

THE WEBER THESIS OF CALVINISM AND CAPITALISM—ITS VARIOUS VERSIONS AND THEIR “FATE” IN SOCIAL SCIENCE

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The paper identifies and examines various multiple renditions of the so-called Weber Thesis of an historical association and convergence between ascetic Protestantism, above all Calvinism, and the emergence and development of modern capitalism as an economic spirit and system. Specifically, it detects at least four different versions and formulations or interpretations, thus casting doubt in the common view of the Weber Thesis as a single and monolithic theory or hypothesis. The paper also considers the status of the multiple versions of the Weber Thesis in post-Weberian and contemporary sociology and related disciplines like economics and history. It concludes that the weaker, relaxed renditions of the Weber Thesis have attained a greater success and more endured in contemporary social science than have its stronger, stricter versions. © 2015 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.

INTRODUCTION

The question may arise as to how certain pertinent or well-known social theories and theorists have fared in the history of the social-behavioral sciences. One often wonders as to what has been the “fate” or the attained scientific status of these theories and theorists within this history. “Fate” is no doubt a potentially ambiguous term, and is understood as the degree of favorable reception or wide circulation (or indeed notice at all) of a certain theory and theorist in subsequent scholarship, and involves positive or adverse “fates” depending on such opposite degrees of acceptance. It also refers to the level of empirical support a theory and theorist has received by accumulated evidence, and can be positive or adverse “fate” depending on these different levels of confirmation. It is important to distinguish these two meanings of “fate” or attained status of a scientific theory and theorist within the history of the social-behavioral sciences. This is because the degree of reception or circulation of a theory and theorist in subsequent scholarship may *or* may not be grounded in and justified by the level of empirical support received by accumulated evidence, although ultimately the first would probably tend to align with the second within the scientific community.

Within the history of the social-behavioral sciences, an exemplar of the “fate” of a scientific theory or theorist is Talcott Parsons’ (1937, p. 3) statement that Herbert “Spencer is dead” expressing the diminishing acceptance in subsequent scholarship and the empirical disconfirmation of Spencerian utilitarianism seen as the “victim of the vengeance of the jealous god (i.e.) the evolution of social scientific theory.” This hence represents an instance of the unambiguously adverse “fate” or attained negative status of a previously pertinent or prevalent social theory. The present paper considers another, though more ambiguous, instance of the “fate” of a social theory in the history of the social-behavioral sciences. This is the “fate” of

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Max Weber's theory or hypothesis of a historical association and affinity between early ascetic Protestantism, first and foremost Calvinism, and the rise of modern capitalism.

Weber's Protestant-capitalist theory is commonly considered the classic exemplar of economic sociology (Swedberg, 1998, 2003; Dobbin, 2005; Wuthnow, 2005) and to some extent social, including institutional, economics (Robbins, 1998; Hodgson, 1999; Akerlof, 2007). Some contemporary sociologists (Smelser & Swedberg, 2005, p. 8) even describe Weber's book the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* as the "most influential study" in economic sociology, with its hypothesis provoking an "enormous debate" in this and related social-science fields. In particular, this holds true for its influence in and relevance for what Schumpeter (1941) calls the "economic sociology" of modern industrial capitalism (Lange, 1945–1946; Trigilia, 2002; Fourcade & Healy, 2007). Relatedly, it is regarded as a classical, enduring instance of "theoretically derived" hypothesis or empirically grounded "middle-range" theory of the connection between "religious commitment and economic behavior," and as contributing to a more general theoretical assumption of the "interdependence between social institutions" (Merton, 1968; also, Camic, 1986; Vaisey, 2009).

The previous social-science literature usually regards it as the single, monolithic, and generally consistent sociological assumption or historical-empirical generalization of the relationship of Calvinism and other ascetic Protestantism to modern capitalism. In a rare exception in the literature, some sociologists suggest that Weber's theory of capitalism in relation to Calvinism has more and even partly different and inconsistent formulations and versions¹ (Collins, 1980). The question therefore arises as to whether the Weber Thesis (as commonly called) of a link and convergence between Calvinism and early modern capitalism has a single monolithic or instead multiple different formulations and versions.

The present paper suggests and shows that the Weber Thesis has multiple, different, and in part inconsistent or discontinuous formulations and versions rather than a single, monolithic, and consistent one. What is common to all these versions is that they represent substantive propositions in economic sociology or sociological economics. They do so by assuming the influence of religion and culture on the economy, in this case that of ascetic Protestantism, above all Calvinism, on the origin and early development of the "spirit" of modern capitalism as an "economic ethos" and an *explanandum* in the Weber Thesis. Therefore, they all exemplify (or in factor-analytic terms "load" on) the Weber Thesis as the paradigmatic instance of economic sociology understood as the theory and empirical analysis of the economy in relation to, specifically its conditioning by, society (Smelser & Swedberg, 2005), including religion and culture (DiMaggio, 1994; Wuthnow, 2005). In short, they express the proposition that the economy is socially conditioned, in particular the spirit of modern capitalism, as Weber puts² it, religiously and culturally "determined."

These multiple statements and versions of the Weber Thesis, however, differ in the strength of religion's assumed conditioning of or impact on the economy, specifically of Calvinism in relation to the spirit of modern capitalism. Thus, some renditions assume higher degrees of such determination or stronger influences than do the others. In this respect, they can be generally divided into stronger, stricter and weaker, relaxed formulations and versions of

1. Collins (1980) generally suggests two different or alternative versions of the Weber Thesis: the first in the *Protestant Ethic* and the second in *General Economic History*. Notably, he proposes that the latter contains Weber's "last" and most "mature" theory of capitalism. In the view of Collins (1980; also, 1997), the main difference is that Weber's theory of capitalism revolves around the doctrine of predestination—and its outcome the search of "proof" of salvation—in the *Protestant Ethic* and does not consider or even mention that theological dogma in *General Economic History*.

2. Weber (2001a [1910], p. 70) states in the "first reply" to his critic historian Felix Rachfahl that the "capitalist spirit" (specifically some of its elements) was "originally religiously determined and 'of ascetic character.'"

the Weber Thesis. In this sense, the latter can be understood and described as the plural or at least dual rather than single, monolithic Weber Thesis. The present paper identifies and examines these various formulations and versions of the Weber Thesis, and examines their treatment in post-Weberian sociology and other social science. Specifically, it detects and proposes four such renditions and interpretations. Then it considers what Weber would call the social-science “fate” of such particular variants or interpretations of the Weber Thesis. This signifies their destination in the sense of attained positive or negative scientific status or prestige (Alexander, 1998; Dobbin, 2005; Smelser & Swedberg, 2005), that is, the degree of endurance and impact, success or failure, acceptance or rejection in the social-behavioral sciences. It is to be remarked that these four renditions of the Weber Thesis are the product of the present writer’s interpretation and classification of Weber’s own distinct versions or implications assumed to be identifiable, while also taking into account some existing interpretations and classifications in the secondary literature.

MULTIPLE RENDITIONS OF THE WEBER THESIS?

This section identifies and proposes certain multiple renditions and interpretations of the Weber Thesis of Calvinism and capitalism in their assumed casual association, convergence, and mutual attraction cum “elective affinity.” For that purpose, it examines the Weber Thesis primarily in its historical component as the specific empirical proposition of the relationship between Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism, and secondarily in its sociological core as the theoretical paradigm or “middle-range” theory of the relations of religion and culture to the economy.

At this juncture, Weber considers Calvinism and capitalism the most crucial, powerful, determining, and even “fateful” religious and economic forces, respectively, in modern Western society since the Protestant Reformation through, especially the second as a dominant system of the economy, the nineteenth century and beyond, up to his lifetime. In a way, Weber sees both as total systems of control, compulsion, and constraint over individuals, simply “iron cages,” although Calvinism mostly before and capitalism after the late eighteenth and especially the middle nineteenth century.

He depicts Calvinism, originally the French Protestant Reformation—invoking the Huguenots as the first Calvinists (Scoville, 1953; Hornung, 2014)—and deemed exemplary ascetic Protestantism, as the religious focus of the “great political and cultural struggles”³ enfolding in the “most highly developed countries” in Europe such as France, the Netherlands, and England during the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. Specifically, these struggles, actually religious civil wars caused by Calvinist revolutions (Gorski, 2003), implicated original European Calvinism during Calvin’s later years (the 1540–1560s) and after his death, at first in France and Geneva, and then the Netherlands—plus Scotland but apparently not seen as belonging to the “most highly developed countries”—during the second half of the sixteenth century. These religious revolutions and wars subsequently involved what Weber calls Calvinism’s Anglo-Saxon sectarian derivative, Puritanism, as in England mostly during the seventeenth century and also before, as exemplified in the Puritan Revolution against

3. Weber (1930 [1905], p. 98) observes that “Calvinism was the faith over which the great political and cultural struggles of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were fought in the most highly developed countries, the Netherlands, England, and France.” Comparatively, Weber (2001a [1910], p. 75) describes Calvinism as the “most suitable” and “most consistent” antithesis to Catholicism and Lutheranism alike.

Anglicanism and the monarchy causing the English Civil War of the 1640s (Zaret, 1989; Hillmann, 2008; Kaufman, 2008). In particular, Weber views Calvinism's "most essential" dogma of predestination as a "very highly" influential and significant "causal factor" in historical terms, notably the theological ground (also, Troeltsch, 1966 [1912]) for Calvinist revolutions and wars—that is, the "rallying-point to countless heroes of the Church militant"—especially during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Similarly, Weber portrays capitalism as the "most fateful force in our modern life," specifically in the Western world, and in that sense the "iron cage" determining the fate of individuals (capitalists and laborers) in the "struggle for economic survival." He understands and analyzes modern Western capitalism both as an economic "spirit" and system, thus as a capitalist "ethic" and economy alike. Incidentally, in so doing, apart from critically evoking Marx (Collins, 1980), he follows the usage of the concept of capitalism in the German Historical School to which he nominally belonged and was substantively closer (Knight, 1958; Swedberg, 1998) than to rival Austrian "pure" economics, including his colleague Sombart and his teachers Schmoller and Brentano (credited with coining the term the "capitalist spirit").

As well known and usually emphasized, the Weber Thesis is initially outlined and presented in his first major and most famous and popular work the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, as well as in his "anti-critical" and polemical statements against early "comprehensive criticisms" and critics, including Sombart, Brentano, and especially religious historian Rachfahl (Samuelsson, 1961; Davis, 1978; Chalcraft & Harrington, 2001). What is perhaps less known or emphasized is that Weber elaborates, extends, and partly modifies his Thesis in such later works as *Economy and Society*, especially the sections on the sociology of religion, and *General Economic History* (both published posthumously), presenting his more developed, "mature," and complete sociological theory of the genesis of capitalism (Collins, 1980; Swedberg, 1998; Bellamy & Holleman, 2012).

Generally, these later works exhibit both a degree of continuity and discontinuity, of consistency and inconsistency with the *Protestant Ethic* in respect of the Weber Thesis. On one hand, they are continuous and consistent with this early work by continuing, elaborating, confirming, codifying, and even to some extent reinforcing the original theory of an association of the spirit of capitalism with Calvinism.⁴ On the other hand, his later works are also to some extent discontinuous and inconsistent with the *Protestant Ethic* in that they in part modify, revise, qualify, extend, and relax the initial formulation of the Weber Thesis.⁵ In this respect, the Weber Thesis shows both (intended, explicit) continuity/consistency and (unwitting, implicit) discontinuity/inconsistency between its early and later renditions or interpretations.

As noted, the seemingly single and monolithic Weber Thesis, like many other social-behavioral theories, can be generally subdivided into two alternative, strong and weak, strict and relaxed renditions and interpretations. Usually but not invariably, the first are causal or deterministic and the second noncausal or nondeterministic formulations or interpretations, simply "causations" and "correlations," respectively, with some intermediate cases. Specifically, the following identifies and presents at least four renditions and/or interpretations of

4. This applies primarily, though not completely, to *Economy and Society* (notably, the sociology of religion) and secondarily to *General Economic History*. In this connection, *Economy and Society* can be deemed the work of mostly (though not solely) continuation, elaboration, confirmation, codification, and even intensification of the Weber Thesis (Swedberg, 1998), substantially or explicitly more so than *General Economic History* (Collins, 1980).

5. In turn, this holds above all, though not entirely, for *General Economic History* and to a lesser extent *Economy and Society*. At this juncture, *General Economic History* appears as the "mature" and "last" (Collins, 1980) attempt at modification, revision, qualification, extension, and relaxation of the early Weber Thesis, as can less so *Economy and Society* (Swedberg, 1998).

TABLE 1. Renditions of the Weber Thesis

Strong monocausal, one-determinant rendition
Multicausal, multiple-determinants rendition
Moderate, standard causal, deterministic rendition
Noncausal, probabilistic rendition

the Weber Thesis, some being stronger and stricter, and the others weaker and relaxed. These renditions are, first, a strict or monocausal, one-determinant rendition; second, a multicausal, multiple-determinants rendition; third, a moderate, standard causal, deterministic rendition, and a noncausal, probabilistic rendition. (The four renditions of the Weber Thesis are summarized in Table 1.)

Evidently, the first and fourth renditions are polar or “pure” cases, involving strong, single-factor causation and noncausation in the Weber Thesis, respectively. The second and third rendition form intermediate or mixed cases between these two opposites, but are closer to the causal than to the noncausal rendition. To that extent, the fourfold classification can be plausibly deemed a dichotomy between the causal rendition—with certain subtypes of variations within it—and the noncausal rendition of the Weber Thesis. Generally, these renditions are both complementary and substitute or alternative renditions in various ways and degrees, thus exhibiting continuity and discontinuity, mutual reinforcement and exclusion or tension alike, as elaborated next.

The First Rendition of the Weber Thesis

The first of these renditions is what can be described as the strong and strict causal, deterministic formulation and version of the Weber Thesis. In this rendition, the Weber Thesis treats the assumed explanatory variable, Calvinism and other ascetic Protestantism, as the “most powerful” and “most important” factor of the presumed dependent variable, the emergence and development of modern capitalism as an economic “spirit” and “practice” or “structure” alike. For illustration, Weber initially considers in the *Protestant Ethic* ascetic Protestantism epitomized by Calvinism to be the “most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion,” simply the “causal factor”⁶ of the “spirit of capitalism” as the main variable Weber aims to explain (*explanandum*) and understood as an economic “ethos” or “attitude toward life.” He treats Calvinism as the “most important influence” on the “development of rational citizen economic life,” specifically an “extremely important precondition for modern capitalism” to develop as an economic ethos and system,⁷ particularly as the vigorous “encouragement of capital accumulation,” and generally a strong impact “under all circumstances” in the economy and society as a whole.

6. Specifically, Weber (1930 [1905], p. 99) treats the Calvinist doctrine of predestination as a “causal factor” in virtue of its “influence on other historical processes,” specifically the spirit of modern capitalism. He elaborates that, as an instance of “judgments of historical imputation,” in respect of the “significance which is to be attributed to that dogma by virtue of its cultural and historical consequences, it must certainly be rated very highly” (Weber, 1930 [1905], p. 99).

7. In Weber’s (1930 [1905], p. 172) words Calvinism’s “religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life [called] the spirit of capitalism.” Also, Weber (1930 [1905], p. 174) states that “as far as the influence of the Puritan outlook extended, under all circumstances—and this is, of course, much more important than the mere encouragement of capital accumulation—it favoured the development of a rational citizen economic life; it was the most important influence [on] the development of that life,” an “extremely important precondition for modern capitalism [to develop].”

Almost in identical words, Weber subsequently states (in *General Economic History*) that Calvinism has been the most “powerful, unconsciously refined organization for the production of capitalistic individuals” ever within any existing religion or church, including prior Christianity and other world religions, and more significant for capitalism than its nonreligious antecedent the Renaissance.⁸ He infers that the “power of religious influence,” specifically Calvinism and related ascetic Protestantism, primarily caused the subsequent “differences” in economic attitude and action, notably in the development of the “spirit” (and structure) of modern capitalism, among Western and other societies more than did any other factor, even though not operating “alone.” Weber proposes (in *Economy and Society*) that the “closest connection between ethical religion and rational economic development, particularly capitalism,” existed in “all the forms of ascetic Protestantism and sectarianism in both Western and Eastern Europe.”⁹ The preceding indicates a high degree of continuity and consistence between his earlier and later works in a strong causal formulation and variant of the Weber Thesis.

One can identify or infer what appears as the monocausal, single-determinant version of the Weber Thesis. In this rendition, Calvinism is considered not only the “most powerful” and “most important” among a set of factors, but the “only consistent” and thus relevant factor of the “spirit” of modern capitalism giving birth to and being at (the religious) genesis of the latter. Such assumed or implied monocausation, single determination is the most intense subset of the causal formulation, and thus the strongest variant of the Weber Thesis. For example, Weber states that it was Calvinism and other “ascetic Protestantism” that alone “religiously determined” and even “produced” (sic) the spirit of modern capitalism. He contends (as in the *Protestant Ethic*) that Calvinism via the “Puritan outlook” represented “above all the only consistent” and in that sense significant influence in the emergence and development of modern capitalism as rational economic ethos and life, standing at the “cradle of the modern economic man,”¹⁰ notably the “typical capitalist entrepreneur.” He suggests that if one searches for an “ethical sanction” of the “spirit and practice” of modern capitalism and capitalist entrepreneurs epitomizing “economic rationalism,” this can be found solely in “the ethics of ascetic Protestantism” such as Calvinism. Weber hence proposes to establish the expression the capitalist spirit only in the “sense that is distinctive of ascetic Protestantism,” especially Calvinism, and its “economic ethics.” In his view, the Calvinist “consistent development” (although “not identical with Calvin’s own attitudes” in *Institution of the Christian Religion* and other works) supplied an “ever more positive evaluation” to the spirit of modern capitalism such as “profit and the rational means of its realization.”¹¹

In comparative terms, Weber considers Calvinism to be the practically only one and thus unique among the religions of salvation providing such positive valuation to the spirit of capitalism by virtue of being the sole or most salient exception from their common

8. As Weber (1950 [1927], p. 368) puts it (in the closing pages of *General Economic History*), “such a powerful, unconsciously refined organization for the production of capitalistic individuals [as Calvinism] has never existed in any other church or religion, and in comparison with it what the Renaissance did for capitalism shrink into insignificance.” He elaborates that “in no other religion was the pride of the aristocracy of predestined salvation so closely associated with the person of a vocation and with the idea that success in rationalized activity demonstrates god’s blessing as in Puritanism (and hence in no other religion was the influence of ascetic motivation upon the attitude toward economic activity so strong)” (Weber 1968 [1920], p. 575).

9. Weber (1968 [1920], p. 479) mentions “Zwinglians, Calvinists, Baptists, Mennonites, Quakers, Methodists, and Pietists (both of the Reformed and, to a lesser degree, Lutheran varieties).”

10. Weber (1930 [1905], p. 259) adds that the spirit of such an “ascetic religion” as Calvinism, “gave birth to economic rationalism” in the form of the spirit of modern capitalism.

11. For example, Weber (1968 [1920], p. 1190) suggests that “Calvinism produced the first theoretical justification of interest,” though deliberately does not emphasize and even downplays this moment in his argument.

“anti-capitalist orientation.”¹² He posits what he calls the “unique and long-established elective affinity of Calvinism to capitalism,” thus being the only instance of such a relationship within Christianity, including Protestantism, and among all the world religions of salvation. Since such an affinity involves Calvinism as the unique, only “causal factor” and hence the spirit of modern capitalism as the aggregate, even if unintended, effect, this yields or implies a monocausal formulation of the Weber Thesis. The latter formulation is also implicit in that Weber establishes a sort of identity between Calvinist in terms of its societal “inner-worldly asceticism” and the spirit of capitalism in its “essential elements,”¹³ except for the “religious basis,” arguing that their “content” is the “same.” Of course, this holds true to the extent that Calvinism is assumed to be the religious “causal factor” and the spirit as well as structure of capitalism the aggregate economic outcome in such an identity or equivalence, as seen above.

It is to be emphasized that the monocausal version of the Weber Thesis is usually deemed anomalous or atypical in the Weberian and related literature (Collins, 1980; Swedberg, 1998; Munch, 2001) or even a “myth” (Holton, 1983)¹⁴. Also, Weber himself declaratively rejects such a version as a “foolish and doctrinaire thesis” and “one-sided” causal conception. The preceding shows, however, that such declarations do not always correspond to his propositions or implications, as he occasionally proposes or implies a monocausal rendition of his Thesis, especially in the “heat” of the argument and polemics, as in some sections of the *Protestant Ethic* and his heated “anti-critique” against early critics (e.g., Rachfahl, Sombart, Brentano, and others). In this respect, the strongest causal or deterministic rendition of the Weber Thesis is in part identifiable or implicit in certain of his analyses or statements, despite his declarative denials.

The Second Rendition of the Weber Thesis

The second of its renditions can be denoted the multicausal or multiple-determinant formulation and version of the Weber Thesis. By contrast to the first, this rendition posits or implies multicausation or codetermination in which Calvinism constitutes just one of the “necessary” causal factors or determinants of the spirit as well as the practice and structure of modern capitalism, even if being among the strongest and most significant of them (Kalberg, 1980; McCleary & Barro, 2006; Becker & Woessmann, 2009).

A negative, defensive, or preemptive statement of this version is that admittedly Calvinism is not the only factor and basis of modern capitalism as an economic spirit and structure, thus seemingly rejecting or suspending the previous monocausal formulation as provisional, preliminary, polemical, provocative, and the like. As noted, Weber admits that it is “a foolish and doctrinaire thesis” that capitalism as a “spirit” developed only as the “result of certain effects of the Reformation” and as an economic system represents its “creation.” He acknowledges “the fact that certain important forms of capitalistic business organization” are “considerably older than the Reformation” is a “sufficient refutation” of this thesis.

12. Weber (1968 [1920], p. 1198) argues that “an anti-capitalist ethos and welfare orientation is, in effect, a common characteristic of all religions that promise salvation [with] two exceptions, differing from one another: Puritanism [Calvinism] and Judaism.” Since Weber dismisses Judaism as the religious source of premodern political and speculative “pariah” rather than modern bourgeois industrial capitalism, thus rejecting Sombart’s alternative thesis of Judaism and capitalism, he effectively considers Calvinism, including Puritanism in England and America, as the only exception in this regard.

13. Weber (1930 [1905], p. 180) asserts that the “essential elements of the attitude which was there called the spirit of capitalism are the same as what we have just shown to be the content of the Puritan worldly asceticism, only without the religious basis.”

14. Holton (1983, p. 166) alerts to “the myth of Weber’s supposedly monocausal ‘Protestant ethic’ explanation of the development of modern capitalism.”

A positive statement of this version is that Calvinism causally influenced the spirit of modern capitalism within a relatively large complex of various social and historical factors, that is, codetermined it operating in a matrix of determinants (Collins, 1980; Munch, 2001; Acemoglu et al., 2005). In such a statement, these codeterminants of what he calls the “peculiar modern Western form of capitalism” include the development of technology and modern science, the “social structure of the Occident,” notably the “rational structure of law and of administration,” all expressing the “rationalism of Western culture,”¹⁵ alongside Calvinism as a religious determinant.

In another, mature and probably last (Collins, 1980; also, Bellamy & Holleman, 2012) statement (in *General Economic History*) on the matter, Weber first proposes that the “rational permanent enterprise, rational accounting, rational technology and rational law” are ultimately the factors “in the last resort” producing modern capitalism, though qualified as “not these alone,” with Calvinism conspicuously missing, though intimated in the qualification. Then he introduces such “necessary complementary factors” as “the rational spirit, the rationalization of the conduct of life in general, and a rationalistic economic ethic,” and thus by implication its religious root, Calvinism not even mentioned explicitly at this point. Hence, Calvinism plays a necessary role in the formation of modern capitalism as an ethos and system but operating within what Weber admits as the “complex interaction of innumerable different historical factors.” This yields or implies a kind of “modest”¹⁶ or weakened version of the Weber Thesis compared to the previous.

The Third Rendition of the Weber Thesis

The third of its renditions can be considered the moderate or standard causal, deterministic formulation and version of the Weber Thesis. Unlike the first, this rendition does not explicitly contend that Calvinism and other ascetic Protestantism constitutes the “only consistent” or even the “most powerful” but only a certain “causal” factor, especially through its fundamental dogma of predestination, of the spirit of modern capitalism. It treats Calvinism as such a factor on the account of its “causal effect” on the historical origin and development of the spirit of capitalism. Unlike the second, this rendition by incorporating only Calvinism as the factor, even if not described as the sole or even strongest, does not explicitly incorporate or specify the other social factors of the spirit of capitalism, although acknowledges them by implication.

The third rendition postulates a causal path from Calvinism and ascetic Protestantism overall as the assumed religious determinant or explanatory variable to the spirit of modern capitalism as the composite economic outcome or dependent variable to be explained. In so doing, it does not, however, claim that this is the only or even strongest “causal chain” in that direction, as does instead the first rendition, while mostly abstracting from other such determinants by contrast explicitly incorporated and specified by the second. In Weber’s words, Calvinism and other ascetic Protestantism exerted an “influence,” “specific impact,” or “effect,” even if not necessarily the sole or even the strongest, on the spirit of modern

15. Weber (1930 [1905], pp. 24–25) admits that the “peculiar modern Western form of capitalism has been strongly influenced by the development of [technology] [and] modern science [plus] the social structure of the Occident [e.g.] the rational structure of law and of administration. For modern capitalism has need of a calculable legal system and of administration in terms of formal rules. In [sum] the rationalism of Western culture.” He adds that “every such attempt at explanation must above all take account of the economic conditions [yet] the opposite correlation [from religion to economy] must not be left out of consideration” (Weber, 1930 [1905], p. 26).

16. Thus, Weber (1930 [1905], p. 90) modestly or defensively declares “we are merely attempting to clarify the part which religious forces have played in forming the developing web of our specifically worldly modern culture, in the complex interaction of innumerable different historical factors.”

capitalism¹⁷ and other, as via the doctrine of predestination, “historical processes,” notably religious and political struggles in the most developed European societies mentioned earlier.

For Weber the “causal relation” between religion in the form of Calvinism and the spirit as well as practice of capitalism, as in Puritan-ruled New England, proves to be the “reverse” of what the “economic” or “materialistic” conception argues.¹⁸ In this sense, Weber’s “causal chain” between religion and capitalism, so to speak, “turns Marx on his head” and, to complete the metaphor, perhaps vindicates or returns to Hegel and generally what Parsons (1937) registers as German idealism (also, Collins, 1980), though with some later qualifications.¹⁹ A subsequent extension of this rendition is what Weber proposes and undertakes as a “causal evaluation” of not only ascetic Protestantism but the “Western religions” as a whole, especially their characteristic “economic ethics” differentiating them from their non-Western counterparts such as Buddhism, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. This is hence the evaluation of these religions in terms of their causal impact on the formation and expansion of the spirit as well as system of capitalism (Bendix, 1946; Parsons, 1947; Collins, 1997).

The Fourth Rendition of the Weber Thesis

The fourth of its renditions can be deemed a noncausal, probabilistic, and in that sense a weak formulation of the Weber Thesis. This rendition establishes an association, relationship, connection, linkage, affinity, convergence, congruence, conjunction, confluence, correlation, and the like between ascetic Protestantism and modern capitalism as an economic ethic and system. It does not, however, explicitly specify Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism as the independent and dependent variables (i.e., *explanan* and *explanandum*), respectively, although they can be inferred by implication or interpretation from the context and argument such as the “causal chain.” If causation is assumed away, as in many interpretations of the Weber Thesis (Munch, 2001), such an inference is not admissible. If without either explicit specification or implicit inference of the independent and dependent variables, this noncausal version is more indeterminate than the others²⁰ in the sense of a “superficial correlation” (Samuelsson, 1961). Hence, to understand it presupposes understanding the causal versions of the Weber Thesis.

17. Weber (1968 [1920], p. 588) states that the “inner-worldly asceticism of Protestantism first produced a capitalistic ethics, although unintentionally, for it opened the way to a career in business, especially for the most pious and ethically rigorous people [expressing] the influence of certain religious ideas on the development of an economic spirit, on the ethos of an economic system.” In his view, “certain characteristic features of [capitalist] culture can be imputed to the influence of the Reformation [i.e.] the effect of the Reformation” (Weber, 1930 [1905], pp. 83–90). In particular, Weber (1978 [1910], p. 1112) registers Protestantism’s “specific impact on the development of those ethical qualities of the individual which would influence a propensity toward capitalism [i.e.] religiously determined specific ethical qualities.” Generally, he proposes “a causal evaluation of those elements of the economic ethics of the Western religions which differentiate them from others” (Weber, 1930 [1905], p. 27), thus not only ascetic Protestantism but also Catholicism and Christianity overall (Parsons, 1937).

18. Weber (1930 [1905], p. 55) argues in Massachusetts, the spirit of capitalism “was present before the capitalistic order. There were complaints of a peculiarly calculating sort of profit-seeking in New England, as distinguished from other parts of America, as early as 1632” and infers that “[i]n this case the causal relation is certainly the reverse of that suggested by the materialistic standpoint.”

19. However, in response to various criticisms, Weber (1930 [1905], p. 27) moderates his position stating that “we are dealing with the connection of the spirit of modern economic life with the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism. Thus we treat here only one side of the causal chain,” the other being the effect of economy on religion emphasized by the “materialistic conception.”

20. Statistically, “correlation” replaces “regression” and in that sense “causation.” Simply, without a previous knowledge or reading of the argument and causal link, this rendition does not allow to know whether Calvinism or modern capitalism is the independent or dependent variable, as they only covary; and needless to say covariance is not necessarily causation but can also be a “superficial correlation” (Samuelsson, 1961) or spurious causal relationship.

This rendition has at least two intertwined or closely related formulations. One formulation is in terms of association or covariation, another in the form of mutual attraction termed “elective affinity” or convergence between the two variables. In the first formulation, this rendition posits the “intimate” and “inner” relationship, “direct” and “large-scale developmental” connection and link, “correlations,” and like relations between Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism,²¹ thus without directly assuming or specifying the direction of the “causal chain,” if any (yet indirectly inferred from the previous versions).

In the second formulation, the present rendition suggests an “elective affinity,” “strong congruence,” “conjunction,” “confluence,” and the like between Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism (Howe, 1978; Munch, 2001; McKinnon, 2010). This seemingly does not entail or require specifying a causal link in the sense of an exact relation between independent and dependent variables.²² It is considered a special case of what Weber calls the “degree of elective affinity between concrete forms of social action and concrete structures of the economy” as the general theoretical assumption and empirical result of his economic sociology or social economics (Swedberg, 1998). At this juncture, the difference is that the first formulation implicitly entails but does not explicitly specify the “causal chain” between Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism, and the second implies no causation and so does not require such a specification.

The Weber Thesis Qualified and Relaxed

The Weber Thesis is in turn subject to some degree of qualification, relaxation, and concession, especially in view of what Weber admits as early “comprehensive criticisms” by his colleagues (Rachfahl, Sombart, Brentano, etc.). The main and perhaps most predictable qualification or concession and extension is treating both Calvinism and modern capitalism, religion and economy in general, as the cause and effect, the independent and dependent variable alike, in relation to each other. This then makes the Weber Thesis, as he puts it, “only one side of the causal chain” of religion and the economy, particularly Calvinism and modern capitalism in the form of a “capitalist spirit” and “structure” alike.

This is indicated by what Weber acknowledges and analyzes (especially in *Economy and Society*) as the interaction, interconnection, interdependence, interpenetration, reciprocal reinforcement and tension, and the like between Calvinism and capitalism, as well as religious and economic phenomena overall (Bendix, 1946; Munch, 2001; Ekelund, Hébert, & Tollison, 2002). Thus, he recognizes the “interaction between religious and capitalist interests” and the “confluence of the religious and economic components,” in particular Calvinism and modern

21. Weber (1930 [1905], p. 42) contends that the “supposed conflict between other-worldliness, asceticism, and ecclesiastical piety on the one side, and participation in capitalistic acquisition on the other, might actually turn out to be an intimate relationship,” in particular that “if any inner relationship between certain expressions of the old Protestant spirit and modern capitalistic culture is to be found [it is] not in its alleged more or less materialistic or at least anti-ascetic joy of living, but in its purely religious characteristics.” Similarly, he posits the “connection of the spirit of modern economic life,” specifically “modern capitalist development” and “bourgeois wealth accumulation,” with the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism’ (Weber, 2001a [1910], p. 76) such as Calvinism and various sects (Quakers, Mennonites, etc.). For instance, Weber (2001b [1907], p. 35) emphasizes the “clear connection between the development of the capitalist ‘spirit’ in France and the Huguenot movement,” namely the “significance of the Huguenots in France and their industrial connections” in this regard. Generally, he proposes “we can only proceed by investigating whether and at what points certain correlations between forms of religious belief and practical ethics can be worked out” (Weber 1930 [1905], p. 91)

22. Weber (1978 [1910], p. 1112) points to the “long noted affinity between Calvinism and capitalism,” even the “unique and long-established elective affinity of Calvinism to capitalism” (plus Quakerism and other sects). Similarly, he asserts the “uncontested fact of the remarkably strong congruence between Protestantism and modern capitalism,” described as “disputed as yet by no one” (Weber, 1978 [1910], p. 1112). In particular, Weber (2001b [1907], p. 36) proposes that “Calvinism showed the conjunction of intense piety with capitalist business acumen.”

capitalism. Similarly, he registers “interdependent influences” of the “material basis” a la Marx and the religious “ideas” of the Reformation—plus the “forms of social and political organization”—in particular “religious belief and practical (economic) ethics,” including the “meshing together of religious and capitalist interests in the workplace,” etc. In this context, the probably most substantial, dramatic, and unexpected concession, in view of the “materialistic” conception he rejects, is that Weber concedes that the “influence of economic development on the fate of religious ideas,” thus of modern capitalism on Calvinism and Protestantism in general, is “very important” within the overall “process of mutual adaptation of the two.”

Lastly, it is important to note that the Weber Thesis concerns the “origin” or “genesis” and “early development” of modern industrial capitalism, in particular the “qualitative formation and the quantitative expansion” of its “spirit”²³ or “ethos,” as during the late eighteenth and middle nineteenth century. Conversely, it does not pertain to the contemporary operation, structure, and dominance of capitalism, including that during and after his life, since the late nineteenth through the early twenty-first century. For capitalism during Weber’s time in his view no longer needs and has transcended and liberated itself from its Calvinist “religious basis” and “roots” pronounced as “died out slowly.”²⁴ Especially, he pronounces Calvinism’s doctrine of predestination—and its consequent ethic of worldly asceticism through systematic labor in a “calling” as proof of Divine “election”—as *caput mortuum* (literally “death’s head” or corpse), thus as inconsequential for contemporary capitalism (also, Collins, 1980; Friedman, 2011). Alternatively, Weber suggests that capitalism once established, consolidated, and dominant after the image of an “iron cage” has no pressing need and place for Calvinist and any religious sanctification.

THE COMPARATIVE “FATE” OF THE WEBER THESIS’ VERSIONS

This section considers the theoretical-empirical “destination” or attained status in the sense of the degree of acceptance in subsequent scholarship or of empirical confirmation of the Weber Thesis in its multiple versions. In his words, the question is whether the Weber Thesis has experienced a positive or adverse “fate”—simply, which of its renditions have endured or been sustained, and which have not in the social-behavioral sciences, including sociology, economics, and history?

“Adverse Fate”

In general, the strong causal-deterministic version of the Weber Thesis has suffered mostly an “adverse fate” or failure in the post-Weberian and contemporary social-behavioral sciences.

23. Weber (1930 [1905], p. 24) declares that his “central problem [is] the origin of this sober bourgeois capitalism with its rational organization of free labor [i.e.] to ascertain whether and to what extent religious forces have taken part in the qualitative formation and the quantitative expansion of that [capitalist] spirit over the world [during] the early development of capitalism.”

24. In Weber’s (1930 [1905], pp. 181–182) view, the “religious basis [by Franklin’s time] had died away. Victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer. It no longer needs the support of any religious forces [so] the religious roots died out slowly.” He adds that the “religious root of modern economic humanity is dead; today the concept of the calling is a *caput mortuum* in the world. Economic ethics arose against the background of the ascetic ideal; now it has been stripped of its religious import” (Weber, 1950 [1927], pp. 368–369). In particular, Weber (1968 [1920], p. 575; 1978 [1910], p. 1122) observes that “all that remained of [the doctrine of predestination] in Occidental ascetic Protestantism was a remains (*caput mortuum*), the contribution which this doctrine of grace made to the rational capitalistic orientation [i.e. to] the concept of the methodical demonstration of vocation in one’s economic conduct” by providing the “*dogmatic* foundations of inner-worldly asceticism.” In short, Weber (2001c [1910], p. 116) infers that contemporary capitalism is “most definitely and extensively emancipated from such [religious-theological] moments.”

Thus, the contention that Calvinism is the most powerful and important “causal factor” and historical precondition of the spirit of modern capitalism mostly has not been sustained and so not “survived” in sociology and even less in economics and especially history. This is in the sense that most subsequent sociological, economic, and historical theories and studies do not theoretically adopt and/or empirically support this apparently strong contention. They instead consider Calvinism just one among the multiple societal factors and historical conditions of modern capitalism as either an economic ethos or system, which is not necessarily more powerful and important than the others that are of nonreligious nature (Collins, 1980; Acemoglu et al., 2005).

Moreover, many sociologists, economists, and especially historians starting with Sombart and other early critics (Brentano, Rachfahl, etc.) dispute and disconfirm that Calvinism is a strong and important causal factor and historical condition of the spirit of modern capitalism. They do so on the grounds that Calvinism does not really have a stronger and more significant positive causal impact on the capitalist spirit and activity than does Catholicism as its presumed opposite and defined main enemy, as well as Lutheranism, Anglicanism, Arminianism, and other branches of Christianity (Becker & Woessmann, 2009; Young, 2009), and also Judaism²⁵ (Sombart, 2001 [1911]) and Buddhism (Collins, 1997) among the non-Christian world religions. Some analysts deny that Calvinism represents such a causal factor and historical condition at all in that it follows in time after rather than precedes and therefore does not and cannot causally impact the spirit as well as system of capitalism (Collins, 1997; Alexander, 1998; Cohen, 2002).

A fortiori, the strongest, monocausal version of the Weber Thesis has suffered clearly and decisively an “adverse fate” or failure in the social-behavioral sciences. The contention that Calvinism is the “only consistent” and to that extent the sole significant causal factor of the spirit of modern capitalism has definitely not “survived” or been sustained but virtually completely discredited and rejected in sociology, economics, and history. No relevant and serious post-Weberian and contemporary sociological, economic, and historical theory and study theoretically advances and empirically supports this “super-strong” contention. Virtually all such theories and studies refute and disconfirm that Calvinism is the sole coherent and thus relevant factor, instead placing it within a larger set of plural social factors, of the rise and expansion of modern capitalism (Collins, 1980). Even Parsons (1938), while vociferously defending the Weber Thesis against some early critics (Robertson, 1933), admits that ascetic Protestantism is but one of the “necessary” conditions, and not a single or even the strongest condition, of the spirit of modern capitalism. If the monocausal version of the Weber Thesis in the above sense has ever been proposed or implied, and Weber does and Parsons and most other Weberians would deny this, then it has been abandoned and disappeared in the post-Weberian social-science literature.

In a way, Weber himself anticipates (for cynics or critics) or preempts (for Weberians) the “adverse fate” of this version of his Thesis by declaratively dismissing it as “foolish” and “one-sided,” while still substantively positing or implying it for the sake of argumentation, polemics, and “anti-critique” against with critics. Either way, the super-strong, monocausal version of the Weber Thesis is extinct or not taken seriously in the post-Weberian and contemporary social-science literature.

25. For Sombart (2001 [1911], p. 94), “Puritanism is in reality Judaism” in a Christian dress, while Robertson (1933, p. 88) suggests that Weber treats Calvinism as “more akin to Judaism than to Christianity.”

Mixed "Fate"

The multicausal version the Weber Thesis has experienced some kind of mixed, positive, and adverse "fate," success and failure in social science. Thus, the proposition that Calvinism represents one of the causal factors of the spirit of modern capitalism has been in part validated and invalidated alike, thus endured and failed, in the literature. Specifically, it has been adopted, elaborated, and extended in contemporary sociology and to some extent economics, yet mostly refuted, disputed, or substantially modified in history.

Much of post-Weberian contemporary sociology and to some extent economics adopts and supports incorporating Calvinism into the complex of causal factors of modern capitalism, but not necessarily as the most powerful, important, and consistent factor among them (Barro & McCleary, 2003; Guiso, Sapienza, & Zingales, 2006; Swedberg, 2005) and sometimes even weaker than the others (Acemoglu et al., 2005). However, since Sombart and Brentano, many sociological, economic, and most historical studies also dispute or disconfirm that Calvinism either in its original form or its variations belongs to the causal factors, let alone being the sole or most powerful factor, of the emergence and expansion of modern capitalism (Robertson, 1933; Clark, 1951; Samuelsson, 1961).

The weak or moderate causal-deterministic version of the Weber Thesis has also experienced mixed "fate," a mixture of victory and defeat in sociology and related disciplines. The proposition that Calvinism positively impacts the spirit of modern capitalism has in part been sustained and in part unsustainable, so partly "survived" and partly not endured in these disciplines. As before, it has been frequently (but not universally) adopted, elaborated, and extended in sociology and economics, yet largely rejected, disputed, or appreciably altered in history. Like with the previous version, much of post-Weberian contemporary sociology and economics concurs with Weber that Calvinism and ascetic Protestantism overall has a strong positive effect on the formation and expansion of the spirit of modern capitalism (Collins, 1980; Dobbin, 2005; Wuthnow, 2005), even if not being considered the sole or even strongest influence.

Yet, most historical research seems to disconfirm or dispute such a role of Calvinism, either alone or in conjunction with other factors, in the emergence and development of the spirit of modern capitalism, instead suggesting that the latter was not greatly impacted by the former. Thus, many sociologists, economists, and above all historians since Sombart (1928 [1913], 2001 [1911]) deny that Calvinism represents a causal factor and historical condition of modern capitalism. They do so on the historical ground that Calvinism follows in time after rather than precedes capitalism as either a "calculative spirit" as well as activity, and therefore factually did not and logically could not causally impact in any relevant or meaningful way its "genesis" and early, as distinct from later, development. For instance, they invoke capitalist city-states in Renaissance or earlier Italy and Europe long before the Protestant Reformation and thus Calvinism (Samuelsson, 1961;²⁶ Cohen, 1980; Collins, 1997; also, Tawney, 1962).

The aforesaid holds for the weak, probabilistic, or correlational formulation of the Weber Thesis, which has also experienced mixed "fate" within sociology and related social sciences. The hypothesis of a relationship, connection, correlation, affinity, and congruence between Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism has partly survived and partly not in social science. Namely, it is largely adopted, elaborated, and specified in sociology and economics,

26. In Samuelsson's (1961, p. 96), view, "if a correlation in strictly general terms [has] existed between forms of religious faith and economic progress, it does not necessarily follow that its nature was precisely as supposed by Weber, that religion generated economic progress. The relationship may equally well have been the converse one of prosperous countries becoming Protestant."

yet mostly refuted, unsupported, or substantially altered in history. Much of post-Weberian and contemporary sociology and economics subscribes to Weber's view that the Calvinist religion and the capitalist spirit are to some degree (co)related, connected, linked, congruent, and in mutual affinity and reinforcement (Howe, 1978; Munch, 2001), though not necessarily in a definite causal nexus with specified causes and effects, independent and dependent variables, but as indeterminate noncausal covariance and convergence.

However, historical research does not seem to confirm the assumed connection, affinity, and congruence of Calvinism and the spirit of modern capitalism. Thus, most historians as well as many sociologists and economists suggest that Calvinism and modern capitalism are unrelated, disconnected, in reciprocal disaffinity, and incongruent, either in causal or noncausal terms, since the early critiques of Sombart and others (Rachfahl, Brentano) through subsequent historical, economic, and sociological studies (Samuelsson, 1961; Delacroix and Nielsen, 2001; Kaufman, 2008).

Positive "Fate"

Lastly, the relaxed version of the Weber Thesis has experienced a decisively positive fate or triumph in contemporary sociology and other social science. The assumption of interaction, interdependence, interpenetration (Munch, 2001; Ekelund et al., 2002), and the like between Calvinism and modern capitalism, like religion/culture and economy in general, has definitely survived and been sustained, including further elaborated and specified in sociology and economics, and supported by historical research. Moreover, it has become paradigmatic in particular in classical and contemporary economic sociology²⁷ (Parsons, 1947; Swedberg, 2003; Dobbin, 2005) and to some degree in social economics (Akerlof, 2007), as well as "middle-range" and more general sociological theory.

CONCLUSION

Theories and theorists seem to have a certain "fate" within the history of the social-behavioral sciences. This scientific "fate" has two but interrelated components, first the level of reception or circulation of a theory or theorist within subsequent scholarship, second, the degree of empirical support by accumulated evidence, with the latter component ideally or ultimately grounding and justifying the former in the scientific community. An infamous exemplar has been the negative "fate" of Spencerian utilitarianism, expressed in Parsons stating that "Spencer is dead," within social science since the 1930s. By contrast, the "fate" of Weber's social theory, more specifically his assumption of an association between ascetic Protestantism and the emergence and expansion of the spirit of modern capitalism has proved more ambiguous and complex within the social-behavioral sciences, in particular sociology, history, and economics.

The preceding reveals a mixed "fate" of (and so "mixed feelings" about) the Weber Thesis in contemporary sociology and related social science. The first version has suffered mostly an adverse "fate" or complete failure in social science. In particular, its strongest, monocausal, formulation, even if anomalous, atypical, and impertinent, is completely and definitely, to use Weber's expression, *caput mortuum* in contemporary sociology as well as economics and history. Most of sociology, economics, and history theoretically denies and empirically disconfirms that Calvinism is the most powerful, important, and consistent causal factor of the

27. Dobbin (2005, p. 34) concludes that "what is novel [and enduring] about Weber is not so much this particular argument [of Calvinism and capitalism] as his vision of how economy and society were intertwined."

spirit as well as structure of modern capitalism. And virtually none, and also no field within each discipline, holds that Calvinism is the only or unique factor in this respect.

The second and third versions have experienced a mix of positive and adverse fate, success, and failure in contemporary social science. The first outcome is observed mostly in economic sociology and middle-range sociological theory and economics, and the second especially in history. Most of contemporary sociology and economics concur that Calvinism is one of the causal factors of and thus influences on modern capitalism, but history mostly refutes or disputes and substantially modifies this assumption. The fourth version has enjoyed a decisively positive fate in the sense of unquestionable success or even triumph in contemporary sociology, economics, and history alike. In particular, it has become one of the major theoretical paradigms of contemporary economic sociology and to some extent social economics, as well as among the exemplars of “middle-range” and cognate sociological theory. Also, it has been strongly supported by empirical sociological and economic and historical research.

In sum, in post-Weberian and contemporary sociology as well as economics and especially history (Marshall, 1982; Benedict, 2002,²⁸ 2014; Peltonen, 2008; Brink, 2014; Graafland, 2014), the least successful and enduring seems to be the strongest and most categorical, simply the first, rendition or meaning and interpretation of the Weber Thesis²⁹ (Smelser & Swedberg, 2005). Conversely, the Weber Thesis’s weakest and most moderate, that is, the fourth, rendition and interpretation proves to be the most successful and enduring in contemporary social science, especially economic sociology (Dobbin, 2005) and social economics and middle-range’ and related sociological theory.

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28. Benedict (2002, p. xix) comments that “Weberian themes have long shaped the general image of Calvinism’s historical significance held by the educated public, they exercised surprisingly little influence on the research of most specialists in this field for the better part of the twentieth century. At an international conference on European Calvinism from 1540 to 1620 held a decade ago, a participant observed during the final session that Weber’s name had not come up once in the course of three days’ discussion. The consensus of those present was that this was for the best.” Benedict (2014, p. 200) adds that “after three generations of research devoted to pertinent aspects of this topic, the preponderance of the evidence clearly seems to be running in favor of the view that features distinctive to the theological or religious makeup of Calvinism or of the Reformed tradition more generally cannot convincingly be shown to have provided an important stimulus to rational capitalist accumulation or economic success.” Also, Brink (2014, pp. 221–222) notes that “whereas [Weber’s] essay continues to serve as a classic in sociology, in economic historiography it has been largely marginalized.” In turn, Marshall (1982, p. 68), while defending Weber’s Thesis, admits that his concept of the spirit of capitalism is historically or “empirically unverified.” Graafland (2014, p. 179) remarks that “current research has, however, cast severe doubt on the historical links between Calvinism and the origin of capitalism.”

29. Smelser and Swedberg (2005, p. 8) register that the “thesis in *The Protestant Ethic* has led to an enormous debate, with many scholars—probably a majority—arguing against Weber.”

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