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Access to the online journal archive at <https://www.jstor.org/journal/maxweberstudies>

2020 institutional rates for *Max Weber Studies* are as follows:

Print	\$220.00 USD
Online	\$240.00 USD
Print + online	\$260.00 USD

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*Indexing and Abstracting:* This journal is indexed and abstracted by EBSCO Publishing, 10 Estes Street, PO Box 682, Ipswich MA01 938, USA ([www.epnet.com](http://www.epnet.com)), and also in *Sociological Abstracts*, *Social Services Abstracts*, *Worldwide Political Science Abstracts* and *Linguistics & Language Behavior Abstracts* published by Cambridge Scientific Abstracts, 7428 Trade Street, PO Box 22206, San Diego, CA 92121, USA ([www.csa.com](http://www.csa.com)).

© Max Weber Studies 2020  
ISSN 1470-8078 (print)  
2056-4074 (online)

## Contents

List of Contributors	5
<b>Editorial</b>	
Sam Whimster	6-7
<b>Science, Rationalization, and the Persistence of Enchantment</b>	
Eduardo Weisz	8-24
<b>Max Weber and the Mandate of Heaven</b>	
Wolfgang Drechsler	25-56
<b>Between Translations and Monographs: An Exploratory Analysis of Secondary Literature on Max Weber-Reception in the Chinese Context</b>	
Po-Fang Tsai	57-81
<b>Reply to Frank J. Lechner's 'Versions of Vocation'</b>	
John Dreijmanis	82-86
<b>Obituary: Guenther Roth, 1931-2019</b>	
Stephen Kalberg	87-90
<b>Book Reviews</b>	91-111
Bruce Douglass, <i>The Iron Cage Revisited: Max Weber in the Neoliberal Era</i>	
Omar Kassem	
Talcott Parsons, <i>Kapitalismus bei Max Weber – zur Rekonstruktion eines fast vergessenen Themas</i>	
Helmut Staubmann	
Jack Barbalet, <i>Confucianism and the Chinese Self: Re-examining Max Weber's China</i>	
Dongsheng Zang	
Notes for Contributors	112



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## Editorial

Sam Whimster

Imagine you are an American postgraduate embarked on the academic equivalent of a European grand tour. Studying first in Vienna and then in Heidelberg you start taking notes on some of the leading names - Georg von Below, Werner Sombart, and Max Weber - and this is five years after Weber's death. You think you are in the field of economic history but in fact you are breaking into a debate about the origins of modern capitalism. Sombart's output is striking and he puts forward the novel idea that the Crusades unleashed a lust for treasure and destabilised the medieval static and organic world-view. An 'essay' by Max Weber disputes the motivation, substituting an intricate argument about the redefining of *Beruf* in terms of obsessive economic activity as obeisance to a hidden and impersonal god. Conduct of life, religious practice, culture and thought itself falls under the spell of the Puritans' god, and asceticism descends like a hoar frost on a merry and magical world.

That student was Talcott Parsons (as outlined in the new book edited by Uta Gerhardt) and the more he pulled on this thread the deeper and wider the analysis became. Eduardo Weisz reveals, in his account of '*Wissenschaft als Beruf*', the religious roots of scientific vocation. The whole process of rationalization begins with ancient Judaism and ends with ascetic Protestantism, giving birth to the disenchanting modern world, one governed by calculation and science. Puritanism opens the behavioural route to modern capitalism, and religion and superstition incubate *ratio*. Scientists should not ignore the non-rational forces that gave birth to their profession: 'They become decisive in Weber's commitment to salvaging a place for humanity in an increasingly bureaucratized world.' John Dreijmanis reminds us that *Beruf* is the crucial concept that translators face.

Weber travelled to China in translations, beginning in the 1980s. The process is charted by Dr Tsai. Weber was both authority, as the

alternative to Marx, but also critic of the Confucian stasis at the heart of Chinese civilization. Weber was mistaken for an economic historian - a recurring mistake - and it would take the somewhat haphazard translation of the secondary literature on Weber to reveal the nature of the intellectual journey. Each world religion is *sui generis*, and the comparisons are the lifeblood of the comparative historical and social sciences. Jack Barbalet's book on Weber's China continues the assessment.

Weber was also a professional economist and Bruce Douglass' book on Weber's neoliberalism is reviewed by Omar Kassem. Contemporary neoliberalism extols and extends the disenchantment of markets over all other spheres of life - the continuity of western ratio *pur*; though there are signs that dissenting economists are escaping their intellectual cage.

If a civilization is run for over two centuries on an intensive programme of economic world mastery treating the earth and biosphere as an externality, a sage just as much as a scientist could predict the event might be, comparatively speaking, short-lived. Wolfgang Drechsler suggests that Confucian *Beruf* will turn out to possess the better curriculum vitae than its western versions. Bureaucracy and Chinese imperial rule as a form of Public Administration is subject to the Mandate of Heaven, a discipline and a charisma on loan that has to respect the popular will and not offend the telluric spirits.

## Science, Rationalization, and the Persistence of Enchantment

Eduardo Weisz

### Abstract

Against the view that in his lecture ‘Science as Vocation’ Weber was counselling students not to demand of science an emotional, prophetic or romantic response, this article argues that Weber saw experience and insight as crucial components of scientific endeavour. *Beruf* involves self sacrifice and discovery a mental frenzy. Drawing on *Ancient Judaism* non-rational elements cannot be excluded from the whole process of western rationalization. There are forces that limit rationalism and they become decisive in salvaging a place for humanity in an increasingly bureaucratized world.

Keywords: rationalization, science, religion, disenchantment, experience, charisma, plebiscitary democracy.

On November 7, 1917—the very same day the Bolsheviks seized the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg—Max Weber, invited by students of the *Freistudentische Jugend*, delivered in Munich his famous lecture ‘Science as a Vocation’ (*Wissenschaft als Beruf*). Two years later, he published it together with ‘Politics as a Vocation’, a lecture he had given in January 1919, also in Munich and organized by the same student group.

The aim of this article is to explore controversially the lecture ‘Science as a Vocation’ and encourage a reading of it from a point of view often neglected in most of these writings, one that downplays its understanding as a mere picture of a rationalized, disenchanting world. I do not need to expound on the many sound reasons to see this lecture as one of the key texts to understanding Weber’s historical-universal process of rationalization. It was in 1910, and in relation to his studies on the sociology of music, that Weber developed a clearer idea of the extent of Western rationalism. And it was because of this understanding that he began his monumental study of world religions, as a key to the comprehension of the rationalization process from a developmental and comparative standpoint. It is



necessary to bear in mind that in 1917, when Weber gave his lecture, he had already published most of what would later become his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, with only parts of his study on China and on Judaism remained unpublished. And what we know as the chapter in *Economy and Society* on the sociology of religion—now published by the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (I/22-2) as *Religiöse Gemeinschaften,-* was fully written before the war. It has to be considered, then, that the professor who stood in front of the students in Munich had previously made a thorough analysis of how the different religions influenced the conduct of life in each major civilization and was well aware of the influence of rationalism in history. Hence, we can read in the ‘Zwischenbetrachtung’, first published in 1915,

For the rationality, in the sense of logical or teleological ‘consistency’ of an intellectual-theoretical or practical-ethical attitude has and always has had power over man, however limited and unstable this power is and always has been in the face of other forces of historical life (1946b: 324 [1988b, 537]).

If rationality has always had power over men and women, modern science has undoubtedly played an important role in shaping modern conduct of life. Notwithstanding their differences, essential authors like Friedrich Tenbruck and Wolfgang Schluchter have argued that for Weber the rationalization process consisted in two different processes. First, rationalization was driven by the salvation religions up until modernity; secondly, the emergence of science acquired this dominant position, monopolizing the reign of rationality and forcing religion out and confining it to the realm of the non-rational (Tenbruck 1999: *passim*; Schluchter 2009: 2). As it was posed by Antônio Pierucci, ‘science disenchanters because calculation depreciates the incalculable mysteries of life’ (2005, 160-61).

Volkhard Krech and Gerhard Wagner have consistently considered ‘Science as a Vocation’ the lecture on science as the peak (Höhepunkt) of Weber’s thesis on disenchantment and rationalization (1994: 767). It is not surprising, then, that as it has been scrutinized by Pierucci for in the lecture Weber used the term *Entzauberung* more times than in any of his other writings (2005: 151). It is also true that here, although less than in other instances, Weber fiercely defended science against the demands by students that it also embrace *Erlebnis* - rendered in English by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills as ‘experience’.

Detlev Peukert has showed that despite Weber’s proximity to Nietzsche, instead of the latter’s prophetic pathos, the former opted

for a scientific pathos, confronting professors who wished to become prophets (1989: 36). Weber's diatribes against professors using their classes to impart their values can certainly be found in this lecture, as well as in many other of his texts. However, I will claim that in Munich before the students he wanted to transmit something prophetic and non-scientific. In a recent article on 'Wissenschaft als Beruf', Keith Tribe also stressed that 'he had begun to criticize those who embraced emotion, sensation and "inner experience" (*Erlebnis*) as guidelines for political activism, the stance of many pacifist students' (2018: 127). But as I will underline, in this lecture we find Weber claiming that for the scientist, the lack of *Erlebnis* would lead to a failure in producing any scientific advance. Tribe does recognize that '[s]cience is organized rationally, but has need of imagination to progress; cold calculation leads science nowhere' (2018: 130). However, he immediately insists that '[t]he source of this imagination cannot simply be lived experience, sensation; hard consistent work is usually needed before a clear and well-founded insight emerges', which he reinforces quoting Weber: 'Insight does not replace work. And in turn work cannot substitute for insight, or force it into existence, just as little as passion can' (2018: 130).

Wolfgang Mommsen has written at length on Weber's position against political or spiritual tendencies that stood for the revitalization of myths. The discussions against the circle around Stefan George, or, even more harshly, against myths pretending to show the superiority of the Prussian social model, evidence this. At the Conference at Burg Lauenstein, which Weber attended some months before his lecture in Munich, he battled against the myth of a German romanticism that pretended to stand above democratic individualism based on Enlightenment values: '...he criticized the anti-rationalist preconceptions of the Youth-Movement which was also pursuing alternative mythological designs to bourgeois-capitalist society (Mommsen 1992: 139). Weber, argues Mommsen, was confronting 'the irrationalist tendencies in large sections of the organized German student body, and indeed in the intelligentsia in general' (1992: 139). These attacks were clearly part of the lecture. But my focus will build upon the fact that even when Weber explicitly argued in the lecture against *Erlebnis*, this is nevertheless a condition for any scientific step forward.

In his book on Weber, published some years ago, Pedro Piedras Monroy occupies himself with 'Science as a Vocation', focusing on the tension I want to stress here. He underlines the challenge to the

academic community that Weber presented in Munich, something that had only been addressed by Nietzsche, an outsider (Monroy 2004: 101). While this had been considered by other authors, Piedras Monroy's originality is to focus in the dichotomical structure of the lecture: charisma on the one side, routinization (*Veralltäglicung*) on the other, a dichotomy also posed by Wolfgang Mommsen - though not for this lecture (1992: 145-65). Highlighting the many non-rational vicissitudes the academic life is based on, for Piedras Monroy the scientist is somebody to whom 'Weber gives back a renovated charismatic vigor, substantiating the new charismatic hero of science, with all his magical attributes' (2004: 116). Although with a different approach than the one I will develop here, Piedras Monroy makes apparent the tension Weber poses to his young audience.

In other words, the crucial role of modern rationalism in every sphere of our times is undoubtedly one of Weber's main contributions to our understanding of the epoch. But I will stress that we can find in 'Science as a Vocation' very strong hints on the importance he assigned to non-rational aspects in his approach to reality. This will lead me to a discussion of aspects of his study on ancient Judaism, because it was in that civilization that Weber found the cradle of Western rationalism. Using this, I will point out the contradictory path of the rationalization process, the limits and instability of the power of *ratio* 'in the face of other forces of historical life', as Weber warned (1946b: 324 [1988b, 537]). My thesis is that the importance of the non-rational elements, which I underline in both texts, is due to the fact that they are *forces* that limit rationalism. They become decisive in Weber's commitment to salvaging a place for humanity in an increasingly bureaucratized world.

I will begin by showing the tension between the rational and the non-rational in the title itself of Weber's lecture, specifically in the concept of *Beruf*. The non-rational elements in the activity of the scientists, as depicted by Weber, will be dealt with in the following section. Departing from the rational elements highlighted in *Ancient Judaism*, I will then contend that, for him, the prophet's historical role depended also on relevant non-rational features. In the next section, I will show that elements alien to rationality are decisive both in the life-conduct encouraged by Weber and in his political proposals. In the conclusion I will argue that these non-rational aspects were decisive for Weber's attempt to erode, at least minimally, the tendency towards rationalization, no matter its inexorability.

*Worldly Profession and Religious Calling*

*Beruf*, which means both vocation and profession, is, as we know, a key concept in Weber's analysis on Protestantism. It is a concept that entails a tension that leads to its frequent translation (at least in English and in Spanish) into two words: vocation and profession. However, as in *calling*—used to translate the term *Beruf* in *The Protestant Ethic* but not in the title of the lectures delivered in Munich—, in the German language the term *Beruf* has clearly apparent religious roots: it refers to a worldly activity that fulfills God's will. It involves *a tension between something worldly and something divine*, between something rational and something that is not. 'Every increase of rationalism in empirical science', Weber states, 'increasingly pushes religion from the rational into the irrational realm' (1946b: 351 [1988b: 564]). Therefore, the religious content of *Beruf* calls forth an 'intellectual sacrifice' (1946a: 154 [1994a: 22]), as long as the term is not completely devoid of its original sense.

For Weber, the emergence of modernity, in which the ascetic Protestant concept of *Beruf* played an important role, cannot be reduced to a rationalization process in which religion was replaced by science. No matter how much 'the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness' (1930: 176 [1988a: 197]), the *non-rational realm* still plays an important role. It is this tension between the rational and the non-rational that I want to point to. I will also focus on this tension in the author's study of Judaism because 'Science as a Vocation' and the essay on ancient Israel are closely linked. Together they provide an important insight on Max Weber's understanding of our fate as modern men and women.

*Enchantment within the Scientific Sphere*

As Weber states in the 'Zwischenbetrachtung', the intellectual sphere is one of the most decisive spheres of Western modern rationalism, and science is its core. In 'Science as a Vocation' he explains: 'Scientific progress is a fraction, the most important fraction, of the process of intellectualization which we have been undergoing for thousands of years' (1946a: 138 [1994a: 9]). This is the process of disenchantment. To characterize our world as disenchanted meant, for Weber, that magic has been ruled out of our way of dealing with reality, that everything can be calculated. Not having the capacity to understand the way something works does not lead us to look for magical solutions

but for the specialist with scientific knowledge. *Entzauberung* is usually rendered in English as ‘disenchantment’, but its literal meaning is ‘demagification.’ As he explains,

[P]rincipally there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, one can, in principle, master all things by calculation. This means that the world is disenchanted. One need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed (1946a: 139 [1994a: 9]).

In *General Economic History*, we read, ‘In all times there has been but one means of breaking down the power of magic and establishing a rational conduct of life; this means is great rational prophecy’ (1927: 362 [1958: 308]). And, Weber goes on, ‘[t]he germ of this development as regards magic is found far back in ancient Jewish ethics’ (1927: 363 [1958: 310]). Weber constructed the ideal-type of prophecy by basing himself on the Jewish one, and it is from this standpoint that he asserts: ‘Prophecies have released the world from magic and in doing so have created the basis for our modern science and technology, and for capitalism’ (1927: 362 [1958: 309]). Prophecies, then, were for him a precondition of modern science.

After having made this assessment, achieved through his study on world religions, Weber revised his 1904/1905 articles on the Protestant ethic to include them in the first volume of his *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* (1920). Weber had arrived at the idea by then that Calvinism was the end of a historical process:

[T]hat great historic process in the development of religions, the elimination of magic from the world, which had begun with the old Hebrew prophets and, in conjunction with Hellenistic scientific thought, had repudiated all magical means to salvation as superstition and sin, came here to its logical conclusion (1930: 105 [1988a: 94-95]).

As I have shown elsewhere (Weisz 2011), to comprehend Weber’s stand regarding this long-range developmental process, one should not forget that it is an ideal-typical process. With the aid of this methodological tool, he characterizes a process of rationalization that begins with ancient Judaism and ends with ascetic Protestantism, giving birth to the disenchanted modern world, one governed by calculation and science.

Jewish prophecy and science, which eventually forces religion into the irrational realm, are both decisive parts of the rationalization process. However, within ancient Judaism, as well as within modern

science, there is a strong non-rational component to which Weber assigns a crucial importance. This is what I want to underline here.

Weber researches the universal historical process of rationalization by studying the religious ethics. Weber's decision to focus on the religious side gives us a hint of why 'Science as a Vocation' is so full of religious references and metaphors. Hence, we can find there, for example: 'According to our ultimate standpoint, the one is the devil and the other the God, and the individual has to decide which is God for him and which is the devil' (1946a: 148 [1994a: 17]). Weber's mention of gods and devils regarding modern humans' dilemma is a metaphorical way to express that each individual has to decide what values he or she chooses to follow. The concept of 'polytheism', as used in this lecture, refers to the multiple values offered to everyone in modernity and among which one has to decide, without the possibility of recurring to science for an answer. The same has to be said on the term *Entzauberung*, which Weber used first in his essay for the journal *Logos* in 1913, in the midst of his research on religions. In modernity, it has not the literal sense of demagification—breaking with magic (*Zauber*)—, something done by religions millenniums ago, but the break with a world unified under a religious veil, a process in which science had a leading role. For this reason the non-rational components of Weber's lecture are not to be found in the use of magic, gods or devils.

In 'Science as a Vocation' Weber seems to enjoy uncovering—with no solemnity whatsoever—the limitations of rationalism in the profession of the scientist. I want to point out briefly some of his sharp remarks in front of the students. These statements, stressing the irrationality of scientific and academic activity, can be found in the three levels he develops in the lecture: (1) the external conditions in which a scientist develops his or her activity, which in Weber's approach were linked to the vicissitudes of making a career at a university; (2) the internal conditions, by which Weber refers to the intimate conditions of those who, in a laboratory or an office, produce a scientific advance; and (3) the cultural conditions in which a modern scientist carries out his or her job. These three levels are discussed next.

1. Weber begins his lecture by raising some remarkable conditions any scholar finds in his or her career at a university. In Germany, you have to be wealthy to be able to begin an academic career, he warns the students. But besides this, whether or not you succeed depends on luck: 'I know of hardly any career on earth where chance [*Hazard*] plays such a role' (1946a: 132 [1994a: 3]). It also depends on favorable

coincidences and, of course, on connections and friends in influential positions. Weber goes on by warning that success as a professor might well depend on the inflection of his or her voice, or on other similar features. And, of course, one can forget a career if one is Jewish or a leftist. These are reasons that explained for him why the academy was full of mediocrities.

Therefore, for Weber, German universities are following the American path, they are increasingly bureaucratized, rationalized, but at the same time they riddled with attributes alien to rationality, in which human factors play an important role. In the external conditions a scientist has to face, then, there are decisive variables that cannot be calculated, are radically devoid of rationality and the pursuit of efficiency, and these depend on something as irrational as hazard. There are undoubtedly 'incalculable forces that come into play', the academic career cannot be mastered only 'by calculation'. The academic career in Weber's words is not fully disenchanting.

2. On the specific work done by scientists, Weber naturally includes the ascetic dedication and selfless effort without which the scientist can accomplish nothing. However, he also emphasizes that arduous work is not enough to do it. To be able to succeed in producing something new in science, you need a calling, a *Beruf*, which he equates to having a 'strange intoxication', a passion. And to this he adds *Erlebnis*—translated as 'experience.' Weber refers further in his lecture to *Erlebnis*—also in other essays like the ones on Roscher and Knies—and he usually treats it with annoyance and in a critical manner because of its being praised by some in a way he understood as romantic irrationalism. But *Erlebnis* is in this passage related to the sensation that a scientist at work *must* experience. It is an emotional state that cannot consequently be reduced to rationality.

A scientist also needs to feel *Rausch*—'frenzy' in Gerth and Mills's translation—the way an artist needs it. Weber refers here to Plato's *mania*, which we can find in *Phaedo*, meaning raving, exaltation, and divine frenzy. The scientist also needs *Eingebung*, 'inspiration', to be able to produce something worthy. For the occurrence of an idea 'has nothing to do with any cold calculation,' its arrival depends on chance, just as it does for the artist, adds Weber. The best ideas come to the scientist's mind 'when smoking a cigar on the sofa; or when taking a walk on a slowly ascending street' (1946a: 136-37 [1994a: 7]). Scientific production, therefore, comes out of irrational, magical, charismatic elements. It does not seem to be fully disenchanting either.

3. Finally, on the cultural conditions of modern science. Given that Weber wrote in several texts on the irrationality of values as a decisive feature of modern culture, and that much can be found in the secondary literature on this, I will not expand here on this issue. In his lecture, he emphasized that we cannot share the illusion of the Enlightenment project—he relates it here to Plato’s allegory of the cave. Mainly, science cannot settle conflicts of values; the struggle cannot be but endless—therefore, there is no solution but *polytheism*. Ancient polytheism, closed down by Christianity, emerges in our time in the form of the irrationality of values, a dispute in which each has to decide where he or she wants to stand. Science and rationality can only aid in this decision, but it cannot resolve it: ‘the individual has to decide which is God for him and which is the devil’ (1946a: 148 [1994a: 17]).

To sum up, while focusing on modern science and understanding it as the highest stage of the rationalization process, Weber devotes significant parts of his lecture to make apparent the many non-rational aspects that are inherent in the actual circumstances a scientist has to face.

#### *The Rational and the Non-rational in Ancient Judaism*

If we go back now to the other end of the ideal-typical rationalization process, to its beginning in ancient Judaism, we can find there also the rational and the non-rational. As I have already mentioned, Weber found in this civilization key elements of the Western rationalization process. Specifically, he highlights a set of ethical commandments that had to be fulfilled; to behave according to them was more important than following rites or sacrifices, which were the core practices of other creeds. In ancient Israel Weber found a religion that rejected magic, based in a covenant, an agreement between God and his people, that allowed that any inquiry on God’s will was channeled in ‘an at least relatively rational mode’ (1952: 167 [1988c: 179]).

The priests in Israel were similar to other religions’ priests in several aspects, but they did not practice magical therapies or use irrational therapeutic methods. Rather than being magicians, Weber wrote, they were bearers of knowledge. Their prestige was based not on their magical deeds, as in other religions—in Babylonia or Egypt, for example—, but on the purely rational knowledge of Yahweh’s commandments, on what could or couldn’t be done. In addition, there was nothing in those commandments that was beyond comprehension



(1952: 175, 178, 219 [1988c: 187, 190, 233]). As Weber explains, 'Like prophecy itself, world events are rational in character; they are determined neither by blind chance nor magical forces' (1952: 314 [1988c: 328-29]). The absence of magic combined with the emphasis on the rational knowledge of the commandments plus the assumption of events being essentially rational led to a unique systematization of the Jewish religion. This systematization became also an important drive toward the rationalization of conduct. In these respects, Judaism was certainly unique in comparison with the surrounding religions.

Thus, his research on ancient Judaism granted Weber the tools to insert in the 1920s version of *Die protestantische Ethik* that ancient Judaism initiated the historical religious process of disenchantment of the world. This assertion reveals the full scope of Judaism's importance for Weber's thought.

I will not go further here in the rational aspects of ancient Judaism, with which I have dealt in other texts (see Weisz 2012, 2019). My concern now is to highlight a different aspect of this religion analyzed by Weber. What I want to point out is that one can find in *Ancient Judaism* also the author's interest in facets that are opposed to this religion's role as the cradle of rationality. For Weber, those features played a fundamental historical role.

In 'Science as a Vocation', we read that in our time ultimate values have disappeared from public life. As Weber puts it: 'the prophetic pneuma, which in former times swept through the great communities like a firebrand, welding them together', is now only to be perceived in 'the smallest and intimate circles, in personal human relations' (1946a: 155 [1994a: 22-23]). What is important to stress here is that in his study on Judaism, Weber highlights a factor completely alien to the rationality I have emphasized: religious feelings were the source of the constitution of a community (*Gemeinschaft*). Weber assigns a decisive importance to the feelings that underlie the formation of a *Gemeinschaft*. The historical relevance of those religious feelings can be better appreciated by recalling how Weber compared Judaic and Hellenic prophecies. He points to the lack of emotions in Greek society, to the secularity of its politicians, the discipline of its armies, the rationalistic spirit, the lack of religious demagoguery, the absence of an ecstatic prophecy. In Athens, there was aversion to emotional prophecy, 'nothing of religious demagoguery in the manner of the Israelite prophets is known ever to have intervened in the politics of the Hellenic states.' By contrast, in Jerusalem, 'unconfined by priestly or status conventions and quite untempered by any self-control...

the prophet discharges his glowing passion and experiences all the abysses of the human heart' (1952: 270-73 [1988c, 284-87]). Hence, the prophet made possible the establishment of a ritual community of the people (*rituelle Volksgemeinschaft*). Relying in his charisma, they awoke strong feelings in their followers; the relationship between the latter and the prophet was fully shaped by this emotional element. As Weber made clear, it was the 'vital emotional *preaching* which is distinctive of prophecy' (1978: 445 [2005: 32]).

Therefore, despite the prophet's crucial role in confronting magic and, by doing this, constituting a decisive step in the world-historical process of rationalization, their importance depended also on the non-rational, affective component of their relationship with the believers. To sum up, according to Weber's analysis, not only rationality but also emotions and feelings were decisive components for the historical significance of the Hebrew prophecy.

#### *Individual Freedom and Politics*

After having shown the importance Weber assigns to both rational and non-rational aspects at the onset and at the conclusion of the historical process of rationalization, it is possible to go further into two life-spheres in which this tension becomes particularly relevant. One is the realm of the individual freedom: what are the possibilities one can find to escape, although only partially, the iron cage produced by pervasive rationalization? The second concerns the political sphere, where according to Weber, rational bureaucracies play an increasingly significant role.

Weber brought up both issues in 1917, in *Parliament and Government in Germany*. 'In view of the fundamental fact that the advance of bureaucratization is unstoppable', he wrote, and raised then a set of questions that follows from this inevitability. While the first of them refers to the possibility of salvaging any remnants of individual freedom in a bureaucratized world, the last refers to the necessity of the 'leading spirit' a politician must have, in contrast with an official who must perform 'his work dutifully and honorably in accordance with regulations and orders' (1994b: 159-60 [1988e: 222-23]). I want to deal briefly with both issues, suggesting some Weberian answers. For both we can also find some hints in the lecture on science I am discussing, as well as in the study on ancient Israel.

On how to lead a fulfilling life in this rationalized age, it is significant to recall how Weber ended his lecture in Munich, on 'how we

shall act' in order 'to bear the fate of the times like a man': 'We shall set to work and meet the "demands of the day", in human relations as well as in our vocation. This, however, is plain and simple, if each finds and obeys the demon who holds the fibers of his very life' (1946a: 155-56 [1994a: 23]). In this lecture, it is easy to recognize Weber as an educator, an *Erzieher*. Wilhelm Hennis has stressed this aim in Weber's career. Moreover, Hennis defined 'Science as a Vocation' as a pedagogical invocation of an enormous strength (2016: 179). Schluchter, writing on this lecture, has remarked that, '[a]s many contemporaries have testified, Weber was a powerful speaker with demagogic talents, reminiscent of the prophets of the Old Testament, whose rhetoric he described so movingly, in his study on ancient Judaism' (1979: 67). Weber's aim was to aid in the education of scientists able to resist the scientific bureaucratized machine. This is, I believe, one of the reasons for the many references to the non-rational aspects of this profession. For this reason, this lecture can be characterized as a sort of *Bildungsroman* for young scientists. Thus, it is revealing that it ends with the aforementioned quote of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* about 'the demands of the day'.

In modern times, ultimate values lost their universal status. For this reason, each has to act following his or her own values, obey the demon that holds each one's own life. But there are times when to follow each one's own demon means, as Weber wrote in another text, is to act like Don Quixote waging a battle even when there are few chances to win it; in other words, it might mean the pursuit of unreachable goals. More specifically, for Weber that meant to follow one's values even when this leads acting in opposition to a scientifically indisputable tendency (2014: 318 [1922: 475]). For Weber himself, his own *Donquixotterie*—that is the word he actually used—was to fight against the unstoppable tendency toward bureaucratization. His own demon was the defense of a dynamic culture where a meaningful life could still be possible. The central question for anybody who is aware of the increasing bureaucratization humanity is going through, Weber asserted, is what do we have to oppose the bureaucratic machinery, so as to save a rest of humanity from this parceling of the soul, from this autocracy of the bureaucratic ideal of life ([1988d: 413-14]).

Apart from individual freedom, Weber treasured Germany as his other permanent value. His strong nationalism shaped his writings on all types of political problems, explicitly placing his nationalism before any other consideration. No matter what the event, before,

during, or after the Great War, every single time Weber intervened in political debates he assigned the German nation, his demon, the foremost place in his thought.

I will not pursue the issue further here. But both demons, the safeguard of individual freedom and the German nation, were Weber's own path to avoid becoming 'a specialist without spirit', a *Fachmensch ohne Geist*, as he depicts modern human being at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*. Finding and obeying 'the demon who holds the fibers of his very life', Weber himself proceeded the way he suggested to the students at the end of the lecture in Munich. That meant for him to develop a personality, something he wanted to instill in his audience. 'Personality for Weber is based in the final analysis on the consistency of one's inner relationship to ultimate values and life-meanings' (Mommsen 1992: 134), values and life-meanings that science cannot settle.

I will refer now to the second problem Weber raises in *Parliament and Government*, the role of the politician in opposition to that of the official, the civil servant. On different occasions, he wrote that proper politicians, not bureaucrats, should govern Germany. Until the November revolution of 1918, Weber hoped that the German Reichstag could give birth to politicians with the ability and the ambition to become true leaders, but in early 1919 Weber stood up for a *Führerdemokratie*, a plebiscitary leadership democracy; this became Weber's last political commitment. He was convinced that a bureaucratic democracy, or legal-rational domination, could not deal with an unstable situation, such as the political turmoil that characterized Germany after the war. While his advocacy in favor of a *Führerdemokratie* is consistent with the capability of charismatic domination, as described in *Economy and Society*, to rule in a crisis-ridden political situation, Weber's standpoint resulted not solely from the dire situation of postwar Germany. It was also a way of endorsing a political transformation that could finally overcome Bismarck's heritage. For Weber, the legacy of the 'Iron Chancellor' still hampered German politics, in particular, its ruling class, confined between the whims of the *Kaiser* and the unchecked power of the bureaucracy. *Führerdemokratie*, finally, was also a strategy to invigorate democracy, to pave the way for the emergence of charismatic politicians. This is the attribute of Weber's proposal I want to refer to.

In *Economy and Society* Weber compares the leader with the religious prophet. Actually, Weber drew from the latter to build the ideal-type of charismatic leader. For this article, the main connection

between the religious prophet and the charismatic leader is that in both cases charisma creates an *emotionale Vergemeinschaftung*—an emotional form of communal relationship. In *Ancient Judaism*, he compares the prophet with the demagogue because of the emotional invectives used by both, while in his political writings Weber even asserts that the demagogue is the one who is best trained for political leadership in democracies (1994, 219 [1988e, 265]). Emotions, religious feelings, as has been explained, had in old Israel an important stake in the historical relevance of the prophecies. Weber explains that this happens especially in times of disarray, such as when the Yahwistic community had to keep together after the destruction of Jerusalem, when the ‘pressing emotional timeliness of the eschatological expectation’ was the main binding force (1952: 334 [1988c: 350]). The prophets appealed to the affective involvement of broad sectors of the population, giving birth to communal bonds.

It is worth recalling here again Weber’s comparison between Israel’s prophecies and the political system in ancient Greece. In Athens, ‘the firm military structure of the city was averse to free emotional prophecy’, whereas in Jerusalem, ‘the purely religious demagogue was spokesman and his oracles highlighted obscure fates of the future like lightning out of somber clouds. Such prophecy was ... averse to all orderly procedure’ (1952: 271 [1988c: 285]). Weber’s expression makes clear that he assigned pride of place to emotion in politics, and this prominence of emotions was a feature he reserved, in his typology of domination, to the charismatic type. In Weber’s view, the masses tend to behave in an emotional and irrational way, and this is what makes the charismatic process possible. During political or social crises, this irrationality becomes decisive.

Weber told the students in Munich, as already noted, that the modern war of values cannot achieve the welding together of communities in a way that prophecies were able to accomplish. In Germany, with the emergence of a charismatic leader, and through the bonds national feelings are capable of creating, communal bonds, at least relatively, could be brought out. This is what Weber wanted to foster: a national community, a *Machtstaat*, capable of resisting, partially, the bureaucratization of politics.

Hence, Weber found in the religious sphere aspects he struggled to preserve in modern rationalized societies: the values and emotions that underpin meaningful actions for the individual, and communal bonds that allow for an invigorated political system.

*Encouraging the Donquixotterie*

From this understanding, it is possible to grasp a strong statement Weber makes in passing when he analyzes the erotic sphere in the 'Zwischenbetrachtung.' There he writes that 'eroticism appeared to be like a gate into *the most irrational and thereby real kernel of life*, as compared with the mechanisms of rationalization' (1946b: 345 [1988b: 558], author's emphasis).

For Weber, the rational and the non-rational are both decisive in his approach to universal historical problems. Both are relative terms, and he describes neither of them in a systematic way. Without providing a systematization here, what I have tried to emphasize, starting from 'Science as a Vocation', is that both scientific discoveries and successful academic careers depend on the intervention of non-rational components; living a life worthy of that name and enhancing the political life of the nation are equally impossible without this key components.

Therefore, Weber's account of human history as one of rationalization and disenchantment as a historical process should not be understood solely as the success of modern rational thought over myths and magic. In reality, Weber's account gives testimony of the fundamental tension between rational and non-rational aspects in human life and history. If 'Science as a Vocation' is read in the context of the whole of his legacy, it offers much to those seeking the remnants of freedom in this bureaucratized world. Max Weber, as an *Erzieher* or an educator, was a bold activist in the struggle against the decline of modern society, and in my opinion this lecture must be also read in this frame. As Sheldon S. Wolin asserted almost forty years ago, Weber's writings have endured because 'they reveal him deeply engaged with the powers that dominate the soul of modern man: bureaucracy, science, violence and the intellectualism that has destroyed the spiritual resources on which humankind has fed for more than three thousand years' (1981: 421).

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## Max Weber and the Mandate of Heaven

Wolfgang Drechsler

### Abstract

How can China's eminence in the global economy during the era from 1000 to 1750 be reconciled with its Confucian system of government and administration, which allegedly did not focus on the economy at all? The answer might lie in the concept of the Mandate of Heaven, which provided the Confucian bureaucracy with a severe performance imperative, a point made forcefully if very implicitly—almost unconsciously—by Max Weber in his Confucianism study. Perhaps because of this implicitness, however, no study on the MoH so far has apparently utilized Weber, while Weber-on-China studies have only rarely looked at his use of the Mandate of Heaven. This essay fills these lacunae from the Public Administration perspective, bringing the discussion up to today.

Keywords: Max Weber, Mandate of Heaven, China, Confucianism, Public Administration, Bureaucracy.

### 1. Introduction

During the last period of China's eminence in the global economy, the Imperial era from the Song to the early Qing Dynasty, 1000 to 1750 (if with fluctuations; Broadberry *et al.* 2018), the state ideology, and the administrative set-up, was (Neo-) Confucian (Drechsler 2015a). But how could Confucian Public Administration (PA)<sup>1</sup>, popularly not exactly well-known for economic performance, (help) accomplish this

1. With PA, I mean both the administrative structure in time and space and those working within it. It may be that using the term already frames the issue at hand in a certain way, as Imperial Chinese bureaucracy—and even this term has been challenged (Bell 2015: 223-24, but see e.g. Ebrey 2016)—certainly made, rather than implemented, policy as well. However, this has long been recognized as usual by global-Western PA theory as well (Waldo 1948); moreover, I would say that the heuristic value of the concept of PA and the scholarship that comes with it, especially in the Weberian context—PA is both *Verwaltung* and *Verwaltungswissenschaft*—greatly outweighs possible problems.

during such a long time and on such an overall high level? The answer might easily lie in the concept of the Mandate of Heaven (MoH, 天命, *tianming*), which, in short, provides the Confucian bureaucracy with an explicit and even severe performance imperative.

In his Confucianism study (1989), Max Weber makes this point forcefully if very implicitly—almost, one might say, unintentionally. Perhaps because of the latter, however, no study on the MoH so far has apparently utilized Weber, while Weber-on-China studies have only rarely looked at his use of the MoH. According to Ingham (2015), the latter have missed Weber's analysis of China's monetary system as the explanation for China's lack of economic development. In the following essay, I argue that Weber actually explained why classical China did economically develop so well, and I do so from the PA perspective.

## 2. Max Weber on Confucianism

Max Weber's Confucianism study of 1920, *Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*, the 'most influential and controversial book among China scholars in the past few decades' according to Seoh (1991: 87), has been lengthily discussed in several fields of academic inquiry, and still is.<sup>2</sup> The tenor has been to say that it has serious scholarly flaws but is still somehow magnificent (for the variations on that theme, see, e.g., van der Sprenkel 1964; Faure 2013; D. Zhao 2015a). Sinologists and China experts naturally mind that Weber, a generalist who did not read Mandarin or had ever visited China, had produced a more insightful and impactful China study than they, via often correct, if extremely sweeping generalizations. H.H. Dubs states that 'to the sinologist, this book is an extraordinary collection of howlers' (1953: 188) and recommends for the non-sinologist not to read it so as not to be misled, but he also acknowledges, 'That such keen insights should have been reached in spite of his poor knowledge of philosophy and religion, can only be genius' (1953: 189). Metzger calls it a 'brilliant and still unparalleled attempt' (1977: 3; see 234-35). 'Among all the academic studies of the traditional society of China', S.C. Lee declares, this was 'one of the most brilliant and illuminating' (1952: 397). Weber himself was exceedingly open about his linguistic and research deficiencies and acknowledged them throughout (Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 19; Schluchter 2014: 22).

2. Next to Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989, Adair-Totef (2014: 79-81) provides an excellent brief discussion of the reception history. See Tsai 2016 about its recent history, especially in Taiwan.

The details of the publication history of the book are straightforward. Planned and perhaps outlined first around 1911 and started probably in 1913, it was published as an essay in 1915 and subsequently appeared in the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* in 1920 (and thus was and is not always recognized as a separate ‘book’ in the German context), which is still in print; this is the most-used German edition (exhaustively Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 15-17, 32-73; see also Schluchter 2014; Albrow and X. Zhang 2014: 172-75). For 30 years now, we have had the respective volume in the collected works, *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen: Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* (Weber 1989). In serious Weber research, there is no reason not to use this one, also to standardize references, but the 1920 edition and any later reprint are fine in a functional sense. The important if, as is sometimes claimed (van der Sprenkel 1964: 349 n. 3; Schluchter 2014: 13 n. 7), deficient English translation just of the Confucianism part by H.H. Gerth—I think it is functionally fine, as well—appeared in 1951 (Weber 1951) and sparked a new round of engagement.<sup>3</sup>

In addition to this book, there are just a few but influential remarks on Confucianism in the *Religiöse Gemeinschaften* part of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (2001, *passim*), Weber’s posthumous *magnum opus*. In *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Confucianism seems more favorably depicted in a ‘kitchen-Weberian’ sense, i.e., regarding the dominance of the Confucian bureaucracy over other governance institutions.<sup>4</sup> Here, however, Weber is never interested in Confucianism as such; it is only a secondary case study to illustrate and corroborate his general theses, whereas *Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*, in German scholarship, is one of the first ‘modern’ books on China from a social-science perspective (Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 8-9, 14-15; see van der Sprenkel 1964: 350).<sup>5, 6</sup>

3. However, all English translations of *Konfuzianismus* passages in this essay are my own. Taoism is basically treated by Weber as a Confucian variant, in one chapter entitled ‘Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy (Taoism)’, within the discussion of the latter (Weber 1989: 370-449).

4. On Weber’s earlier texts on Confucianism and their development, see Albrow and X. Zhang 2014.

5. Schluchter has argued that even the Confucianism study itself was only intended to serve for an analysis of the West (2014: esp. 11, 23; see also Albrow and X. Zhang 2014); however, I would claim that even if that was Weber’s intention, the text as is actually does provide a legitimate, comprehensive analysis, even on the highest level—something that is also shown by the never-ending engagement with the text, and not only with its methodology, since its publication, both by Western and Eastern scholars.

6. A predecessor in several respects is Christian Wolff’s 1723 *Oratio de Sinarum*

One classic critique has been to complain about Weber's sources, both based on the state of the art of his time and of that of today (e.g. Schluchter 1983b: 41-45; Metzger 1977: 4; Dubs 1953: 188; but see Hamilton and Kao 1991; Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 17-19; the sources in Weber 1989: 557-68). But if Weber's sources were insufficient by the standards of his time, then this has never been demonstrated by producing texts he could have cited but did not. The two forgeries Weber—and many others—used as sources (and still sometimes use) are incidental to his theses (Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 67). And the idea that his should have been the state of research of a century later is, of course, quite absurd; this only makes some sense if one asks the question whether his analysis is still correct and useful by today's standards.

And this is the case to a baffling degree. Comparable to Hegel's treatment of the Presocratics (1982: 155-460), which is based on much worse sources yet as eminent (Gadamer 1991b: 3-4), this makes Weber's study's quality even more astounding (Shinohara 1986: 43). That the work is 'orientalist' from today's perspective (Said 2003), however, goes without saying; it is a work that could almost define Orientalism (see de Bary 1975: 1).<sup>7</sup>

In the PA context, this work is rarely used, let alone studied in detail; astoundingly, even in treatments explicitly dealing with Weber and Confucian PA, a discussion of this, the central book on the topic, is frequently altogether missing (recently, e.g., Tao 2018).<sup>8</sup> Often, pieces on Chinese PA where the title includes 'Weberianism' or even Weber

*philosophia practica* (1985), often seen as the first German work that acknowledges that one could be Confucian and ethical at the same time (i.e., one did not need to be Christian), for which—if based on an intrigue that intentionally misunderstood the argument—the author received a Royal death warrant if he did not leave Prussia within 48 hours (see Drechsler 1997: 113). Based mostly on Jesuit missionary reports, and written by someone who surely was not a China expert in any sense, it still was and is a notable achievement—more in Philosophy, but as Wolff was a polymath who also was one of the first PA scholars in Europe and someone always interested in the economic consequences of thoughts and actions (see Drechsler 1997), this is a book that can be called proto-Weberian in scope.

7. See Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 1-12, on the context; cf. Schmidt-Glintzer 1999: 472. Z. Lin and Palmer (2016: 5) see in Weber's book the beginning of 'Sociological Orientalism' in the Far East; Brisson (2016: 316), some auto-Orientalism in its continued use (and of that of Marx and Durkheim) in the region itself.

8. Tao, who specifically talks about 'Weber and Confucius in East Asia', briefly mentions the book but does not cite it even once; it is also not in the bibliography (2018: 85-86). I should anecdotally add that at panels at PA conferences that deal

do not refer to Weber at all but just utilize his name as a generic label for a classic form of Western bureaucracy (e.g. Rothstein 2015), which is time-honored and an achievement for Weber but, in our context, still noteworthy. For PA-and-development scholars, if known, Weber's Confucianism thesis simply seems to indicate that this worldview is bad for the economy or at least for Capitalism (see e.g. Dao 1996: 48-49). Reason enough to look at his book in some detail.

### 3. *Confucianism and Confucian PA*

But before we do so, it seems advised to briefly outline how Confucianism specifically in the state/governance discourse is commonly classified, and what the term is supposed to mean. Confucianism is usually periodized as follows:

*Confucianism* as such, enshrined in the writings by, or attributed to, Confucius (孔夫子, 551-479 BC) and his immediate disciples, including detailed referrals to earlier predecessors;

*Neo-Confucianism* (ca. 800-1905 AD), largely a concrete state doctrine with a distinct PA, including the famous Civil Service Exam; the aforementioned time of Chinese economic eminence between 1000 and 1750 is the *plateau* of classical Imperial Chinese PA as well (the term Neo-Confucianism covers Buddhist and Taoist, but also Legalist and some other, elements and is, even though originally a purifying reform movement, an amalga;<sup>9</sup> S.-H. Tan 2011; Weber-Schäfer 1983: 217-18; Drechsler 2015a; de Bary 1975); and

*New Confucianism* (since 1905); the intellectual worldview that makes Confucianism applicable, and applies it, to individual life, society and state today, and it entails a response to the West, with the idea that learning should go both ways (S.-H. Tan 2008: 141-53; Bell 2010).

Practically all Confucian PA in an institutional sense is therefore Neo-Confucian, and for this, the former label is used in shorthand. But if one looks at the vastness of Chinese history and that of the other Confucian countries (Vietnam and Korea are the two with a separate, highly sophisticated Confucian PA system over many centuries;

explicitly with Confucianism, I have often encountered complete ignorance of this work.

9. This is something, just as the variety of Confucianisms, especially in Neo-Confucianism (Puett 2018; Metzger 1977; classically de Bary 1975), that Chinese political philosophy and PA scholars often miss today; they argue for a 'wider' definition of the 'traditional Chinese approach' (e.g. Yan 2018: 8) without acknowledging the umbrella function of the term.

Japan to some extent as well, during a shorter period of about 200 years),<sup>10</sup> even from this minor side perspective, it becomes clear that all general statements about Confucianism are problematic. Confucianism was and is a dynamic, ever-changing, multi-faceted thought system in which a plethora of claims have been made and have been labelled essential Confucianism by their protagonists (de Bary 1975; about which Shinohara 1986: 57). Neo-Confucianism (and any Confucianism, I would say) was, as de Bary argued partially against Weber, 'neither a static philosophy nor a set of fixed doctrines, but a movement which grew precisely through successive efforts to redefine tradition and reformulate orthodoxy' (de Bary 1975: 11; see 25)—how, in a text-based tradition system, could it possibly be otherwise (Gadamer 1991a)? This is a caveat to keep in mind both for Weber and for the generalizations in the current essay.

What is hard to fathom even for someone with a Weberian background is the importance that state and PA had in Imperial China in the peoples' mind—something that is, if in weaker form, still present in all Confucian countries today (Drechsler 2018). And that even pertains to creativity in the wider sense—MacGregor, in the context of describing the creation of a Han Dynasty lacquer cup, speaks of Chinese 'bureaucracy as a guarantee of beauty' (2011: 219).

At the core of the Confucian PA system was the Imperial civil service—as the Qianlong Emperor (乾隆皇帝) used to say, and as we now again mostly realize, 'There is no governing by laws; there is only governing by people' (Elliott 2009: 152). This is a Confucian point: 'In Confucian political philosophy, it is more important to have virtuous people in government than to have a good system of laws' (S.-H. Tan 2011: 470; Frederickson 2002). The civil service was created by means of the famous Civil Service Exam, the longest-continuing PA exam, or probably educational institution generally, in the history of humankind and the first large-scale competence-based test at all, which was abolished in 1904/1905, after altogether 13 centuries, 'in the name of "Westernization"' (Elman 2000: xxxv; see Miyazaki 1981: 125)—ironically just when in the West, similar exams came to be *en*

10. There are nine systems today with a PA that is at least sometimes called Confucian in that it entails Confucian elements, but only six really qualify institutionally: Next to Mainland China, South Korea, and Vietnam, these are Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Japan and North Korea are historical cases (although we have almost no idea about the latter); and Macao just empirically seems to have never had any institutional elements (Drechsler 2018).

*vogue* (Bell 2015: 83). Although in its origins older than Confucianism (Kim 2014: 191-92, but most Confucian institutions are, and by design), the exam was and is so central for Confucian PA that even for Confucianism as such, it forms a definitional pillar (Murray 2009: 373), so that uniquely, a philosophy or religion would be defined via a PA institution. As Max Weber said, 'Confucianism [is] the ethics of a powerful civil service' (2001: 270), and, naming the protagonists of world religions, 'then for Confucianism, this is the world-ordering bureaucrat' (2001: 282-83; see 166).

The Imperial Civil Service Exam, overall radically narrowing the group in different stages, entailed the formal discussion of the *Four Books* (四书) of the Confucian canon; it remained largely stable over the centuries and is thus often seen as too formal and abstract (on the exam, see briefly and accessibly Miyazaki 1981; Xiao and Li 2013: 340-48; Bell 2015: 81-89; Weber 1989: 297-302; Weber-Schäfer 1983). Nonetheless, 'the examination system mainly did fulfil the function which the Emperor had meant it to' (*Seine vom Kaiser ihm zugedachte Funktionen hat das Prüfungswesen in der Hauptsache wirklich erfüllt*', Weber 1989: 302; see Weber-Schäfer 1983: 208-209). This included the avoidance of the emergence of a bureaucratic aristocracy based on families, and keeping the civil service moderately open, both against cronyism and in favour of needed talent (see Weber 1989: 302; van der Sprenkel 1964: 359; 364-66).

How important the Civil Service Exam was in China is to be seen from the high esteem in which it, and success in it, was held in Chinese life. This is because becoming a civil servant was simply the highest position one could aspire to—'the one and only career that mattered in imperial China' (Elliott 2009: 4), one that granted prestige and wealth both to the individual and to his family, even to his place of origin.<sup>11</sup> The examination was conducted with the personal involvement of the Emperor himself, who personally graded the final top essays (see Miyazaki 1981: 81-83), unthinkable in the West. It is easy to see why the products of such a process would have a worldview that was completely state-centred and perhaps ascetic, but disdainful of trade and commerce—Weber surely thought so, and, by and large, correctly so.

11. Pye (2000: 249) notices how this gave the despised merchants an additional motivation to succeed, because material success is all they would have had; thus, this setup might have actually been a stimulus for commerce.

Fukuyama has famously claimed that even the modern state itself started in China and not in the West (Fukuyama 2011: 18-21)—indeed, according to him, ‘It is safe to say that the Chinese invented modern bureaucracy, that is, a permanent administrative cadre selected on the basis of ability rather than kinship or patrimonial connection’ (113). This, however, goes against the ideas of Weber, for whom Chinese PA was not a success, mostly because *rationalization*—his key term—was, if not missing, then too different to be working in the desired way in Confucianism, also in PA (1989: 467-69; Schluchter 1983b: 32, 39). Non-experts would generally assume that Weberian-Protestant and Confucian PA are almost the same, given the central, positive role of the bureaucracy, and numerous other similarities or at least homologues in values and institutions, but the opposite is the case: While acknowledging *prima facie* similarities, for Weber, Confucian PA was not Weberian at all (Schluchter 2014: 19).

Already the lack of ‘rational professionalism’, due in part to the general nature of the exam—which led to reliance of advisors outside the core system—(see Weber 1989: 302-314; Weber-Schäfer 1983: 212-15), was fatal for successful Confucian PA.<sup>12</sup> Then, balancing through law and Capitalism was lacking (Weber 1989: 324, 339-45), and there is no religious ‘salvation’ in Confucianism as there is no state of sin to be saved from (1989: 351 [23-24]: ‘*Der Gedanke einer Erlösung fehlte der konfuzianischen Ethik natürlich völlig*’), one of Weber’s main points regarding Confucianism in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (2001: 270, 272, 301, 350; see Schluchter 1983b: 32; X. Zhang and Albrow 2016: 44-45). Hence, when Weber famously compares Confucianism and Puritanism in *Konfuzianismus und Taoismus* (1989: 450-78; see Adair-Toteff 2014: 87-88), he highlights that the former means coming in line with the world, without a personal goal, the latter transforming the world, with a very distinct personal goal (Weber 1989: 476; 461, 467-68; see Schluchter 2014: 19; Albrow and X. Zhang 2014). Stressing this difference in substance creates the basis for Weber’s well-known argument why Modern Capitalism did not emerge in Imperial China—and, more importantly, why there was so little economic policy, development, and growth.

12. Weber misses the inner-Chinese, highly contentious and centuries-long debate on this topic, exemplified, e.g., by Wang Anshi’s reform proposals (more about him *infra*), which, however, Weber could not have known; Wang Anshi 1935: 58-59; Drechsler 2013, 2014, 2015a.



#### 4. *Confucian Economic Policy and Capitalism*

As regards economic policy, Weber emphasizes that the 'ethical religions' succeeded in breaking the dominance of blood ties, while Confucianism lacked trust based on ethical individual qualities of the business partner, and worshipped wealth more than Puritanism (1989: 461-63, 469). Confucius' economic theory is explicitly compared to the Cameralists (1989: 463), which as such might be praise (Reinert and Rössner 2016; Rössner 2017: 245-48 for the parallel), but Weber means this, in this context, pejoratively. There was, according to Weber, some considerable economic policy, but the (power-limiting) three-year rotation within the Imperial Civil Service (see Drechsler 2013: 357), a feature Confucian PA theory shares with its Marxist counterpart (Mandel 1976), and according to Weber also with 'similar Islamic institutions', made the impact of the bureaucracy on the economy only haphazard in his opinion (1989: 322).

The main exception, the 'as far as we know, most sweeping attempt at unified economic organisation' (*soviel bekannt, großzügigste Versuch einer einheitlichen Wirtschaftsorganisation*, Weber 1989: 325 111-13) in Weber's opinion, were the Song Dynasty Chancellor Wang Anshi's 11th-century reforms, which he judged to have failed in the end (1989: 244-46, 325). But as X. Zhao and I have recently argued, these—as we say—proto-Keynesian reforms were actually very successful and show, even if they do stand out, a Confucian-economic pattern (X. Zhao and Drechsler 2018; also Chang 1996: 78-79; one has to acknowledge however that Weber's view is still quite common in Chinese scholarship). This included, for instance, the 'Green Sprout Loan Act', a social-welfare and development-finance project drawing on the resources of the government's granaries; the 'Agriculture Promotion Ordinances', a set of detailed arrangements to promote land reclamation and irrigation projects; and the 'State Trade Act', establishing a buffer-stock scheme as well as an urban financial agency, implemented by State Trade Agencies in large commercial cities and State Trade Commissions in every province (X. Zhao and Drechsler 2018: 1242-44, rephrased).

One of the reasons for what he perceived to be the failure of these policies were, for Weber, the lack of competent civil-service staff (Weber 1989: 246; see de Bary 1975: 6-7). This is something Wang not only would have agreed with, he also tried to improve the situation by upgrading administrative capacity. And while Wang did this for Confucian reasons, i.e., to make the state work well (Drechsler 2013,

2014), this predictably met with the strenuous, and in the mid- and long run very effective, resistance of those—in their view and that of later generations—more traditional Confucians associated with his main antagonist, Sima Guang.<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, the Chancellor's work on PA reform, which might have changed his perception of the Imperial system at least a little, was not accessible to Weber yet.<sup>14</sup>

'But via economic policy, one does not create a capitalist economic mindset' (*Aber mit Wirtschaftspolitik schafft man keine kapitalistische Wirtschaftsgesinnung*, Weber 1989: 464). 'There was no link between Confucianism ... and a bourgeois life method. But this is what matters. This is what Puritanism created, if against its will' (*Kein Mittelglied führte aber vom Konfuzianismus ... zu einer bürgerlichen Lebensmethodik hinüber. Auf diese allein kam es aber an. Sie hat der Puritanismus – durchaus gegen seinen Willen – geschaffen*; cf. Kaesler 2017). Capitalism in Weber's sense of 'pursuit of profit via the continuous, rational capitalist firm: of profit again and again: of "financial return"' (*Streben nach Gewinn im kontinuierlichen, rationalen kapitalistischen Betrieb: nach immer erneutem Gewinn: nach "Rentabilität"*, Weber 2016: 106 [8-10]) therefore never emerged in Confucianism (1989: 469-71). 'It was missing the central, internally motivated, religiously caused rational life method of the classical Puritan, for whom economic success was not *telos* and purpose in itself, but a means of probation' (*Es fehlte ihm die zentrale, von innen heraus, religiös bedingte rationale Lebensmethodik des klassischen Puritaners, für den der ökonomische Erfolg nicht letztes Ziel und Selbstzweck, sondern Mittel der Bewährung war*, 471 [15-19]).

13. Sima Guang represents much more closely the Confucian *literati* tradition than Wang (although he was not impractical either, see Faure 2013: 80-81; he was the author of Mao Zedong's favourite book, Y. Wang 2018: 58), and much criticism from Chinese scholars of Wang Anshi today stems from their tendency to only see one Confucian way as 'genuine' and the rest as heterodox, whereas for all practical intents and purposes, Wang Anshi was the mainstream (Drechsler 2014, 2015a; X. Zhao and Drechsler 2018). As de Bary rightly states, 'The initial impulse in the Sung was reformist and revivalist: to reorder society, and reestablish the long-neglected values which had supposedly inspired the ideal order of the early sage-kings' (1975: 6).

14. Weber is very well aware of Wang's thought and importance (there are more than a dozen references; 1989: 574), and in a letter to the first influential reviewer of the book, A. v. Rosthorn, he asks specifically about Wang's economic reforms; Schmidt-Glintzer in Weber 1989: 41-43. But the *Memorandum*, Wang's central treatise on PA (1935), became part of the general scholarly discourse only after Weber's death (mainly as Franke 1932; Weber was generally using Franke's work, who was the leading German China scholar of his time).

Weber attributes this non-Capitalism to Confucianism as such, not to ‘Chinese characteristics’—in fact, somehow presciently, Weber deems the Chinese more suited and qualified for Capitalism than even the Japanese (1989: 476), whom he implicitly does not qualify as Confucians: ‘As far as we can see, the Chinese would be as capable as or probably even more capable than the Japanese to make Capitalism, as it has technically and economically come to fruition in the modern cultural sphere, his own’ (*‘Der Chinese würde, aller Voraussicht nach, ebenso fähig, vermutlich noch fähiger sein als der Japaner, sich den technisch und ökonomisch im neuzeitlichen Kulturgebiet zur Vollentwicklung gelangten Kapitalismus anzueignen’*, 476 [30, 477 ll]). This passage has been referred to frequently in the secondary literature and often cited *verbatim* (e.g. Pye 2000: 248; Schmidt 2011: 25). For the Chinese aspect, it means that critiquing Weber for being wrong, as China (or Confucian Asia generally) is so productive today (Z. Lin and Palmer 2016: 5), makes no sense, because he predicted exactly that—his point was purely about the *origins* (D. Zhao 2015a: 206-207; Adair-Totef 2014: 93).<sup>15</sup> ‘Weber’s pertinent writings, if anything, are validated by the developments in Asia and other parts of the world, rather than refuted’ (Schmidt 2011: 13). Levy’s summary that Confucianism did not lead to (Capitalist) Modernization but, once this was established, was very conducive to its unfolding (1992: 18) rings both true and sums up nicely this specific Weber thesis.

Nonetheless, Weber does argue that Confucian economic policy stayed weak where it existed (with important exceptions, such as Wang Anshi’s reform attempts). How, then, do we account for the overall economic system, then and even now, of China specifically and the Confucian countries generally, with the exception of the ‘Great Divide’ hiatus of the quarter millennium between 1750 and 2000, however that was caused (see Pomeranz 2000; Frank 1998; Drechsler and Karo 2021)? This essay suggests that what ‘forced’ perhaps anti-economic- and certainly ‘anti-Captialist’-minded civil servants into successful economic policy was the concept of the MoH, as described and analysed by Max Weber.

15. Faure 2013 makes a much more legitimate case, arguing for Capitalism starting, declining, and now again resurging in China; on Song Dynasty economics in this context, see D. Zhao 2015a: 211-12.

### 5. *The Mandate of Heaven*

The MoH is a concept that was used by newly arriving, successful dynasties to legitimize replacing the old ones (Yao 2011: 144-45; Mote 2003: 819; Yonglin 2011: 165-66), and it appears that this worked well (D. Zhao 2009: 419).

There is no 'authoritative' phrasing of what the MoH is, but today's lowest-common-denominator consensus, i.e., Wikipedia (2019), defines it by referring to an online resource on *ThoughtCo* (Szczepanski 2018) that states the following:

The 'Mandate of Heaven' is an ancient Chinese philosophical concept, which originated during the Zhou Dynasty (1046-256 BCE). The Mandate determines whether an emperor of China is sufficiently virtuous to rule. If he does not fulfill his obligations as emperor, then he loses the Mandate and thus, the right to be emperor.

#### *How Was the Mandate Constructed?*

There are four principles to the Mandate:

1. Heaven grants the emperor the right to rule,
2. Since there is only one Heaven, there can only be one emperor at any given time,
3. The emperor's virtue determines his right to rule, and,
4. No one dynasty has a permanent right to rule.

Signs that a particular ruler had lost the Mandate of Heaven included peasant uprisings, invasions by foreign troops, drought, famine, floods, and earthquakes.

The core idea of the MoH itself is that the ruler must rule, i.e., have authority and govern, and he must govern well, or deliver, i.e., procure at least peace and food for his people. It 'endowed the emperor with the privilege and responsibility of building a prosperous and peaceful human society' (Yonglin 2011: 175). 'Prosperous' and 'food' signify the economic side of the Mandate. If the ruler did not do all of that, he did not have the MoH—not to begin with or not anymore, as the MoH was not easy to maintain once one did have it—and he, extremely rarely she, could be replaced, ultimately even legitimately killed (Yao 2011: 167, 187; Weber 1989: 174-77). This was not an empty threat: Y. Wang has shown that during the Chinese Empire, 'only half of the emperors left office naturally. Among these unnatural exits, about half were deposed by the elites' (2018: 61)—only that

these exits were not 'unnatural' and that the elites might have just been doing their job.<sup>16</sup>

Heaven here is understood as the divine realm, the supreme deity and/or fate as such (see Yao 2011: 141-42, 167-69, 196-99; Yonglin 2011: 4-5; Eno 1990; Nuyen 2013: 116-17). Max Weber interprets it, I would say rightly, as an unusually strong, 'impersonal' abstraction from the usual agricultural fertility gods, to the point that official religion and ceremony focused on a completely impersonal deity, serving whom was the Emperor's monopoly (1989: 161-63, 'impersonal' at 161 [24-25; see Schluchter 1983b: 33). And the state ritual, too, was 'intentionally sober and austere' (*absichtsvoll nüchtern und schlicht*', Weber 1989: 337 [12]).<sup>17</sup> This abstraction is very important because it allows various and ambiguous meanings (see Eno 1990: 2-5).

In fact, similar to a Bultmannian Protestant God (see Drechsler 2010), Heaven is so abstract, and has been since the inception of the MoH by the Zhou (Allan 1984: 532), that any manifestation of 'the welfare of the people' might have space here. To call it Josephine, Kantian, even a putative element of non-participatory, consensual democracy, seems not too far-fetched. As with all political-philosophical ideas, it can be interpreted in various ways, quite removed from the actual historical iterations. But both views (can) exist:

In what might be called the liberal interpretation of the 'mandate of heaven', Confucianism ... allows for a popular revolt against a despotic ruler (hence for the possibility of democracy). In what might be called the conservative reading, this is denied. The liberal view locates the mandate of heaven in the will of the people whereas the conservative view takes the mandate to rule to lie in a heaven that transcends

16. Shaw 2015, *The Lost Mandate of Heaven*, makes the point that *The American Betrayal of Ngo Dinh Diem* (subtitle), 'the first president of South Vietnam, ... [who] possessed the Confucian MoH, a moral and political authority that was widely recognised by the South Vietnamese ... [and] never lost his mandate to rule in the eyes of his people', was therefore clearly an illegitimate removal (2015: 18) which thus led, if anything, to a loss of MoH of the Kennedy Administration. This ascription is very open to debate, but it nicely illustrates that the toppling of obviously successful and popular governments cannot be justified by the MoH.

17. In general, and this is one of the main themes of the Confucianism references in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (2001: 233-34, 337, 390), Weber ascribes to 'educated' Confucianism a high degree of austerity yet orientation towards this world; topics of key relevance for discussions of his thesis regarding other topics than the present one. In fact, this essay only focuses on the MoH-PA-performance nexus and leaves out some of the most important other aspects of Weber on Confucianism not germane to our topic.

the people (Nuyen 2013: 113, with a general discussion, *passim*; cf. also Tiwald 2008).

The MoH is at the very core of Confucianism, even if it is older, too—it comes from the early Zhou, and it is often ascribed to the Duke of Zhou (周公) himself ('Shao Announcement' in de Bary and Bloom 1999: 35-37), whose state theory and practice was the model for Confucius (*Analects* 7:5). S. Allan has shown in some detail how the concept evolved from the Shang to the Zhou, not just as a legitimizer for takeovers, but as a shift from the Emperor as mediator—in a society that practiced human sacrifice 'on a grand scale' (1984: 525)—to the 'recipient of the MoH' (523). She also shows that well beyond the normative power of the factual, the Zhou 'obtained evidence of transfer by oracle bone divination' (530). 'Confucian discourse on government is based on its understanding of the MoH' (Yao 2011: 165).

While on an individual level, we find the MoH in Confucius himself (*Analects* 2:4, 16:8; Bloom in de Bary and Bloom 1999: 43-45), on the state level, it is most prominently displayed—perhaps the combination is even created—in the works of Mencius (孟子; Glanville 2010: 324), the second-generation Confucian who focused more than the Master on 'the individual's role in society' (Suleski 2008: 259) and thus also on governance and PA (Glanville 2010: 330). And Mencius stresses the delivery aspect first of all: 'Mindful of the potent idea of the MoH that he believed derived from the early Zhou, Mencius maintains that Heaven oversees a kind of overarching moral order in which it is given to rulers to rule for the sake of the common people, with the object of achieving their well-being and prosperity' (Bloom in de Bary and Bloom 1999: 115; see Glanville 2010; Eno 1990: 101-103; Frederickson 2002: 613; cf. W. Zhang 2017).

Mencius said to King Xuan of Qi: 'Suppose that one of the King's subjects entrusted his wife and children to his friends and journeyed to Chu. On returning he found that he had allowed his wife and children to be hungry and cold. What should he do?'

孟子谓齐宣王，曰：'王之臣有托其妻子于其友而之楚游者，比其反也，则冻饿其妻子，则如之何?'

The King said: 'Renounce him.'

王曰：'弃之。'

'Suppose the chief criminal judge could not control his officers. What should he do?'

曰：'士师不能治士，则如之何?'

The King said: 'Get rid of him'.

王曰: '己之'.

'Suppose that within the four borders of the state there is no proper government?'

曰: '四境之内不治, 则如之何?'

The King looked left and right and spoke of other things.

王顾左右而言他.

(Mencius, Book 1B6, 24, Van Norden trans. in Mencius 2008; see also Book 1B8: 26).

This was not a heterodox or in any way radical thought—Mencius may appear to be the most 'left' Confucian or an 'extreme liberal' even by today's standards (Curzer 2012: 74), but he is securely and safely within the Confucian canon. Nuyen is right in warning against imposing 'our' debates on Mencius, or making the complex relationship of Heaven and people in him too easy or to just resolve it in our way (2013: 114-15 *et passim*), but it is probable that Mencius' point regarding the MoH was (at least often and in many circles) the general assumption of the Chinese Empire, and the text by Mencius was in the most prominent, orthodox place imaginable, the canonical, *examensrelevante* Four Books mentioned (cf. Yao 2011: 166). The potentially quite subversive nature of these texts towards any oppressive, irresponsible regime is very clear even to the casual reader—but it also establishes something else.

As has been argued, the MoH 'equates in its totemic quality to the Western idea of democracy' (Wang Tao cited in MacGregor 2011: 151), and it can be said that also in contents, the monitoring problem of Imperial China (Yao 2011: 186) was somewhat solved by reviewing the MoH both 'by members of the educated elite who felt it their responsibility to be the judge of such matters' and by the general population (Mote 2003: 861). Eberhard has rightly questioned, with Weber, whether 'the educated at court really believed in the Emperor's guilt' if some catastrophe happened (1983: 78), but it gave them an avenue for implanting Imperial accountability into the system. As Xu has argued (2017), using a distinctly Mencian perspective (130-31), the MoH does produce accountability, something that leads to better governance in any case.

Since the MoH may seem *prima facie* like a 'wonderfully self-fulfilling prophecy' (Olson 2008: 155) in that successful rulers are

legitimate, it is important to emphasize the possible equation of the MoH ‘with the will of the people’ (Yao 2011: 186; W. Zhang 2017). Therefore, ‘social protest’ would not necessarily be ‘challenging the Mandate of Heaven’ (Perry 2002), but rather working towards its fulfilment (Glanville 2010: 324; D. Zhao 2009: 421; 2015b: 54; see W. Zhang 2017). Recently published and much-discussed ‘early Chinese Bamboo-slip manuscripts’ have strongly corroborated this interpretation historically (Johnson 2016a, 2016b), although for Mencius, the actual implementation likely could not happen through the people directly, but through family members, anointed leaders, and/or—the senior bureaucracy.

This is one of the main recent issues within the debate of the MoH, especially in its central Mencian variant, because it matters for whether it is acceptable for Western(ized) theorists to label it (potentially) democratic (rather than the other way round, which is much rarer; He 2016; Xu 2017: 136; Curzer 2012: 81-82).<sup>18</sup> This is not our primary concern here, but the discussion of whether and when the people have a right to stand up against an unrighteous ruler, i.e., one without MoH, underlines once again the both dependent and independent role of the civil servants in this process. As Xu puts it elegantly, ‘the meritocratic officers, the gentlemen, serve as the accountees to protest against the unjust policies. According to early Confucian meritocratic theory, the political capacity and moral virtues of Confucian gentlemen enable them to claim the eligible role of deciphering the will of heaven, which counterbalances the ruler’s monopoly on political legitimacy’ (2017: 213).

So far, so clear—but what does that have to do with economic performance via economic policy? As we will see, everything. ‘The MoH to rule had to be merited by performance’ (van der Sprenkel 1964: 354)—and this performance crucially included economic performance.

### 6. *A Mandate for Economic Development*

Weber’s judgment of the Imperial Chinese economy, which for the almost-millennium between the Song and the early Qing would be somewhat difficult to maintain, is, as has been pointed out by Schluchter, one of the casualties of his source basis, at least from

18. Parr has recently argued (2019) that the earliest Western deployment of the MoH, by the ex-Jesuit missionary Joseph Amiot in 1772, was directed against the French monarchy.



today's perspective (Schluchter 1983b: 41-45; Eberhard 1983: 55)—for which, once again, he is hardly to blame. But Weber, by focusing on ancient Chinese history (which was normal in his period) and on his own time, i.e., the very last, highly troubled years of the Qing Dynasty, somewhat neglects exactly the centuries when Imperial Chinese PA was arguably working best, most of Neo-Confucianism (Schluchter 1983b: 41-42; 2014: 22; Eberhard 1983: 55-57) before the 'Great Divergence' (Pomeranz 2000; the most pertinent recent critique of the Pomeranz thesis for our topic, i.e., for Weber, is D. Zhao 2015a: esp. 207-210, 219-21; see also Cotesta 2014 and Frank 1998). But how did this economic success—which is only claimed here—come about if a prosperous economy assumes (and with Weber, I assume this as well, although faith in a functional 'free market' is, I suppose, also possible) successful economic policy, yet if the potential policy makers were not interested in the economy to begin with?

The answer, I would argue with Weber, is that the MoH extends beyond the Emperor himself and thus forms a core element of Confucian governance and indeed PA (see Dao 1996: 50-51; Suleski 2008: 259-62). Thereby, it had a direct impact on successful economic policy and performance in a way which Weber, despite his discussion of the MoH, seems to under-appreciate. 'The rationalism and humanism of Confucianism enables Confucian doctrines to extend the responsibility for the Way of Heaven from the ruling class to all individuals, or at least to all educated men' (Yao 2011: 169). The MoH arguably worked for the civil servants in two ways:

*Indirectly*, fulfilling the MoH obligations of the Emperor, and

*Directly*, for themselves individually, i.e. every civil servant is obliged to deliver.

Regarding the transfer of this MoH obligation of delivery to the civil service, Weber's aforementioned interpretation of the concept, curiously not emphasized by the scholarly literature, even by those who look at both Weber and the MoH, is fundamental.<sup>19</sup> As Weber says, 'The Heaven-spirit became ... in *popular* belief ... an ideal place for complaints against earthly office-holders, from the Emperor down to the last civil servant' (*'Der Himmelsgeist wurde nun... im Volksglauben... aufgefaßt nach Art einer idealen Beschwerdeinstanz gegen die*

19. Cotesta equates what is functionally the MoH with 'charisma', which, if done implicitly by others as well, would add to the discussions of Weber and the MoH (2014: 150).

*irdischen Amtsträger, vom Kaiser angefangen bis zum letzten Beamten'*, 1989: 165 [26-30). 'This concept, and *only* this, served... in aid of the subjects against the civil servants as a kind of superstitious Magna Charta, and in fact as a much dreaded weapon; a very specific indicator of bureaucratic... mindset' ('Diese Vorstellung und nur sie stand, als eine Art superstitiöser Magna Charta, und zwar als eine schwer gefürchtete Waffe, den Untertanen gegen die Beamten... zur Seite: ein ganz spezifisches Merkmal bürokratischer... Gesinnung', 166 [2-7). So, although the difference between folk belief and elite ethos is very important for Weber's China, it is nonetheless obvious that this is a mechanism that, for Weber, really worked—and that is precisely what we can assume from the other sources cited, as well. The civil servant also had, via Heaven, another reference point than 'just' the Emperor's command or supervisory or popular judgment (de Bary 1975: 10). In Xu's words, 'the scholar-officials regarded themselves not merely as the ruler's deputies but as the delegates of heaven. They should not devote themselves to the interests of the ruler, but to the welfare of the people' (Xu 2017: 139 n. 3).

So for Weber, the MoH does apply directly to the civil servants, certainly from the people's perspective, but also from their own; the bureaucrats take part in the charisma all by themselves: 'In the eyes of the masses, the successfully examined candidate and civil servant was not at all merely someone who was qualified because of his knowledge to be in line for office, but a proven carrier of magical qualities, which... adhered to... the certified mandarin' ('In den Augen der Massen war der chinesische, erfolgreich geprüfte Kandidat und Beamte keineswegs nur ein durch Kenntnisse qualifizierter Amtsanwärter, sondern ein erprobter Träger magischer Qualitäten, die ... dem diplomierten Mandarin... anhafteten', Weber 1989: 313 [7-11; see 179; 319-20).

On all levels, this worked as a check on power—the civil servant was never 'safe'; he always needed to perform well in the eyes of all those entitled to judge him (Weber 1989: 313-14). And just as the Emperor could be killed for under-performance (if, according to Mencius, only by those legitimately entitled to do so), so the civil servants were always being critiqued and under the risk of dismissal and punishment, even down to capital punishment not only for crimes-in-office, but for under-performance (see Metzger 1977: 170).

There is a symbiotic relationship between Emperor and civil service here: The Ming Yongle Emperor's (永乐皇帝) state theory, for instance, has been summed up thus, 'follow the will of heaven, find wise and able officials, and protect the people' (S.-S.H. Tsai 2001: 81).

Weber puts it most precisely: “Constitutionally”—this was the theory of the Confucians—the Emperor could *only* rule through graduated literati as civil servants, “classically” only through *orthodox Confucian* civil servants’ (“Konstitutionell” konnte—das war die Theorie der Konfuzianer—der Kaiser nur durch diplomierte Literaten als Beamte regieren, “klassisch” nur durch orthodox konfuzianische Beamte’, 1989: 331 120-23; see 2001: 268; Yao 2011: 169).<sup>20</sup> In van der Sprenkel’s phrase, there is ‘the central power, whose embodiment is the Son of Heaven, and whose agent is the bureaucracy’ (1964: 353; D. Zhao 2009: 421). One could even say that ‘The emperor was legitimized as the son of heaven, but the heavenly mandate was subject to the interpretation of meritocratically selected Confucian bureaucrats, and the emperor had to exercise his power through the indispensable assistance of Confucian scholars who controlled the sophisticated bureaucracy’ (D. Zhao 2015a: 215).

In this discussion, doubtlessly, Weber overemphasizes the ‘folk’ aspect; as we can see from the discussion of the MoH, applying it to the civil service was part and parcel of the self-image of the mandarin as well, austerity and intellectualism (which are never so rational as not to carry their own kind of magic along the way; Drechsler 2010: 429-30) notwithstanding. The civil servants, according to all we know, at least ideally saw themselves as responsible to public welfare, not only to the Emperor (see even the perpetually critical Kim 2014: 194); they were directly charismatically legitimized (Weber 1989: 179), if, as S.-C. Lee pointed out in his review of Weber’s book in English, ‘to a lesser degree’ (1952: 398). Thus, ‘any disruption or disturbance of a social or cosmic-meteorological kind in their parish proved that they did not have the grace of the spirits. Without asking for the reasons, they then needed to leave their office’ (*jede Unruhe oder Unordnung sozialer oder kosmisch-metereologischer Art in ihrem Sprengel bewies: daß sie nicht die Gnade der Geister hatten. Ohne alle Frage nach den Gründen mußten sie dann aus dem Amt weichen*’, Weber 1989: 179 16-10).<sup>21</sup>

20. Weber borrows from the eminent Czech Sinologist Rudolf Dvořák the translation of *junzi*, the term for the scholar-bureaucrats, as ‘Gentlemen’ (2001, 275 and n. 24; on this perspective, see de Bary 1975: 3; Adair-Toteff 2014: 83; X. Zhang and Albrow 2016: 43), contrary, as he claims, to the West, by then science-based. However, we might recall that both the British and the German PA systems at Weber’s time were completely non-science based, and a scientific or technical education, rather than a *literae humaniores* or legal background, would have still been detrimental to a civil-service career by the time of Weber’s death; see Snow 1959.

21. As Weber nicely notes, however, each incident like that confirms the Confu-

The MoH approach, then, is an effective way to link public-service activity with genuine performance, i.e., with that of the overall quality of life of the government unit in question. If the bureaucrat fails to deliver this, and be it due to a natural disaster (which often becomes one only if not properly managed, and surely crisis management is a core activity of PA; see Curzer 2012: 74), he has to go. In many respects, this is a superior and less arbitrary approach compared to the indicator-measuring craze of late 20th-, early 21st-century New Public Management ideas, in which reaching self-referential numbers is defined as success, independently of how the people are actually doing (Drechsler 2019).

And successful performance for PA means economic performance, with material well-being as a *conditio sine qua non* for human happiness, as we see very clearly in our context for instance in Wang Anshi's policies and writings (Drechsler 2013: 258); this is, in fact, already explicit in Mencius (Book 1A3). The MoH makes sure that the PA is instrumentally supportive of the economy, because if the unit in question fails, then it is the fault of the civil servants in charge.

Therefore, in spite of all of Weber's issues with Confucian economic policy due to the lack of an economically pro-active mind-set on the part of the civil service, economic performance *was* the task of the Confucian civil servant—not for 'more', but for the people to stay happy overall, or at least happy enough (and of course for other reasons, such as war financing, as well, but that is trivially always the case). And the agent for that was the MoH, precisely in the sense Weber elucidated—a sense that is completely in synch with contemporary MoH scholarship, for whatever that is worth. No matter the degree to which they were detached gentlemen, it might have literally cost the *junzi* their head, and—according to the theory—quite rightly so, had they failed to perform, and that means also to perform economically. That was the case, again, from the Emperor down to the lowest higher civil servant. As it looks, to some extent at least, it still might be.

cian worldview of a well-ordered universe and violations against it as the root of the catastrophe (1989: 328). From the individual perspective, S.-h. Tan has emphasized, along those lines, the role of the MoH regarding the civil servant's overall mission in life—doing the best one can do where one is, even against all odds; S.-H. Tan 2016: 167-71.

### 7. *Performance Legitimization Today?*

This is a historical-conceptual essay, if with implications for today, but the issues debated here are of contemporary relevance and, as they say, controversial once again (Puett 2018: 236; see D. Lin 2017). They do not only touch the resurgence of China after the 'Great Divide' and its challenge to Western global domination, but in the returning Asian Values context, Confucianism is perhaps the key shibboleth for an alternative to Western liberal democracy, something that the West at best still finds hard to accept.<sup>22</sup> Yet, what it also means is that this use of the past (and how could it be otherwise than interpretive?) might also shed some light on the historical debate, because both the self-logic of the argument and its relevance become more obvious if they are used in the present context as well.

D. Zhao (2009; see also 2015a, 2015b) has strongly emphasized the performance aspect of the MoH along the lines mentioned here; however, he sees performance-based legitimacy, and specifically China with its resurrected Confucian-MoH agenda, as latently unstable because it may lead to crisis once the state ceases to perform well. Kim, in his effort to bring Confucianism in line with democracy theory (2014: esp. 171, 192-93; see also He 2016), claims,

Most East Asians are now living in a society where the moral cosmology of Heaven and the political metaphysics of the MoH have become completely obsolete. In more or less democratic societies, the mandate to rule comes either directly or indirectly from ordinary citizens without any recourse to the MoH. ... In the post-Heaven era, there should be no ... ambiguity in the public service of political leaders and public officials (194-95).

The problem with this remark lies not only in the literal interpretation both of the Mandate and of Heaven, but that it represents wishful thinking rather than anything else. As W. Zhang has emphasized (2017), the MoH as a Confucian concept might actually be the core of Chinese governance and legitimacy in a time that is characterized very differently:

China's leaders today have adapted [the MoH] into a sense of mission to realize the Chinese dream of restoring the country's standing in the world and creating a more just and prosperous society for all... over the past thirty years the Chinese state has presided over the world's fast-

22. Sheng 2018 is a recent survey; see also Wu and B. Wang 2019; Pye 2000 for the Weber connection.

est economic growth and improvement of living standards in human history. Key independent surveys ... show consistently that the Chinese central authorities command a high degree of respect and support within the country. Depicting China's polity as lacking legitimacy, or even being on the verge of collapse, is out of touch with China's reality... However imperfect, this system is in a position to compete with the Western political model... The Chinese experience since 1978 shows that the ultimate test of a good political system is how well it ensures good governance as judged by the people of that country... China's experience may eventually usher in a paradigm shift in international political discourse from the dichotomy of the so-called democracy vs. autocracy, to that of good governance versus bad governance (see also Keane 2018; Van Norden 2017).

Similarly, T. Zhao (briefly 2018) has developed a global, New Confucian philosophy that he calls the 'Tianxia system', in which he defines the MoH as 'the "Confucian optimum" as a more acceptable alternative to the so-called self-interest-driven "Pareto optimal"'

On a more meso-level, as Rothstein (2009) has pointed out, even in classical global-Western democracies, the citizen mostly faces the state, through PA, in performance, so that performance probably will remain central and also a *conditio sine qua non* for legitimacy. E. Perry, author of the trailblazing *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (2002), has suggested that for China, 'a more ambitious approach could draw support from the... MoH, whereby a ruler's popular legitimacy was based on a comprehensive concern for social welfare' (2018: 17).

And finally, we might add here that the poster boy of contemporary Confucian PA is often Singapore, where 'the debates over political meritocracy were revived' (Bell 2015: 3; see Wu and B. Wang 2019). It is even sometimes taken as the model for Mainland China for re-Confucianization (Puett 2018: 233-34). Institutionally, Singaporean PA, like Hong Kong's, is based on the British Colonial legacy (Quah 2010: esp. 18-19). There never was Chinese government in Singapore prior to independence, and the Chinese elite was mercantile. Nonetheless, this elite—the basis of today's—often did espouse a Confucian habitus,<sup>23</sup> and even critics concede that the self-image of the Singaporean politico-bureaucracy elite is quite similar to that of the *junzi* (Chua 2017: 60). And while it is questionable whether the founding father of

23. The room on 'The Scholar as Gentleman' in the Asian Civilizations Museum impressively illustrates this; <http://acm.org.sg/collections/galleries/scholar-in-chinese-culture>.

Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, was a Confucian (Suleski 2008: 272-75; see Chua 2017: 58-60) rather than someone who used Confucianism as a (communication) tool (Chan in Tu 1991: 306-310), something that has been said about today's Singapore government as well (K.P. Tan 2018: 17, 32, 58-59), the Administrative Service's policy-making role, indeed the concept of a country run, with a long-term perspective, primarily by a meritocratic bureaucracy (the 'Confucian scholar-official mentality'; Tu 1996: 7), and several institutional elements as well<sup>24</sup> (if without a civil service exam),<sup>25</sup> make it possible to ascribe fundamental characteristics of Confucian PA to Singapore. As far as I can see, the MoH specifically is not part of the Singaporean New Confucian discourse; the performance legitimization, however, is radical, and it works so well that, with all its flaws and challenges, one would be hard-pressed to find a better-performing system anywhere in the West.

### 8. Outlook

The Confucian challenge to the global-Western model is a perspective that can and may be contested easily and in many ways, theoretically, empirically, and anecdotally. But can it still be cavalierly dismissed, especially when those who do the dismissing are really no cavaliers anymore, or *a fortiori*, if the age of cavaliers is coming to an end (cf. Bell 2015; Bell and Li 2013; critically Kim 2014; He 2016)?

Today's Chinese government already 'presents Confucius as precisely the figure offering an alternative to Western neoliberalism. ... The traditions that were once being destroyed are now being presented as embodying a vision that offers a new possibility for twenty-first century humanity' (Puett 2018: 234; see F. Zhang 2015; D. Lin 2017; Van Norden 2017; Wu and B. Wang 2019). It is very debatable what precisely the contemporary Chinese amalgam of Confucianism and Capitalism looks like (see Wang Gungwu 2019), but an amalgam

24. Singapore is, for instance, able to pay its civil servants—including the elected ones—rates semi-competitive with the private sector (see Bell 2015: 121-22). The opportunity-cost argument behind it, in addition to the specific public-sector motivation one, seems to be Neo-Confucian PA, coming right out of Wang Anshi's 1058 *Memorandum*, according to which the salary for civil servants must be 'sufficient to make up for what they had lost in farming by being called upon for public work' (Wang Anshi 1935: 55).

25. But see Chua (2017: 60) and Chan (in Tu 1991: 308), for the Singaporean selection of top civil servants for their intellectual brilliance (cf. Tu 1996: 7).

there is, even if the latter seems to be very strongly in the lead, economically and otherwise.

Therefore, perhaps the biggest challenge to Weber's argument comes from the very Weberian D. Zhao, who calls into question whether, in the long term, ('Weberian') Capitalism is so desirable after all, and/or the future of Humankind—and that could mean that the Chinese-Confucian system not only was but will be the superior one. This is a thought that needs to concern us also in historical reflection, because it determines, like it or not, how we evaluate the phenomena under observation here.

Industrial capitalism... is at present just an irresistible reality that Europe brought to the whole world, not something that has to be celebrated. In less than 200 years of its history (even shorter than the duration of a single longlasting Chinese dynasty), industrial capitalism has already produced weapons that are able to destroy human civilizations several times over, led to the increasing deterioration of the environment, and will deplete oil and other natural resources in the foreseeable future. The Confucian state model lasted in China for over two thousand years; I strongly doubt that industrial capitalism can be sustained for that long (Zhao 2015a: 223).

[Future scholars] might even read Weber's *The Religion of China* upside down; in other words, they might consider this work a masterpiece in analyzing a more sustainable culture—a culture that successfully harnessed human desire to aim towards 'rational adjustment to the world' rather than 'rational mastery of the world', a goal which frequently creates more problems in the active process of solving the old problems. ... From the standpoint of someone regarding industrial capitalism negatively, Weber made one big mistake—he wrongly assigned industrial capitalism a positive value—but he also argued correctly that China was not responsible for the rise of industrial capitalism (Zhao 2015a: 224).

Max Weber's lapse of judgment, if it was that, was to imply that his kind of Capitalism was the only road to economic success—but from the Song up until the Qianlong reign, that was not an issue anyway, and today, there appears to be no conflict between Capitalism and Confucianism at all; even to the contrary (Drechsler and Karo 2021; but see Schluchter 2014: 24-25). In fact, *pace* D. Zhao, to not see China as one of the most, and most severe, Capitalist countries today would take considerable effort.

What remains in any case is that historically and theoretically, and also today, Confucian civil servants are, un-paradoxically, existentially interested in a well-performing economy, no matter whether



we call it Capitalist or not. Therefore, observing that Confucianism, Confucian PA and economic performance did, and do, go together very well, indeed that they harmonize, should be what one would have expected.

The argument of this essay has been that this, however, is not automatic, but that the linchpin is the MoH, which *mandates* the civil servants, via the arrangement that makes them directly legitimized and charismatic but also existentially responsible, to pursue the kind of also *economic* performance they might otherwise have neglected. Max Weber neither recognized this performance in action, nor did he appreciate how it would be brought about by the MoH in the way he explained it, so that this is something almost hidden, but certainly implicit, within *Konfuzianismus und Taoismus*. One may say that Weber was right even without being aware of it, but he was right nonetheless, and he explained context and connections rather beautifully. Given the importance of the contemporary discourse around such elements as PA reform, the resurgence of China, Confucianism today, the critique of global Capitalism, and even the MoH itself, in short: of the bridging of the 'Great Divide' at the very least, Max Weber's interpretation of the MoH may prove to be a cornerstone for such discussions about the past, as well as for and in the future.

#### *Acknowledgments*

This essay grew out of the respective passages in a paper on Confucian PA and Innovation presented at the 2016 IRSPM annual conference, co-authored with Erkki Karo (and forthcoming itself as Drechsler and Karo 2021), further developed for a Hallsworth Conference at Manchester University convened by Philipp R. Rössner. As the focus shifted more and more to Weber, it was best placed here, and I am grateful to Sam Whimster's editorial *Betreuung*. I am also happy to acknowledge funding by the core infrastructure support IUT (19-13) of the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research. Most of the research was done in Singapore (Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy) and Bangkok (NIDA); without Harvard University's library infrastructure, however, it could not have been completed. Suggestions, support and feedback to at least some passages or thoughts from Ingbert Edenhofer, Mark Elliott, Rainer Kattel, Siong Guan Lim, Anna Mayer, Edoardo Ongaro, Adam Parr, Sor-hoon Tan and Xuan Zhao are likewise most gratefully acknowledged.

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**Between Translations and Monographs:  
An Exploratory Analysis of Secondary Literature on  
Max Weber-Reception in the Chinese Context**

Po-Fang Tsai

**Abstract**

Max Weber-reception in the Chinese context relied on not only the translations of Weber's works, but also the selection of secondary literature translated into Chinese. The latter reflected the collective mentality and intellectual framework of the recipient community. The author examines the secondary materials in terms of genre and period. During the crucial 1980s to 1990s period, there were three genres (monographs, book-chapters, and biographical work) scattered in a common space of secondary literature, in which we identify at least two different dynamics: a divergent trend in monographs and a convergent trend in book-chapters. The reception of Weber included a dual image which could barely be explained in terms of external factors, such as social, economic, political changes.

Keywords: Confucianism, Chinese reception of Weber, translation.

*1. Introduction*

The ever-growing scholarship on Max Weber has never been only about probing and further developing his theoretical insights about modern societies but also involved putting the reception of Weber's works into context. To be able to tell what Weber's theoretical concepts mean and to assess the implications of his theory for specific disciplines it is necessary to clarify the different contexts of reception. This includes his works published or translated, the reception of specific works, and the key interpretative works which has played a crucial role in understanding Weber. In recent years, more and more studies on Weber have proved the importance of the reception history (Derman 2012; Kaesler 2016; Kaiser and Rosenbach 2014; Rehmann 2016; Scaff 2011).

According to Hanke's 'profound or radical change' thesis, the multiple revivals of Max Weber's legacy on a global scale, whether through

academic translations of his works or public discussions accompanied by social relevancies, happened during 'scientific change of paradigm, socioeconomic change, or legitimacy crisis in the political order' (Hanke 2016: 80-81). Intellectuals as mediators in their own countries played a decisive role either in the academic reception of Weber's theory of modern societies or in popular introductions of Weber's ideas on concrete societies. Therefore, Weber serves to help local academics to develop a comparative viewpoint and initiate scholarly dialogue within the international scientific community. Meanwhile, the image of Weber as a modern social theorist is gradually and respectively established in terms of intellectual infrastructures, ranging from translations, secondary literature, or canonization in textbooks to study groups, research schools, or academic institutions.

The reception of Weber in the Chinese context constitutes a crucial case worthy of investigation in detail (Su 2007, 2011). There have been at least two explanations which provide the partial reasons for how and why Weber's works were introduced both in popular opinion and academic institutions, through various disciplines such as sociology, economic history, political science, history, or China studies. One is the 'Confucian ethics and East Asian capitalism' thesis (儒家倫理與東亞資本主義), the other is the 'rise of China' thesis (中國崛起). These two themes have their respective scope in time and space: the former is referring to the 'four Asian tigers' or 'four little dragons'—the economies of Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korean, and Taiwan—during the early 1970s to the 1990s, and the latter is referring to the government of People's Republic of China (PRC) during the 1980s to the early 21st century. The reception of Weber in China converges on the primacy of economic and political transformation, but diverges in the knowledge interests of these intellectual carrier who introduced, translated, interpreted Weber's relevant to Chinese culture.

According to the research with a retrospective viewpoint, the 'Confucian ethics and East Asian capitalism' debate happened during the 1980s aimed at Weber's two main works, *The Religion of China* and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Barbalet 2014; Cheng 2011; Huang and Cheng 2013). In this debate, Chinese scholars attempted to argue against Weber's treatment of Confucianism and imperial China, scrutinizing the evidence that Weber missed or misunderstood in terms of historical or social sciences approaches, and

rescued the Weberian statement that capitalism could have taken root in Chinese society or that Confucian values had an 'elective affinity' with Chinese capitalism. In this regard, the revival of Weber urged not only the attention of mass media to Weber's arguments about the sameness and difference between European and Chinese societies, but also scholars' interest in Weber's comparative sociology of world religions. While this thesis cannot avoid criticism, such as the 'negative question' (Hamilton 1985; Sun 1990; Tang 1990), two Taiwanese historians, Le Kang 康樂 and Hui-Mei Chien 簡惠美, devoted themselves for over two decades to translate, mainly from English texts yet also referring to Japanese translations as well as the German original texts, Weber's two main works, *Economy and Society* and *The Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion* (Hamilton 1985; Sun 1990; Tang 1990).

The 'rise of China' thesis rooted in the 1980s 'reform and open' (改革開放) period focused on Weber's two famous lectures, *Politics as a Vocation* and *Science as a Vocation*, while *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* also attracted general readers and intellectuals. The reception of Weber in mainland China started with a 'Weber gap' reported by Chinese historians who had attended the International Congress of Historical Sciences in the summer of 1985. After that, the PRC government officially initiated a plan to translate Max Weber's works. The key translator Rong-Fan Wang 王容芬, a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, finished the translation of *Wissenschaft als Beruf* and *Politik als Beruf* from German original texts, and introduced Weber's ideas by way of being interviewed by national newspaper and giving popular speeches in the activities held by the Beijing Students Association. However, Wang left China and settled in Germany because of her Weberian criticism of PRC government: her dissenting position on political democratization would be linked with the 'Tiananmen Square' student movement on 4 June 1989 (Hanke 2016: 84-86). This interruption delayed reception of Weber in China to the end of the 20th century and refracted Weber's image through the political lens. In this sense, the 'rise of China' thesis after 2000 indicated that the reception of Weber was often processed with a special emphasis on the political dimension, such as Weber's Freiburg address on nation state and economic policy, political writings during the WWI, and the two lectures on vocation.

The achievement of these two themes lies in the correspondence between the social world and intellectual world, in which

the reception of Weber—namely, translations of Weber’s work and monographs on Weber—echoed the radical change in reality. There is, however, an intellectual missing-link between translations and monographs which is hardly addressed explicitly: the non-Chinese secondary literature about Weber. In fact, this can be seen as highly relevant for the process of Weber-reception, especially when some of this was so valued that scholars had decided to translate them into Chinese in order to understand Weber in advance. A closer look at the secondary literature reveals at least two further implications: from a substantive dimension, we can learn more about the image of Weber during the crucial decades; from a formal dimension, the genre, style or discipline shows more information about the dynamics and carriers of Weber-reception.

By scrutinizing the secondary literature—which is mostly written in English and sometime in German—as an essential indicator, this paper attempts to investigate the Weber-reception from the crucial 1980s–1990s to the new century, in which the translations of the secondary literature on Weber into Chinese have played a key role in creating the image of Weber.

## *2. Between Translations and Monographs: The Weight of Secondary Literature*

Although most scholarship focuses on either the translations of Weber’s work and on Chinese scholars’ monographs on Weber—mostly written in Chinese, a decisive role in Weber-reception was played by the non-Chinese literature selected for translation into Chinese. During the crucial 1980s–1990s, these foreign-language written monographs on Weber made different contributions to the Weber-reception. Before our analysis of this literature, there are at least two basic contexts worth noting. On the one hand, there was an obvious distinction between the more frequent period and the stable period: more than ten pieces on Weber were translated in Chinese during 1986–1990, while less than five in each following five-year period, from 1991 to 2015. On the other hand, monographs remain to the fore in mainstream publications after the 1986–90 period over book chapters and biographical works. Table 1 shows the numbers of this secondary literature, in terms of different genres and five-year periods.

**Table 1:** Numbers of secondary literature translated, by 5-year periods and genres<sup>1</sup>

	1986-90	1991-95	1996-2000	2001-05	2006-10	2011-15	2016-
<b>Monographs</b>	5	0	2	1	2	3	2
<b>Book-chapter</b>	4	0	1	1	2	0	0
<b>Biographical</b>	2	1	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	1	3	3	4	3	2

Firstly, during the crucial 1980s-1990s period of Weber-reception,<sup>2</sup> the secondary literature was rapidly translated into Chinese and published in the Chinese scholarly community, accompanied with Weber-translations and Chinese monographs on Weber. From a retrospective viewpoint, this neglected literature suggests not only the Chinese translators' thoughts on questions like 'which secondary work was worthy of be translated at that time', but also the possibility of identifying a common space in which different positions on interpreting Weber's theory was coordinating with the intellectual dynamics. The secondary literature might not be as original and authoritative as Weber's works in German or English, but it still made a substantive contribution to Chinese Weber-scholars and popular readers; while not an indigenization or localization of Weber's theory, it nevertheless represented the collective mentality regarding the implicit questions of what kind of Weber was expected or which way of realizing Weber would be most productive in a Chinese context.

As for the obvious discrepancy between the numbers of secondary literature translated in the 1980s and the other periods, this literature should be situated on a continuum between Weber-translations and Chinese monographs on Weber. According to the recent studies on Weber-reception in Chinese (Hanke 2016; Li 2015; Tsai 2016), the late 1980s and early 1990s were an essential period because of the

1. There were two exceptions. One was Stuart Hughes' *Consciousness and Society*, which had been translated in Chinese in 1981 but only had one chapter about Weber's overcoming the dilemma between positivism and idealism; the other was Kaneko Eiichi's *Max Weber's Comparative Sociology*, which had been translated into Chinese in 1969, but had a second edition in 1986, a more complete and popular one.

2. As for the reception of Weber in the early years of Chinese sociology, please see Tsai (2016: 119-22). There were first generation sociologists or cultural philosophers who had found Weber's insights in European sociology or Western thought (cf. He 1988; Sun 1966; Wu 1990).

conjunction of three different publications: Chinese translations of Weber's works, Chinese monographs on Weber, and the translated secondary literature on Weber. After that period, however, the situation changed. Weber-translations were substantially completed around the year 2000, and by then some of early translations now had rivals. Chinese monographs on Weber were seldom published after the 1990s, and most works, whether journal article or book chapters, remained at an introductory level. Whereas translations of the secondary literature continued to be published after the more frequent period. That is the reason why we should attach importance to these works, which could both formally and substantively be viewed as literature 'between translation (in Chinese) and monographs (in non-Chinese)'.

Secondly, the translated secondary literature on Weber consisted of three different genres which had respectively facilitated the image of Weber: monographs, book chapters, and biographical works. Each monograph represented an important lens through which Chinese scholars would realize a comprehensive picture of Weber's core ideas, but different monographs constituted a configurational space within which authors' special positions, and not intentions, formed an interpretive dynamics. Besides, the differences between the academic communities that the authors belonged to also mattered. For example, most monographs translated into Chinese were written in English, except for two influential works: Wolfgang Schluchter's *Die Entstehung des modernen Rationalismus* and Wolfgang Mommsen's *Max Weber und die deutsche politik: 1890–1920* (Mommsen 1974, 2016; Schluchter 1998, 2014). These two important works in global Weber studies were not translated into Chinese until 2014 and 2016. This special situation happened to Schluchter's other two works. One is *Rationalismus der Weltbeherrschung* which was partially translated into Chinese during the 1980s but only three chapters of a six-chapters book, the other is *Religion und Lebensführung* which had been translated but not published until today (Schluchter 1980, 1986).<sup>3</sup>

This English-writer dominated situation in translation also happened in the other two genres: book chapters and biographical

3. As for the situation of Schluchter's *Religion und Lebensführung* which had been translated yet not published, there seemed to have some unknown trouble with the publication or publisher since the translator Rong-Fan Wang 王容芬, according to her personal communication, had finished the translated draft before the 1990s.

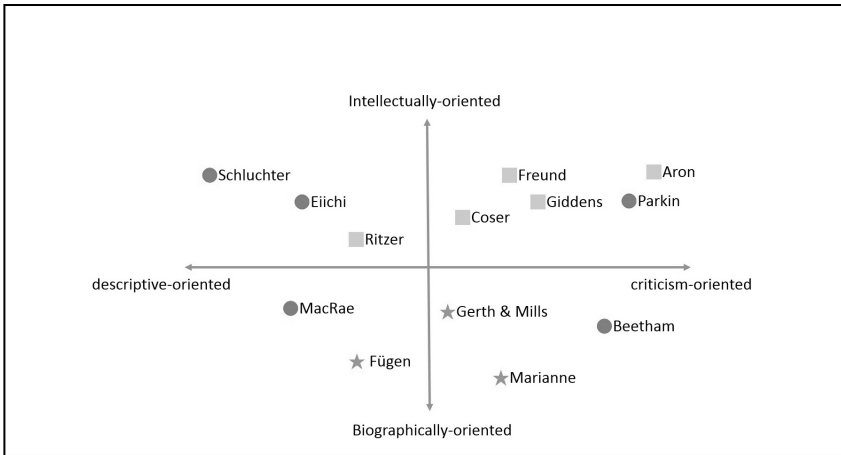
works. Most book-chapters on Weber had at least two characteristics: a monograph about social thought or social theory, written in English. Although they might have different readership, from scholarly work on European thoughts to textbooks for undergraduate-level readership, the discussion of Weber occupied only a part in these books, ranging from one chapter to one part (three or more chapters). This inevitably facilitated a situation whereby comparison between Weber and other theorists such as Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim or Vilfredo Pareto had an effect on Weber-reception in Chinese context. As for the biographical works, it was awkward that Chinese translators had less interest in this genre, and there were only three translations—Marianne Weber's work (first partially translated, then full translated) and Hans Norbert Fügen's work—from the 1980s to the present (Fügen 1985, 1988; Weber 1975, 1986, 2002).

With this contextual information, I will reformulate the common space of the secondary literature translated into Chinese, which not only had its own dynamics and effects on Weber-reception, but also went through a transformation from the crucial 1980s to the period after the year 2000. Within this configurational space of the 1980s, the style, argument, and effect of the secondary literature collectively shows their dynamics: divergence in monographs yet convergence in book-chapters. With the biographical work responding more to the popular than the academic debate, these two tensional trends constituted the formulation of Weber-reception during the 1980s, while the secondary literature was individually translated into Chinese in line with the translator's decision. After the crucial 1980s, Weber-reception was centered around the discipline of sociology.<sup>4</sup> The published translations of the secondary literature written in foreign-languages had two competing but not conflicting focuses: institutionalized in social theory with a format such as a comparison between Weber and other the classical theorists; and grouped around specified theme and works of Weber such as *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* or *Economy and Society*. Both the dynamics and transformation reflect changes in the ways in which Weber has been approached, studied, and understood over the past three decades under the emerging disciplinary effect.

4. Although the main carrier discipline was sociology in the crucial decades, there were other disciplines starting to approach Weber from their own viewpoints after year 2000, such as literary criticism and legal study (Luo 2006; Wang 2011; Zhang 2003; Zang 2014).

### 3. The Formative Period, 1980s–1990s: Mapping, Dynamics, and Problematics

From a bird's eye viewpoint, we can draw a tentative map of how the three different genres were scattered in this common space. The mapping is constructed in terms of two axes: one is the extent to which the material was intellectually-oriented or biographically-oriented (x-axis), and the other is the extent to which the material was descriptive-oriented or criticism-oriented (y-axis). The position occupied by each text is represented by the author's name, while the circle mark indicates a monograph, the square mark a book-chapter, and the star mark a biographical work. A visual relationship is provided in figure 1.



**Figure 1:** A tentative mapping of secondary literature in the 1980s.<sup>5</sup>

Based on this configuration, there are two tensional dynamics worth noting: divergence in monographs and convergence in book-chapters. The divergence-trend was a dynamic formulated in a triadic

5. These two secondary materials were not counted in Table One because they were included in the Chinese translation of Weber's *Wissenschaft als Beruf* and *Politik als Beruf*: Gerth and Mills' introductory biography of Weber and Julien Freund's essay, 'German Sociology in the Time of Max Weber'. They were translated into Chinese and collected as the introductory part of a re-titled work of Weber, *Xueshu yu Zhengzhi* 學術與政治 (Academics and Politics), in which the main parts were Chinese translations of Weber's two lectures (Tsai 2016: 124-25).



relationship in which Schluchter, Aron/Parkin, and Beetham respectively occupied different positions. Their works were translated into Chinese during the period 1986-89 and each had a different effect on Weber-reception (Aron 1967, 1986; Beetham 1974, 1989; Parkin 1982, 1989; Schluchter 1980, 1986).

Schluchter's *Rationalismus der Weltbeherrschung*, half-translated in Chinese in 1986, provided Chinese scholars with an authoritative understanding of Weber's core ideas such as rationalism, bureaucracy, the ethics of conviction and responsibility. The style of Schluchter's interpretation of Weber exposed Chinese readers to a fascinating mix of philological effort, textual criticism, and puzzle-solving. Schluchter constructed his own typologies as a facilitative tool for exploring Weber's typologies. Although Schluchter's argument on Weber contained both his interpretation and criticism, his monographs in the 1980s established a unique style which echoed some Chinese scholars' idea about being 'a transmitter and not a maker' 述而不做 of ancient classics. Besides, Schluchter was one of the four main editors of *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* so that his works were believed to be based on a reliable archive and data about Weber. The style of arguing, plus access to first-hand texts, gave Schluchter's monograph a dual authority when it came to interpreting Weber.

By contrast, Aron's way of understanding Weber was quite different stylistically. Aron's *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* was translated in the same year as Schluchter's work but in a more selective way: the translators chose to translate only the chapters on Durkheim, Pareto, and Weber. This decision not only veiled Aron's original framework and argument on the situation of social thought in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also highlighted, yet somehow isolated, his interpretation of Weber as an existentialist and his focus on Weber's insight in the philosophy of history. For example, when Aron explained Weber's effort to distinguish and combine two types of causal relations, sociological causality and historical causality, he gave readers his own but definitive typology; three kinds of ideal types: (1) that of historical particulars; (2) that designate abstract elements of historical reality; (3) that constitute rationalizing reconstructions of a particular kind of behavior (Aron, 1967: 239, 246-47). From a retrospective viewpoint, Schluchter and Aron's styles of interpreting Weber left an implicit lesson for Chinese readers in the 1980s: either staying close to the text or starting from the philosophical worldview.

Compared to the complicated understandings of Weber provided by Schluchter and Aron, there followed just three years later, Parkin's

and Beetham's monographs which expounded their authors' own explicit positions and these were translated complete without selection. The Chinese translations of these two monographs conveyed another dimension different from the Schluchter-Aron contrast to general readers and scholars.

Parkin's *Max Weber* had a clear line of enquiry: did Weber apply his method and procedures, from the actor's point of view, in his substantive works?<sup>6</sup> In this sense, Parkin found few positive answers in his reading of Weber, arguing that Weber did not provide a proper approach applied to historical materials, and also giving the reader an interpretation according to a fixed methodological premise (Parkin 1982: 47, 74).

[...] a *Verstehen* approach to this problem would have encountered formidable difficulties, not least in the way of documentary sources.

[...] There is, again, little attempt by Weber to construe things from actor's point of view.

Parkin's understanding of Weber in terms of theoretical-practice coherence might be just one of the many criticisms of Weber, but the translation of his monograph did have the effect of demythologizing Weber for scholars in Chinese context. Considering the fact that Parkin's book belonged to a series 'key sociologists', Chinese readers would be led to believe that Parkin's position had its fair and reasonable elements in Weber study, or at least before they had Bendix's or Ringer's monographs translated into Chinese.

Translated into Chinese in the same year as Parkin's work, Beetham's *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics* provided a thought-provoking reading of Weber with some evidence almost inaccessible to Chinese readers. The problematics of Beetham was another demythologizing question: how to read Weber's academic sociology in terms of his political writings in which the dilemma of bourgeois liberalism was rooted?<sup>7</sup> Although Beetham's critique gave priority to polit-

6. 'Weber adopts in weighing up the influence to be attached to certain religious beliefs in fostering the rise of western capitalism. His investigation of this large problem drew also upon some of the other methods and procedures discussed above, with what results we may now consider' (Parkin 1982: 39).

7. '[...] This brings us to the final question to be considered in the present chapter: what relationship do Weber's political writings hold to his sociology? [...] When, however, this account of Weber's political theory has been given, the final chapter will return to the question of its relationship to his academic sociology' (Beetham 1974: 25, 31).

ical practice over academic sociology, he did not attribute any failures of scholarship or statemanship to Weber but rather to the dilemma of modern liberalism from which Weber was unable to escape.

This discussion brings us to a final substantive issue to be considered in Weber’s political theory. Weber’s account of the dilemma of bourgeois liberalism exemplifies a more general problem which he discerned in the character of bourgeois society, arising from the phenomenon of class and class conflict (Beetham 1974: 210).

The argument being pursued here is thus that Weber’s social science and his practical political analysis differed both as to the kind of question asked and in the form of their analysis (Beetham 1974: 259–60).

Beetham’s monograph irritated some Chinese scholars at the end of the 1980s, especially those who admired Weber as an ideal personality both academically and politically. In China Beetham’s critical approach preceded the translation, in 2016, of Mommsen’s far more critical stance.

During the late 1980s, a divergence-dynamic had gradually emerged among the Chinese translations of influential works on Weber, namely those by Schluchter, Aron, Parkin, and Beetham. This consisted of distinctive styles of understanding Weber and presented the Chinese reader with internal tensions. This opened an ‘imaginative dialogue’ with the existing translations revealing a collective unawareness in the Weber-reception. The problematics proposed in the 1980s were to foreground Weber’s internal coherence both in his texts and his position. But when the translations of Schluchter, Aron, Parkin, and Beetham are taken into consideration four permutations seem possible, as shown in Table Two.

**Table 2:** Text coherence and position coherence in Weber reception

text-coherence / position-coherence	Y	N
Y	Schluchter	Aron
N	Beetham	Parkin

Texts pointed in the direction of consistency and monographs put forward divergent interpretations, and this led on to the question of whether we can scrutinize Weber in terms of his coherence in text and position. During the 1980s Weber-reception, the divergent dynamics was explicit but its veiled problematics was implicit (Tsai 2016: 127–29).

Then, as another variable we have the translators’ selection, readership, and the carrier discipline. This was first noticeable in two

crucial books on social theorists, Aron's *Main Currents in Sociological Thought* and Coser's *Masters of Sociological Thought*. Their published form was affected by the translators' intentional and deliberative selections (Aron 1967, 1986; Coser 1977, 1986). Three of seven thinkers were chosen, and the chapters in the Chinese version of Aron's two-volume monograph only included Durkheim, Pareto, and Weber. A similar situation happened in Coser's case: three of thirteen thinkers were chosen, and the chapters in Chinese version of Coser's monograph only included Marx, Durkheim, Weber. There were at least two important messages in this selection. One is that some substantial chapters which served as an introduction or conclusion were omitted because of limited time and resource: the chapter—*the Sociologists and the Revolution of 1848*—as the crucial transition between Aron's volume one and two; the chapter—*Recent Trends in American Sociological Theory*— as the conclusive remark in Coser's monograph. This selectivity kept to neither Aron nor Coser's original frameworks, and transformed them into works on individual theorists in the Chinese translations. The other point to notice is that the translators not only used just three but also placed the chapters on Weber as the last chapter in the Chinese translation, presenting Weber as synthesizer.<sup>8</sup> Obviously, the selections came from a deliberative engagement with the arrangement in Talcott Parsons' 1937 masterpiece, *the Structure of Social Action*. In sum, this can also be seen from the differences between the original title and the Chinese title of these two books: in Chinese versions, Aron's book-title was translated as 'Modern Western Social Thinker' 近代西方社會思想家, Coser's book-title was 'Classical Sociological Theory' 古典社會學理論.

Secondly, following the translations of Aron and Coser's work in 1986, the Chinese reader was also exposed to two translations of Giddens and Ritzer's book on social and sociological theory in 1989 (Giddens 1971, 1989; Ritzer 1983, 1989). Both these translations were successful in terms of readership. Giddens' *Capitalism and Modern Social Theory* focused only on Marx, Durkheim, and Weber, and became an important book with a readership above graduate level. In contrast, Ritzer's *Sociological Theory*, translated into Chinese in two

8. There is a slight difference that needs to be mentioned. This strategy of the Chinese translators seemed to present Weber as a synthesizer, which reflects neither Aron's nor Coser's intentions. However, this idea of 'Weber as a synthesizer' does partially corresponded to the Aron's original arrangement, although Coser did not have this arrangement in his book at all.

volumes, included many theorists from classical to contemporary, and occupied the key role in course material with readership at undergraduate level. Coser and Ritzer's book devoted more space to the biographical and social contexts, spent less time criticizing the theorists; Aron and Giddens's book not only focused their own realization of different theorists, but also provided corresponding chapters which played an introductory or a comparative role for the remaining chapters. Furthermore, these two styles showed a broader and emerging space of social theory in the 1980s, which constituted a crucial infrastructure for Weber-reception in Chinese context. On the one side, general introductory books on social thought were American-oriented and echoed the framework of materials in American sociology such as Coser and Ritzer's books; on the other side, books with author's criticism of theorists were European-oriented, and intended to provide an alternative theoretical vision departing from Parsons. To some extent, this situation reflected a hidden dilemma: how far could the effort of translating those books on social theory go beyond 'Parsons' convergence thesis' and the Parsonized version of Weber's action theory?

Although the answer to this question might need more examination, we can at least find the convergent dynamics in these social theory books as well as in the genre of book-chapter. Considering the different genres of secondary literature and the varying length of book chapters, they functioned as a crucial 'bridge' between biographical works and monographs, even partially overlapping with the latter two genres in a more concise form. However, the diversity of book-chapters gradually converged on the scope being offered to the reader and the translator/carrier. No matter that the title in Chinese was 'sociological' or 'social', 'thought' or 'theory', what really happened during the 1980s-1990s was the fact that Chinese translators and readers could not and would not afford too many theorists. The scope of dialogue among social theorists was narrowed down, and the focus of comparison was confined to 'the Marx-Durkheim-Weber trinity' of classical sociology. Among many Western theorists from the 19th to 20th century, more effort was spent on comparisons between Marx and Weber or Durkheim and Weber. This convergent dynamic, therefore, had become an influential precondition of Weber-reception, reflecting the implicit confrontation or confirmation with Parsons' interpretation of Weber. At the same time, the convergent trend also reflected the carrier, scholar or institution of Weber-reception. Most of these book-chapter were written by sociologists

and were used, whether in foreign or Chinese context, as course materials in sociology departments. Unlike the Chinese translations of Weber's original works which were conducted by historians, the secondary literature, especially the social theory books, was translated by sociologists. The convergent dynamic in book-chapters, more widely situated in social theory, might be at risk of excluding the problematics and visions from other disciplines, such as history, philosophy, and political science.

By constructing a map of the 1980s, i.e., the dynamics of convergence and divergence, we can uncover further unspoken problematics that emerged during this crucial decades of Weber-reception. One is the presumption of coherence, either in Weber's text or in his position, in which Chinese scholars seemed to trap themselves between, on the one side, the infallibility of Weber and, on the other, Weber's mistreatment of China. In addition was the hidden influence of Parsons' framework, so that while Weber was presented in comparison with Marx and Durkheim he was also framed as a transformative social theorist who had reformed traditional humanities into modern social sciences through his idea of social action. The secondary literature accompanying the translations of the texts and including the monographs written in Chinese during the 1980s provided a clear and ready-made image of Weber—but one without the richness of Weber's unexplored works.

#### 4. *The New Century: awkward developments?*

Although the study of Weber became widespread in China after the 1980s–1990s, the number of translations of secondary literature on Weber declined to around three or four publications per five-year period. Among the three genres, the respective situations differed in the contents and numbers when compared to the crucial period of 1980s–1990s. Therefore, we scrutinize them from book-chapter through biographical work to monograph.

First of all, the least changed genre was the book-chapter on social theory or sociological thought, which remained stable in numbers but with fewer publications within the institutionalized or established curriculum in sociology. Not only did books translated in the 1980s tend to prevail with readers via new editions or reprints, but there were also only three publications after the year 2000: J.H. Turner's *The Emergence of Sociological Theory* in 2000, T. Parsons' *Structure of Social Action* in 2003, and R. Collins' *the Discovery of Society*

in 2006 (Collins 1997, 2006; Turner, Beeghley and Powers 1998, 2000; Parsons 1949, 2003). Although Weber played an important role in those books, especially in Parsons' famous title first published in 1937, the framework of reading these book and realizing Weber was the same as it had been in the 1980s. For a reader who wants to link the background and foreground, from sociological thought to social theory, Weber played an essential role in positivizing the humanities into social sciences. Following this understanding, Weber's theory of social action and endeavors in comparative study became an indispensable foundation of modern sociology. On the other hand, for readers or Chinese scholars' expositions of Weber were less numerous in comparison with Marx or Durkheim, meaning less attention was paid to the comparison with other German sociological thinkers such as Simmel or Toennies, or with other German schools in economics (National school / Historical school), neo-Kantian philosophy (Southwest school/Marburg school), or historical jurisprudence (Begriffsjurisprudenz / Interessenjurisprudenz).

In addition to the book-chapter, biographical work still played a small role in the secondary literature of Weber-reception, but it was gradually assimilated into the other genres, especially monographs. After the short biography included in other genres and the unfinished translation of Marianne's work, readers interested in Weber's biographical and social context had to rely on two Chinese translations: K. Jasper's *On Weber* in 1992 and the full-translations of Marianne's *Max Weber* in 2002 (Jaspers 1989, 1992; Weber 1975, 2002). Not surprisingly, neither translator nor the publisher would commit time and money on biographical works on Weber after the enthusiasms of the 1980s. However, there were two translations which somewhat changed this situation with their balances and linkages between the biographical and intellectual contents: D. Käsler's *Max Weber: Eine Einführung in Leben, Werk und Wirkung* was translated in 2000, and F. Ringer's *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* was translated in 2011 (Käsler 1988, 2000; Ringer 2004, 2011). These two works filled the gap between two genres, biographical work and monograph, and hence had further provided a different possibility in which readers could realize Weber from biography to intellectual biography.<sup>9</sup>

9. 'The partial and fragmentary character of the source material is the major reason for the controversy that has long divided interpreters of Weber's thought and which continues to smoulder today. [...] In this book, we shall seek to show that it is not necessary to reduce Weber's work to a uniform, integrated position in order to

Most importantly, the situation of monograph translations, different from the other two genres, had differentiated into three branches, and therefore reflected an ambivalence worth examining. Reliable and comprehensive translations appeared in two waves: R. Bendix's *Max Weber: An Intellectual Protrait* in 1998 and D. Käsler's work in 2000, then ten years later came Ringer's work in 2011 and J. Alexander's *Theoretical Logic in Sociology vol. 3. The Classical Attempt at Theoretical Synthesis: Max Weber* in 2012 (Alexander 1983, 2012; Bendix 1977, 1998; Käsler 1988, 2000; Ringer 2004, 2011). These monographs not only provided Chinese readers and scholars a 'Verstehen' reading of Weber's works and an appropriate way of realizing Weber's inconsistencies, but also gradually replaced the status of book-chapters on Weber. In this regards, the short-length and introductory texts retained its readership at undergraduate level, but the monographs translated into Chinese had established an intellectual threshold of Weber scholarship.

Moreover, two other kinds of monograph were translated into Chinese and had different effects. There was a delayed effect with the translation of Schluchter's *Die Entstehung des modernen Rationalismus: Eine Analyse von Max Webers Entwicklungsgeschichte des Okidents* and Mommsen's *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik: 1890–1920* (Mommsen 1974, 2016; Schluchter 1998, 2014). The more than forty-year time lag meant that key themes such as the idea of 'developmental history' and the debate about 'nationalism factor' in Weber were denied to Chinese scholarship. But Chinese readers had already got the sense of these with R. Bendix's work in 1998 forestalling Schluchter's work in 2014, and Beetham's work in 1988 Mommsen's work in 2016. This 'delay-effect' was less serious—with a roughly ten-year time lag—in the case of R. Swedberg's *Max Weber and the Idea of Economic Sociology* in 2007 and S. Whimster's *Understanding Weber* in 2016, because of the absence of a substitute (Swedberg 1998, 2007; Whimster 2007, 2016).

The 'decanonizing-effect' could be reflected in the Chinese translations of two essential symposiums, which were focusing on single works: *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism and Economy and Society* (Camic, Gorski and Trubek 2005, 2010; Lehmann and Roth 1993, 2001). The volume edited by H. Lehmann and G. Roth, *Weber's Protestant Ethic: Origins, Evidence, Contexts*, provided a crucial commentary

discuss his argument cogently. Weber's writings on methodology are very closely connected to the biographical and intellectual backdrop in terms of which they were formulated' (cf. Kaesler 1988: x).



of Weber's most influential work. The commentary edited by C. Camic, P. Gorski, and D. Trubek, *Max Weber's Economy and Society: a Critical Companion*, afforded many in-depth discussions of Weber's most controversial work. These two translations challenged the Chinese readings of these classic works. Apart from experts in religious studies or dogmatics, few Chinese scholars seriously doubted Weber's treatment of Western religions, whether Catholicism or Protestantism, even though they disagreed with Weber's characterization of Chinese religions. The translations of Lehmann and Roth's volume also brought interdisciplinary studies, including historians of the 17th century, biblical hermeneutics, and sociologists interested in Weber's intellectual development to the attention of Chinese scholars. Similarly, the companion edited by Camic, Gorski, and Trubek revealed the 'Werkgeschichte' of *Economy and Society* to Chinese readers with three essential chapters in Part One. Chapters concerning the elaborations and applications of the substantive parts of *Economy and Society* eliminated the plausible idea of rationalization in all sectors of modern society; other chapters reconsidered the appropriateness of Parsonian 'action theory', which had dominated the interpretation of Weber's theory of social action and social organization.

Both the 'delay effect' and 'decanonizing effect' show that the translated monographs still continued to be a major factor. Whether the image of Weber or the understanding of his particular work was changing but in different ways, there seemed to be fewer inconsistencies in Weber yet more interpretations that contained multi-contextual factors; indeed, these monographs broke the dominant and uniform way of reading Weber's essential works, and provided alternative ways of realizing them; while the translations of Weber's works almost finished in the new century.

The development of secondary literature in the new century, however, also had its internal tensions, even dilemmas between new various understandings of Weber and the given Chinese translations of Weber's works. With the help of translated monographs such as Käsler's, Ringer's, or Whimster's works, Chinese scholars had a much clearer and more complete picture of Weber's work than they did in the 1980s, when they were reliant on the works of Aron, Parkin or Beetham. These translated monograph emphasized Weber's academic achievement as a countervailing force to institutionalized disciplines, or Weber's 'late sociology' as different from his early writing. Chinese readers who were convinced by these arguments would not find echoes in the Chinese translations of Weber's work,

which mainly relied on either the fourth version *Economy and Society* edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich or Hans Gerth and Don Martindale's English translation of Weber's three works on world religions (Ancient Judaism, China, and India) (Scaff 2011; Sun 2013; Weber 1930, 1951, 1978).

### 5. Conclusion

This paper has tried to examine the translated secondary literature of Weber-reception in the Chinese context. Although the translations of the theorist's original texts and the monographs written by scholars in the recipient community are the obvious indicators of reception process, the translated secondary literature also plays an implicit yet influential role that not only reflects the collective mentality and selection of the recipients but also formulates the perception of popular readers and local scholars. The secondary literature did matter during the reception process, especially when the translations were launched according to a given plan (mostly from English rather than German texts) and the numbers of Chinese scholars' monographs on Weber decreased since the 1990s. These special phenomena raised the independence of secondary literature, and on the other researchers dissatisfied with global explanations such as Hanke's 'profound or radical change' or regional themes such as 'Confucian ethics and East Asian capitalism' and 'the rise of China'. Most explanations regarded neither the selection of foreign secondary literature worthy of translating into Chinese, nor the configurational space constellated by the translated secondary literature as crucial factor as crucial factors in the Weber-reception. Needless to say, the developments, dynamics, and dilemmas that existed among this secondary literature might be neglected by researchers who would be interested in Weber's works and the reception of Weber.

Entering the new century, Chinese readers witnessed a de-differentiation of the translated secondary literature, in which monographs not only absorbed the genre of biographical work, but also replaced the function of book-chapter. In the last two decades or so, some essential and innovative monographs have been translated into Chinese and influenced scholars of Weber from several aspects. Some monographs have brought a complete picture of Weber, avoiding confining readers to an uniform Weber and mitigating the rival interpretations of Weber; other monographs, such as the latecomer translations of Schluchter and Mommsen's works, have revived the

key issue and debate in global Weber studies; further monographs, especially the two edited volumes on *PCSE* and *ES*, have renewed and advanced the clichéd knowledge of Weber's essential works. Equipped with these developments of the secondary literature, Chinese Weber scholars might, however, encounter an awkward situation. Some of the arguments in these translated monographs might not have corresponding textual supports in the Chinese translations of Weber's original texts because of the latter's heavy reliance on non-German texts. This problem could not only discourage Chinese scholars who have not read Weber's German texts with a work-critical attitude but also shrink the market niche of these high-quality monographs in the Chinese Weber-study community. To some extent, the unintentional consequence of the developments of secondary literature, compared with the nearly completed Chinese translations of Weber's works and the few monographs written by Chinese scholars, reflects the dilemma in the Weber-reception in the new century.

A few final remarks are added assessing the quality of the translations at undergraduate and postgraduate levels and available in public resources. Generally speaking, the secondary literature published during the 1980s was of a higher quality due to the fact that the translators were senior scholars as well as the scholarly reputation of the publisher. Further, some of them had been translated into Chinese twice by different translators with different publishers, for example, the translations of Aron, Giddens, and Parkin's works.

The influential status of the leading translations published during the 1980s is affected by another factor: the unofficial circulation of translated materials between Taiwan (in traditional Chinese) and China (in simplified Chinese). For example, the Chinese translations of Aron and Schluchter first came from the former and were circulated to the latter, while the translations of Parkin and Beetham went in the opposite direction. This historical contingency partially overcame the tendency toward inconsistency in Chinese translations of Weber's theoretical terms. Although there was some divergence in translations during the 1980s, the translators did not provide enough introductory or contextual information about the authors or readership. This prevented readers from sharing the translators' considerations regarding the selection of secondary material. Even so, the translated secondary literature during the 1980s became a basic threshold for the readership above graduate level in the Chinese context, at least in the scholarship of Weber studies or the disciplines of sociology and political science.

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## Reply to Frank J. Lechner's 'Versions of Vocation'<sup>1</sup>

John Dreijmanis

It is good to have a comparative analysis of five English translations of Max Weber's *Wissenschaft als Beruf*. Lechner notes that Weber is 'nearly unreadable without assistance for all but the most sophisticated readers' (Lechner 2018: 278). This is true and also applies to German readers.

More discussion of his difficult to understand style and his working methods and their implications are, however, required.

Weber recognized that his thoughts came from external sources:

For when I am 'receptive' or contemplatively allow the thoughts to come *inwardly*, everything flows—no matter whether it is much or little, precious or worthless—and it flows in abundance—and then begins the struggle to express it on *paper*..., and that is the real and—for me—almost unbearable 'torment', which no doubt shows itself in the 'style' (Weber 2012: 586).

According to Marianne Weber, 'once he got going, so much material flowed from the storehouse of his mind that it was often hard to force it into lucid sentence structure' (Marianne Weber 1988: 309). As a result, a 'great deal had to be hastily crammed into long, convoluted sentences, and whatever could not be accommodated there had to be put in footnotes. Let the reader "kindly" take as much trouble as he himself did!' (1988: 309).

Karl Jaspers, a member of the Webers's inner circle, noted that his 'work contains repetitions, digressions followed by reversion to the subject, lists that are sometimes not absolutely necessary, encapsulated clauses, afterthoughts' (Jaspers 1946: 51). Thus, the typical style of Weber's writings tends to bury the main points of the argument in a jungle of statements that require detailed analysis, or in long

1. Frank J. Lechner, 'Versions of Vocation: Max Weber's "*Wissenschaft als Beruf*" in Translation', *Max Weber Studies* 18.2 (2018): 274-93.

analyses of special topics that are not clearly related to either the preceding or the ensuing materials. Weber undertook several interdependent lines of investigation simultaneously and put all his research notes into the final text without making their relative importance explicit (Bendix 1977: xvii).

There is also:

excessive use of quotation marks. Someone who puts common words within quotes thereby designates them as 'so-called', meaning that they are generally used in this way by others. This implies that I use them only in a distanced way, with reservations or, more directly: really with another meaning of my own (Löwith 1993: 87).

It should be noted that in *Die Protestantische Ethik 'Geist'* needs to be in quotation marks (Lechner 2018: 276).

More recently Hans Henrik Bruun and Sam Whimster and Keith Tribe have come to similar conclusions concerning the difficulties of understanding Weber's works (Bruun and Whimster 2012: xxxi and Tribe 2019: 3). There are quite a number of examples of translations of various words and phrases and sometimes lengthy discussions and criticisms of them—*football-Meister* (2018: 274-76), for instance. However, there is no indication by what criteria they and not others were selected. Not all words and concepts are of equal importance and therefore a list of key words and themes for comparison would have been beneficial, such as the prospects for an academic career and its problems. Moreover, missing are also his/Lechner's own translations of the selected words in question. The major problem is that this work and its translations are analysed just like any other Weber publication. However, it is quite different and special in that it is specifically addressed to prospective academics, is partially based upon his own experiences, and offers advice. It is also one of the best introductions to academia, if not the best one, providing candid observations of what happens or may happen.

The title of Weber's work presents a problem of how to translate it. It is both a vocation and a profession. Lechner briefly discusses it (2018: 282-83), but to fully grasp Weber's meaning, it is necessary to note that there is first of all the need of an '*inward* calling for science' (Wells 2008: 30). The prerequisites for success in one's academic vocation are systematic work, talent, complete devotion to one's subject, imagination, passion, and inspiration, the latter being the decisive one (2008: 31-34). Here as well it is important to discuss how the various translators have dealt with these matters.

Equally important would have been a note to the effect that *Science as a Vocation* is only a partial account, because he also wrote articles and gave speeches (1908–1920) on the Prussian higher education system, autocratically run by Friedrich Althoff, the so-called Althoff system, academic freedom, the upholding of the autonomy of higher education institutions, and related matters. They are not just of historical interest, but are an integral part of Weber's conception of an academic vocation and academia. Furthermore, these writings as a whole address such still relevant matters, among others, as the precarious financial situation of numerous academics and student demonstrations. Although four of the discussed works do not mention them, some of them were already translated and published by Edward Shils (1974) and all of them by Dreijmanis (2008). They did not appear in German in book form until in 2016 in the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*, I/13.

Lechner has four 'standards of good Weber translations' (2018: 277)—substantial supporting apparatus of historical context and detailed notes (277), translators explaining their approach (279), being faithful (280), and capturing his personality and voice (284). When they have been met, then 'maximum fidelity' (274) has been achieved. None of the five translations achieved it (286), but only two of them receive 'a brief second look' (286).

Their application raises some of the same problems and questions as his selection of various words and terms for analysis. Are they all equally important? If so, why is the fourth one not mentioned in the translation comparison table (291)? This seems to indicate that it is of far lesser importance than the others, and may be argued rightly so. As for detailed notes, how many are too many or too few? He criticizes Dreijmanis (2008) for having 'excessive notes ill-suited for scholarly or student use' (288). However, they are helpful to many contemporary students and academics who no longer have as wide and detailed knowledge as did Weber and his contemporaries. To a considerable extent, this is due to increasing specialization in science, already noted by Weber (Wells 2008: 31). As to whether or not 'maximum fidelity' is achievable in general and in Weber's case in particular, this is best dealt within the context of some broadly defined grammatical and cultural problems in translating complex German scientific works into English, which Lechner and many others have insufficiently addressed.

Dirk Siepmann, a professional translator and professor of didactics in English, has noted the difficulty when there are more complex texts, which is certainly the case with Weber's writings:

As soon as more complex texts come into play, it becomes impossible to render all aspects of the source text (e.g., lexis, syntax, order of information in the clause, information density, assumptions about the reader's prior knowledge, etc.) into the target language in precisely the same working order; commissioning agents (i.e., clients) or translators themselves have to prioritize the various aspects according to the function of the target culture (Siepmann 2010: 580).

In such situations:

translators must pursue a strategy which transfers the content-focused German text into a reader-focused text in English, with its typical progression—which sometimes comes across as being more akin to popular science—from the general to the specific, from the consensual to the controversial, from the common-sensical to the counterintuitive. As noted..., the resultant target text will never be equivalent to the source text in all aspects, but it will be able to claim functional adequacy (2010: 582).

Thus, it may be concluded that in this case at least 'maximum fidelity' is unachievable, but 'functional adequacy' is achievable and sufficient.

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## Obituary

### Guenther Roth, 1931-2019

Guenther Roth, Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, passed away on May 18, 2019, age 88. He is survived by his wife, the distinguished Medievalist Caroline Walker Bynum, daughter Alice Roth, son Christian Roth, and step-daughter Antonia Walker.

Guenther's name will be linked with Max Weber's *magnum opus*, *Economy and Society* (E&S, 1968, 1976, 2013), as long as Weber endures. With the assistance of his long-term friend and co-editor Claus Wittich, he served as the major translator and editor of this three-volume tome. His labors have been acknowledged for decades as remarkable. Guenther was qualified—indeed, uniquely so—to undertake this herculean task.

His Humanistic Gymnasium in his hometown, Darmstadt, Germany, provided to him an excellent education in languages and history. The study of both ancient (Latin and Greek) and modern languages (French and English) was required. Assembling and translating Weber's dauntingly abstruse treatise would have been impossible without a firm grasp of Western history and languages.

Alterations in approaches to the teaching of the social sciences in America set the framework for Guenther's translation. In the aftermath of World War II, instruction could no longer remain America-centric. An opening to the world must occur and, indeed, American universities were transformed by a wave of émigré scholars. Guenther's life-long enthusiasm for 'the big picture', his close observation of the writing of *Max Weber: An Intellectual Portrait* (1960) by his mentor, Reinhard Bendix, pushed him further toward the study of Weber's works.

Bendix's volume was wildly successful, in part owing to a rapidly growing dissatisfaction in the 1960s with the Modernization theory of Parsons. Yet extant translations of Weber were piecemeal and frequently unreliable. Roth and Wittich took on a huge task: the

hydra-headed *E&S* spanned nearly 1,500 pages. Guenther encountered obscure references throughout and a convoluted, 19th-century German writing style.

*E&S* defined Weber clearly as an opponent of organic holism and banished the effort by Parsons to render him a Modernization theorist. This study became an amenable home for many American comparativists. A new field—‘comparative-historical sociology’—acquired solid footing and a ‘Weber wave’ now became apparent in American macro theorizing. However, this transformation of the discipline would never have occurred without the firm parameters defined by *E&S*. Had Guenther not undertaken the task, *E&S* might never have become accessible to researchers. Cumulative sales of this opus have reached approximately 40,000 copies.

Perhaps historians of American sociology will someday think of *E&S* as Guenther’s major contribution. However, his scholarship pronounced a distinct voice. Written in equal numbers in German and English, his publications were numerous and influential. First, in respect to Weber studies, Guenther’s contributions were wide ranging. He clarified many of his concepts (such as domination [*Herrschaft*], legitimacy, patrimonialism, bureaucracy, and charisma), identified central procedures in Weber’s comparative-historical writings (‘secular theories’, ‘socio-historical models’, and ideal-type analysis), demonstrated the capacity of these procedures to guide empirical research, and understood Weber’s writings on the origins and trajectory of the West as offering a ‘developmental history’ of the West. He also utilized a variety of his ideal types in order to comprehend empirical phenomena such as the 1960s student movement (charisma), personal (patrimonial) and impersonal (bureaucratic) domination in the developing world. He documented heretofore fully unexamined aspects of Weber’s life, connecting them to main themes in his scholarship, politics, and personal activities. In a 700-page epic, *Max Weber’s Anglo-German Family History, 1800–1950* (German 2001), he investigated Weber’s extremely cosmopolitan family as an example of 19th century economic globalization.

Secondly, Guenther’s contributions ranged beyond Weber. He defended the discipline of sociology as well as the university’s mission to support non-partisan scholarship and to reject all attempts to politicize social science research (see Bendix and Roth, *Scholarship and Partisanship*; 1971, 1980). He also examined the writings and political activities of Weber’s wife, Marianne Weber, placing them within the context of feminist activism in Germany and arguing for



her recognition as a major feminist theorist, wrote a widely acclaimed volume on the integration of a hostile political movement in Imperial Germany (see *The Social Democrats in Imperial Germany* [1963, 1979]), and he analyzed Jewish immigration and assimilation in the United States (see *Edgar Jaffe, Else von Richthofen and Their Children* [2011]). Guenther's distinctive and powerful voice requires our attention even today.

His long journey encompassed a boyhood under Nazi Party rule in his city, running from building to building to avoid bombings, and providing directions in English to American soldiers. He arrived in the United States in 1953 after two years studying critical theory at the University of Frankfurt. To his delight, Guenther received a residency permit even though he had vigorously opposed, through his activities in the German Peace Movement, the rearmament of Germany - a position upheld by the American government.

In addition to Columbia University, his academic positions included Ohio State, Stony Brook University, UC-Davis, and the University of Washington. His guest positions in Germany included the University of Heidelberg, Mannheim University, and the Free University of Berlin. He received the Lifetime Service Award from the ASA History of Sociology Section in 2007. 'I grew up in Nazi Germany in a hurry. War made me a political animal; liberation, an intellectual; emigration a political sociologist'.

In his autobiographical essay (*Authors of Their Own Lives*, edited by Bennett Berger, 1990), Guenther wrote that he arrived in the U.S. as a foreign student 'with little cultural preparation'. However, he also noted that he never lacked support from a network of cosmopolitans scattered throughout the country. Perhaps an important guidepost in his life in America can be comprehended by these statements: at least since the 1970s Guenther actively assisted the acculturation of innumerable German scholars in America and of scores of American scholars in Germany. Although he knew he would always be viewed in the U.S. as 'a hyphenated' (German-American) scholar, he wished to 'give back' the generosity he had received in his early years by becoming a trans-Atlantic mediator. One practical avenue to 'bridge building' involved for him the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), a government-funded foundation that provided scholarships to students and post-doctoral fellowships to faculty. He sat on its selection committee for six years. Perhaps Guenther's efforts as a 'reliable advisor' assisted several hundred people in need of 'cultural preparation'.

Guenther leaves behind generations of students who appreciated the broad expanse and empirical foundation of his theorizing, a singular ability to frame events and developments through theories, a dry humor, and a sincere dedication to his task. 'My kind of Sociology', he wrote, 'must address the big, political, cultural, and social issues of modernity'.

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## Book Reviews

R. Bruce Douglass, *The Iron Cage Revisited: Max Weber in the Neoliberal Era* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 170pp. (hbk). ISBN: 978-1-13828-544-6. \$57.88.

In *The Iron Cage Revisited*, R. Bruce Douglass rejects the postmodern claim that we live in a period of epochal change transcending Max Weber's depiction of the modern condition. The neoliberal order that sweeps Keynesianism aside is capitalist and so '*quintessentially modern*' (4, 120). Its policy goal of pushing the public to be 'self-reliant', 'enterprising' and 'productive' is reminiscent of the industrial era (5). Superficial change accounted for by new technologies aside, emancipatory claims about a new post-industrial, post-materialistic junction in society's development (109) do not survive facts such as the 'highly unequal' distribution of gains and the stressful and insecure working environment (7).

This continuity is reflected in the 'instrumental' role of the individual as the perennial pursuit of efficiency, which applies equally in bureaucratized régimes as in the case of neoliberal liberalization. Despite its name, neoliberalism is actually a 'recast of established institutions' (75-76). Furthermore, Douglass seeks to describe neoliberalism's subsequent 'resilience' over decades in terms of the trap encapsulated in the 'iron cage' metaphor (8-9) that Weber uses to describe how disenchantment erodes 'human agency' through 'the spread of scepticism in a highly materialistic setting' (139).

While an 'anti-government mood' brought about neoliberal policies with the elections of Thatcher and Reagan, continued public scepticism over the use of 'state power to curtail market freedom' has stymied remedial regulation, even though this failure is widely blamed for the 2008 crash and Great Recession (9, 144). What characterizes the mood now is public scepticism about politics and an inability to 'believe strongly enough in anything that might qualify as a real alternative to the status quo' (145).

Douglass holds François Lyotard's postmodern scepticism responsible for the social 'fracture' evident in single-issue politics' undermining of the collective action necessary to 'take control of institutions' (128-29, 137). Even as the New Right and other secular 'believers' in business and politics counter these trends (101, 121-23), their commitment to hanging on 'to the old ways' merely adds to the polarisation that negates human agency. The iron cage thus becomes the problem of a public 'caught up in a pattern of behaviour that appears to be a product of something deeper than either habit or calculation of self-interest', a 'mentality' with 'an obsessive quality' that makes change all but impossible (132).

To establish the nature and origins of this psychological state, Douglass appeals to Weber's discussion in *Science as a Vocation* of the association between 'rationalization' and the desire to achieve 'mastery'. He interprets mastery there as a way for 'modern people' to 'establish ... control over the *conditions* under which they conducted their lives' (13-14; emphasis added). From this, he argues that 'technical progress' is the 'ongoing stream of new inventions that [improve] people's ability to control their environment', thus setting the 'quest for mastery' as 'an ongoing, open-ended pursuit of an ever-higher standard of living' (48), and the iron cage as the '...uncritical - pursuit of the quest for mastery... with an *obsessive* quality about it' (132).

However, this interpretation bears little relation to Weber's idea that the 'mastery of life' is an intellectual solution to the problem of doing science without the anchor of natural law.<sup>1</sup> For Weber, technical progress involves an instrumentalism which is about better scientific not materialistic results. The same interpretive gap repeats itself in Douglass's treatment of the *Protestant Ethic*. Where Douglass sees the "'spirit" of capitalism' as the obsession with 'earning more and more money' (58), actually Weber intends the ascetic analogy there to show that the spirit of 'modern' capitalism is not about money but working for work's sake, thus rejecting Werner Sombart's '*auri sacra fames*'.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, we see Weber clarifying in the (later) Prefatory Remarks that 'modern' capitalism is a rationalizing force, associated with the rise in the West of the 'large scale organisation of free labor

1. Max Weber, 'Science as a Profession and Vocation', in *Max Weber: Collected Methodological Writings*, ed. Hans Henrik Bruun and Sam Whimster, trans. Hans Henrik Bruun (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2012 [1919]), pp. 335-54 (344).

2. Sam Whimster, *Understanding Weber* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), p. 36.

in industrial enterprise',<sup>3</sup> which requires 'exact calculation [formal rationality], the foundation of everything else, [to be] possible...'<sup>4</sup> The sense is of a new atomistic (asocial) predicament of the modern individual, comparable to that of ascetics living (as it were) in separate cells, who are only linked by a theology to which they are 'called', as a vocation (*Beruf*).<sup>5</sup> For Weber, the problem of modernity is the organization of mass society. The disenchantment that comes with rationalization reflects our new inability as individuals to any longer form cognitive communities based on shared meanings, as social relationships cease to 'depend upon the individual wills of the participants'.<sup>6</sup>

It is now such (latter day theologies as) economic theories, which provide 'similarities, uniformities, and continuities in [...] attitudes and actions which are often far more stable than they would be if action were oriented to a system of norms and duties which were considered binding on the members of a group.'<sup>7</sup> Individuals necessarily relate instrumentally to such economic theories or to ideas in general, and the problem of the iron cage poses itself when we ask whether those theories and their applications, over which we have no direct control, actually work for us, or for someone else, and how this can be assessed.

Weber understands instrumentalism as a relationship of the individual to ideas that shape ends, rather than an act that instrumentalises the means to ends. He lectured on theoretical economics,<sup>8</sup> and sees the economics of means/ends rational choice, which abstracts from all values/ends, as meaningless. The first task of economics (one of two sub-disciplines of social economics) must be the establishment of consistent and realistic sets of values/ends, provided that the economist 'cannot tell anyone what he should do – but rather what he can do'.<sup>9</sup> This ethically neutral approach to values is echoed in *Science as*

3. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg, rev. edn (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011 [1920]), p. 243.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 242.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 158.

6. Max Weber, *Economy and Society: an Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. and trans. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1968), p. 585.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

8. Whimster, *Understanding Weber*, pp. 19-25.

9. Max Weber, 'Objectivity of Social Science and Social Policy', in *Max Weber: Collected Methodological Writings*, pp. 103, 105, 106.

a *Vocation*, when Weber tells us that he wants the professor to be not a leader but a teacher.<sup>10</sup>

Concluding, Douglass places great store by the possibility in what Weber, in *The Protestant Ethic*, called the 'rise of "new prophets" or, alternatively, "a great rebirth of old ideals and ideas"' (135, 138), as the eventual way out of the iron cage predicament,<sup>11</sup> but without explanation as to what kind of ideas or prophets. In terms of Weber's train of thought, the construction of values or setting of ends is the effort intended to achieve, in a mass society context, a return to the way of the 'old ideas and ideals', using economics to help collections of individuals form new cognitive associations and meanings. The reference to 'new prophets' would involve social projects proposed in terms of a 'deliberate formulation of ultimate values' (*Wertrationalisierung*).<sup>12</sup>

Weber never denies that individuals pursue their 'material and ideal' interests, always and in all matters. However, he sees ideas as setting such interests and ideals in the context of one or other 'image of the world' (which Weber describes using the 'switchman metaphor'),<sup>13</sup> to form the basis for action. This is why he accords central place in his method to social philosophy, which studies 'those ideas for which people now, as in the past, fight'.<sup>14</sup> As a sub-discipline of social economics, social philosophy, as opposed to economics proper, studies the problem of the unintended consequences of individuals acting on beliefs (albeit for valid reasons).<sup>15</sup>

Weber's agonistic view of social processes means that any rationalized social order only ensures its permanence on the basis of acquiring legitimacy.<sup>16</sup> Individuals lobby their peers and wrestle with liquid conventions to oppose formal institutions, and to impact norms by means of (legitimised) deviations and reinterpretations.<sup>17</sup> At stake is '...the chance of a man or a number of men to realize their own will in a social action even against the resistance of others who are participating in the action'.<sup>18</sup> For Weber, people will always pursue their

10. Weber, 'Science as a Profession and Vocation', p. 348.

11. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 177.

12. Weber, *Economy and Society*, p. 30.

13. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, ed. and trans. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), p. 280.

14. Weber, 'Objectivity of Social Science and Social Policy', pp. 102-103.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 124.

16. Weber, *Economy and Society*, pp. 31-33.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 927-29.

material and ideal interests, and combine to do so, in whatever ideological guise.

Douglass does points out that Weber thinks in the liberal tradition of Kant (43), and is an activist (142), but this line of thought is overtaken by Nietzschean pessimism, which sees the battle of ideas in Weber as seemingly settled by ‘fate’, not resolved by ‘any kind of “science”’,<sup>19</sup> as a counsel of despair. However, Weber’s ‘will to values’, differs from Nietzsche’s ‘will to power’.<sup>20</sup> Weber is well aware of Nietzsche’s ‘last human beings’ (*letzte Menschen*) without imagination (*ohne Geist*),<sup>21</sup> who seek out (ethically-biased) ‘leaders’ rather than (ethically-neutral) ‘teachers’, which is why he admonishes his pupils on this matter.

Douglass tells us that neoliberalism is a ‘backward-looking’ return of *laissez-faire* (6, 17), while explaining elsewhere that it is an act of reregulation rather than deregulation (75-6), without explaining the contradiction. This double truth is central to the neoliberal idea. In an equitable capitalist order, which Weber tries to achieve through his individualistic ‘science’ of values, the deception is unnecessary. The problem arises with a monopoly capitalist order,<sup>22</sup> which seeks to actively define the material interests of the majority. Exposed, this idea clearly struggles to acquire legitimacy. That markets are ‘constructed’ to serve special interests is, therefore, veiled behind propaganda that they subsist in pure Platonic form, and are happily accessible to mathematical economists.

The natural law idea of markets entered the DNA of financial journalists at about the time of the French Physiocrats in the eighteenth century. Weber’s objection that there can never exist such notions of efficiency in the abstract, without first settling the framework of individual relationships in terms of a science of values, never received serious attention until recently. As mathematics advanced, however, the impossibility of stable optimal solutions to abstract economic

19. Weber, ‘Science as a Profession and Vocation’, p. 348.

20. Hans Henrik Bruun and Sam Whimster, ‘Introduction’ in *Max Weber: Collected Methodological Writings*, xi-xxviii (xxiii).

21. Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, p. 178.

22. Let us use ‘monopoly’, although strictly speaking the system the Chicago Law School wants to justify as *laissez-faire* post-WW2 is ‘oligopolistic’. See Rob Van Horn, ‘Reinventing Monopoly and the Role of Corporations: The Roots of Chicago Law and Economics’, in *The Road from Mont Pelerin: The Making of the Neoliberal Thought Collective*, ed. Philip Mirowski and Dieter Plehwe (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2015), pp. 204-37.

models with multiple agents became clear to economists.<sup>23</sup> Deliverance, however, would come in the form of the neoliberal ideologue Friedrich Hayek, who argued that markets could simply become a political project realised through the state.<sup>24</sup> The new climate of government auctions, privatizations, and the creation of financial derivatives, would allow economists to ‘assert their competence to “design” markets, with the objective of giving people what economists believed they *should* want.’<sup>25</sup> ‘Optimality’ for a society of multiple individual agents was no longer their concern.

The pivotal neoliberal idea, as articulated by Michel Foucault, is Gary Becker’s deconstruction of personhood into arbitrary bundles of educational investments, skill sets, temporary (familial and racial) alliances and fungible body parts.<sup>26</sup> In destroying the autonomous Kantian subject, and eradicating the need for individual values, this new notion of *homo oeconomicus* enunciates the fundamental truth about the monopoly capitalistic order. In this culture, individuals navigate product and investment markets in a dialectic of continuous personal affirmation and rejection within an amorphous peer environment that determines purchases (including of educational ‘products’), where gambling, speculation, and legal infractions result in market judgements, and where losses/incarceration are the punishments for failure. Crucially, the hierarchical disciplinary structures and networks that ‘construct’ the terms of the environment/the life the individual has to navigate are left unspoken.

When Douglass describes the neoliberal subject in eulogic terms such as ‘self-reliant’, ‘enterprising’ and ‘productive’, which signify traits that are not ends in themselves, to show continuity between the industrial/Fordist and neoliberal orders, he fails entirely to convey the real nature of either. He fails especially to convey the sense of a new social order that systemically features outsourcing, zero-hours contracts, tax credits that subsidise low wage payers, the gig economy,

23. A good summary of the arguments involved are to be found in S. Abu Turab Rizvi, ‘The Sonnenschein-Mantel-Debreu Results after Thirty Years’, *History of Political Economy* 38 (2006 [Suppl. 1, Part 2]): 228-45.

24. Friedrich Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960), esp. p. 129.

25. Philip Mirowski and Edward Nik-Khah, *The Knowledge We Have Lost in Information: The History of Information in Modern Economics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), p. 4.

26. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France 1978-1979* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 226.



online gambling, usurious payday lending, multi-level marketing, rampant speculation, accounting fraud and tax evasion,<sup>27</sup> financial corruption,<sup>28</sup> and deliberate and counter-intuitive fragmentation of investment markets.<sup>29</sup>

Douglass sees his notion of entrapment in the iron cage as supported by neoliberalism's decades-long endurance (17, 15), and the 'resignation' of the electorate to this status quo (145). Yet neoliberal obfuscation in defence of the monopoly capitalistic order and the dominance of special interests over the public interest, mediated by economists who are in Weber's words 'leaders', rather than 'teachers', is highly contested, even if social action has unintended consequences. The New Left turn of 1993 (Clinton) and 1997 (Blair) sought the democratization of neoliberalism through the deregulation of financial services that gave us 'privatized Keynesianism'.<sup>30</sup> Its resurgence in the 2009 'Obama reaction' to the 2008 Crash, then failed to address the consequences of this extreme financialization, partly because Obama was the candidate of the banks.<sup>31</sup> In turn, the 'Trump/Brexit' (populist) counter-reaction<sup>32</sup> challenged a globalized monopoly capitalist order that succeeded in 'putting a girdle around the earth and running rings around national governments'.<sup>33</sup>

The question then is how neoliberalism, a marginalized doctrine in both Europe and the US in the 1930s–1950s, whose leading lights lost the argument with Keynes, rose to prominence. The pivotal development lay not in the electoral events in 1979/81, but the *ideational* event that brought Lyndon Johnson's Great Society and the War on Poverty

27. James R. Crotty, 'The Neoliberal Paradox: The Impact of Destructive Product Market Competition and Impatient Finance on Nonfinancial Corporations in the Neoliberal Era', in *Financialization and the World Economy*, ed. Gerald A. Epstein (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2005), pp. 77–111.

28. Philip Ashton and Brett Christophers, 'On Arbitration, Arbitrage and Arbitrariness in Financial Markets and their Governance: Unpacking LIBOR and the LIBOR Scandal', *Economy and Society* 44.2 (2015): 188–217.

29. Walter Mattli, *Darkness by Design* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

30. Colin Crouch, 'Privatised Keynesianism: An Unacknowledged Policy Regime', *British Journal of Politics and International Relations* 11.3 (2009): 382–99.

31. Pam Martens, *Obama's Money Cartel*, at <https://wallstreetonparade.com/obamas-money-cartel/> (2008), accessed 1 November 2019.

32. Michael Lind, *The New Class War: Saving Democracy from the Metropolitan Élite* (London: Atlantic Books, forthcoming 2020).

33. Colin Mayer, 'Reinventing the Corporation', *Journal of the British Academy* 4 (2016): 53–71.

to a sudden halt by 1975 with the collapse of the Democratic consensus.<sup>34</sup> This was a peculiarly American development that arrested the progress of a historically European social democratic order travelling from an originally Idealist conception of the state in the British and German 1830s to its ultimate Keynesian destination.<sup>35</sup> What replaced it is a materialist conception of the state constituted of rotating corporate hierarchies,<sup>36</sup> in an originally American 'corporate liberalist' tradition from the 1900s in which entrepreneurs actively shape the state by 'adapting to their own ends the ideals of middle class social reformers, social workers and socialists.'<sup>37</sup>

Weber's thought is germane to our condition which it describes as resulting from a battle of ideas where, in that context, the state has the potential to make any ends its own.<sup>38</sup> Neoliberalism is not, per Douglass, a condition brought about by public attitudes, except trivially. It is *originally* a set of calculated ideas long in the making, promoted by élites to prise the grip of a European idea of the state off the body of the peculiarly, per Thorstein Veblen, 'pecuniary' institutions that developed in America. Progressives had conceived of the counter-vailing forces they brought to bear on those institutions in terms of this European idea, until the collapse of the Democratic consensus.

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Talcott Parsons, *Kapitalismus bei Max Weber – zur Rekonstruktion eines fast vergessenen Themas*, edited by Uta Gerhardt (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2019), v + 167 pp. (pbk). ISBN 978-3-65810-110-7. €37.99.

The centerpiece of Uta Gerhardt's volume is a document that Talcott Parsons prepared as a dissertation for his Dr. phil. degree from

34. Henry J. Aaron, *Politics and the Professors: The Great Society in Perspective* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 1978), especially p. 154.

35. David P. Calleo, *Coleridge and the Idea of the Modern State* (New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 1966).

36. G. William Domhoff, *State Autonomy Or Class Dominance?: Case Studies on Policy Making in America* (Piscataway, NJ: Aldine Transaction, 1996); G. William Domhoff et al., *Studying the Power Élite* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

37. James Weinstein, *The Corporate Ideal in the Liberal State, 1900–1918* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1968), pp. xiii-xiv.

38. Andreas Anter, *Max Weber's Theory of the Modern State: Origins, Structure and Significance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 22.

the University of Heidelberg. However, Gerhardt introduces the dissertation with an essay that reviews Parsons's education prior to his arrival in Heidelberg and also characterizes aspects of the intellectual environment he encountered at the university. She then adds a lengthy postscript to the dissertation that reviews the importance of Max Weber's works for Parsons's thought throughout his career, with particular emphasis on Parsons's advocacy for Weber's thesis on the importance of the 'Protestant ethic' for the emergence of the spirit of capitalism and the development of rationalistic modern capitalism—a career-long advocacy that began with the dissertation manuscript. It is her thesis that without Parsons's advocacy the importance of Weber's works, especially his analysis of the sources and origins of modern capitalism, may well never have become prominent in contemporary social science.

The outline of Talcott Parsons's early career has been fairly clear, but Gerhardt's introduction relates part of the story with new details, supported by quotations from correspondence she has found in archives at both the University of Heidelberg and Harvard University. Parsons was an undergraduate at Amherst College, an intellectually thriving and challenging institution, where he studied biology and institutional economics and took an influential course on Kant, reading the *Critique of Pure Reason*. He then spent a year at the London School of Economics, where he was influenced primarily by Malinowski's seminar in which key figures of later British social anthropology, E. E. Evans-Pritchard, Meyer Fortes, and Raymond Firth, were also students.

Through the support of the Amherst professor who had taught the course on Kant, Parsons then obtained a fellowship for a year's study in Germany. He was assigned to the University of Heidelberg, where he was heavily influenced, as he later claimed, by the 'ghost' of the five-year-deceased Max Weber, still a dominant influence in social science at the university. Gerhardt, however, notes that Weber's ideal-type methodology was receiving substantial criticism, especially from Heinrich Rickert, and the status of his scholarship may have been in decline. Thus, when Parsons read the section of Weber's *Collected Studies in the Sociology of Religion* addressing the Protestant ethic and the emergence of modern capitalism, and when he grasped its insight into the Calvinism at the core of his own personal background, he quickly focused on scholarship that otherwise, at Heidelberg, might have been falling into decline. Parsons made the body of Weber's then published works the center of his studies.

When Parsons learned that he could complete coursework for a Dr. phil. degree with his fellowship year and an extra summer of study at the university, he decided to complete a doctorate in Heidelberg. In the spring and summer semesters, he drafted much of his dissertation on conceptions of modern capitalism in the German literature. Before returning to the United States, he left key chapters of the dissertation, apparently the ones on Sombart and Weber, and perhaps one on Marx, with his supervisor, Edgar Salin, who expressed encouraging approval of them.

Back in the United States, as an instructor at Amherst, he seems to have drafted additional materials for the dissertation, although just what is not clear. In the summer of 1927, he returned for his final semester at Heidelberg, confident that he could soon wrap up the matter of his dissertation. But something had gone wrong. Salin had lent the chapters Parsons had left in Heidelberg to a younger colleague with interests in their subject matter, Arnold Bergstraesser, who had mislaid them. On Salin's advice, Parsons prepared fifty handwritten pages on the core of the dissertation, presumably covering the materials on Sombart and Weber. Explaining what had happened to the original manuscript to his colleagues, the economist Alfred Weber, the psychiatrist-psychologist-philosopher Karl Jaspers, and the modern historian Willy Andreas, Salin, the economist, was able to convene Parsons's oral examination for the doctorate on the basis of the fifty handwritten pages. After passing the oral examination with the highest grade, Parsons needed only to publish the dissertation to complete his degree.

Returning to the United States, Parsons became a 'non-faculty instructor' in the Department of Economics at Harvard University. Parsons later said his position was actually similar to an advanced graduate student, perhaps a post-doctoral fellow in today's terminology. Salin had apparently advised him to seek publication in the United States, interestingly with the idea that his work might attract attention to German scholarship on modern economies in an academic setting where it had largely been ignored. In late 1928 and early 1929, Parsons published two papers derived from his dissertation materials in the *Journal of Political Economy*, one centering on Sombart and the other on Weber.<sup>39</sup> Thus satisfying the German requirement of publication for doctoral degrees, Parsons was awarded his doctor-

39. The papers are republished in *Talcott Parsons: The Early Essays*, ed. Charles Camic (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

ate in 1929 for the two published papers. Gerhardt clarifies and adds detail to this story with pertinent quotations from both the Heidelberg Archives and the Parsons Papers in the Harvard Archives. Yet, one detail seems to us unclear: why did Parsons produce the 140 typescript pages of a dissertation in German when his earlier manuscript had been lost, he had passed his oral exam on the basis of a shorter handwritten document, and he planned publication in English? Had he hoped also to publish a short book in German?

The status of the manuscript that Gerhardt has published is therefore rather unclear. After Parsons's death, one of us (VL) found the text in an old file cabinet in the basement of Parsons's home along with other papers from the early years of his career. The text has been in the Parsons Papers at the Harvard University Archives ever since. Gerhardt encountered the text in the Archives. It seems that there is not a copy in the archives of the University of Heidelberg, so it appears that Parsons never formally submitted it. Yet, the cover page, included in Gerhardt's version, includes the usual formal language of submission to the university to fulfill the requirements for the Dr. phil. degree. At the time, and for a decade or more after, Parsons drafted materials for publication in handwriting and had them typed up by a secretary when he was pleased with the content. Thus, it is apparent that particular effort went into preparation of the text.

If the partial draft of 1926 had been lost and Parsons's oral examination was conducted on the handwritten document, it is not clear when and why he went to the effort to produce the longer version in German. As Guenter Stummvoll and Bruce Wearne noted in the introductory materials to their German and English edition of the dissertation,<sup>40</sup> some parts of the typed text include umlauts, suggesting that they were typed on a German typewriter, while other parts do not include umlauts, suggesting that they were typed in the United States. Were the sections from a German typewriter written in the summer of 1927 and the others after Parsons had assumed his instructorship at Harvard? It does seem that one possible explanation is that Parsons at some stage planned to seek publication in a book format in Germany. It is also possible that Parsons had received - or acceded to - Salin's suggestion that he seek publication in the United States only after preparing the German version.

40. Guenter Stummvoll and Bruce C. Wearne (eds), *Der Kapitalismus bei Sombart und Max Weber; Capitalism according to Sombart and Max Weber: Talcott Parsons' Dr.Phil Dissertation in German and English* (Wien: Lit Verlag, 2018).

Whatever the answer to this mystery, scholars interested in Parsons's intellectual development have long wondered how similar his draft dissertation was to the two published papers. We now have an answer with Gerhardt's publication of the German text of Parsons's dissertation. (While the Stummvoll-Wearne edition includes both the German text and an English translation, its introductory materials are quite different, so both editions are welcome contributions to the literature on Parsons.) The text has more of the form of a dissertation. It has a brief introduction. It has a short chapter on predecessors of Sombart and Weber, including Richard Passow, Georg von Below, and Lujo von Brentano, with brief remarks about Karl Marx and other earlier socialist authors. It has substantial chapters, first on Sombart, then on Weber, concerning their conceptions of capitalism, especially modern capitalism. It ends with a brief, well focused conclusion. Wearne and Stummvoll posit that there may have been a chapter on Marx in the materials lost by Bergstraesser. Consistent with this suggestion, there are substantial notes on Marx, contrasting with brief notes on Passow, Below, and Brentano, and very extensive notes on Weber and Sombart, among Parsons's reading notes for his dissertation in the Harvard Archives.

When Parsons began to explore publication of his materials on Sombart and Weber, he acknowledged that he would need to edit and reduce them to fit the length of journal articles. And so he did, as the articles are substantially shorter than the dissertation chapters. But there are also some notable differences of substance. Both essays convey less detail than the dissertation, and they rely much less on quotation from Sombart and Weber and much more on Parsons's own characterization of their principal points. Both the dissertation and the essays, but the latter more briefly, acknowledge Marx's conception of capitalism as the forerunner of Sombart's and Weber's analyses of modern capitalism. Marx was the first to portray capitalism as a form of society as a whole. The essay on Weber is less critical in its account of the ideal-type methodology and in its discussion of a lack of clarity regarding the difference between the concepts of capitalism in general and modern capitalism. The essay on Weber follows the dissertation, although in a more succinct account, in underscoring Weber's argument that bureaucracy is essential to modern corporations. Like market-orientation, bureaucracy is dependent on an underlying rational-legal normative order, also an essential element of modern capitalism. The essay is somewhat stronger than the dissertation in emphasizing the origins of the spirit of modern capitalism in

the Protestant ethic as the key point making Weber's analysis superior to Sombart's. A theme developed across the two essays, as in the dissertation chapters, is that Weber's emphasis on the Protestant ethic helps to explain why the spirit of capitalism and, hence, modern capitalism, originated only in the Occident. Sombart had underscored the importance of a special spirit in the functioning of modern capitalism, but, Parsons argued, he had nothing useful to say about its origins. Throughout his career, Parsons repeatedly highlighted the importance of Weber's analysis of the Protestant ethic as an essential factor in the rise of modern societies in Europe and North America, but he referred to Sombart's works only occasionally and briefly after his two first published essays. Weber was a key predecessor in his efforts, notably in *The Structure of Social Action*, to establish his own theory; Sombart plays no part in it, and is mentioned on only ten pages of Parsons's early masterwork.

Gerhardt's 65-page postscript draws on her many previous publications on Parsons's intellectual career and the crucial role of Weber's writings in guiding it. Her major theme is that Weber's contributions to the understanding of the unique developmental path of the modern Occident and, especially, his studies of the Protestant ethic and its consequences, were central to Parsons's thought from his dissertation to his last works. She begins with a brief review of the dissertation itself, and its importance, against the backgrounds of both Heidelberg scholarship at the time and American economics and sociology of the 1920s and early 1930s. She proceeds to discuss Parsons's talks and essays on National Socialism and on Hitler as a charismatic leader, noting his emphasis on the tensions and strains in the status orders of German society in the Great Depression and its aftermath. She also observes that Parsons, unlike most American academics of the time, did not generalize from awareness of the conditions giving rise to Nazism to an overall distrust of German culture and academic achievements.

Gerhardt proceeds to a brief discussion of *The Structure of Social Action* and the principal role of Weber's works in its synthesis of a voluntaristic theory of action. Although Parsons argued that major themes in the works of Marshall, Pareto, Durkheim, and Weber converged on his own voluntaristic theory, the most extensive discussion of the predecessors concerns Weber's contributions. It covers his methodology, the range of aspects of society he analyzed, and his comparative civilizational studies, including the research on the Protestant ethic. Gerhardt again notes that Parsons's theoretical synthesis

differed importantly from most of the leading American sociologists of the time, and especially from that of his department chairman, Pitirim Sorokin. Gerhardt proceeds to discuss briefly Parsons's next major work, *The Social System*, observing that its strong emphasis on normative order as essential to the stabilization of social relationships and social institutions is consistent with Weber's analyses.

In the post-World War II setting, Parsons became engaged politically on two fronts. The better known episode concerns his opposition to the McCarthy movement and its suspicions of Communist influence in government, public affairs, and also in academia. Parsons's most famous involvement was an essay analyzing the sources of political support for McCarthy, which he found in the social statuses that had lost prestige and economic standing over the previous several decades of industrial development in the United States. Parsons also suffered a brief period in which his own passport was held up, apparently because a guest in the Parsons's home had reported that at a party his son, Charles, had recited from the Communist Manifesto, suggesting that his father might be disloyal to capitalist America. Parsons also supported his colleague Samuel Stouffer, known to be a conservative Republican, when his loyalty was questioned and his ability to work on federal grants and databases was interrupted. Parsons's student, Robert Bellah, had complex difficulties with the Harvard administration due to his participation in a Communist-affiliated student group while an undergraduate. After completing his doctorate, Bellah left for McGill University in Montreal to escape the difficulties, but Parsons then succeeded in bringing him back to Harvard after a number of sharp exchanges with the administration. In these situations, Parsons was importantly guided by Weber's methodological distinction between political/social values and the valuation of contributions to scholarship. Gerhardt does not say, but it is important that Parsons collaborated with students and colleagues across the political spectrum, from conservative to liberal to the radical left, so long as he believed they were making valid contributions to scholarship.

The second political domain on which Parsons gave talks and wrote significant papers concerned international relations during the Cold War. In a couple of papers, Gerhardt reports, he emphasized that there were shared values and interests between the United States and the Soviet Union, the West and the East. He highlighted the shared concern for economic development and welfare of the population and the shared interest in avoiding war and nuclear catastrophe. By



the mid-1960s, with the waning of the Cold War, Parsons was active in forming relationships with Russian sociologists. He also participated in Pugwash conferences engaging Soviet and American scientists to develop technical means of reducing the risks of catastrophic war. Gerhardt sees all of these writings and political involvements as following Weber's model of a scholar engaged both in high level academic work and in public affairs.

In 1964, Parsons was a major participant in the celebration of the centennial of Weber's birth at the University of Heidelberg. Reinhard Bendix had warned him in advance that adherents of the Frankfurt School of critical theory, mainly Theodor Adorno and Herbert Marcuse, were planning to speak of Weber as a sort of forerunner of Nazism, particularly in his political conservatism, his concept of charismatic leaders, and his concern with the humanistic decline of Germany's industrial capitalist society of the early twentieth century. Parsons prepared his paper for the centennial with exceptional care and delivered a thoughtful exposition and firm defense of Weber's methodology, one that anticipated and carefully countered the views of the critical theorists.

In the later 1950s and 1960s, Parsons published a number of papers on economic and social development more broadly. A key theme involved the respects in which the historical development of the Occident, including the cultural developments that followed the Protestant ethic, might provide a model for development in the so-called Third World countries. Parsons's later contributions, as in his short book *The System of Modern Societies*, influenced in part by Robert Bellah's writings on Japan, gave more attention to the variety of possible paths toward industrialization and modernity. Another theme in the 1960s and 1970s concerned the religious constitution of American society. Parsons emphasized the process of inclusion by which Catholic and Jewish minorities, one quite large, the other much smaller, had gained acceptance as fully American in a way that had not been true before World War II. A related essay addressed the Civil Rights movement of the mid-1960s and argued that African-Americans were being included in the previously all-white status group of citizens fully and equally protected by the law. Parsons argued that the inclusion of African-Americans was following a path toward inclusion previously marked out by Catholics and Jews.

Gerhardt also discusses several of the theoretical works that followed the development of the four function paradigm. *Economy and*

*Society*, written with Neil J. Smelser, returned to the basic Weberian problematics of the relation between economic institutions and the other principal institutions of a modern society. *The American University*, written with Gerald M. Platt, was in part a general study of the culture and institutions that stabilize academic life for both faculty and students in modern colleges and universities and, in part, a response to perceptions that American academic institutions were in a period of crisis during the student movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. Finally, the manuscripts on the American societal community, which were published only years after Parsons's death, address the problem of the relationship between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*, again critical issues for Weber.<sup>41</sup> Parsons's treatment was complex, but he sought to demonstrate that modern societies have *Gemeinschaft*-like aspects in a highly differentiated set of *Gesellschaft*-like institutions that comprise one of four major subsystems of society.

One surprising oversight of Gerhard's careful review is Parsons's 1947 essay, 'Certain Sources and Patterns of Aggression in the Western World.' The essay combines Weber's emphasis on the activism grounded in the inner-worldly asceticism of the modern West with a Freudian analysis of aggression when actors, collective as well as individual, are frustrated by their inability to attain goals. It is a masterpiece of reflection and analysis in the aftermath of World War II, and one that does not blame the war and the risks of future wars on German culture and social patterns, but locates the blame with Western civilization in its entirety.

The publication of Talcott Parsons's dissertation manuscript and the thorough editorial background information not only clarifies in detail a peculiar episode in Talcott Parsons's career, but more importantly, it also highlights new aspects of the impact Weber's oeuvre had on Parsons's theoretical development and consequently on twentieth-century intellectual and political history.

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41. Talcott Parsons, *American Society: A Theory of Societal Community*, ed. Giuseppe Sciortino (Boulder, CO and London: Paradigm Publisher, 2007). The title is somewhat misleading. Parsons own title was *The American Societal Community*.

Jack Barbalet, *Confucianism and the Chinese Self: Re-examining Max Weber's China* (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 213 pp. (hbk). ISBN 978-982-10-6288-9. €89.99.

Jack Barbalet's *Confucianism and the Chinese Self* is a fascinating contribution to the study of Max Weber, focusing on the latter's book *The Religion of China (RC)*. As a sequel to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), *RC* was first published in 1915, then in augmented form in 1920. Its English translation, by Hans Gerth, appeared in 1951.<sup>42</sup> Since then, the book has been talked about mostly in China study circles. Barbalet's is a recent effort by a sociologist who is an authority on Weber. Barbalet tells his readers in the *Preface* that the book is written 'to Weber not Confucius' (viii). 'Much of what is written', Barbalet remarks at the book's conclusion, is 'in disagreement with Weber, and yet, the disagreement was in conversation with his rich, detailed, and extensive texts' (203). In this book-length dialogue with Weber, Barbalet goes back to Weber's texts, methods, and sources to demonstrate Weber's insights, and more often, what Weber has missed, disregarded, and misinterpreted for his own purposes. Barbalet's comments are rich, careful, measured, and consistent, reflecting impressive in-depth knowledge of both Weber and China.

After a brief introductory chapter, the book starts with *RC*'s German context (Chapter 2). Here Barbalet sets the analytic framework for subsequent chapters on two basic points. First, Weber's sources came primarily from Jesuit missionaries who were in China during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (25, 61–64). Thus Weber's 'representation of Confucianism is in many ways an invention of European sinology and betrays the latter's missionary roots' (24). Second, the German colonial expansion and Weber's endorsement of it (18–21) shaped Weber's interpretation of Confucianism. In Barbalet's words, 'Weber's image of China as backward and dominated by traditional or non-rational thought systems is consistent with the missionary and German imperialist mentality' (43).

This is followed by two substantive chapters devoted to Weber's interpretation of the religions of China: Confucianism (Chapter 3) and Daoism (Chapter 4). Here Barbalet explains how the Jesuit construction of Confucianism led Weber to be focused exclusively on classical Confucianism, which blinded him from recognizing the significance

42. Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans Gerth (New York: Free Press, 1951).

of neo-Confucianism—a major development of Confucianist doctrines led by Zhu Xi (1130–1200 CE) in the Song Dynasty (64). As a consequence of this omission, Barbalet notes, Weber also ignored an ongoing revolutionary transformation in China. In Barbalet's words, Weber totally failed to 'appreciate the dynamic elements in Confucianism' (74). Similarly, Barbalet points out that Weber was mistaken in his interpretation of Daoism (Chapter 4). In the discussion of Chinese religions, Barbalet shows his witty sensibility by noting that the 'New Culture Movement' intellectuals, who were active in China between 1913 and 1917, actually shared Weber's perspective in attributing China's backwardness to Confucian traditionalism (54).

Another two chapters are devoted to specific notions that Weber used in *RC*, self-interest (Chapter 5) and magic (Chapter 6). Barbalet notes that while Weber's sociology of religion was based on individualism, i.e., the 'lesser self', in China, it was the 'greater self' (106) or 'relational self' (136) that provided the motivation in the Chinese economy. Thus, according to Barbalet, 'It cannot reasonably be said, therefore, that the concept of self-interest is absent in traditional China' (124). He also argues that Weber 'exaggerate[d] the acceptance of magic in Chinese society' (176) and mistakenly ascribed a 'religious' significance to those elements of magical practice he perceived. 'Those things that Weber describes as Chinese magic [...] have no meaningful religious connotation or value' (175).

The concluding chapter (Chapter 7) connects Weber's *RC* and China's more recent history. As Barbalet observes, 'at the time that Weber first published [*RC*] in 1915, and certainly by the time of the augmented edition in 1920, the Chinese economy was more thoroughly capitalist than could be imagined on the basis of his discussion' (194). It may run some risk of being teleological when Barbalet states in the *Preface*, 'The rise of China over the past 40 years is a global event of major significance' (vii), and concludes by devoting a few pages to Deng Xiaoping's reforms of the 1980s (194-98). But this frame resonates well with the title of the book, *Confucianism and the Chinese Self: Re-examining Max Weber's China*.

Barbalet's critique makes a stronger case in arguing that Weber has misinterpreted China—the first goal he sets for himself. But the book has a second goal—that is to explain *why* Weber did what he did. As noted earlier, Barbalet asserts at the outset of the book, 'the purpose of Weber's analysis in *RC* is to demonstrate the correctness of his argument concerning the uniqueness of the West [...] In this endeavor, Imperial China is simply drawn upon as a negative case'

(43). That image 'is consistent with German imperialist mentality' (43). Barbalet highlights the historical context: *RC* 'is a work that at the time of its publication brought China into Germany in a decisive and definitive manner, asserting the correctness of the German imperial approach to East Asia and colonized regions in general' (22). These assertions, if substantiated, would make an important contribution to the on-going critical reexamination of Weber.<sup>43</sup> However, it seems to me, the book falls short in achieving its second goal in the following respects.

Barbalet is definitely right in emphasizing that China was anything but static at the time that Weber was working on *RC*. In addition to all the dynamics that Barbalet points out in his book, China was experiencing volatile crises and transformation in terms of its culture/religion. The Taiping Rebellion, between 1851 and 1863, was launched in the name of Christian faith, though in reality it was a mixture of Christianity, Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 specifically targeted Christian missionaries—casualties included German missionaries and Ambassador Clemens von Ketteler. At the same time, a race-based theory, 'the Yellow Peril', was spreading in Europe and the United States.<sup>44</sup> German travelers to China during this period, from Karl Gützlaff (a Protestant missionary), Ferdinand von Richthofen (the geographer who played key role in annexation of Qingdao), to Elisabeth von Heyking (novelist and travel writer, wife of Edmund von Heyking, the German envoy to China in 1896) increasingly depicted China in racialized terms.<sup>45</sup> Beginning in 1895, Kaiser Wilhelm II actively exploited this xenophobia in German foreign policy.<sup>46</sup> Weber, however, openly questioned the 'Yellow Peril' claims. In 1917 he commented, 'Germany's policy towards China produced a yield that was embarrassingly and, it must be added, by no means coincidentally disproportionate to [the

43. See, e.g., Andrew Zimmerman, 'German Sociology and Empire: From Internal Colonization to Overseas Colonization and Back Again', in *Sociology and Empire: The Imperial Entanglements of a Discipline*, ed. George Steinmetz (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2013), pp. 166-87.

44. Richard Austin Thompson, *The Yellow Peril, 1890-1924* (New York: Arno Press, 1979).

45. George Steinmetz, *The Devil's Handwriting: Precoloniality and the German Colonial State in Qingdao, Samoa, and Southwest Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), ch. 6.

46. Gunther Barth, Book Review, *The Journal of American History* 84: 264 (1997) (reviewing Ute Mehnert, *Deutschland, Amerika, und die "Gelbe Gefahr"* [1995]).

Kaiser's] words, so that these then did much damage to our prestige.<sup>47</sup> Weber was well aware that 'racial problems are among the most difficult questions in international affairs, because they are complicated by the conflicts of interest amongst the white peoples.'<sup>48</sup> This position was reflected in *RC*, where Weber noted, 'nowadays [...] even experienced and knowing men can say nothing definite about the extent to which biological heredity is influential' (*RC*, 231). Specifically on China, Weber stated, 'It is obviously not a question of deeming the Chinese "naturally ungifted" for the demands of capitalism.' Rather, Weber's cultural interpretation was a departure from the race theory: 'many of the Chinese traits which are considered innate may be the product of purely historical and cultural influences' (*RC*, 248, 231).

Weber's distance from race theory in *RC* was *not* 'obvious', however, for many of his contemporaries. Edward A. Ross, one of the key founders of American sociology, who influenced Roscoe Pound and Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., was a strong opponent of Chinese and Japanese immigration based on 'Yellow Peril' claims.<sup>49</sup> While he shared some contemporary views about Germany's imperial expansion, Weber was driven by motives that were different from the dominant ideology.

Finally, Weber's position on race, it seems, was more than a convenient critique of the Kaiser's foreign policy; it was fundamental for his approach in *PE*. In 1904, the year his first installment of the *PE* was published, Weber observed, 'there is a widespread belief that [...] all historical events are results of the interplay of innate "racial qualities"'.<sup>50</sup> Weber considered this belief an 'uncritical concoction of "social theories" based on the "natural sciences"'. 'It is to be hoped', he announced, 'that the situation in which the casual explanation of cultural events by the invocation of "racial characteristics" [...] will be gradually overcome by research which is the fruit of systematic training'.<sup>51</sup> From this vantage point, *RC* seems a natural follow-up of

47. Max Weber, 'Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order', in *Weber: Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 200.

48. *Ibid.*

49. Edward A. Ross, 'The Causes of Race Superiority', *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 18: 67-89 (1901).

50. Max Weber, "'Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', in *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, ed. and trans. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1949), p. 69.

51. *Ibid.*

*PE*, guided by the same goal of presenting culture as an alternative explanative framework.

Barbalet's book makes a solid case that Weber portrayed China as a static, traditional, and backward society through the lens of culture. In that sense, *RC* fits well with the typical Orientalist picture, and Barbalet's book presents systemic evidence to strengthen that view. However, to the extent that Weber was trying to distance himself from race-based theory, the hardcore of Orientalism of his time, Weber was hardly a typical exponent of the 'imperialist mentality'.

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## Notes for Contributors

*Max Weber Studies* is an international journal which is published twice a year. It concerns itself with the interpretation, reception and application of Max Weber's writings and ideas and celebrates his polysemic legacy. The journal publishes new academic work on Max Weber and includes among its aims:

- The domains of comparative sociology, economic sociology and sociology of technology, organizational sociology and institutional design, political sociology, nation, state and power, the sociology of law and justice, the sociologies of culture, art, music, sexuality, family and religion, and the methodology of the social sciences. It also invites contributions that assess, or utilize, Weber's key ideas in the analysis of historical societies and processes of change with particular reference to the periods of ancient, medieval and modern.
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Book reviews. If you are interested in reviewing, please write to Professor Joshua Derman, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Division of Humanities, Clear Water Bay, Kowloon, Hong Kong. Email: [hmderman@ust.hk](mailto:hmderman@ust.hk)

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