

“How Ideas Become Effective in History” Max Weber on Confucianism and Beyond [1]

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Abstract

Max Weber's interest in East Asia starts as early as 1898, but it comes to fruition only after 1910. Instead of continuing his essays on ascetic Protestantism, as promised to the public, he embarked on a comparison of world religions, in which he included Confucianism, although he did not regard it as a religion in the strict sense of the term. As a matter of expediency, he used Confucianism, however, as the most pronounced counterexample to ascetic Protestantism, seemingly similar from the outside, but totally different from the inside. So, Confucianism is included in his attempt to provide a sociology and typology of religious rationalism. Confucianism is also used as a backdrop to understand the singularity of the Western development. The sketch, as he calls it, is not meant as a full-fledged analysis of this intellectual and social movement nor of Imperial China at large. Therefore, it is very dangerous to apply Weber's analysis to the current situation in China (after the "Cultural Revolution" and the one-child policy). I call this the fallacy of misplaced application. This does not rule out, however, using Weber's methodology and conceptual tools to a certain extent for such an analysis. How this could be done, is shown in the last section of this presentation.

Keywords: Max Weber, Confucianism, world affirmation, religious rationalism, Chinese capitalism, emerging middle class

Introduction

The title of my presentation contains a quotation from Max Weber's first essay of his study on "The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism." This essay appeared in 1904. [2] With the promise to the reader that he would demonstrate in the following essay how ideas operate in history, he justified the publication of this study in the newly founded *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. Weber belonged to the editorial board of this scientific journal, which for Germany's social sciences became as important as Durkheim's *Année sociologique* for the social sciences in France. According to the statement of mission of this scientific journal, signed by Edgar Jaffé, Werner Sombart and Max Weber, it was designed to provide fresh impulses for the development of the social sciences at large. [3] It was not meant to cater primarily to strictly historical work. In his essay on "Objectivity", with which Weber partly complemented this statement, he also

stressed the importance of a new approach to the social sciences beyond mere historical studies. Therefore, his justification seems to be in order. In the second essay on "The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism," which was published in 1905 almost one year later, Weber fulfilled his promise. In this essay he emphasized the impact of religious ideas on human conduct, putting institutional arrangements and class-constellations into brackets. Therefore, his essay, although a historical study, could be regarded, besides its historical merits, also as an important contribution to social theory. [4]

In this second essay Weber provided a spiritualist account of the emergence of the new economic ethos defined as spirit of (modern) capitalism. He regarded it as a one-sided analysis on heuristic grounds. In the second essay of 1905, we find many indications that he intended to supply, in a third essay, the 'other side of the causal chain', as he put it later. [5] Although he was encouraged by his publisher Paul Siebeck to write this third essay right away and to put

all three essays together as a book, he shied away from this suggestion. Instead, he became entangled in a sterile controversy over his first and second essay that lasted almost four years. In 1910, when Weber ended this controversy with what he called his "last word", he had given up on this book project for the time being. [6] Instead, he embarked on a huge comparative project on the relation between religion and the economy. The first published result of this endeavor was the study on Confucianism, written down in 1913. It appeared unchanged in the *Archiv* under the title "Confucianism" in October and December 1915 in two installments, together with the "Introduction" into the "Economic Ethics of the World Religions" and the "Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism," in which Weber compared the impact of Confucian and Puritan Ethic on the conduct of life, clarifying at the same time, as he declares, the relationship between Confucian rationalism and Puritan rationalism. [7]

Interestingly enough, the essay on Confucianism (not on "The Religion of China", as the title is mistranslated) [8] was not Weber's first encounter with East Asia. As we know from his lecture notes, he dealt with East Asia already in his lecture courses before the turn of the century. In the lecture on "Practical Economics", delivered for the last time in winter 1897/98 in Heidelberg, he alluded to the "entry of East Asia into the orbit of the occidental cultural sphere" (Kulturkreis), referring to Japan and China. Here he regarded Japan as a feudal system, based on rice-contributions in exchange for military service, China as a state-like system ruled by officials and without any feudal remainders since the Manchu conquest. [9] There is no mention of cultural or religious factors in either case, however. Now, in 1913/1915, we encounter a very different approach to East Asia. Whereas Japan is pushed to the sideline, China is considered thoroughly in its early transition from feudalism to patrimonial bureaucracy, with the result that it became dominated by an educated Confucian elite, the literati. This elite, according to Weber, transformed Confucianism into a kind of civil religion or state ideology.

Between the lecture course of 1897/98 and the essay on Confucianism of 1913/15 Weber

had two important insights: 1. Economic history has to be supplemented by religious history, and this included an analysis of cultural or religious ideas and their effectiveness 2. Under specific circumstances cultural or religious ideas could become rationalizing forces. The first insight is tied to the Protestant Ethic, the second to the comparative studies on the economic ethic of the world religion. Both insights together are central to Max Weber's later work.

An Economic and a 'Spiritual' Interpretation of History Combined

In June 22, 1915, Max Weber wrote to Paul Siebeck, his publisher, with whom he had a friendly relationship: "I am willing to provide the *Archiv* with a series of essays on the 'Economic ethic of the world-religions,' which have been sitting here since the beginning of the war ... and in which I apply the method used in the essay 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in a general way." [9] It was an attempt on his part to compensate the publisher for his lack of cooperation in the case of the essays on ascetic Protestantism. Siebeck had asked him to grant permission for a separate edition of these essays. But Weber declined, as he had done several times before.

What does it mean: to "apply the method used in the essay 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in a general way"? As we have stated already, Weber pursued in this study a one-sided analysis, focusing on the spiritual side, putting institutional arrangements and class-constellations into brackets. In other words, he analyzed the emergence of a peculiar 'spirit', not the emergence of a peculiar 'form.' To apply this method in a general way would mean that he did the same in his early studies on the economic ethics of the world religion. However, this seems to be not in line with the texts published in 1915. For Weber starts his early essay on Confucianism with a short analysis of structural and institutional patterns of Imperial China, before he turns to the 'spirit' of its carrier stratum, the literati. Nevertheless the focus in this early version is still on the 'spirit', not on the 'form'. It is not by accident that Weber considerably extended the so-called

“sociological foundations” in his revised version of the essay in 1919/20. [10] He felt obviously obliged to provide a much more detailed analysis of this part of his essay than he had achieved in 1913. We may surmise from this fact that all the essays written down in 1913 emphasized the spiritual side of the matter. As we know from Weber’s schedule in 1916, he worked again on his studies on Hinduism and Buddhism from 1913, especially on “The Hindu social system.” Therefore, prior to publication of these essays in 1916/1917, he was able to amend the structural and institutional side and put it on equal footing with the spiritual side. The same holds for his study on ancient Judaism, which was rewritten from 1917 onward. Here, the required balance between the two sides is also achieved before the first publication of this work.

It would be a mistake, however, to conclude that Weber had discovered the importance of the ‘other side of the causal chain’ only after the publication of the study on ascetic Protestantism. The double-sided analysis between ‘spirit’ and ‘form’ was already in place. This can be inferred not only from Weber’s insistence that his study on ascetic Protestantism was not meant “to substitute for a one-sided ‘materialistic’ an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and history,” adding, that “*both are equally possible*,” but in each case only a beginning. They have to be elaborated and combined (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 179, translation slightly changed). This is corroborated by many hints in the second essay on ascetic Protestantism and his statements in the “Anti-Critiques”. Here he remarked that as soon as he would be finished with his analysis as intended, his critics would accuse him to surrender to materialism, as they do now with regard to idealism or ideology. Of course, Weber wanted to overcome historical materialism, but without siding with idealism. Rather, he strove for a multidimensional analysis, which he had justified in his essay on “Objectivity,” analyzing the religious conditioning of the economy and the economic conditioning of religion as well. [11]

What can we learn from these considerations?

1. A one-sided analysis can only be a beginning.
2. One has to consider both sides of the causal

chain, the economic conditioning of religious patterns as well as the religious conditioning of economic patterns. 3. Crucial is the distinction between form and spirit. 4. There is an elective affinity between these two sides, no law-like or functional relationship.

According to some statements in the secondary literature, Weber started as a materialist, turned into an idealist, and returned later on, luckily, into a moderate type of materialist. Nothing can be more mistaken. Consider for instance his early lecture on theoretical economics, delivered before the turn of the century. Here Weber argues already that the economic perspective on human life is always one-sided and that the development of human needs cannot be reduced to economic conditions. Man’s attitude toward the world is informed also by noneconomic cultural powers, especially by religion. And a religion, furthermore, cannot be regarded as a reflex of economic conditions (Weber, *Allgemeine Nationalökonomie* 364-6). Consider also his late lecture course on universal social and economic history. After having dealt extensively with the structural and institutional preconditions of modern capitalism, he ends up stressing the importance of the spiritual side of modern capitalism. The entire last paragraph is dedicated to it. [13] In addition, consider the short time span from 1904 to 1908, when Weber wrote the study on ascetic Protestantism and on the “Agrarian Condition of Antiquity,” [14] the former emphasizing the spiritual, the latter the structural and institutional side. As we can see, Weber pursued from the very beginning and till the very end a program beyond materialism and idealism, and he did not waver on this issue over the course of time.

Weber’s approach is also comparative from the very beginning. Comparison and explanation are two sides of the same coin. The reconstruction of a cultural phenomenon requires three steps: 1. Identification –what are the defining characteristics of a cultural manifestation? 2. Causal attribution –how did this manifestation arise? 3. Weighing –which of the causal factors can be regarded as an adequate cause? The first question can be answered only by comparison, the second and third only by counterfactual arguments using the

categories of objective possibility and adequate causation. These three steps inform Weber's project of the *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion*, which he anticipated already in 1915 and of which the revised essay on Confucianism from 1913/15, now entitled "Confucianism and Taoism," becomes an integral part.

The *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion*, prepared in 1919/20, alongside with *Economy and Society*, his *Sociology*, both unfinished at Weber's untimely death, was to comprise four volumes. Weber was able to prepare only volume one for publication. He included the revised version of the "Protestant Ethic" and the revised version of the study on Confucianism. But contrary to the study on Confucianism, he still did not supply in case of the study on ascetic Protestantism 'the other side of the causal chain.' The analysis of the structural and institutional preconditions of modern capitalism is still lagging. It is an open question whether he wanted to provide this analysis in volume 4 of the *Collected Essays*, devoted to Western Christianity. More important in our context is however: More than three out of the four volumes would have been dedicated to the developmental history of the West. This can be easily inferred from Weber's plan, which he turned in to Siebeck in 1919, and from its execution till his death (see appendix below). [15]

As one can see from this plan and its execution, Weber is quite explicit on the aim of his comparative and developmental religious studies. In his summarizing statement we can also detect the three questions mentioned above. To rephrase it: What are the distinctive economic and social characteristics of the West (identification), how did they arise (causal attribution), and in particular, how do they stand in relation to the development of religious ethic (weighing)?

A Sociology and Typology of Religious Rationalism

Comparison, however, serves an additional purpose: The creation of typologies. In the "Intermediate Reflection" ("Zwischenbetrachtung"), dealt with already

in the first version of *Economy and Society* of 1914 ("The Economy and the Societal Orders and Powers") [16] and published in a more sophisticated version together with the study on Confucianism in 1915 in the *Archiv*, Weber underscored that his comparative studies, comprising Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Early Christianity, Eastern Christianity and Western Christianity as well as Islam should also be read as a contribution to a sociology and typology of religious rationalism. Already in 1915, he defined the yardsticks according to which he wanted to measure the degree of rationalism incorporated in a religious creed. There are two "primary yardsticks", independent of each other, but nevertheless interdependent: 1. "the degree to which the religion has divested itself of magic" (disenchantment); 2. "the degree to which it has systematically unified the relation between God and the world and therewith its own ethical relationship to the world" (theodicy or cosmodicy) (Weber, *The Religion of China* 226). [17] The first yardstick belongs to the realm of praxis, the second to the realm of doxis. Both are integral parts of the world view that a religion proposes.

At this juncture Confucianism enters the picture. Confucianism and Puritanism are depicted as polar types. From the outside, they look similar; from the inside they are very different. Both are rational, but of a different kind. Confucianism, as embodied in the carrier stratum of Imperial China, lacks the potential to radically change the existing world, because it is not a salvation religion, not even a religion. It is in its practical consequences, in its effectiveness, a social ethic supportive of an education that aims at the creation of a "gentleman." In contrast to these practical consequences of Confucianism, Puritanism calls for an interpretation of man as a tool of a powerful creator god, whose commands have to be fulfilled by his subjects in total submission. It aims at the creation of a "vocational man" dedicated to God's cause. The Confucian bureaucrat is affirming the existing world; the Puritan entrepreneur is rejecting it, while acting out these different mentalities in this mundane world. In this connection Weber distinguishes between two pure types of culturally or religiously bound rationalisms:

the rationalism of world adjustment (major example: Confucianism) and the rationalism of world domination (major example: ascetic Protestantism). [18]

We have already alluded to the notion of disenchantment (first yardstick). Disenchantment becomes a crucial concept in Weber's comparative studies on religion since 1913. It is used to establish a double link. The first is historical, connecting ancient Judaism with ascetic Protestantism, the second is typological, contrasting Confucianism and ascetic Protestantism as two types of rationality. Ascetic Protestantism, according to Weber, has driven disenchantment in the relationship between a powerful creator God and man to the extreme, whereas Confucianism does not know anything about a creator God and has left magic outside its own sphere virtually untouched. This is due to the fact that it is not a religion, based on the notion of salvation and troubled by prophetic eruptions, as it is true for Christianity and other salvation religions. To keep the harmony between this world and the world beyond, not to dramatize the rupture between them, is the Confucian way.

As we can see now more clearly, Weber starts his comparative endeavor with Confucianism, *because* it is not a religion, not to mention a salvation religion. The transition to salvation religions is provided in the "Intermediate Reflection," which is placed *after* the study on Confucianism and *before* his entry into the developmental history of the West. It is a transition that occurred in his view already in Asia, especially in Buddhism. Although Buddhism had a tremendous influence also in China, it originated in India, and therefore Weber deals with it in the following essay, entitled "Hinduism and Buddhism" (and not "The Religion of India"), which is also not a book, as the English publication suggests. [19]

For Weber, the decisive dividing line runs not between Asia and the West, as for instance in Hegel's philosophy of religion, but *within* Asia. It is a dividing line that separates Confucianism from Buddhism, a social ethic from a salvation religion, a rationalism of adjustment to the world from a rationalism rejecting and at the same time fleeing the world. That the West embarked on a

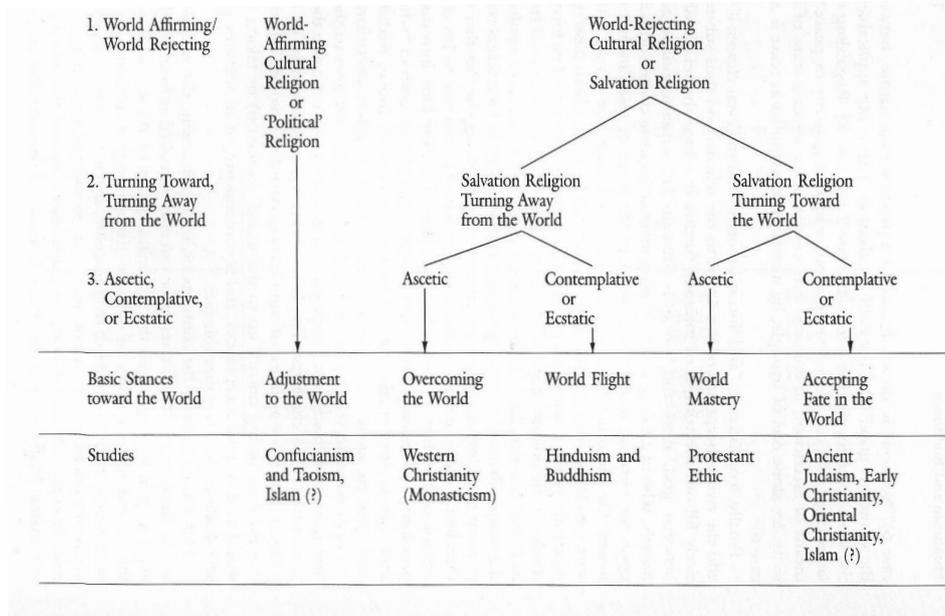
different trajectory compared with the salvation religions in Asia is due to its religious sources. They originated primarily in ancient Judaism with its notion of a personal creator God who rules the world.

As is well known, in his "Intermediate Reflections" Weber distinguishes four types of religiously motivated world rejection. He labels them innerworldly asceticism, otherworldly asceticism, innerworldly mysticism and otherworldly mysticism. The distinction between "innerworldly" and "otherworldly" is applied to distinguish an attitude turning toward the world and changing it from one turning away from the world and leaving it. These different avenues on the road to salvation can be pursued either with ascetic or with mystical, contemplative means. Each of the four religiously motivated stances toward the world carries its own rational potential. It is important to realize that this is a differentiation *within* religiously motivated attitudes of world rejection. To provide the full picture, however, one has to add to these world-view rejecting attitudes those affirming the world. [20]

According to Weber, Confucianism belongs to such a typology and sociology and typology of religious rationalism, because it represents the most elaborated case of world affirmation. It is within his project a borderline case. Weber regards it as a matter of expediency to include it and to start the entire series with such an example of rational world affirmation. It is important to keep this in mind when it comes to the usage of his essay today.

We can summarize Weber's sociology and typology of religious rationalism as follows (Schluchter, *Rationalism, Religion and Domination* 144):

Classification of Cultural Religions



The fallacy of misplaced application

The essay may be still useful for our research if we eschew what I call the fallacy of misplaced application. There are two likely ways to commit this fallacy. One pertains to Weber's work, the other to the current situation in China. Both have to do with the insufficient contextualization of Weber's study. Let me give a short illustration in both regards.

An insufficient contextualization within Weber's work occurs when we disregard the role of the study on Confucianism in his comparative project. I have already alluded to this. Weber does not consider Confucianism a religion in the strict sense of the term and he does not provide us with a comprehensive analysis of all important cultural movements in Imperial China. He does not even provide us with a comprehensive analysis of the "sociological foundations," although he considerably extended this side of the causal chain, the impact of structures and institutions on the life conduct of the carrier stratum, in the revised version of the text after 1913/15. More important, Weber does not even pretend to offer a full-fledged coverage of the history of Imperial China, following the sequence of dynasties and the major turning points in its history. He had,

as he confessed, only a very limited knowledge of Chinese history, because he could not read the sources in the original and depended on the European scholarship of the time. As we know from the secondary literature on Weber's study, he neglected Neoconfucianism altogether. And although he dealt with early Buddhism in his study on "Hinduism and Buddhism," he did not pay much attention to Chinese Buddhism as an additional cultural force in Chinese history. As in the study on "Hinduism and Buddhism," he rested satisfied with identifying Chinese indigenous cultural resources and the way in which they became institutionalized. From here he jumped to the time of the emergence of modern capitalism in Europe. All this can be regarded in retrospect as major deficiencies. [21]

However, we should also acknowledge Weber's self-imposed limitations when we criticize his study one hundred years after its inception. As we can infer from the table of contents of the *Collected Essays*, his emphasis was not on Asia, but on the West. He made this quite clear in the "Preliminary remark," with which he prefaced this collection in 1919. [22] Here he pointed not only to the difference between the study on ascetic Protestantism and

the remainder –he treated in case of ascetic Protestantism “only one side of the causal chain,” whereas in the studies on the economic ethic of the world religions he dealt with both sides– but he also made clear to the reader that his interest in Asia went only “so far as it is necessary to find points of comparison with the Occidental development.” Hence, he regarded his studies on Asia not to be “complete analyses of cultures” (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 27). [23] To put it differently: The studies on Asia serve him as a backdrop to his study of the Western trajectory.

At this point the allegation of a Eurocentric perspective in Weber’s comparative studies becomes relevant, and justly so. The question is only: what type of Eurocentric perspective is at stake, a heuristic or a normative one? A normative Eurocentric perspective would put the West above all other civilizations, regarding them as deficient and the achievements of the West as the summit in the development of mankind. In contrast, a heuristic Eurocentric perspective would look upon world history from a consciously one-sided Western viewpoint in order to get insights into the distinctiveness of its trajectory. In my view, there is no doubt that Weber regarded his comparative studies as a contribution to the latter. This becomes quite obvious in the famous first paragraph of the “Preliminary remark,” if read with care. Here Weber states: “A son of modern European civilization, studying any problem of universal history, is bound to ask himself to what combination of circumstances the fact should be attributed that in Western civilization and in Western civilization only, cultural phenomena appeared which (as we like to think) lie in a line of development having *universal* significance and validity” (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 13, translation slightly changed). “As we like to think,” this is an important qualification. It can also be read as an invitation to members of other civilizations to ask similar questions from their one-sided point of view.

An insufficient contextualization occurs also when we use Weber’s study as a kind of manual for the analysis of the current situation in East Asia. Then we end up with the so-called Weber paradox. Since Weber had attributed the absence of an indigenous development of rational capitalism in Imperial China to

institutionalized Confucianism, one might conclude that Confucianism must be a hindrance to the development of capitalism in general. But the economic development in East Asia tells us a different story. Where Confucianism has maintained its cultural influence, economic modernization seems to fare much better than in cases where it has lost its power. Therefore, something must be wrong with the so-called Weber thesis on China. Confucianism cannot be a hindrance to and a promoter of modern capitalism at the same time. [24]

This would be a very superficial conclusion, however. It would be based on a double disregard. On the one hand, Weber distinguished clearly between invention and diffusion. Modern capitalism was invented in the West, but then it penetrated the world. He argued that in the course of diffusion, countries with a Confucian heritage would be more receptive to this process than countries with a different cultural heritage. [25] On the other hand, mainland China underwent a process of detraditionalization throughout the last 100 years. Especially since the Communists have deliberately cut the threads to traditional China, we are faced with a situation not anticipated by Weber. I mention only the long-lasting consequences of Mao’s “Great Leap Forward,” the destruction of traditional Chinese culture during the “Cultural Revolution,” the one-child-policy, which destroyed the traditional family structure and will cause a demographic disaster in the future. [26] And although Deng’s reforms have profoundly changed China, [27] it is still ruled by a Leninist-type party, in total control of the military, public communication (propaganda) and the economy. [28] If we want to analyze the Chinese type of capitalism in its politically authoritarian context, we should not use Weber’s study on traditional China, but his methodological and theoretical approach.

Capitalism in modern China from a Weberian perspective

Let me begin this final section of my article with a thesis: Since Deng’s reform Communist China has taken over some capitalist institutions and has stimulated an outstanding economic growth, industrializing an agrarian country. But it is still

dominated politically as well as economically by a Leninist party and it lacks a carrier stratum independent of the party and dedicated to the rational tempering of the irrational drive for acquisition and the values connected with it.

If we want to interpret the current economic constellation in China from a Weberian perspective, we have to define first of all the explanandum, rational capitalism, more precisely. According to the second version of *Economy and Society*, Weber's *Sociology*, the conditions necessary "for obtaining a maximum of formal rationality of capital accounting in production enterprises" are as follows:

- a) Complete appropriation of the means of production by private owners;
- b) formally free labor;
- c) freedom of contract;
- d) open markets;
- e) complete autonomy in the selection of managers by owners;
- f) separation of household and enterprise.

Furthermore, with regard to concomitant institutions outside the economy:

- g) rational technology;
- h) formal-rational administration and formal-rational law;
- i) institutional differentiation between the economy and the polity. [29]

Does China's capitalism today meet these institutional requirements? This holds true only to a very limited degree. With regard to a) there exists still a lot of insecurity, despite the Property Law of 2007, with regard to e) the influence of the party still looms large. With regard to h) there can be serious doubts whether China meets the regular standards of an impartial bureaucracy acting *sine ira et studio vis-à-vis* the public at large and whether it lives up to the minimal standards of a legal state. With regards to i) the differentiation between the state (party) and the economy remains underdeveloped. The economy lacks, in Weber's terms, relative autonomy and autocephaly *vis-à-vis* the state (party). [30]

One consequence of this lack of institutional differentiation seems to be a tremendous amount of corruption, running from top to bottom of the political system. It is also a system that has produced extreme inequality. Of course, the communist party and its affiliated organizations have become more responsive over time to the needs of the population, comparatively speaking. [31] And as a result of this 'opening' a new middle class has emerged. But this new middle class is still not really politicized, asking for participation in the political process. We are facing a type of consultative authoritarianism, not a Western type of democracy.

To be sure, a Western type of democracy is not a necessary condition to make modern capitalism possible and flourish. This is a Weberian insight, as we can infer from his studies on the Russian Revolution of 1905. [32] It is also true that Weber's catalogue of requirements forms an ideal type of rational capitalism. It is to be used as a heuristic yardstick to measure deviation and to encourage thereby the search for causal attributions. The ideal type should not be reified. Therefore, we cannot expect that an empirical case would meet all these requirements. Nevertheless, we may distinguish between types of modern capitalism. Authoritarian capitalism deviates from the ideal type much more than liberal capitalism (for example in the US) or welfare capitalism (for example in Europe).

As we have seen, Weber alerts us always to the distinction between 'form' (structures and institutions) and 'spirit' (culture and mentalities). One side cannot be regarded as the function of the other. This was the message of the study on ascetic Protestantism, and this is the message of his entire approach. On the level of the 'spirit' we may distinguish three modes of capitalist orientations, embedded in different cultures: the political, the speculative and the economic mode. The first is associated with political capitalism, where the actor exploits political instead of market opportunities; the second is associated with adventurer capitalism, where the actor exploits very risky short-term opportunities either in the political arena or in the marketplace; only the third one is associated with economic capitalism proper. This is the orientation of the capitalist entrepreneur, capable of deferred

gratification and dedicated to sustainability in his action. He represents what Weber called the "vocational man."

I know of no empirical study that would distinguish between these three types of capitalist orientation and measure their empirical manifestation quantitatively. However, I think it is safe to say that in today's China political and adventurer capitalist orientations are at least as widespread as the strictly economic ones. In view of this situation, we should turn Weber's question in his study on Imperial China around, so to speak, and ask ourselves: Could a revitalization of Confucianism be helpful in promoting an economic capitalist orientation among the Chinese middle class in general and among Chinese businessmen in particular? For in a Weberian perspective the rational tempering of the irrational drive for acquisition and the values connected with it do not come automatically with the adaptation to capitalist institution. This holds especially true when these institutions are still partially not properly in place.

I regard the reappropriation of Confucianism, which was crushed especially during the "Cultural Revolution," to be helpful in this situation. I can think of four elements, deeply embedded in Confucian ethics that could serve the purpose at hand:

- The Confucian emphasis on learning and academic qualification. It is well known that in Western countries, especially in the US, the rate of illiteracy is much higher than in countries under the influence of Confucianism.
- The Confucian emphasis on social relations, especially family relations, and on filial piety (xiao) that is very different from the Western emphasis on patria potestas and on individualism. [33]
- The embeddedness of economic relations in social relations (guanxi) and the personal trust that goes with it. Disembeddedness of economic relations is a serious problem in Western societies. [34]
- The Confucian ideal of order and harmony (Lin 54-8).

It is an open question, however, whether the Communist ideology, after all a Western product, would be compatible with such a kind of

reanimated Confucianism. It would also require the modernization of Confucianism itself. But we are convinced: The Chinese party-bound capitalism, this authoritarian capitalism, remains a form without spirit for the time being and without a carrier stratum that is able to promote a new civil spirit based on freedom, calculated risk-taking, responsibility and sustainability. [35]

With these remarks we deviate from Weber at the end of our presentation. As is well known, he finished his study on ascetic Protestantism on a very pessimistic note. He regarded victorious capitalism as emancipating itself from the old spirit of modern capitalism. Based on mechanical foundations, he argued, victorious capitalism does not need this spiritual support any more. This form will function without actors dedicated to the idea of a 'calling.' Victorious capitalism will produce the required mentalities quasi automatically. It will determine the lives of those born into this mechanism, and this will go on, "until the last ton of fossil fuel has been consumed" (Weber, *The Protestant Ethic* 181, translation slightly changed). With these statements, however, Weber does not only pass a value judgment, as he himself admits, he also deviates from his own analytical strategy, denying any law-like or functional relationship between 'spirit' and 'form.' Furthermore, we know today that the last ton of fossil fuel will indeed soon be consumed, but new energy resources will be unearthed and the limits of capitalism thereby extended. True enough, capitalism cannot function without energy, but it cannot function without cultural resources either.

Appendix

Weber: Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion

Plan dated 1919 and its execution

Volume 1 was submitted for printing and was proofread by Max Weber. It ends with the "Intermediate Reflections". Marianne Weber decided after Weber's death to present the study on Hinduism and Buddhism as volume 2 and the study on ancient Judaism as volume 3. This was not in line with Weber's plan. However, with the exception of the fragment on the Pharisees, she did not find any text that would fit Weber's plan of 1919. Many texts had still to be written. The titles in *italic* indicate these texts.

Volume 1

Preliminary Remark	1920
I. The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism	1904/05,
I. The Problem	revised
II. The Work Ethic of Ascetic Protestantism	1920
II. The Protestant Sects and the Spirit of Capitalism	1906 (two versions),
	revised
	1920
III. The Economic Ethics of World Religions	1915,
Introduction	revised
	1920
I. Confucianism and Taoism	
I. Sociological Foundations:	1915,
A. City, Prince and God	revised
	1920
II. Sociological Foundations:	
B. Feudal and Prebendal States	
III. Sociological Foundations:	
C. Administration and Agrarian Conditions	
IV. Sociological Foundations:	
D. Self Government, Law and Capitalism	
V. The Literati	
VI. The Confucian Orientation to Life	
VII. Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy – (Taoism)	
VIII. Result: Confucianism and Puritanism	

Intermediate Reflection: Theory of Stages and Directions in Religious Abnegation of the World	1915, revised 1920
II. Hinduism and Buddhism	1916-1917
I. The Hindu Social System	1920 republished
II. The Orthodox and Heterodox Redemption Teachings of the Indian Intellectuals	(intended revision not carried out)
III. The Religiosity of Asiatic Sects and Salvation	

Volume 2

<i>The General Foundations of Occidental Development (and/or: the Development of European Citizenship in Antiquity and the Middle Ages)</i>	News bulletin of the publishers 25th Oct. 1919, p. 11
<i>Egyptian, Babylonian and Persian Relations (or: Egyptian, Mesopotamian and Zarathustran Religious Ethics)</i>	Archives, vol. 44, booklet 1, Oct. 1917, p. 52 and News
Ancient Judaism	1917-1920, 1920 republished (intended revision not carried out)
I. The Israelite Confederacy and Yahweh	
II. The Origin of the Jewish Pariah People	
<i>Supplement: Psalms and the Book of Job</i>	Preface RS III
Appendix: The Pharisees (intellectual estate)	Preface RS III and News

Volume 3

<i>Talmudic Judaism</i>	News
<i>Early Christianity</i>	
<i>Oriental Christianity</i>	
<i>Islam</i>	News

Volume 4

<i>The Christianity of the West</i>	News
"The subject throughout is the treatment of the question: on what the social and economic <i>uniqueness</i> of the West is founded, how it arose and especially in what relation it stands to the development of religious ethics."	News

Endnotes

- [1] Reprint with permission of the author.
- [2] On the following, see my introduction to Max Weber, *Asketischer Protestantismus und Kapitalismus. Schriften und Reden 1904-1911*, 2014,. Wherever possible, Weber's works are quoted according to the Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe (MWG). MWG I includes his works and speeches, II his letters, III his lectures. The statement I am referring to cannot be found in the second edition of this essay of 1920. English translations are also used throughout this essay, but sometimes altered.
- [3] The founding of the *Archiv* is described in Ghosh 2010.
- [4] See Max Weber 2001a (*Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/9*), pages 12-22 and pages 65-66.
- [5] A list of these indications can be found in Max Weber 2001a, pages 90-93.
- [6] All critiques written by H. Karl Fischer and Felix Rachfahl as well as Max Weber's replies, his anti-critiques, can be found in Max Weber 2001a. For an English edition of Weber's texts see Chalcraft and Harrington (eds.) 2001.
- [7] See Max Weber, „Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen. Religionssoziologische Skizzen. Einleitung. Der Konfuzianismus I, II,“ and Max Weber, „Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen (Zweiter Artikel). Der Konfuzianismus III, IV. (Schluß). Zwischenbetrachtung. Stufen und Richtungen der religiösen Weltablehnung.“ The dates of the volumes and the dates of the issue do not coincide. The articles appeared in issue 1 and issue 2 respectively already in 1915.
- [8] See Weber 1951. The translation is unfortunately very poor.
- [9] The lecture course on “Practical Economics” has still to be edited. It will appear as Max Weber, *Praktische Nationalökonomie. Vorlesungen 1895-1899* (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. III/2).
- [10] A comparison between the two versions can be found in Weber 1989 (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/19). See especially the synopsis of the tables of contents, pp 77-79.
- [11] See Weber 1904, pp. 22-87, esp. pp. 37-39. This volume was the first of the new series which Edgar Jaffé established together with Werner Sombart and Max Weber in 1904, Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe vol. I/9.
- [12] See Weber 2011b, pp. 380-396. (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. III/6).
- [13] See the book-length article in Weber 2006, pp.300-747, esp. I. Einleitung (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/6). The article appeared in 1908.
- [14] See, in addition to the appendix, my article “On the Place of the Study on Confucianism in Max Weber's Work.”
- [15] We distinguish in the meantime a prewar version from a postwar version of *Economy and Society*. The prewar version carries the subtitle *The Economy and the Societal Orders and Powers (Die Wirtschaft und die gesellschaftlichen Ordnungen und Mächte)*, the postwar version the subtitle *Sociology (Soziologie)*. The prewar version is available in 5 volumes. One of these volumes is on religious communities (Religiöse Gemeinschaften), where the first version of the “Zwischenbetrachtung” can be found. This text was then turned into an article, linking the study on Confucianism with the study on Hinduism and Buddhism and published in two versions, 1915 and 1920 respectively. See Max Weber 2001b (Max Weber Gesamtausgabe vol. I/22-2).
- [16] Brackets are added. Disenchantment means in this context demagicalization of the means of salvation. There is a second meaning of disenchantment in Weber's work. See chapter 1 in my book *Die Entzauberung der Welt. Sechs Studien zu Max Weber*, 2009.
- [17] This juxtaposition between Confucian and Puritan rationalism remained unchanged between the first and the second version of the study. It can be found in the summary statement, entitled “Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism” (“Resultat: Konfuzianismus und Puritanismus”).
- [18] See Max Weber, *The Religion of India. The Sociology of Hinduism and Buddhism*, translated and edited by Hans H. Gerth and Don Martindale (1958). This translation is even worse.
- [19] An English translation of the “Intermediate Reflection” („Zwischenbetrachtung“) can be found in Weber 1946, here “XIII. Religious Rejections of the World and Their Directions.”

[20] For the importance of Neoconfucianism to the cultural history of traditional China and beyond, see de Bary 1981. For a critique of Weber's approach from the point of view of the specialist, see Metzger 1977. A wide range of issues connected with Weber's study and its shortcomings is discussed in Wei-Ming (ed.) 1991. See also Schluchter (ed.) 1983. A recent, very insightful contribution to Weber's 'history' of Imperial China is Faure 2013, and in general Faure 2006.

[21] The text entitled "Vorbemerkung" was written in fall 1919. Parsons translated it as "Author's Introduction;" Kalberg, as "Prefatory Remarks to Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion (1920)." Neither translation is correct.

[22] I am using Parsons' translation here.

[23] This was a hotly debated issue especially during the time when the so-called four tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea) developed very successful capitalist economies. It caused the so-called "Weber fever" in Taiwan.

[24] This was a hotly debated issue especially during the time when the so-called four tigers (Singapore, Hong Kong, Taiwan and South Korea) developed very successful capitalist economies. It caused the so-called "Weber fever" in Taiwan.

[25] See Weber, *Religion of China*, page 248: "The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically fully developed in the modern culture area." Similar statements can be found with regard to India.

[26] The cover story of a recent TIME International issue stated: "because of the one child policy, China's population is out of whack: Too few youths, too few women, too many elderly." ("Why China Needs More Children" 17). The gender disparity is remarkable: boy-girl ratio is 118:100.

[27] Within 20 years, China has managed to raise per capita income almost three times and to fight poverty (famine) to a remarkable degree. To put it figuratively: Where bicycles have been before, there are cars now. It holds at least for Beijing and Shanghai. It is predicted that in 2030 China will have the biggest economy in the world.

[28] See McGregor 2010 (in German: *Der rote Apparat. Chinas Kommunisten*, 2012), esp. chapter 1.

[29] See Max Weber Gesamtwerk vol. I/23, pages 375-381 (§§ 30 and 31). English translation in Weber 2013, pages 161-166; with a new preface by Guenther Roth.

[30] See McGregor 2010, chapter 2.

[31] In Weber's terms, the opening of social relations from the point of view of the party occurred to a certain extent during the last years. On the one hand, even an entrepreneur can now become a party member, on the other hand, consultation with bodies outside the party has increased. But this has not shattered the monopoly of the party with its affiliated organizations.

[32] See Weber 1989, esp. pages 267-274 (Max Weber Gesamtwerk vol. I/10). On page 270 we can read: "It is ridiculous to attribute to the current developed capitalism, as it exists in den United States and as it is imported to Russia right now, an inevitable 'elective affinity' to 'democracy' or even to 'freedom'" (my translation). Weber is convinced that capitalism when taken over from the outside could flourish even under "enlightened despotism."

[33] Gary Hamilton has alerted us to the fact that Weber equated the Occidental legal concept of patria potestas with the Chinese moral concept of xiao. This was not without consequences for his ideal type of patriarchalism, which became therefore strictly westernized. The application of this concept to traditional Chinese relationships, the five lines, distorted the traditional Chinese role-model. Here, for instance, the son does not submit to the father's command, but he acts like a son as it is prescribed by a role. See Hamilton, "Legitimation Domination in China: A Reconceptualization," paper presented at *Max Weber and Chinese Culture: The Religion of China Centennial International Conference 2013* (forthcoming), and Hamilton 1990.

[34] See Lin 2008, esp. pages 43-45. The question of embeddedness and disembeddedness poses an intriguing problem in case of China, however. On the macro level, the embeddedness of the economy into the polity seems to be counterproductive, whereas on the micro level economic relations proper may profit from emdeddedness.

[35] See also the insightful article from a Weberian perspective by Ku 2007. He mentions the spiritual vacuum caused by the "Cultural Revolution," but is skeptical whether a revitalized Confucianism would do the job. See page 85.

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Author's biography

Wolfgang Schluchter is one of the most important commentators and scholars of Max Weber's work in the last fifty years. His "neo-evolutionary" approach to Weber's work has influenced numerous authors such as Jürgen Habermas. In dozens of books dedicated to Max Weber, Schluchter reconstructed both the historical and systematic content of the Weberian work. In addition to his analysis of Weberian studies on the great world religions, his reconstruction of Weber's moral theory stands out.