e.g., Rotary, Lions, etc.) led Weber to describe the United States as a society of “benevolent feudalism” (see 1978, p. 281).
47. Weber lived to complete revisions only on *PE*, “Sects,” 1946a, 1946c, and *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism* (1951 [1920]).
48. Two analytic essays were also included: “The Social Psychology of the World Religions” (1946c), which is the introduction to the Economic Ethics of the World Religions studies, and “Religious Rejections of the World” (1946a), which is placed after the investigation of Confucianism and Taoism and before *The Religion of India* (1958). “Religious Rejections,” which mainly offers a masterly, sweeping analysis of modern Western civilization, does not fit well into this series (although it could have been placed at the end). Collected Essays remained incomplete. Weber had planned to write chapters on the religions of ancient Egypt, Phoenicia, Babylonia, and Persia, and volumes on Islam, ancient Christianity, and Talmudic Judaism.
49. This essay is believed to be the last sociological work Weber wrote.

50. This essay was given the title “Author’s Introduction” in the earlier translation by Parsons. Placed in his volume before *PE*, generations of readers of *PE* have incorrectly viewed this essay as an introduction to *PE* (despite an explanation by Parsons in his “Translator’s Preface”).
51. His three-volume opus, *E&S* (1968), constituted the other major direction for his empirical sociology. Weber’s sociology of religion also moved in a more theoretical direction. See the “Sociology of Religion” chapter in *E&S* (pp. 399–634).
52. Nonetheless, to this day nearly every introductory textbook in sociology depicts Weber as an “idealist” and contrasts his sociology to the historical materialism of Marx.
53. I will hold to this statement even though it should also be clearly noted that most chapters in the EEWV volumes treat ideas and interests separately rather than contextually and conjuncturally. These aspects of Weber’s analysis are mainly apparent in innumerable paragraphs throughout EEWV and in the “Social Psychology of the World Religions” essay (1946c). I have systematically examined Weber’s contextual and conjunctural causal methodology elsewhere. See 1994b, pp. 98–102, 155–76, 189–92.
54. The EEWV analysis must be supplemented by multiple analyses in *General Economic History* (1927), *E&S* (1968), and *The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations* (1976).
55. See the preceding note.
56. Moreover, such a reconstruction would require frequent reference to the works mentioned in note 54 (see also Kalberg, forthcoming).

References

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GLOSSARY

This listing includes (a) historical terms that are often forgotten today and (b) terms that are key to Weber's analysis. When first used in each chapter, all Glossary terms have been set in bold type.

Affinity (elective, inner) (*Wahlverwandtschaft, innere Verwandtschaft*). A notion taken from Goethe that implies an "internal" connection between two different phenomena rooted in a shared feature and/or a clear historical linkage (for example, between certain religious beliefs and a vocational ethic). The causal relationship is not strong enough to be designated "determining."

Ascetic Protestantism. This generic term refers to the Calvinist, Pietist, Methodist, Quaker, Baptist, and Mennonite churches and sects. Weber compares and contrasts the vocational ethics of these faiths to each other and to those of Lutheran Protestantism and Catholicism.

Calling (*Beruf*). See Vocational Calling.

Carriers. See Social Carriers.

Conventicles. Small group Bible and prayer gatherings ("house churches") of the faithful that aimed to counteract any weakening of belief. The Scriptures and devotional literature were studied and spiritual exercises performed.

Deification of Human Wants and Desires. The Puritan's loyalty must be exclusively to God. Human wants and desires (personal vanity, sexual fulfillment, the enjoyment of love, friendship, luxury, etc.) must be tamed and remain subordinate to this noble and prior allegiance.

Dispassionate (*nüchtern*). A term Weber uses repeatedly to characterize the temperate and restrained frame of mind of Puritans. This disposition implies rigorous self-control and a capacity to organize life systematically around defined goals.

Dordrecht Synod. An Assembly of the Reformed Church of the Netherlands in Dordrecht in 1618–1619. Disputes concerned Arminianism and its rejection of the doctrine of predestination.

Earning a Living (making a living; orientation toward acquisition; *Erwerbsleben*). Carried by Puritanism, a middle-class activity that is necessary in profit-oriented economies; contrasted in *PE* mainly to persons who live off rents ("rentier wealth") and to the life-style of feudal nobles .

Economic Ethic of the World Religions. This is the title Weber gave to a series of studies on the world's great religions. See pp. lviii–lxiv.

Economic Form. An economic form refers to the way in which a company is organized and managed, the relationship of employer to workers, the type of accounting, the movement of capital, etc. Contrasted by Weber in chapter 2 to an "economic spirit" or "economic ethic."

Economic Rationalism. This term refers to the modern capitalism that developed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the West. It implies the utilization of sci-

ence on behalf of a systematic organization of labor and the entire production process, and hence qualitative increases in productive capacity.

Economic Traditionalism (traditional economic ethic). A frame of mind in respect to work. Work is viewed as a necessary evil and only one arena of life, no more important than the arenas of leisure, family, and friends. “Traditional needs” are implied: when fulfilled, then work ceases. This frame of mind stands in opposition to the development of modern capitalism. (“Traditionalism,” in Weber’s time, referred to the conduct of activities in an accustomed, habitual fashion.)

Feeling (feeling-based; *Gefühl*). The “strangely warmed heart” (Wesley) sought especially by Pietists and early Methodists that indicated the presence within of God and strengthened commitment and ethical responsibility toward Him. At the vital core of these denominations because tantamount to the subjective experiencing of salvation (and out of which emotions—exhilaration, joy, relief—flowed), feeling remained suspect to Calvinists, who viewed salvation in terms of a striving to render one’s life holy (see below). In Weber’s analysis, feeling provided a less firm foundation for the vocational calling than the Calvinist’s striving.

Frame of Mind (*Gesinnung*). The specific temperament or disposition that Weber sees as specific to a group of people. He uses the term to refer to characteristic features (in the sense of an ideal type) of Calvinists, Catholics, Lutherans, adventure capitalists, feudal aristocrats, old commerce-oriented (patrician) families, persons in the middle class, etc. Each group has its own temper or outlook. The frame of mind in some groups may be more weighted toward values, even ethical values (the religious groups); in others it tends more toward endowing interests (adventure capitalists) or traditions (peasants) with greater meaning.

Glorification of Desires. See “Deification of Human Wants and Desires.”

Ideal Type. Weber’s major methodological tool. He creates in *PE* “ideal types” for an array of groups (Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, adventure capitalists, etc.). Each ideal type, by accentuating that which is *characteristic* from the point of view of *Weber’s* theme, seeks to capture that which is essential to a group. (See pp. 13–14; ch. 4, note 78).

Interpretive Understanding (*Verstehen*). This is the term Weber uses to describe his own methodology. He wishes to understand the actions and beliefs of people in demarcated groups by reconstructing the milieu of values, traditions, interests, and emotions within which they live, and thereby to understand how “subjective meaning” (see below) is formulated.

Middle Class (*bürgerlich, das Bürgertum*). *PE* offers an analysis of the religious origins of the ethos and frame of mind of a new class that elevated steady and constant work to the center of life. Composed of both employers and workers, this middle class was the social carrier (see below) of a set of values oriented to economic activity and “earning a living” that distinguished it significantly from the destitute urban poor, feudal nobles, patrician old-family capitalists, and adventure capitalists. Weber seeks to offer an explanation for the origin of this set of values and to argue that they played a role in calling forth the spirit of capitalism.

Modern Capitalism. Weber sees capitalism as universal. He is interested in the origins of *modern* capitalism as it appeared in the West in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. This capitalism involved the rational organization of free labor, the systematic pursuit of profit, and a “modern economic ethos” or “spirit.” He concludes that a “Protestant ethic” played a role in giving rise to modern capitalism.

Organization of Life, Organized Life. Weber’s term *Lebensführung* implies a conscious directing, or leading, of life. Although for him the organized life is generally “internally” rooted in a set of values (even ethical values), this is not always the case (interests anchor the “practical rational” *Lebensführung*). This term stands as a contrast in Weber’s writings generally to the undirected life that simply, like a natural event, flows on in time without guidance. Because Weber emphasizes in *PE* that the Puritans must organize and direct their lives in a *methodical-rational* organization of life according to their beliefs, the phrase “organization of life” appears best to capture his meaning here.

Providential (sanctifying). Rendering with religious (salvation) significance an activity heretofore purely utilitarian (work, wealth, and profit, for example).

Psychological Motivations (*Antriebe*). Weber is concerned throughout *PE* with the motivation behind action, particularly action directed toward work, making a living, and profit as it originates from religious beliefs. The important psychological motivations for religion-oriented action derive, he argues, not from the ethical theory implied by doctrines or what is officially taught in ethical manuals, but from the motivations that arise out of a combination of belief and the regular *practice* of the religious life as transmitted by the clergy to believers through pastoral care, church discipline, and preaching (see “Psychological Reward”).

Psychological Rewards (*psychologische Prämien*). Through belief and the practice of religion, “salvation premiums” are awarded to particular activities (such as the accumulation of wealth or the organization of life in accord with God’s laws), thereby assisting the devout, as long as they perform this activity, to more easily convince themselves of their membership among the saved.

Puritanism. Weber’s usage follows the everyday language of the seventeenth century. This “amorphous” term refers to the ascetic Protestant (see above) movements in Holland, England, and North America oriented toward this-worldly asceticism (including the Congregationalists and “Independents”). All Puritans organized their lives around work and a this-worldly, morally rigorous asceticism. Puritanism, Weber argues, provides a consistent foundation for the idea of a vocational calling.

Rational. A systematic, rigorous, disciplined element to action.

Rationalization. Weber is using this term in accord with the usage of his time. It implies a systematizing of one’s actions (usually to accord with religious values) in the sense of an increased rigor and methodicalness and a taming of the *status naturae* (see below).

Reformed Church (*reformierte*). Although “by no means identical with Calvinism,” Calvinism constituted to Weber the major theological force behind the broader Reform movement of ascetic Protestant churches and sects in Holland, England, and America (except for the Methodists). He tends in chapter 4 to use “Calvinism” when

referring to ideas, doctrines, and values stemming from John Calvin, and “Reformed” when referring to the several organized churches he founded. All Reformed churches stood in stark contrast to the Lutheran “state church” in Germany.

Religious Reward. See “Psychological Reward.”

Savoy Declaration (1658). A statement of faith by English Congregationalists. Advocated (unlike the Westminster Confession) the autonomy of local churches.

Sect. As opposed to a church, an exclusive, voluntary, and tightly knit group that admits new members only once specific criteria have been fulfilled. Membership implies both “good character” and a monitoring of behavior by other sect members to ensure compliance.

Social Carrier (*Träger*). Ideas are important causal forces of historical change, for Weber, but only if they are “carried” by demarcated and influential groupings, strata, and organizations (Calvinists or a middle class, for example). Weber wishes to know in *PE* what groups carried specific types of vocational ethics. A central concept in Weber’s sociology (see lii–liv).

Status *Naturae*. The “natural status” of the human species. The spontaneous aspects of human nature are not tamed, channelled, sublimated, or organized. Puritanism, Weber argues, by systematically organizing the lives of believers according to a set of values, accomplished just this—indeed in an extremely rigorous manner.

Striving to Make Life Holy (sanctified; *Heiligung*). Puritans organized their entire lives around a search for psychological certainty of their salvation status. Despite the doctrine of predestination, they came to believe (especially owing to Baxter’s revisions) that their capacity to adhere to specific modes of conduct approved by God *testified* to their membership among the saved. Hence, through their righteous conduct, they could “strive” for salvation. Pietists and Methodists believed that certainty of salvation came also through a feeling (see above) of being possessed by God.

Subjective Meaning. Weber seeks, throughout his sociology, to understand how persons view their own behavior and how they justify it to themselves, or lend it “meaning” (no matter how odd it may appear to the observer). He wishes in *PE* to understand, for example, why continuous hard work and a systematic search for profit and wealth constitutes a subjectively meaningful endeavor for Calvinists.

Surpassing (*Überbietung*). The Puritans, in organizing their lives according to God’s laws, surpassed “this-worldly” (utilitarian) morality.

Testify (*Bewährung*). This central notion for Calvinists (and for all striving for salvation) implies both an outward demonstration visible to others (one’s conduct, demeanor, and bearing) and a psychological element: the devout understand their strength to “prove” their belief through perpetual righteous conduct as emanating from God—and hence they feel an inner confidence regarding their salvation status

This-Worldly (*innerweltlich, diesseitig*). This term implies activity “in” the world in contrast to the monks activity “outside” the world (in the cloister). With Puritanism, Weber argues, asceticism moved out of the monastery and “into” the world. Remarkably, the activity of Puritans was *in* the world but not *of* the world (since its major orientation was not to this-worldly goods or interests but to salvation in the next life).

Traditional Economic Ethic. See “Economic Traditionalism.”

Utilitarian Adaptation to the World. The orientation of life to the pragmatic morality of the everyday world rather than a surpassing (see above) of this morality on the basis of a rigorous orientation to God’s laws and a striving for salvation.

Value-Rational Action (motives). One of Weber’s “four types of social action,” this term implies that a person’s action is oriented to values to a significant extent, indeed even to the degree that values become obligatory, or “binding,” upon action. It contrasts, in particular, to “means-end rational action” in Weber’s sociology.

Vocational Calling (*Beruf*). Denotes a task given by God and the incorporation of a demarcated realm of work into the Protestant believer’s life in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the West. Despite a vast comparative-historical search, Weber found this definition of “calling” only in Protestantism.

Westminster Confession. A confession of faith by Calvinists. Approved by the Long Parliament in 1648, but denied official status after the restoration of the monarchy in 1660. Adopted later by several American and English ascetic Protestant churches. ♦

