Weber's Theoretical Orientation

Weber's work is avowedly multidimensional. This is depicted in Figure 4.3 by his positioning relative to the other theorists discussed in this text. He explicitly recognized that individual action is channeled through a variety of motivations that encompass both rationalist and nonrationalist dimensions (see Figure 4.1). Moreover, his definition of sociology as a science aimed at the interpretive understanding of social action squarely places the individual and her conduct at the center of analysis. Complementing this position are Weber's substantive interests that led him to study religious idea systems, institutional arrangements, class and status structures, forms of domination, and broad historical trends—in short, elements aligned with the collective dimension of social life. In Figure 4.4, we have highlighted a number of key concepts found in our preceding remarks or in the primary selections that follow. From the chart, it is readily apparent that Weber's theoretical orientation spans each of the four dimensions.

His examination of religion demonstrates his multidimensional approach. In his series of studies on the worldviews of five major world religions—Confucianism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Christianity (he was completing his studies on Judaism when he died)—Weber highlighted the ways in which religious ideas have a profound impact on individuals' actions—and consequently on the broader social order. To begin, unlike Marx, who viewed religion as "the opiate of masses," an ideology that served the economic interests of the ruling class, and unlike Durkheim, who saw in religion humanity's

Figure 4.3 Weber's Basic Theoretical Orientation

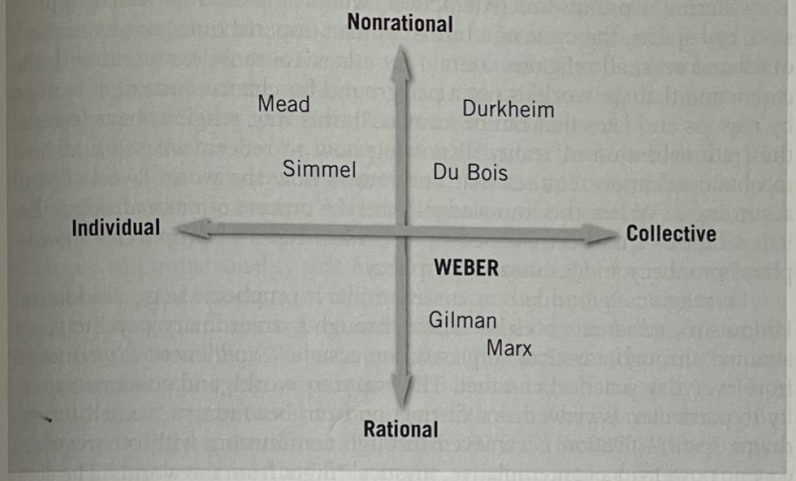
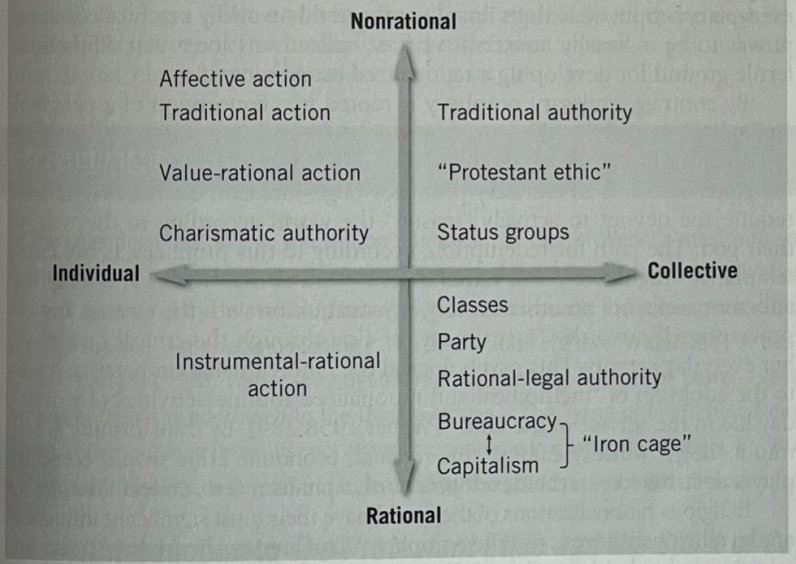


Figure 4.4 Weber's Core Concepts



worship of itself, Weber saw religions as serving an important social psychological function by providing a system of meaning that explains the existence of suffering and evil in the world. In addressing the psychological need of the fortunate to legitimate their good fortune, the need of the less fortunate to accept their misfortune, and the need of all for the promise of future salvation, religions are oriented to the individualist and nonrational domains of social life. At the same time, religions are *systems* of meaning that shape numerous aspects of

societies, including economic activity, and thus possess collectivist and rational features, though not of the sort emphasized by Marx and Durkheim.

Let's flesh this out further.

Offering a promise of redemption, whether it be from social oppression, evil spirits, the cycle of rebirths, human imperfections, or any number of other forces, all religions counter an otherwise senseless world with the conviction that the world is not a playground for chance; instead, it is ruled by reasons and fates that can be known. In this way, religions have fostered the "rationalization of reality." Knowing how to redeem oneself and how to obtain salvation requires that one knows how the world "works." And according to Weber, this knowledge—and the process of rationalization that it has fueled—has been shaped by two ideal types of prophecies: "exemplary" prophecy and "emissary" prophecy.[2]

In religions grounded in an exemplary prophecy (e.g., Buddhism, Hinduism), adherents seek salvation through extraordinary psychic states attained through mystical, orgiastic, or ecstatic experiences far removed from everyday practical conduct. The everyday world, and economic activity in particular, is viewed as a distraction from becoming a "vessel" for the divine spirit; salvation is achieved through communing with otherworldly cosmic powers in a contemplative, mystical "flight from the world." The conception of a supreme, impersonal being accessible only through contemplation and mystical (i.e., nonrational) experiences compels an inward search for spiritual awakening and removes the psychological (i.e., individualist) impetus to engage in worldly action as a path for redemption. Consequently, exemplary prophecy, with its hostility toward this-worldly practical conduct, proves to be a socially conservative (i.e., collectivist) force that offers little fertile ground for developing a rationalized economic ethic.

By contrast, emissary prophecy is rooted in a conception of a personal God who is vengeful and loving, forgiving and punishing, and who demands of the faithful active, ethical conduct in order to serve His commandments. Religions based on an emissary prophecy (e.g., Judaism, Christianity, Islam) require the devout to actively "master" the world according to the will of their god. The path for redemption, according to this prophecy, is not contemplative "flight from" but rather ascetic work *in* this world. The religious adherent seeks not an otherworldly, mystical union with the cosmos but to prove oneself a worthy "instrument" of God through the ethical quality of her everyday activity. This psychological (i.e., individualist) imperative leads to the adoption of "methodical and rationalized routine-activities of workaday life in the service of the Lord" (Weber 1958:289). By transforming work into a "holy," worldly calling, this *rational*, economic ethic would come to play a decisive role in the development of capitalism (i.e., collectivist).

Religious rationalizations of the world have their most significant influence on the religiously devout (monks, prophets, shamans, ascetics) whose quest for salvation is guided by authentically spiritual motives. Yet though the masses may be less devout, religion nevertheless provides a way of life steeped in

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[2]It is important to remember that exemplary and emissary prophecies are ideal types. In actuality, religions often possess both emissary and exemplary characteristics. For instance, Christian Charismatics, who believe that the Holy Spirit can enter into individuals and spur them to "speak in tongues," practice a more "exemplary" prophetic tradition than do Methodists, whose very name reflects their more "methodical," emissary bent. For their part, both Islam and Judaism have their more mystical, "exemplary" sects in the form of Sufism and Kabbalah, respectively.

value-rationality and a path to eternal redemption that allows them to counter an otherwise senseless world with a "meaningful cosmos." Thus, communing contemplatively with the cosmic love of Nirvana, striving for orgiastic ecstasy, or actively proving oneself as an instrument or tool of God's will represents a genuine religious aim that cannot be reduced to some sort of underlying "distorted" class interest. Nor can the motives of the religiously observant be understood as expressions of the collective conscience or as serving the unintended consequence of deifying society, as Durkheim would contend.

Not all of Weber's work incorporates elements from each of the four dimensions in our theoretical framework, however. For instance, as you will read later in this chapter, Weber's discussion of bureaucracy (excerpted below) focuses on the administrative functions and rules that account for the efficiency and impersonality that mark this organizational form. As a result, he emphasizes the structural or collectivist aspects of bureaucracies and how they work down to shape a given individual's behaviors and attitudes within them. Thus, you will find Weber remarking, "The individual bureaucrat cannot squirm out of the apparatus into which he has been harnessed. . . . He is only a small cog in a ceaselessly moving mechanism which prescribes to him an essentially fixed route of march" (Weber 1925/1978a:988). Weber's interest lies here in describing the bureaucratic apparatus replete with its institutionalized demands for technical expertise and leveling of social differences.

The purpose of these remarks and the brief overview of Weber's analyses of religion is to provide you an introduction into his complex, multidimensional theoretical orientation. As you the read the selections that follow, you will develop a fuller understanding of and appreciation for the ways in which he knits together individualist and collectivist, as well as rational and nonrational, elements into his wide-ranging studies.[3]

Readings

In the selections that follow, you will be introduced to four of Weber's most influential writings. In the first reading, excerpts from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Weber 1904–1905) offer Weber's analysis of the relationship between Protestantism and the economic and cultural life of modern Western society. In the second reading ("The Distribution of Power Within the Political Community: Class, Status, Party," 1925), Weber investigates the crosscutting sources of power: class, status, and party. A parallel theme is addressed in the third selection, "The Types of Legitimate Domination" (1925), in which Weber outlines three distinct types of domination or authority. Finally, in "Bureaucracy" (1925), we end with Weber's description of bureaucracy, the predominant form of modern social organizations.

Introduction to *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*

Beyond doubt one of the most influential sociology books ever written, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* masterfully captures the two subjects that preoccupied Weber's intellectual activities:

[3]Although Weber's approach is clearly multidimensional, it is due to arguments like the one expressed in his essay on bureaucracy that we position the body of his work "off center," ultimately in the collectivist/rationalist quadrant of our diagram. In the end, his emphasis lies in examining the rationalizing (i.e., rationalist) processes that have shaped the development of modern Western institutions (i.e., collectivist).

(1) the rationalizing tendencies so prevalent in Western society and (2) the role of ideas in shaping those tendencies. In developing his account of the independent role religious ideas can play in shaping the social order and, in particular, the "ethos" of economic systems, Weber offers a powerful critique of Marx's emphasis on property relations and class struggle as the motor forces of change. Indeed, in several passages of *The Protestant Ethic*, you will read Weber clearly setting his sights on Marx's historical materialism and its allegedly one-sided causal interpretation of history—for not only "material" factors but also "ideal" factors can be instrumental in producing social change. It is to this complex historical argument that we now turn.

Weber begins his study with the observation that throughout contemporary Western Europe, business leaders, owners of capital, managers, and highly skilled laborers were overwhelmingly Protestant; Catholics were far less likely to hold such occupational positions. This observation, in turn, led Weber to ask the historical question: Why were those areas of Europe where capitalism—the continuous, rational pursuit of profit—had most fully developed at the same time places most receptive to the Protestant Reformation and its condemnation of the Catholic Church? His answer, in short, was that the "peculiar," methodical *attitude* at the heart of Protestantism—the **Protestant ethic**—played a central role in the rise and eventual dominance of Western capitalism. Significantly, however, Weber did not argue that the Protestant ethic *caused* the emergence and growth of Western capitalism. Protestantism alone was not sufficient for creating this profound economic change. Rather, he argued that the Protestant ethic combined with a number of other important structural and social factors—including the separation of business pursuits from the home; the development of rational bookkeeping methods; technological advances in methods of production, distribution, and communication; the development of a rational legal system based on impersonal, formal rules; and, most important, the rational organization of free labor—to produce the dominance of Western capitalism.

Led by the German Augustinian monk Martin Luther (1483–1546), the Protestant Reformation was a sixteenth-century religious movement initially intended to reform the beliefs and practices of the Catholic Church, which according to Luther and his followers had become much too lax in controlling the everyday life of Catholics.[1] Yet by radically redefining the relationship between man and God, the Reformation upended the Church's religious and political authority—that is, the authority of the Pope and the religious hierarchy, as well as the authority of political rulers who were seeking to extend their power through control of the Church. The result was not reform but rather the split of a unified, medieval Christianity into what we know today as Catholicism and Protestantism.

In medieval Christianity, the salvation of the individual was tied to rituals performed by a handful of religious professionals (the clergy), who alone had the ability to communicate with God. By contrast, Protestant reformers maintained that every individual has a direct relationship to God and that individual salvation lies in His hand, not in the hands of church clergy. Moreover, they contended that token, periodic rituals (for instance, the Catholic confessional) or occasional "good works" could never placate or gain the favor of a great and all-powerful God. Instead, each individual must methodically strive to realize a moral and righteous life each and every day (not only on Sunday) in all practical activities (not just occasional "good works") as a continual expression of devotion to the glorification of God. Displacing the Church as the sole conduit, here was a way for the faithful to respond directly to the will of God.

An essential element of the Reformation was the conviction that each individual had the duty to *submit* to the will of God through faithful dedication to her or his **calling** or life-task. For Luther, this submission to a calling was demanded of rich and poor alike. All must be content with their lot, for it was God's unfathomable will that had assigned to each his station in life. With its emphasis on submission and faith, Luther's view of the calling, like the Catholicism it rebelled against, promoted a traditional economic ethic that discouraged both laboring and profit seeking beyond what had long been established

[1] In one of the signal events of the Reformation, Luther posted 95 theses on the church door in the university town of Wittenberg (a then common practice to instigate debate).

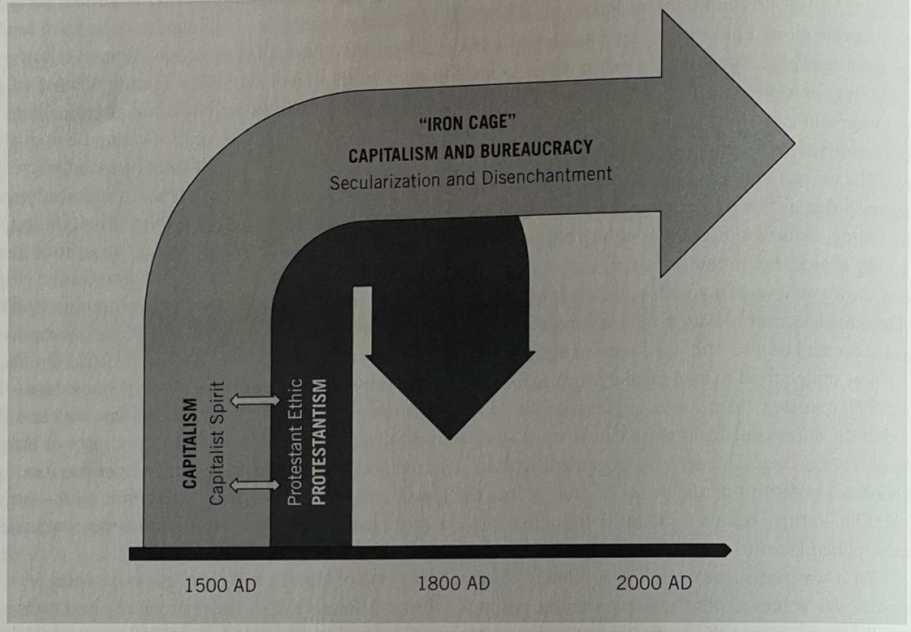
through custom. Workers and merchants sought simply to maintain the level of productivity and standard of living associated with the vocation in which they were engaged.

In the hands of later Puritan leaders, however, the meaning of the calling was transformed. John Calvin (1509–1564) and Richard Baxter (1615–1691) viewed the calling as a commandment to *work* for God's divine glory. Epitomizing an emissary prophecy, Calvinism in particular demanded that its followers serve as the instruments of God in order to fashion the world in His image. This reinterpretation of the calling, however, induced an unimaginable spiritual anxiety. With faithful submission to one's calling no longer sufficient for gaining confidence in one's salvation, how could the believer know that he might be one of His elect? Existing beyond the influence of mortals, only God knows who will be saved; there could be no certainty of proof of one's state of grace. In the wake of this spiritual abyss, Puritan leaders reasoned that although a person can never know with certainty whether or not he is diligently fulfilling his calling, God would grant a sign to those who might be saved. And that sign? Success and profit in worldly affairs, the pursuit of which was now religiously enjoined. Baxter stated the injunction thusly: "If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way . . . if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept His gifts and use them for Him when He requireth it" (Weber 1904–1905/1958:162). Profit was now understood to be a visible blessing from God that allowed the faithful to answer the most burning of all questions: Am I saved? Possessed by this "new spirit," one's predestined, eternal fate was now tied to the success of his conduct in work, a sphere of activity that was catapulted to the center of the believer's existence. The active engagement with the external, secular world called for by Calvinism functioned as a potent impetus for social change and the development of a rationalized economic ethic—an ethic that, in turn, resolved a central imperative of capitalism, for a competitive market economy requires a disciplined labor force, one in which workers show up and work hard each and every day.

Yet it was not success itself that offered proof of being one of His elect. Rather, it was *how* and *why* success was achieved that was paramount to one's salvation. Recall that a cornerstone of the Protestant Reformation was the commitment to living each and every day devoted to the glorification of God through one's calling. As Baxter cautioned his followers, "you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin" (Weber 1904–1905/1958:162). In this proscription lay the seeds for the subjective disposition that would ignite the growth of capitalism. Because wealth served as proof of one's salvation only if it did not lead to idleness or self-indulgence, the faithful servant could not waste time on frivolous pursuits or spend money on luxuries. For the faithful businessperson, working hard in his calling might very well result in profit, but the question was what to do with this profit and still remain in God's good grace. The best course of action was to reinvest that profit back into one's business. Profitableness, moreover, was best guaranteed when economic pursuits were carried out on the basis of methodical and rational planning. Thus, ascetic restrictions on consumption and "the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life" were combined with the religiously derived compulsion to increase one's wealth. And this ethical imperative to save and invest one's wealth would become the spiritual foundation for the spread of capitalism.

It would not be long, however, before the rational pursuit of wealth and bureaucratic structures necessary to modern capitalism would render obsolete the religious ethic that first had imbued work with a sense of meaning and purpose (see Figure 4.5). In one of history's greatest paradoxes, a religious belief system that demanded faithful commitment to God's commandments and devotion to creating His kingdom on earth would fuel the creation of a secular world chained by the never-ending pursuit of profit. As businesses became increasingly organized on the basis of impersonal, methodical practices aimed at the efficient production of goods and services, individuals sought profit not to quell the anxiety-inducing uncertainty of their eternal salvation but because it was in one's worldly self-interest to do so. Stripped of its religious impulses and spiritual moorings—its value-rationality—the explosive growth of capitalism in the West would eventually reverse the "natural relationship" between economic acquisition and the satisfaction of material needs. "Man [was now] dominated by making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of life" (Weber 1904–1905/1958:53).

Figure 4.5 The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism



The Protestant ethic would ultimately fade away as a set of ideas capable of compelling and giving meaning to conduct. In its place was conjured a hollowed-out spirit of capitalism, a spirit, as you will read, voiced in the writings of Benjamin Franklin. Yet over time, this spirit was itself crushed by the rationalistic structure of capitalism and bureaucratic forms of organization that together metastasized into an **iron cage**, a collective force determining the life chances of individuals. As Weber (1904–1905/1958) famously states:

> The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day [sic] determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. (181)

By the twentieth century, the original religious injunction to lead a life freed from the "temptations of the flesh" would devolve into a disenchanted, secular world devoid of moral imperatives and spiritual meaning where "material goods [had] gained an increasing and finally inexorable power over the lives of men. . . . In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the 'saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment.' But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage" (Weber 1904–1905/1958:181).

And what of the iron cage today? Consider some statistics from the U.S. Commerce Department and the Federal Reserve Board: as of the beginning of 2019, the average household was saddled with credit card debt of more than $8,000, while the nation's credit card debt stood at just over $1 trillion

(LendingTree 2019). The average total household debt was more than $50,000, while as a nation, total household debt reached a record high of more than $13 trillion (Kline 2019). Not surprisingly, personal savings rates have declined. After essential expenditures, Americans saved just over 11 percent of their disposable income in 1984. As of December 2019, 35 years later, the rate stood at 7.6 percent (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis 2020). Currently, more than half of Americans report spending more than they earn (Stevens 2018). Far from being a "light cloak," our "care for external goods" has become central to our personal identity and sense of self. We define ourselves through the cars we drive, the clothes we wear, the places we vacation, and the neighborhoods we live in, rather than through a sense of ultimate purpose or meaning to life. Whether it's trying to keep up with the Joneses or to distinguish ourselves from the herd, we are in continual "need" of new and better products, the purchasing of which requires ever-longer working hours in order to earn more money, so that we can spend more money. To keep pace with the growing accumulation of products, over the past 50 years, the average home size has doubled. Still, we can't seem to fit everything in, so we hire companies to organize our closets and garages, or, when that fails, we pay to pack our "unessential" belongings into one of the thousands of self-storage spaces that dot the landscape. Like Marx's views on the fetishism of commodities and Veblen's notion of conspicuous consumption, the iron cage has imprisoned us in the pursuit of the lifestyles of the rich and famous, whether or not we can afford to live like the affluent.

From *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1904)

Max Weber

The Spirit of Capitalism

In the title of this study is used the somewhat pretentious phrase, the *spirit* of capitalism. What is to be understood by it? The attempt to give anything like a definition of it brings out certain difficulties which are in the very nature of this type of investigation. . . .

Thus, if we try to determine the object, the analysis and historical explanation of which we are attempting, it cannot be in the form of a conceptual definition, but at least in the beginning only a provisional description of what is here meant by the spirit of capitalism. Such a description is, however, indispensable in order clearly to understand the object of the investigation. For this purpose we turn to a document of that spirit which contains what we are looking for in almost classical purity, and at the same time has the advantage of being free from all direct relationship to religion, being thus, for our purposes, free of preconceptions.

"Remember, that *time* is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but sixpence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon *that* the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides.

"Remember, that *credit* is money. If a man lets his money lie in my hands after it is due, he gives me the interest, or so much as I can make of it during that time. This amounts to a considerable sum where a man has good and large credit, and makes good use of it.

"Remember, that money is of the prolific, generating nature. Money can beget money, and its offspring can beget more, and so on. Five shillings turned is six, turned again it is seven and threepence, and so on, till it becomes a hundred pounds. The more there is of it, the more it produces every turning, so that the profits rise quicker and quicker. He that kills a breeding-sow, destroys all her offspring to the thousandth

Source: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, 1st edition, by Max Weber. Copyright © 1958. Reprinted by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

generation. He that murders a crown, destroys all that it might have produced, even scores of pounds."

"Remember this saying, *The good paymaster is lord of another man's purse*. He that is known to pay punctually and exactly to the time he promises, may at any time, and on any occasion, raise all the money his friends can spare. This is sometimes of great use. After industry and frugality, nothing contributes more to the raising of a young man in the world than punctuality and justice in all his dealings; therefore never keep borrowed money an hour beyond the time you promised, lest a disappointment shut up your friend's purse for ever.

"The most trifling actions that affect a man's credit are to be regarded. The sound of your hammer at five in the morning, or eight at night, heard by a creditor, makes him easy six months longer; but if he sees you at a billiard-table, or hears your voice at a tavern, when you should be at work, he sends for his money the next day; demands it, before he can receive it, in a lump.

"It shows, besides, that you are mindful of what you owe; it makes you appear a careful as well as an honest man, and that still increases your credit.

"Beware of thinking all your own that you possess, and of living accordingly. It is a mistake that many people who have credit fall into. To prevent this, keep an exact account for some time both of your expenses and your income. If you take the pains at first to mention particulars, it will have this good effect: you will discover how wonderfully small, trifling expenses mount up to large sums, and will discern what might have been, and may for the future be saved, without occasioning any great inconvenience.

"For six pounds a year you may have the use of one hundred pounds, provided you are a man of known prudence and honesty.

"He that spends a groat a day idly, spends idly above six pounds a year, which is the price for the use of one hundred pounds.

"He that wastes idly a groat's worth of his time per day, one day with another, wastes the privilege of using one hundred pounds each day.

"He that idly loses five shillings' worth of time, loses five shillings, and might as prudently throw five shillings into the sea.

"He that loses five shillings, not only loses that sum, but all the advantage that might be made by turning it in dealing, which by the time that a young man becomes old, will amount to a considerable sum of money."

It is Benjamin Franklin who preaches to us in these sentences, the same which Ferdinand Kürnberger satirizes in his clever and malicious *Picture of American Culture* as the supposed confession of faith of the Yankee. That it is the spirit of capitalism which here speaks in characteristic fashion, no one will doubt, however little we may wish to claim that everything which could be understood as pertaining to that spirit is contained in it. Let us pause a moment to consider this passage, the philosophy of which Kürnberger sums up in the words, "They make tallow out of cattle and money out of men." The peculiarity of this philosophy of avarice appears to be the ideal of the honest man of recognized credit, and above all the idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as an end in itself. Truly what is here preached is not simply a means of making one's way in the world, but a peculiar ethic. The infraction of its rules is treated not as foolishness but as forgetfulness of duty. That is the essence of the matter. It is not mere business astuteness, that sort of thing is common enough, it is an ethos. *This* is the quality which interests us. . . .

Now, all Franklin's moral attitudes are coloured with utilitarianism. Honesty is useful, because it assures credit; so are punctuality, industry, frugality, and that is the reason they are virtues. A logical deduction from this would be that where, for instance, the appearance of honesty serves the same purpose, that would suffice, and an unnecessary surplus of this virtue would evidently appear to Franklin's eyes as unproductive waste. And as a matter of fact, the story in his autobiography of his conversion to those virtues, or the discussion of the value of a strict maintenance of the appearance of modesty, the assiduous belittlement of one's own deserts in order to gain general recognition later, confirms this impression. According to Franklin, those virtues, like all others, are only in so far virtues as they are actually useful to the individual, and the surrogate of mere appearance is always sufficient when it accomplishes the end in view. It is a conclusion which is inevitable for strict utilitarianism. The impression of many Germans that the virtues professed by Americanism are pure hypocrisy seems

to have been confirmed by this striking case. But in fact the matter is not by any means so simple. Benjamin Franklin's own character, as it appears in the really unusual candidness of his autobiography, belies that suspicion. The circumstance that he ascribes his recognition of the utility of virtue to a divine revelation which was intended to lead him in the path of righteousness, shows that something more than mere garnishing for purely egocentric motives is involved.

In fact, the *summum bonum* of this ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life, is above all completely devoid of any eudæmonistic, not to say hedonistic, admixture. It is thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. This reversal of what we should call the natural relationship, so irrational from a naïve point of view, is evidently as definitely a leading principle of capitalism as it is foreign to all peoples not under capitalistic influence. At the same time it expresses a type of feeling which is closely connected with certain religious ideas. If we thus ask, *why* should "money be made out of men," Benjamin Franklin himself, although he was a colourless deist, answers in his autobiography with a quotation from the Bible, which his strict Calvinistic father drummed into him again and again in his youth: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? He shall stand before kings" (Prov. xxii. 29). The earning of money within the modern economic order is, so long as it is done legally, the result and the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling; and this virtue and proficiency are, as it is now not difficult to see, the real Alpha and Omega of Franklin's ethic, as expressed in the passages we have quoted, as well as in all his works without exception.

And in truth this peculiar idea, so familiar to us to-day, but in reality so little a matter of course, of one's duty in a calling, is what is most characteristic of the social ethic of capitalistic culture, and is in a sense the fundamental basis of it. It is an obligation which the individual is supposed to feel and does feel towards the content of his professional activity, no matter in what it consists, in particular no matter whether it appears on the surface as a utilization of his personal powers, or only of his material possessions (as capital).

Of course, this conception has not appeared only under capitalistic conditions. On the contrary, we shall later trace its origins back to a time previous to the advent of capitalism. Still less, naturally, do we maintain that a conscious acceptance of these ethical maxims on the part of the individuals, entrepreneurs or labourers, in modern capitalistic enterprises, is a condition of the further existence of present-day capitalism. The capitalistic economy of the present day is an immense cosmos into which the individual is born, and which presents itself to him, at least as an individual, as an unalterable order of things in which he must live. It forces the individual, in so far as he is involved in the system of market relationships, to conform to capitalistic rules of action. The manufacturer who in the long run acts counter to these norms, will just as inevitably be eliminated from the economic scene as the worker who cannot or will not adapt himself to them will be thrown into the streets without a job.

Thus the capitalism of to-day, which has come to dominate economic life, educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest. But here one can easily see the limits of the concept of selection as a means of historical explanation. In order that a manner of life so well adapted to the peculiarities of capitalism could be selected at all, i.e., should come to dominate others, it had to originate somewhere, and not in isolated individuals alone, but as a way of life common to whole groups of men. This origin is what really needs explanation. Concerning the doctrine of the more naive historical materialism, that such ideas originate as a reflection or superstructure of economic situations, we shall speak more in detail below. At this point it will suffice for our purpose to call attention to the fact that without doubt, in the country of Benjamin Franklin's birth (Massachusetts), the spirit of capitalism (in the sense we have attached to it) was present before the capitalistic order. . . . It is further undoubted that capitalism remained far less developed in some of the neighbouring colonies, the later Southern States of the

United States of America, in spite of the fact that these latter were founded by large capitalists for business motives, while the New England colonies were founded by preachers and seminary graduates with the help of small bourgeois, craftsmen and yoemen, for religious reasons. In this case the causal relation is certainly the reverse of that suggested by the materialistic standpoint.

But the origin and history of such ideas is much more complex than the theorists of the superstructure suppose. The spirit of capitalism, in the sense in which we are using the term, had to fight its way to supremacy against a whole world of hostile forces. A state of mind such as that expressed in the passages we have quoted from Franklin, and which called forth the applause of a whole people, would both in ancient times and in the Middle Ages have been proscribed as the lowest sort of avarice and as an attitude entirely lacking in self-respect. It is, in fact, still regularly thus looked upon by all those social groups which are least involved in or adapted to modern capitalistic conditions. This is not wholly because the instinct of acquisition was in those times unknown or undeveloped, as has often been said. Nor because the *auri sacra fames*, the greed for gold, was then, or now, less powerful outside of bourgeois capitalism than within its peculiar sphere, as the illusions of modern romanticists are wont to believe. The difference between the capitalistic and pre-capitalistic spirits is not to be found at this point. The greed of the Chinese Mandarin, the old Roman aristocrat, or the modern peasant, can stand up to any comparison. And the *auri sacra fames* of a Neapolitan cab-driver or *barcaiuolo*, and certainly of Asiatic representatives of similar trades, as well as of the craftsmen of southern European or Asiatic countries, is, as anyone can find out for himself, very much more intense, and especially more unscrupulous than that of, say, an Englishman in similar circumstances. . . .

The most important opponent with which the spirit of capitalism, in the sense of a definite standard of life claiming ethical sanction, has had to struggle, was that type of attitude and reaction to new situations which we may designate as traditionalism. . . .

One of the technical means which the modern employer uses in order to secure the greatest possible amount of work from his men is the device of piece-rates. In agriculture, for instance, the gathering of the harvest is a case where the greatest possible intensity of labour is called for, since, the weather being uncertain, the difference between high profit and heavy loss may depend on the speed with which the harvesting can be done. Hence a system of piece-rates is almost universal in this case. And since the interest of the employer in a speeding-up of harvesting increases with the increase of the results and the intensity of the work, the attempt has again and again been made, by increasing the piece-rates of the workmen, thereby giving them an opportunity to earn what is for them a very high wage, to interest them in increasing their own efficiency. But a peculiar difficulty has been met with surprising frequency: raising the piece-rates has often had the result that not more but less has been accomplished in the same time, because the worker reacted to the increase not by increasing but by decreasing the amount of his work. A man, for instance, who at the rate of 1 mark per acre mowed 2½ acres per day and earned 2½ marks, when the rate was raised to 1.25 marks per acre mowed, not 3 acres, as he might easily have done, thus earning 3.75 marks, but only 2 acres, so that he could still earn the 2½ marks to which he was accustomed. The opportunity of earning more was less attractive than that of working less. He did not ask: how much can I earn in a day if I do as much work as possible? but: how much must I work in order to earn the wage, 2½ marks, which I earned before and which takes care of my traditional needs? This is an example of what is here meant by traditionalism. A man does not "by nature" wish to earn more and more money, but simply to live as he is accustomed to live and to earn as much as is necessary for that purpose. Wherever modern capitalism has begun its work of increasing the productivity of human labour by increasing its intensity, it has encountered the immensely stubborn resistance of this leading trait of pre-capitalistic labour. And to-day it encounters it the more, the more backward (from a capitalistic point of view) the labouring forces are with which it has to deal.

Another obvious possibility, to return to our example, since the appeal to the acquisitive instinct through higher wage-rates failed, would have been to try the opposite policy, to force the worker by reduction of his wage-rates to work

harder to earn the same amount than he did before. Low wages and high profits seem even to-day to a superficial observer to stand in correlation; everything which is paid out in wages seems to involve a corresponding reduction of profits. That road capitalism has taken again and again since its beginning. For centuries it was an article of faith, that low wages were productive, i.e., that they increased the material results of labour so that, as Pieter de la Cour, on this point, as we shall see, quite in the spirit of the old Calvinism, said long ago, the people only work because and so long as they are poor.

But the effectiveness of this apparently so efficient method has its limits. Of course the presence of a surplus population which it can hire cheaply in the labour market is a necessity for the development of capitalism. But though too large a reserve army may in certain cases favour its quantitative expansion, it checks its qualitative development, especially the transition to types of enterprise which make more intensive use of labour. Low wages are by no means identical with cheap labour. From a purely quantitative point of view the efficiency of labour decreases with a wage which is physiologically insufficient, which may in the long run even mean a survival of the unfit. . . . Low wages fail even from a purely business point of view wherever it is a question of producing goods which require any sort of skilled labour, or the use of expensive machinery which is easily damaged, or in general wherever any great amount of sharp attention or of initiative is required. Here low wages do not pay, and their effect is the opposite of what was intended. For not only is a developed sense of responsibility absolutely indispensable, but in general also an attitude which, at least during working hours, is freed from continual calculations of how the customary wage may be earned with a maximum of comfort and a minimum of exertion. Labour must, on the contrary, be performed as if it were an absolute end in itself, a calling. But such an attitude is by no means a product of nature. It cannot be evoked by low wages or high ones alone, but can only be the product of a long and arduous process of education. To-day, capitalism, once in the saddle, can recruit its labouring force in all industrial countries with comparative ease. In the past this was in every case an extremely difficult problem. And even to-day it could probably not get along without the support of a powerful ally along the way, which, as we shall see below, was at hand at the time of its development. . . .

Now, how could activity, which was at best ethically tolerated, turn into a calling in the sense of Benjamin Franklin? The fact to be explained historically is that in the most highly capitalistic centre of that time, in Florence of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the money and capital market of all the great political Powers, this attitude was considered ethically unjustifiable, or at best to be tolerated. But in the backwoods small bourgeois circumstances of Pennsylvania in the eighteenth century, where business threatened for simple lack of money to fall back into barter, where there was hardly a sign of large enterprise, where only the earliest beginnings of banking were to be found, the same thing was considered the essence of moral conduct, even commanded in the name of duty. To speak here of a reflection of material conditions in the ideal superstructure would be patent nonsense. What was the background of ideas which could account for the sort of activity apparently directed toward profit alone as a calling toward which the individual feels himself to have an ethical obligation? For it was this idea which gave the way of life of the new entrepreneur its ethical foundation and justification. . . .

Asceticism and the Spirit of Capitalism

In order to understand the connection between the fundamental religious ideas of ascetic Protestantism and its maxims for everyday economic conduct, it is necessary to examine with especial care such writings as have evidently been derived from ministerial practice. For in a time in which the beyond meant everything, when the social position of the Christian depended upon his admission to the communion, the clergyman, through his ministry, Church discipline, and preaching, exercised an influence (as a glance at collections of *consilia*, *casus conscientię*, etc., shows) which we modern men are entirely unable to picture. In such a time the religious forces which express themselves through such channels are the decisive influences in the formation of national character.

For the purposes of this chapter, though by no means for all purposes, we can treat ascetic Protestantism as a single whole. But since that side of English Puritanism which was derived from Calvinism gives the most consistent religious basis for the idea of the calling, we shall, following our previous method, place one of its representatives at the centre of the discussion. Richard Baxter stands out above many other writers on Puritan ethics, both because of his eminently practical and realistic attitude, and, at the same time, because of the universal recognition accorded to his works, which have gone through many new editions and translations. He was a Presbyterian and an apologist of the Westminster Synod, but at the same time, like so many of the best spirits of his time, gradually grew away from the dogmas of pure Calvinism. . . . His *Christian Directory* is the most complete compendium of Puritan ethics, and is continually adjusted to the practical experiences of his own ministerial activity. In comparison we shall make use of Spener's *Theologische Bedenken*, as representative of German Pietism, Barclay's *Apology* for the Quakers, and some other representatives of ascetic ethics, which, however, in the interest of space, will be limited as far as possible.

Now, in glancing at Baxter's *Saints' Everlasting Rest*, or his *Christian Directory*, or similar works of others, one is struck at first glance by the emphasis placed, in the discussion of wealth and its acquisition, on the ebionitic elements of the New Testament. Wealth as such is a great danger; its temptations never end, and its pursuit is not only senseless as compared with the dominating importance of the Kingdom of God, but it is morally suspect. Here asceticism seems to have turned much more sharply against the acquisition of earthly goods than it did in Calvin, who saw no hindrance to the effectiveness of the clergy in their wealth, but rather a thoroughly desirable enhancement of their prestige. Hence he permitted them to employ their means profitably. Examples of the condemnation of the pursuit of money and goods may be gathered without end from Puritan writings, and may be contrasted with the late mediæval ethical literature, which was much more open-minded on this point.

Moreover, these doubts were meant with perfect seriousness; only it is necessary to examine them somewhat more closely in order to understand their true ethical significance and implications. The real moral objection is to relaxation in the security of possession, the enjoyment of wealth with the consequence of idleness and the temptations of the flesh, above all of distraction from the pursuit of a righteous life. In fact, it is only because possession involves this danger of relaxation that it is objectionable at all. For the saints' everlasting rest is in the next world; on earth man must, to be certain of his state of grace, "do the works of him who sent him, as long as it is yet day." Not leisure and enjoyment, but only activity serves to increase the glory of God, according to the definite manifestations of His will.

Waste of time is thus the first and in principle the deadliest of sins. The span of human life is infinitely short and precious to make sure of one's own election. Loss of time through sociability, idle talk, luxury, even more sleep than is necessary for health, six to at most eight hours, is worthy of absolute moral condemnation. It does not yet hold, with Franklin, that time is money, but the proposition is true in a certain spiritual sense. It is infinitely valuable because every hour lost is lost to labour for the glory of God. Thus inactive contemplation is also valueless, or even directly reprehensible if it is at the expense of one's daily work. For it is less pleasing to God than the active performance of His will in a calling. Besides, Sunday is provided for that, and, according to Baxter, it is always those who are not diligent in their callings who have no time for God when the occasion demands it.

Accordingly, Baxter's principal work is dominated by the continually repeated, often almost passionate preaching of hard, continuous bodily or mental labour. It is due to a combination of two different motives. Labour is, on the one hand, an approved ascetic technique, as it always has been in the Western Church, in sharp contrast not only to the Orient but to almost all monastic rules the world over. It is in particular the specific defence against all those temptations which Puritanism united under the name of the unclean life, whose role for it was by no means small. The sexual asceticism of Puritanism differs only in degree, not in fundamental principle, from that of monasticism; and on account of the Puritan conception of marriage, its practical influence is more far-reaching than that of the latter. For sexual intercourse

is permitted, even within marriage, only as the means willed by God for the increase of His glory according to the commandment, "Be fruitful and multiply." Along with a moderate vegetable diet and cold baths, the same prescription is given for all sexual temptations as is used against religious doubts and a sense of moral unworthiness: "Work hard in your calling." But the most important thing was that even beyond that labour came to be considered in itself the end of life, ordained as such by God. St. Paul's "He who will not work shall not eat" holds unconditionally for everyone. Unwillingness to work is symptomatic of the lack of grace. . . .

[Not] only do these exceptions to the duty to labour naturally no longer hold for Baxter, but he holds most emphatically that wealth does not exempt anyone from the unconditional command. Even the wealthy shall not eat without working, for even though they do not need to labour to support their own needs, there is God's commandment which they, like the poor, must obey. For everyone without exception God's Providence has prepared a calling, which he should profess and in which he should labour. And this calling is not, as it was for the Lutheran, a fate to which he must submit and which he must make the best of, but God's commandment to the individual to work for the divine glory. This seemingly subtle difference had far-reaching psychological consequences, and became connected with a further development of the providential interpretation of the economic order which had begun in scholasticism.

The phenomenon of the division of labour and occupations in society had, among others, been interpreted by Thomas Aquinas, to whom we may most conveniently refer, as a direct consequence of the divine scheme of things. But the places assigned to each man in this cosmos follow *ex causis naturalibus* and are fortuitous (contingent in the Scholastic terminology). The differentiation of men into the classes and occupations established through historical development became for Luther, as we have seen, a direct result of the divine will. The perseverance of the individual in the place and within the limits which God had assigned to him was a religious duty. . . .

But in the Puritan view, the providential character of the play of private economic interests takes on a somewhat different emphasis. True to the Puritan tendency to pragmatic interpretations, the providential purpose of the division of labour is to be known by its fruits. . . .

But the characteristic Puritan element appears when Baxter sets at the head of his discussion the statement that "outside of a well-marked calling the accomplishments of a man are only casual and irregular, and he spends more time in idleness than at work," and when he concludes it as follows: "and he [the specialized worker] will carry out his work in order while another remains in constant confusion, and his business knows neither time nor place. . . therefore is a certain calling the best for everyone." Irregular work, which the ordinary labourer is often forced to accept, is often unavoidable, but always an unwelcome state of transition. A man without a calling thus lacks the systematic, methodical character which is, as we have seen, demanded by worldly asceticism.

The Quaker ethic also holds that a man's life in his calling is an exercise in ascetic virtue, a proof of his state of grace through his conscientiousness, which is expressed in the care and method with which he pursues his calling. What God demands is not labour in itself, but rational labour in a calling. In the Puritan concept of the calling the emphasis is always placed on this methodical character of worldly asceticism, not, as with Luther, on the acceptance of the lot which God has irretrievably assigned to man.

Hence the question whether anyone may combine several callings is answered in the affirmative, if it is useful for the common good or one's own, and not injurious to anyone, and if it does not lead to unfaithfulness in one of the callings. Even a change of calling is by no means regarded as objectionable, if it is not thoughtless and is made for the purpose of pursuing a calling more pleasing to God, which means, on general principles, one more useful.

It is true that the usefulness of a calling, and thus its favour in the sight of God, is measured primarily in moral terms, and thus in terms of the importance of the goods produced in it for the community. But a further, and, above all, in practice the most important, criterion is found in private profitableness. For if that God, whose hand the Puritan sees in all the occurrences of life, shows one of His elect a chance of profit, he must do it with a purpose. Hence the faithful Christian must follow the call by taking advantage of the

opportunity. "If God show you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way (without wrong to your soul or to any other), if you refuse this, and choose the less gainful way, you cross one of the ends of your calling, and you refuse to be God's steward, and to accept His gifts and use them for Him when He requireth it: you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin."

Wealth is thus bad ethically only in so far as it is a temptation to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life, and its acquisition is bad only when it is with the purpose of later living merrily and without care. But as a performance of duty in a calling it is not only morally permissible, but actually enjoined. The parable of the servant who was rejected because he did not increase the talent which was entrusted to him seemed to say so directly. To wish to be poor was, it was often argued, the same as wishing to be unhealthy; it is objectionable as a glorification of works and derogatory to the glory of God. Especially begging, on the part of one able to work, is not only the sin of slothfulness, but a violation of the duty of brotherly love according to the Apostle's own word.

The emphasis on the ascetic importance of a fixed calling provided an ethical justification of the modern specialized division of labour. In a similar way the providential interpretation of profit-making justified the activities of the business man. The superior indulgence of the *seigneur* and the parvenu ostentation of the *nouveau riche* are equally detestable to asceticism. But, on the other hand, it has the highest ethical appreciation of the sober, middle-class, self-made man. "God blesseth His trade" is a stock remark about those good men who had successfully followed the divine hints. The whole power of the God of the Old Testament, who rewards His people for their obedience in this life, necessarily exercised a similar influence on the Puritan who, following Baxter's advice, compared his own state of grace with that of the heroes of the Bible, and in the process interpreted the statements of the Scriptures as the articles of a book of statutes. . . .

Let us now try to clarify the points in which the Puritan idea of the calling and the premium it placed upon ascetic conduct was bound directly to influence the development of a capitalistic way of life. As we have seen, this asceticism turned with all its force against one thing: the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer. . . .

As against this the Puritans upheld their decisive characteristic, the principle of ascetic conduct. For otherwise the Puritan aversion to sport, even for the Quakers, was by no means simply one of principle. Sport was accepted if it served a rational purpose, that of recreation necessary for physical efficiency. But as a means for the spontaneous expression of undisciplined impulses, it was under suspicion; and in so far as it became purely a means of enjoyment, or awakened pride, raw instincts or the irrational gambling instinct, it was of course strictly condemned. Impulsive enjoyment of life, which leads away both from work in a calling and from religion, was as such the enemy of rational asceticism, whether in the form of seigneurial sports, or the enjoyment of the dance-hall or the public-house of the common man. . . .

The theatre was obnoxious to the Puritans, and with the strict exclusion of the erotic and of nudity from the realm of toleration, a radical view of either literature or art could not exist. The conceptions of idle talk, of superfluities, and of vain ostentation, all designations of an irrational attitude without objective purpose, thus not ascetic, and especially not serving the glory of God, but of man, were always at hand to serve in deciding in favour of sober utility as against any artistic tendencies. This was especially true in the case of decoration of the person, for instance clothing. That powerful tendency toward uniformity of life, which to-day so immensely aids the capitalistic interest in the standardization of production, had its ideal foundations in the repudiation of all idolatry of the flesh. . . .

Although we cannot here enter upon a discussion of the influence of Puritanism in all these directions, we should call attention to the fact that the toleration of pleasure in cultural goods, which contributed to purely aesthetic or athletic enjoyment, certainly always ran up against one characteristic limitation: they must not cost anything. Man is only a trustee of the goods which have come to him through God's grace. He must, like the servant in the parable, give an account of every penny entrusted to him, and it is at least hazardous to spend any of it for a purpose which

does not serve the glory of God but only one's own enjoyment. What person, who keeps his eyes open, has not met representatives of this viewpoint even in the present? The idea of a man's duty to his possessions, to which he subordinates himself as an obedient steward, or even as an acquisitive machine, bears with chilling weight on his life. The greater the possessions the heavier, if the ascetic attitude toward life stands the test, the feeling of responsibility for them, for holding them undiminished for the glory of God and increasing them by restless effort. The origin of this type of life also extends in certain roots, like so many aspects of the spirit of capitalism, back into the Middle Ages. But it was in the ethic of ascetic Protestantism that it first found a consistent ethical foundation. Its significance for the development of capitalism is obvious.

This worldly Protestant asceticism, as we may recapitulate up to this point, acted powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions; it restricted consumption, especially of luxuries. On the other hand, it had the psychological effect of freeing the acquisition of goods from the inhibitions of traditionalistic ethics. It broke the bonds of the impulse of acquisition in that it not only legalized it, but (in the sense discussed) looked upon it as directly willed by God. The campaign against the temptations of the flesh, and the dependence on external things, was, as besides the Puritans the great Quaker apologist Barclay expressly says, not a struggle against the rational acquisition, but against the irrational use of wealth.

But this irrational use was exemplified in the outward forms of luxury which their code condemned as idolatry of the flesh, however natural they had appeared to the feudal mind. On the other hand, they approved the rational and utilitarian uses of wealth which were willed by God for the needs of the individual and the community. They did not wish to impose mortification on the man of wealth, but the use of his means for necessary and practical things. The idea of comfort characteristically limits the extent of ethically permissible expenditures. It is naturally no accident that the development of a manner of living consistent with that idea may be observed earliest and most clearly among the most consistent representatives of this whole attitude toward life. Over against the glitter and ostentation of feudal magnificence which, resting on an unsound economic basis, prefers a sordid elegance to a sober simplicity, they set the clean and solid comfort of the middle-class home as an ideal.

On the side of the production of private wealth, asceticism condemned both dishonesty and impulsive avarice. What was condemned as covetousness, Mammonism, etc., was the pursuit of riches for their own sake. For wealth in itself was a temptation. But here asceticism was the power "which ever seeks the good but ever creates evil"; what was evil in its sense was possession and its temptations. For, in conformity with the Old Testament and in analogy to the ethical valuation of good works, asceticism looked upon the pursuit of wealth as an end in itself as highly reprehensible; but the attainment of it as a fruit of labour in a calling was a sign of God's blessing. And even more important: the 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 which we have here called the spirit of capitalism.

When the limitation of consumption is combined with this release of acquisitive activity, the inevitable practical result is obvious: accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save. The restraints which were imposed upon the consumption of wealth naturally served to increase it by making possible the productive investment of capital. . . .

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 bourgeois economic life; it was the most important, and above all the only consistent influence in the development of that life. It stood at the cradle of the modern economic man.

To be sure, these Puritanical ideals tended to give way under excessive pressure from the temptations of wealth, as the Puritans themselves knew very well. With great regularity we find the most genuine adherents of Puritanism among the classes which were rising from a lowly status,

the small bourgeois and farmers, while the *beati possidentes*, even among Quakers, are often found tending to repudiate the old ideals. It was the same fate which again and again befell the predecessor of this worldly asceticism, the monastic asceticism of the Middle Ages. In the latter case, when rational economic activity had worked out its full effects by strict regulation of conduct and limitation of consumption, the wealth accumulated either succumbed directly to the nobility, as in the time before the Reformation, or monastic discipline threatened to break down, and one of the numerous reformations became necessary.

In fact the whole history of monasticism is in a certain sense the history of a continual struggle with the problem of the secularizing influence of wealth. The same is true on a grand scale of the worldly asceticism of Puritanism. The great revival of Methodism, which preceded the expansion of English industry toward the end of the eighteenth century, may well be compared with such a monastic reform. We may hence quote here a passage from John Wesley himself which might well serve as a motto for everything which has been said above. For it shows that the leaders of these ascetic movements understood the seemingly paradoxical relationships which we have here analysed perfectly well, and in the same sense that we have given them. He wrote:

> "I fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion. Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. How then is it possible that Methodism, that is, a religion of the heart, though it flourishes now as a green bay tree, should continue in this state? For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods. Hence they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this—this continual decay of pure religion? We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; *we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich.*"

There follows the advice that those who gain all they can and save all they can should also give all they can, so that they will grow in grace and lay up a treasure in heaven. It is clear that Wesley here expresses, even in detail, just what we have been trying to point out.

As Wesley here says, the full economic effect of those great religious movements, whose significance for economic development lay above all in their ascetic educative influence, generally came only after the peak of the purely religious enthusiasm was past. Then the intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God commenced gradually to pass over into sober economic virtue; the religious roots died out slowly, giving way to utilitarian worldliness. . . .

A specifically bourgeois economic ethic had grown up. With the consciousness of standing in the fullness of God's grace and being visibly blessed by Him, the bourgeois business man, as long as he remained within the bounds of formal correctness, as long as his moral conduct was spotless and the use to which he put his wealth was not objectionable, could follow his pecuniary interests as he would and feel that he was fulfilling a duty in doing so. The power of religious asceticism provided him in addition with sober, conscientious, and unusually industrious workmen, who clung to their work as to a life purpose willed by God.

Finally, it gave him the comforting assurance that the unequal distribution of the goods of this world was a special dispensation of Divine Providence, which in these differences, as in particular grace, pursued secret ends unknown to men. Calvin himself had made the much-quoted statement that only when the people, i.e., the mass of labourers and craftsmen, were poor did they remain obedient to God. In the Netherlands (Pieter de la Court and others), that had been secularized to the effect that the mass of men only labour when necessity forces them to do so. This formulation of a leading

idea of capitalistic economy later entered into the current theories of the productivity of low wages. Here also, with the dying out of the religious root, the utilitarian interpretation crept in unnoticed, in the line of development which we have again and again observed. . . .

Now naturally the whole ascetic literature of almost all denominations is saturated with the idea that faithful labour, even at low wages, on the part of those whom life offers no other opportunities, is highly pleasing to God. In this respect Protestant Asceticism added in itself nothing new. But it not only deepened this idea most powerfully, it also created the force which was alone decisive for its effectiveness: the psychological sanction of it through the conception of this labour as a calling, as the best, often in the last analysis the only means of attaining certainty of grace. And on the other hand it legalized the exploitation of this specific willingness to work, in that it also interpreted the employer's business activity as a calling. It is obvious how powerfully the exclusive search for the Kingdom of God only through the fulfilment of duty in the calling, and the strict asceticism which Church discipline naturally imposed, especially on the propertyless classes, was bound to affect the productivity of labour in the capitalistic sense of the word. The treatment of labour as a calling became as characteristic of the modern worker as the corresponding attitude toward acquisition of the business man. It was a perception of this situation, new at his time, which caused so able an observer as Sir William Petty to attribute the economic power of Holland in the seventeenth century to the fact that the very numerous dissenters in that country (Calvinists and Baptists) "are for the most part thinking, sober men, and such as believe that Labour and Industry is their duty towards God.". . .

One of the fundamental elements of the spirit of modern capitalism, and not only of that but of all modern culture: rational conduct on the basis of the idea of the calling, was born—that is what this discussion has sought to demonstrate—from the spirit of Christian asceticism. One has only to re-read the passage from Franklin, quoted at the beginning of this essay, in order to see 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, which by Franklin's time had died away. The idea that modern labour has an ascetic character is of course not new. Limitation to specialized work, with a renunciation of the Faustian universality of man which it involves, is a condition of any valuable work in the modern world; hence deeds and renunciation inevitably condition each other today. This fundamentally ascetic trait of middle-class life, if it attempts to be a way of life at all, and not simply the absence of any, was what Goethe wanted to teach, at the height of his wisdom, in the *Wanderjahren*, and in the end which he gave to the life of his *Faust*. For him the realization meant a renunciation, a departure from an age of full and beautiful humanity, which can no more be repeated in the course of our cultural development than can the flower of the Athenian culture of antiquity.

The Puritan wanted to work in a calling; we are forced to do so. For when asceticism was carried out of monastic cells into everyday life, and began to dominate worldly morality, it did its part in building the tremendous cosmos of the modern economic order. This order is now bound to the technical and economic conditions of machine production which to-day determine the lives of all the individuals who are born into this mechanism, not only those directly concerned with economic acquisition, with irresistible force. Perhaps it will so determine them until the last ton of fossilized coal is burnt. In Baxter's view the care for external goods should only lie on the shoulders of the "saint like a light cloak, which can be thrown aside at any moment." But fate decreed that the cloak should become an iron cage.

Since asceticism undertook to remodel the world and to work out its ideals in the world, material goods have gained an increasing and finally an inexorable power over the lives of men as at no previous period in history. To-day the spirit of religious asceticism—whether finally, who knows?—has escaped from the cage. But victorious capitalism, since it rests on mechanical foundations, needs its support no longer. The rosy blush of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems also to be irretrievably fading, and the idea of duty in one's calling prowls about in our lives like the ghost of dead religious beliefs. Where the fulfilment of the calling cannot directly be related

to the highest spiritual and cultural values, or when, on the other hand, it need not be felt simply as economic compulsion, the individual generally abandons the attempt to justify it at all. In the field of its highest development, in the United States, the pursuit of wealth, stripped of its religious and ethical meaning, tends to become associated with purely mundane passions, which often actually give it the character of sport.

No one knows who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might well be truly said: "Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."

But this brings us to the world of judgments of value and of faith, with which this purely historical discussion need not be burdened. The next task would be rather to show the significance of ascetic rationalism, which has only been touched in the foregoing sketch, for the content of practical social ethics, thus for the types of organization and the functions of social groups from the conventicle to the State. Then its relations to humanistic rationalism, its ideals of life and cultural influence; further to the development of philosophical and scientific empiricism, to technical development and to spiritual ideals would have to be analysed. Then its historical development from the mediæval beginnings of worldly asceticism to its dissolution into pure utilitarianism would have to be traced out through all the areas of ascetic religion. Only then could the quantitative cultural significance of ascetic Protestantism in its relation to the other plastic elements of modern culture be estimated.

Here we have only attempted to trace the fact and the direction of its influence to their motives in one, though a very important point. But it would also further be necessary to investigate how Protestant Asceticism was in turn influenced in its development and its character by the totality of social conditions, especially economic. The modern man is in general, even with the best will, unable to give religious ideas a significance for culture and national character which they deserve. But it is, of course, not my aim to substitute for a one-sided materialistic an equally one-sided spiritualistic causal interpretation of culture and of history. Each is equally possible, but each, if it does not serve as the preparation, but as the conclusion of an investigation, accomplishes equally little in the interest of historical truth.