

rior ethic described by Weber was simply one religious perspective which was regarded with suspicion and hostility by the orthodox."²⁴⁵

This may be so, but the statement is not at odds with Weber's analysis. Above all, as is shown in Weber's comparative studies, the material and ideal interests of traders and officials do not create, even in the Christian tradition, methodical conduct and the rationalism of world mastery. The effects of religious sources are never the result simply of the interests of its social bearers; they are also always dependent on the contents of the sources. This aspect of Weber's approach is completely lost in Turner's analysis. Indeed, it has to be lost if one hopes to maintain the convergence thesis of Weber and Marx.

This thesis of the subordinate, secondary importance of ethics vis-à-vis the social structure, of motivational factors vis-à-vis institutional ones, makes the decisive point of the whole story: for the sake of "reconciliation" with Marx, the central point of Weber's approach is interpreted away. Weber never spoke of primary and secondary factors, only of causally important ones. These include internal factors just as much as external ones. The fact that it is difficult or even impossible to quantify their relative weight does not speak against his approach; as he wrote in his dispute with Rachfahl: "The fact that in historical attribution no distribution ratio can be put into numbers is not my fault."²⁴⁶

There are undoubtedly gaps in Weber's analysis of Islam, which is guided by a central question the relevance of which can and must be the subject of controversy. This pertains also to concept formation. Whoever does not share the assumed value will criticize these concepts and construct others in their stead. This is thoroughly in the spirit of Weber's methodology, for the "greatest advances in the sphere of the social sciences are *substantively* tied up with the shift in practical cultural problems and take the *form* of a critique of concept formation."²⁴⁷ This does not alter Weber's basic insight that any sociological analysis interested in promoting historical truth has to take into account both sides of the causal chain.

The Emergence of Modernity

Max Weber on Western Christianity

All in all, the specific roots of Occidental culture must be sought in the tension between and peculiar balance of, on the one hand, office charisma and monasticism, and on the other the contractual character of the feudal state and the rational bureaucratic character of the hierarchy.

—Max Weber, *Economy and Society*

The elimination of all ritual barriers of birth for the community of the Eucharists as realized in Antioch, was also, in terms of its religious preconditions, the hour of conception for the Occidental "citizenry," even if the latter was first to be born more than a thousand years later in the revolutionary "conjuratio" of medieval cities.

—Max Weber, *India*

Asceticism is *bourgeois* virtue.

—Eduard Bernstein, *Geschichte des Sozialismus in Einzeldarstellungen*

Themes and Questions

Max Weber began his long series of publications with an essay on the history of trading enterprises in the Middle Ages.¹ In it, he pursued the "conditions of sociation"² (*Vergesellschaftung*) out of which the modern partnerships of limited and unlimited liability

arose.³ He did this from a genetic and comparative perspective (which later would probably have been termed a "developmental-historical perspective"). As the title indicates, the analysis is aimed primarily at medieval legal conditions; however, it also makes recourse both to antiquity and to the present. Its focus is on the "genesis of legal principles"⁴ or, put in another way, on the invention of an institution that allows for a spatial and above all legal separation between the private and the business spheres. On the one hand Weber compared the legal form of the Roman *societas* and the Germanic household with medieval societies of Italy in particular, and on the other he compared the *societas maris* of the medieval Italian coastal town with the *societas terrae* of the medieval Italian inland town.⁵ His interest already centered on differences; for example, he demonstrated that the credit basis of the modern, unlimited partnership is fundamentally different from that of the limited partnership, and that the two owe their existence to different historical roots.⁶ In addition, he considered the separation a process of far-reaching historical significance. This, in any case, is the impression made by later passages in which he repeatedly refers to his first work.

An especially interesting statement is found in the first version of his *Protestant Ethic*. Summarizing its most important findings, he points out that the conception of the Puritan entrepreneur who has a special obligation toward the possessions entrusted to him can "be traced back, in some of its roots, like so many aspects of the modern spirit of capitalism, to the Middle Ages," in this case to the conception of business as a "mystical entity" (*corpus mysticum*).⁷ It found institutional support in the legal inventions that Weber analyzes in his study of medieval trading enterprises: in the firm, in the consideration of business wealth as a special form of wealth, and in the concomitant notion of limited joint liability.⁸ But although the institutional separation between private and business matters, between the private household and the business firm, between private and business wealth was advanced in the Middle Ages and in this way promoted the idea of the economic service of an impersonal "cause," it was only ascetic Protestantism that first created this institutional separation's ultimately "coherent ethical foundations."⁹ This ethical foundation did not originate in the Middle Ages, but in the post-Reformation period, especially in the seventeenth century.

When one considers the long line of publications building on the dissertation, it is striking that the study of the medieval trad-

ing enterprises already addresses one of the ever recurring themes of Weber's work. This theme can be transformed into two questions: What constitutes the distinctive economic and social character of the West? How is it to be explained? As the dissertation shows, the focus of attention is initially on distinctive *institutional* arrangements and their causes; however, by the studies on Protestantism at the very latest, this focus also includes the distinctive *mentalities* found in the West. Weber gets increasingly interested in the nature of the *connections* between the distinctive economic and social features of the West and the development of its religious ethic. In September 1919, after readying his 1904-5 studies of Protestantism for print within the framework of his *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion*, this is what he terms his cognitive interest, at least for that part of his work dedicated to the comparative studies on the economic ethics of the great religions in history.

Even in the first version of the *Protestant Ethic* he had claimed that there was a connection between developments in religious ethics and the economy that holds not only for the post-Reformation period, but for the pre-Reformation period as well. At the end of these studies, he expressly maintained that "of course, the period of capitalist development which preceded that considered in our study was everywhere influenced by Christianity, which both retarded and advanced it."¹⁰ As a result, in 1904-5 he planned to expand these studies both forward, and, above all, backward in time. The more intensively he dealt with the economic ethics of non-Christian religions in order to divest the studies on Protestantism of their isolated character, the more urgent it became to place the latter studies in the more general framework of a study of Western Christianity. Only in this way could they be placed "in the context of overall cultural development," and that was the stated purpose, as can be gathered from the revised version of these studies.¹¹ In fact, as we know from an announcement of the contents of his *Collected Essays on the Sociology of Religion* in September 1919, Weber intended to write such a study. In the projected four-volume collection, the entire final volume was reserved for this study of Western Christianity.¹²

Owing to Weber's death in June 1920 this plan was never realized, as is true of his writings on early Christianity, talmudic Judaism, Islam, and Eastern Christianity, which were supposed to appear in the third volume. Nevertheless, to take up a remark by Marianne Weber, the necessary preliminary studies for these

monographs had long been completed.¹³ Unlike the monographs planned for the third volume, however, the preliminary studies for Western Christianity were not primarily undertaken from 1910 until the beginning of the First World War. Rather, Weber could draw on studies from the first and second phase of his work.¹⁴ In addition to the dissertation and the studies on Protestantism, there was the lecture course on general ("theoretical") economics, given several times before 1900, in which antique, medieval, and modern Western economic development had been dealt with. These lectures were meant to provide the basis for a textbook.¹⁵

In the third phase of Weber's work, however, his interest was not limited, since it was evidently still there, to Western economic development alone; instead, it now encompassed Western development more generally, including developments in political domination, law, religion, science, and art. Moreover, the focus was no longer on Western development per se, but on its singularity (*Sonderentwicklung*). Weber established the fact that the very foundations of Mediterranean-Occidental civilization differ from those of other civilizations in his comparative studies on religion and economy. Even though the study of Western Christianity—like all the other studies—would have emphasized this specific relationship, like these other studies, it certainly would not have been limited to that relationship. I suspect it would have also aimed at showing the singularity of Western development in the linkage of external and internal transformations—of revolutions in institutions and revolutions in mentalities—and this in view of "the tension and peculiar balance" (*Ausgleich*) among the religious, economic, political, and social orders. It would have included the analysis of the distinct character of the subjectivist culture of the modern West; of its rational capitalism, with its scientifically defined technology; of its *Anstaltsstaat*, with its formal-rational law; of its non-state associations, based on *Vergemeinschaftung* and *Vergesellschaftung*; of its system of "acquired" inequality, with its commercial classes and occupational status groups.¹⁶

With this analysis, Weber did not simply want to repeat Ernst Troeltsch's pathbreaking study, *The Social Teaching of Christian Churches and Groups* (*Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen*).¹⁷ This monograph, which he held in the highest possible regard, motivated him to put off for the time being the continuation of his studies of Protestantism as originally planned and to turn to the economic ethics of the world religions.¹⁸ Admittedly, Troeltsch primarily dealt with the teachings, not the prac-

tical effects of Western Christianity. This certainly left Weber room for analysis even within Troeltsch's domain of investigation.¹⁹ The studies of the economic ethics, however, required that the analysis oriented around the practical effects of the religiously conditioned character of the economy be supplemented by an analysis of the "class-conditioned" character of religion. Moreover, it required this two-pronged analysis for all important societal orders and their interrelations.²⁰

That this is not mere conjecture is indicated not only by those monographs on the economic ethics of the world religions actually written, but also by the aforementioned announcement, especially if the latter is read in connection with a statement Weber made in a letter from the same period. In September 1919, Weber sent the revised version of the *Protestant Ethic* to his publisher, Siebeck. In the covering letter, he announced his essay on the Protestant sects. Thereafter, he let it be known, he intended to prepare his studies of China and India for republication and then insert an essay that he had finished in his head, but which he still needed to put to paper. It would deal with "the general foundations of the singular development of the West." This study would be followed by the study of Judaism, which would go beyond the period already covered in the published articles.²¹ When one compares this statement to the announcement formulated just days later, it appears that the mentally completed essay had in the meantime become "a sketch devoted to the rise of the social distinctiveness of the West [depicting] the development of the European bourgeoisie in antiquity and the Middle Ages."²² In any case, the temporal proximity of the two statements suggests such an interpretation.

Admittedly, the essay anticipated in the announcement appears to be thematically more narrow in scope than the essay anticipated in the covering letter. Nevertheless, in my view it is more significant that the function to be fulfilled in each case was identical. With an essay of this kind, a transition was to be effected from the Chinese and Indian religions to the Near East—Occidental religions. This transition was at the same time linked to a change in perspective. Whereas the analysis of the Chinese and Indian religions went only as far "as is necessary to find points of comparison with a Western development that is then to be further analyzed,"²³ the study of ancient Israelite and Jewish religious development marks the beginning of the depiction of Mediterranean-Occidental cultural development. That Weber intended to expand the latter to include a "short depiction of the Egyptian and Meso-

potamian, and the Zoroastrian religious ethics" (in the words of the announcement) is in accordance with Weber's aim of genetic reconstruction and is nothing new. He had intentionally left this short exposition out of the initial publication of the first part of *Ancient Judaism* (*Das antike Judentum*) (Weber 1952).²⁴ Presumably, the change in perspective was to be accomplished by inserting the aforementioned essay.

A shift had to be made from a comparative perspective that emphasizes the contrasts between the Asiatic and Mediterranean-Occidental world to a developmental perspective that focuses on continuities within the Mediterranean-Occidental world. Without doubt, the focal points of analysis identified by means of the comparative perspective remain important in the treatment of Western development. They serve, as it were, to organize the latter. However, questions of historical preconditions and causal attribution now move to the fore. In his major study of the economic and social history of antiquity, "Agrarian Sociology," written at the end of the second phase of his work, Weber already pointed to this shift in his "somewhat pointed remarks" on urban development in antiquity and the Middle Ages.²⁵ Here he writes that

one might take these anomalies and exceptions as yet another demonstration that "there is nothing new under the sun," and that all or nearly all distinctions are simply matters of degree. The latter is true enough, of course; but the former notion annuls any historical study. One must, instead, lay the emphasis on the divergences, despite all parallels, and use the similarities of two societies to highlight the singularity [*Eigenart*] of each.²⁶

Divergences, however, occurred not only between antiquity and the Middle Ages, but also between the latter and modernity. Admittedly, even though Weber expressly emphasized divergences, he also spoke of the "continuities of Mediterranean-European cultural development" in the same study. Although there is no "one-directional, linear development," there are also no closed cycles that would be completely discontinuous with one another.²⁷

The projected essay on the singular development of the West thus would have had a double function to fulfill: it had to characterize the distinctiveness of Mediterranean-Occidental civilization vis-à-vis the Chinese and Indian civilizations, and, at the same time, it had to produce a developmental perspective on the basis of which the combination of circumstances that led to modern Western culture could be made plausible.²⁸ The conclusion of

the study of Hinduism and Buddhism and the first part of the study of ancient Judaism, both first published in the *Archiv*, already contained the major clues. In *The Religion of India* (*Hinduismus und Buddhismus*), although the essay was not more than "an extremely superficial . . . survey of the Asian cultural world,"²⁹ Weber insisted that one decisive element of the Western economy was lacking in Asia: "The curtailment of this instinctive avarice, its transformation into a rational pursuit of gain and its integration into a system of rational, inner-worldly ethics of action—that achievement of Protestant 'inner-worldly asceticism' which had had a few genuine predecessors."³⁰ And, he goes on to say, this specifically "bourgeois" mode of conduct owes its existence to the emergence of prophets and thinkers who arose against the backdrop of economic problems, but "of political problems of a social structure alien to Asian culture—namely, the political citizenry, without which neither Judaism nor Christianity nor the development of Greek thought could be conceived."³¹

In the study of ancient Judaism Weber begins by noting that without "the creation of the Old Testament" and an adherence to it by the Pauline mission (that was certainly both selective as well as transformative), there never would have been a (universalistic) Christian church and a (universalistic) Christian ethic of the everyday world. Because of these "world-historical consequences" of Jewish religious development, one finds oneself "at a turning point of the whole cultural development of the West and the Middle East." Of similar "historical significance was the development of Hellenic intellectual culture; for Western Europe, the development of Roman law and of the Roman Catholic Church resting on the Roman concept of office; the medieval order of estates; and finally, in the field of religion, Protestantism. It transmuted the older medieval institutions."³²

It would be tempting to search for additional passages in which Weber comments on the general foundations of the singular development of the West or on the developmental history of the citizenry in antiquity and the Middle Ages. Such statements could put the link between the analyses of the Asiatic religions and that of the Mediterranean-Occidental religions in sharper relief. This will not be done here.³³ For these general foundations, the reader can follow above all the "Anticritical Last Word" and the *General Economic History*; for the developmental history of the citizenry, one can follow the concluding passages of "Agrarian Sociology" and, above all, the posthumous manuscript "The City."³⁴

Admittedly, at the time Weber conveyed his further plans for the two major projects to his publisher, Siebeck, in September 1919, "The City"—the manuscript certainly best fitting the announcement's account—almost certainly had been in his desk-drawer for some time. There are many indications that it is relatively old, at least in part, and that in the form handed down, it was connected to the development of the sociology of domination since 1910. Possibly, Weber would have ultimately used it as a basis for both major projects, which is in accordance with his procedure that was increasingly based on the division of labor. Regardless of how one assesses this question, one thing is clear: the projected essay's location following the revised studies of Protestantism and preceding the studies of ancient Judaism, Islam, Eastern Christianity, and Western Christianity. This location implies, however, that the analysis of Western Christianity did not become superfluous after the studies on ascetic Protestantism were revised, nor would this depiction have limited itself to the characterization of the general foundations of the singular development of the West or solely to a developmental history of citizenry.

Weber—and one cannot emphasize this point enough—used the opportunity to revise the studies of Protestantism neither to enlarge the scope of the carefully limited original project nor to alter his original thesis.³⁵ Further accounts of the latter are given in the revised text, but it is neither rescinded nor modified, or even given new accents. Thus, the study of Western Christianity also would not have changed any part of the thesis that only the ethic of ascetic Protestantism, apart from some anticipations, provided one of the constitutive elements of the modern capitalist ethos and vocational culture. Rather, just the opposite would have occurred: it would have more clearly defined this thesis by expanding the intra-Christian scope of comparison and by integrating Judaism (and possibly Islam) into the analysis. Moreover, the study would have expanded the horizon for causal attributions. This, however, required an investigation that transformed the general foundations of the singular development of the West into historical preconditions. This transformation can already be witnessed in the study of ancient Judaism, where one such general foundation, the Old Testament, is put in a developmental perspective.³⁶

In view of this and other statements, one could have expected in the envisioned concluding volume analyses of Christian salvation movements and their organizations, Western territorial and urban associations, Western sacred and profane law, Western sci-

ence and technology; Western organizational forms in trade and industry, supplemented by those of banks and exchanges; as well as of "the tension and peculiar balance" existing above all between the hierocratic and political powers, including the urban ones. As part of the study of the economic ethics of world religions, the analysis of Western Christianity could no longer limit itself to one side of the causal chain, to the practical effects of a certain religious ethic on conduct. As already envisioned in the original version of the *Protestant Ethic*, the analysis also had to trace the "influence of economic development on the destiny of systems of religious ideas"³⁷ and reconstruct the practical effects of religious institutions on conduct as well,³⁸ above all, however, it had to show religion as an internal and external power in life, and in its tension-filled relation not simply to the economy, but also to political domination. Of course, it could do all of this in a "division of labor" with the second version of *Economy and Society*.³⁹

If we accept this diagnosis of the status and the outline of the planned study of Western Christianity, then it seems reasonable to take the older version of *Economy and Society*, especially its chapters on the sociologies of religion, law, and domination, as a primary point of orientation in the reconstruction of those explanations necessitated for the "other side of the causal chain." Special attention must be given in this context to the development of the city, to the "rise of the Western bourgeoisie and its singularity."⁴⁰ This development would have formed one of the axes of the analysis, just as the rise and singularity of the Chinese patrimonial bureaucracy did in the study of China, and the rise and singularity of the Indian caste system did in the study of India.⁴¹ As I mentioned earlier, however, in this case, there are—in contrast to the cases of the other never written studies—additional reference points beyond the older version of *Economy and Society*. Preceding it in time are above all the works on antiquity and the Middle Ages; following it is the *General Economic History*, in which Weber sketched an outline of a social and economic history of the West. Although he included a chapter on the cultural history of the West,⁴² we are largely left—for the conceptions of duty anchored in religious ethics and its concomitant motivational forces, with the exception of a few passages in the chapter on religion in *Economy and Society*—with the two versions of the *Protestant Ethic*. A comparison of these two versions shows that the later one contains several references to the projected study of Western Christianity.

What topics would Weber have dealt with that go beyond the studies of Protestantism? Five are prominent. First of all, he intended to discuss the distinctiveness of Christianity in general within the history of religion. He attributed that distinctiveness, in spite of varying dogmatic foundations, to the "insertion of the decisive interest in proof" of one's salvation,⁴³ which provided Christianity in general with a tendency toward activism. Second, he wanted to furnish a more detailed depiction of pre-Reformation Catholicism. Provoked by Werner Sombart,⁴⁴ he had in mind here, not merely Thomism, which he had already touched upon in the first version, but also the differing "economic ethic of the Scots, and especially of certain mendicant theologians of the fourteenth century," authors such as John Duns Scotus, Bernardine of Siena, and Anthony of Florence, and this in connection with the "discussion of the economic ethics of Catholicism in its positive relations to capitalism."⁴⁵ Third, he planned to deal with the few predecessors of ascetic Protestantism, with the monastic ethic, "the sects and . . . the ethics of Wyclif and Hus."⁴⁶ Fourth, he wanted to analyze post-Reformation and Counter Reformation Catholicism—for example, the Jesuits—as well as the "fundamental position of Port Royal and Jansenism on 'vocation.'⁴⁷ Finally, again at the provocation of Sombart, he wanted to address the role of the Jews in economic life, something that, aside from the second version, can be inferred from the sociology of religion in *Economy and Society*⁴⁸ and from the *General Economic History*.⁴⁹ He wanted to do all this not in order to alter the Protestant Ethic thesis, but to supply the broader context in which it should be read.⁵⁰

Thus, Weber would not have contented himself simply with the characterization of the distinctive features and singular developments of Mediterranean-Occidental civilization. He would have had to explain it, for the mere establishment of interconnections did not suffice here. A telling remark on this is found in the second version of the *Protestant Ethic*. There is nothing novel, Weber states, about the claim of a more or less "strong" relation between the different tendencies within ascetic Protestantism and the [modern] spirit of capitalism; this was something contemporaries were already well-acquainted with. The attempt "to explain the relation,"⁵¹ however, is novel. And this claim is maintained throughout. In the "Author's Introduction" we read that "it once again is our first concern to recognize the special peculiarity of Western rationalism, and within this complex, its modern form, and to explain it."⁵² Thus, the explanatory effort is paramount.

Admittedly, the singularity of this rationalism, which penetrates not only the economic but also the other important spheres and provides them with its own specific "hue," must, as the quote indicates, first be established. This is above all the task of comparative research, and even here we find a parting of the ways, as Weber's dispute with Marx on the one hand, and with the most important of his contemporary rivals—Georg Simmel, Ljubo Brentano, and Werner Sombart—on the other, goes to show.⁵³ But regardless of what one holds to be the unique feature of modern capitalism—and according to Weber, this is not independent of one's own theoretical value relations—it has to be explained. This is premised on the separability of defining and conditioning properties.⁵⁴

Thus, in the study of Western Christianity, as was already the case in the studies of Protestantism, Weber's first concern would have been to provide an explanation. In my view, this is shown unambiguously not least of all by the "Author's Introduction" that serves as the linchpin connecting the revised studies of Protestantism with the studies on the economic ethics. The attempted explanation would have been dedicated to answering: why it is only in the modern West that, aside from the kinds of capitalism prevalent everywhere, there exists "a very different form of capitalism which has appeared nowhere else: the rational capitalistic organization of [formally] free labour."⁵⁵ This was part of a further question, Why "did not the scientific, the artistic, the political, or the economic development [in China and India] enter upon that path of rationalization, which is singular to the West?"⁵⁶ The "rationalism specific to Western culture" is a rationalism of world mastery, something I have sought to demonstrate in a variety of contexts.⁵⁷ It appears in the economic realm in a specific form—in the utilization of capital on the market in the framework of rational business organization based on formally free labor—and in a specific spirit, one of innerworldly active asceticism on the basis of the idea of vocational calling. From the very beginning, in one way or another, as the reference to the dissertation has shown, Weber's thoughts revolved above all around these two cultural phenomena of universal significance. But only the study of Western Christianity would have "unified" in one explanatory approach both the topics and questions connected to these phenomena and the answers discovered after a long course of investigation.

What can be said about this explanatory approach? In other

words, What was Weber's "last theory" of modern Western capitalism? Formulated differently, the question is, How did Weber explain the singular development of the West?

Explaining the Western Trajectory: Three Great Transformations and Their Legacies

Historical Preconditions and Historical Epochs

Before I attempt to provide a sketch of the explanatory model of development in the West, a few remarks on Weber's mode of analysis need to be made. Here, not only his writings on method but also his practiced method has to be taken into account.⁵⁸

I would like to begin with a piece of practiced method. At the very latest with the *Protestant Ethic*, and even more pointedly in the "Anticritiques," Weber distinguishes between the *spirit* of capitalism and capitalism as an economic system. The latter he sometimes terms its form or organization, or even its organizational form.⁵⁹ This distinction matches that between subjective and objective conditions, and is thus not limited to the economic sphere.⁶⁰ Capitalism stands for a certain spirit and a certain form that one can conceive of in either relative-general or relative-specific terms.⁶¹ If one conceives of it in relative-general terms, ideal types of a general character—ideal-typical class concepts (*idealtypische Gattungsbegriffe*)—are formed that "distill that which is permanently the same, in conceptual purity" out of capitalism. If one conceives of it in relative-specific terms, ideal types of an individual character are formed that underscore those traits characteristic "for a definite epoch in contrast to other epochs," whereby "that which generally exists . . . is also presupposed as given and known of."⁶² For example, when one contrasts an economic act in a capitalist economy to one in a household economy, one would stress that it is motivated by the pursuit of profitability; that it employs formally peaceful opportunities of exchange for this; and that it makes use of capital accounting, that is, of "the comparison of estimated monetary incomes with estimated monetary expenses, no matter how primitive the form."⁶³ Weber expressly states that, in the sense of this ideal-typical class concept, capitalism "even with a fair degree of capital accounting, has existed in all civilized countries of the earth, as far back as economic documents permit us to judge."⁶⁴ Nevertheless, as important as the precise formulation of such ideal-typical class concepts

are—and it is the purpose of the sociology of the economy in the second version of *Economy and Society* to do just that—ultimately, it is not those "kinds, forms, and directions of capitalism" found in all the civilized countries that are of interest, but rather those brought forth only in the modern West. To achieve this formulation, the specific features have to be named that are singular to this modern capitalism in terms of spirit and form.

Spirit and form or system, however, are relatively independent from one another. Accordingly, different degrees of elective affinity can exist between them. The spirit can, as Weber expressly puts it, be more or less (or not at all) "adequate" to the form.⁶⁵ This is the case because neither do they necessarily share a common origin, nor is one necessarily derivable from the other. Any position that makes either of these two claims is to be considered reductionist. The respective transformations of institutions and mentalities, the revolutions from without and from within, are rarely synchronized in historical reality.⁶⁶ This is also the reason why the historical preconditions of the rise of a given capitalist economic system should initially be studied separately from the historical preconditions of the rise of a given capitalist spirit. Only after each "unit" has been analyzed on its own, can one then examine to what degree an elective affinity exists, whether spirit and form or system are one-sidedly or reciprocally favorably related, unrelated (indifferent), or even obstructive to one another. Moreover, this last analysis must be related to a specific epoch and a specific developmental realm.

According to Weber's own testimony, by 1910—and thus at the time he entered into the third phase of his work—he had written primarily two historical studies on capitalism: "Agrarian Sociology" to cover "the 'capitalism' of antiquity as an economic system," and the studies of Protestantism, to cover "what I sought to term the 'spirit' of modern capitalism."⁶⁷ Thus, in "Agrarian Sociology," by making recourse in part to some of his older writings, he rounds out his view of the economic and social, but not religious history of antiquity. In contrast, in the studies of Protestantism, mentality and motivation were placed in the foreground. These latter studies were not meant as a conclusion, but as a beginning. Their initial goals were "to trace the course of the factors arising out of the period of the Reformation," and then to go beyond that period and to the other side of the causal chain.⁶⁸

The time of Reformation, or more precisely, the period following the Reformation, especially the seventeenth century, is impor-

tant for Weber because it brings about a transformation—from within. This transformation adds a new thread to the pattern of Western development. In doing so, it creates one of the historical preconditions for modern cultural development. This is not the only one, not even for the modern spirit of capitalism.⁶⁹ It does, however, provide the capitalist spirit with a pattern "specifically different from that of the Middle Ages and Antiquity."⁷⁰ This is the reason why ascetic Protestantism is of historical significance. The latter has itself historical preconditions, internal and external, subjective and objective. To identify them and interweave such historical preconditions according to their spheres and epochs is the mode of analysis that Weber employs already in the studies of Protestantism, although in a deliberately one-sided manner. He changes this mode in the series on the economic ethics of the world religions,⁷¹ where he performs a two-sided analysis throughout. Accordingly, the developmental history of Mediterranean-Occidental civilization would have been a history of epoch-related motivational and institutional transformations. Put another way, it would have been a history of motivational and institutional inventions, their interconnections, and their preservation as historical legacies.⁷²

The thesis that historical preconditions have to be related to specific epochs may appear surprising. After all, did Weber not ban such terms as "epoch," "phase," and "stage" from the cultural sciences due to their evolutionary connotations? Did he not time and again warn against using such terms because they mislead one "to treat them as real beings in the manner of the organism with which biology is concerned, or as a Hegelian 'idea,' which lets its individual components emanate out of itself?"⁷³ Indeed, there can be no doubt that Weber vehemently attacked such concepts of evolution. They were based on a theory of concept formation that did away with the *hiatus irrationalis* between the concept and reality and identified development with progress (*Wertsteigerung*).⁷⁴ In his view, there is neither a lawful succession of universally repeated stages nor an inherent unity to any one stage such that its historical manifestations can be derived from its general character. Instead, the individual constellation of factors has to be addressed. Each individual constellation is caused by other individual constellations. Employing constructs like epochs, phases, and stages is therefore dangerous indeed. These constructs are acceptable, however, as long as they are used as heuristic devices and as conceptual means of representation, but not as means of draw-

ing conclusions, whether by way of deduction or analogy. In fact, in the former regard, they are even unavoidable. For this reason, Weber formulates his stage concept in the following manner: "If we construct a 'cultural stage,' this mental construct solely means, in terms of the judgments it implies, that the individual phenomena that we summarize conceptually by means of it are 'adequate' to one another, possessing—one could say—a certain degree of intrinsic 'affinity,' with one another. It never entails, however, that they follow from one another according to any kind of lawfulness."⁷⁵ This expresses a methodological understanding of the stage concept suggested by Heinrich Rickert. Developmental stages result from a value-related combination of external historical connections and their internal structuring, whereby the "telos" is provided by the value chosen and conditioned by it (Rickert terms this "conditional-teleological").⁷⁶

In this limited sense, Weber accepts the construction of developmental phases, stages, or epochs. Like Rickert, he holds them to be indispensable for structuring a historical nexus formed on the basis of a value relation. It is no coincidence that the division of topics planned by Weber for the "Handbook of Political Economy" (later named the "Outline of Social Economics") started with an article on "Epochs and Stages of the Economy" ("Epochen und Stufen der Wirtschaft"), which was then changed into "Economic Stages of Development" ("Volkswirtschaftliche Entwicklungsstufen"). In fact, the first volume of this multi-author effort, distributed in 1914, began with Karl Bücher's classification of European economic development into the stages of the closed household economy (including the *oikos* and *corvée* labor [*Fromhof*], the urban economy, and the national economy [including the closed state economy (*Staatwirtschaft*) and the more or less open capitalist economy]).⁷⁷ As we know from his correspondence, Weber considered Bücher's exposition completely inadequate, and this estimation played some role in motivating him to revise his own contribution to the "Outline," which has been posthumously handed down to us as the first version of *Economy and Society*.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, he certainly did not consider this article inadequate merely because Bücher employed developmental stages, but because of the very schematic way in which they are employed and more generally, because of the extremely crude and undifferentiated depiction he offered of the different communal and associational forms, lumped together as "economic support groups" (*Versorgungsgemeinschaften*).⁷⁹

The concept of phase, epoch, or stage thus serves Weber as a mode of representation with which to internally subdivide Mediterranean-Occidental development. It produced subunits of historical phenomena possessing a certain degree of inner relatedness, with modern Western rationalism providing the (heuristic) relos for their construction. It was in this sense that he spoke, as early as in the studies on Protestantism, of the capitalism of the heroic age in contrast to that of the iron age. In the "Anticritiques" we find the distinction between ancient, medieval, early modern, and modern capitalism; in the *General Economic History*, probably following Sombart's suggestion, we find the distinction between the precapitalist and capitalist age, the latter being subdivided yet again into an early and advanced stage.

A classification of a different kind was offered by Ernst Troeltsch in his "universal history of the ethics of Western Christianity"⁸⁰ for religious development. For him, the early church, medieval Christianity, and Protestantism formed, in relation to one another, relatively closed developmental realms. Nevertheless, they all made up part of a larger continuity in which the "essence" of Christianity was articulated in different, mutually related formations. Important in all of this, however, is the fact that neither in the internal subdivision of Western economic development nor in that of Western religious development are the stages—so conceived—relativized as being preliminary to some final condition or negatively evaluated. Instead, they remain stages in their own right and with their own internal logic. In his interpretation of medieval Catholicism, Ernst Troeltsch found a very fitting way to put this: "Medieval religion and its social teachings are not a distortion of the 'essence of Christianity,' nor are they a developmental phase of the Christian idea serving other purposes. Instead, they represent an articulation of religious consciousness in keeping with the general constellation, possessing its own assets and truths, and its own errors and horrors."⁸¹

Thus, the internal classification leads to subunits with, as it were, both substantive and temporal references. Substantively, it refers to structural principles that have internal and external sides, motivational and institutional components.⁸² Temporally, they refer to a historical span of time in which a certain structural principle is predominant. In this sense, for example, Werner Sombart distinguishes the precapitalist from the capitalist economic epoch. In the precapitalist epoch, the principle of primary want satisfaction or self-sufficiency (*Eigenwirtschaft*), with empiricist

technology and traditionalist management, predominates. In the capitalist epoch, the principle of market production (or of monetary exchange), with scientific technology and rationalist management, prevails. Further differentiations arise from the facts that economic principles can take on a variety of forms, for example, the principle of primary want satisfaction the form of a peasant village or a manor, and that transitional ages can be conceived in which several principles compete. Thus, Sombart views the time of rebirth of the exchange economy in Western cities as such a transitional period. Nevertheless, initially, at least in the urban crafts, the aspect of customary sustenance, the provision of inhabitants in accordance with their status, remains intact. It is only gradually, on the basis of particular circumstances, that the market principle penetrates traditional relationships and begins to replace them. Thus, the age of early capitalism is reached, in which the principle of relatively self-sufficient want satisfaction is seriously challenged by the market principle.⁸³

The *General Economic History* shows that Weber thought along similar lines. An economic epoch can then be termed typically capitalist only "if the satisfaction of needs is predominantly capitalistic in such a way that if this type of organization is imagined away, the want satisfaction would have to collapse."⁸⁴ This is the underlying meaning of his view that although politically organized capitalism has existed in all previous history and the first moves in the direction of market-oriented capitalist enterprise occurred relatively early, there is but one capitalist epoch, the modern age. Its historical preconditions arose, however, in a number of different precapitalist economic epochs, including not only the early capitalist age but also antiquity and the Middle Ages.

Yet, the economy is only one of several societal spheres. As much as a "universal history of culture" such as Weber's *Collected Essays in the Sociology of Religion* must pay special attention to its spirit and form in its developmental history, equally must it attend to the "elective affinities" between this developmental history and that of the other spheres, especially of religion and politics. For this reason, the division into stages or epochs involves more than simply economic principles; it involves configurations of order that shape an entire civilization. A series of such epochs and their linkages by means of historical legacies must provide the basis for explaining modern culture, especially modern economic culture. Cultural science, in Weber's understanding, thus sees itself confronted by four tasks, which are mutually in-

dependent but at the same time interrelated: (1) developing typologies (*Kasustriken*) of clear (historical) concepts and establishing general rules of occurrence is the task of theoretical cultural science; (2) identifying (individual) constellations, and (3) making causal attributions, as well as (4) estimating developmental tendencies connected to contemporary constellations is the task of historical cultural science. Weber described these four tasks in the essay "Objectivity".

The determination of those (hypothetical) "laws" and "factors" would in any case be only the first of the many operations that would lead us to the desired knowledge. The analysis of the historically given individual configuration of those "factors" and their significant concrete interaction, conditioned by their historical context, and especially the rendering intelligible of the basis and kind of this significance would be the next task to be achieved. This task must be achieved, it is true, by the utilization of the preliminary analysis, but it is nonetheless an entirely new and distinct task. The tracing as far into the past as possible of the individual features of these historically evolved configurations which remain significant for the present, and their historical explanation by antecedent and equally individual configurations would be the third task. Finally, the prediction of possible future constellations would be a conceivable fourth task.⁸⁵

The division into epochs is removed from the history of events but still related to it. At least Weber's scattered remarks seem to justify such an interpretation. In a comparison between the Chinese and the Western political and economic orders, Weber refers to those revolutions decisive for the political and economic destiny of the West, "the Italian revolution of the twelfth and the thirteenth centuries, the Netherlands' revolution of the sixteenth century, the English revolution of the seventeenth century, and the American and French revolutions of the eighteenth century."⁸⁶ A passage from the second version of *Economy and Society* practically reads like an explanation of this first quote:

The major forerunners of the modern, specifically Western form of capitalism are to be found in the [medieval] urban communes with their particular type of relatively rational administration. Its primary development took place from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries in Holland and England, whose status [*ständisch*] order was distinguished by the unusual power of the bourgeois strata and the preponderance of their economic interests. The fiscal and utilitarian imitations, which on the Continent were introduced into the purely patrimonial states or states with feudal legacies, have in common with the Stuart system of monopolistic

industry the fact that they do not stand in the main line of continuity with the later autonomous capitalistic development.⁸⁷

Political and economic destiny is, however, joined by religious destiny; it is linked with the former in a variety of ways but cannot be deduced from it. Its decisive revolutions include not only the Reformation and its primarily seventeenth-century consequences, but also the radical changes in the eleventh and twelfth centuries connected to the separation of the Western church from the Eastern church, the Gregorian reforms, and the Investiture Struggle.⁸⁸ From the junction of the political and economic with religious "destinies" three great transformations result, at least for the developmental history of Western Europe. The transformation from the eleventh to the thirteenth century produced some external historical preconditions for modern capitalism. The transformation from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century gave rise to internal historical preconditions for modern capitalism. The "new spirit" and the already largely complete form entered into a genuine elective affinity such that a development unobstructed by any spiritual restraints could take place. Here, spirit and form are not merely not at odds, they augment each other. The transformation in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries established victorious capitalism, with its rational organization of formally free labor, on a mechanical basis once and for all, it "emancipates" itself from all religious, indeed, from all ethical foundations.

In other words, from a primarily economic perspective we observe first "the late medieval, still highly unstable development, capitalist development,"⁸⁹ then, the early capitalist development, especially its spiritual side,⁹⁰ which brings forth the man of vocation, who, in contrast to the medieval Catholic and the Lutheran, needs make no compromises "in order to feel at one with his activity."⁹¹ Finally, we encounter advanced capitalism, which achieves hegemony once and for all both over all traditional economic mentalities and over all economic systems oriented around Sombart's principle of relative self-sufficiency. In Weber's eyes the capitalist system would reach its ecological limits only in the very distant future. As Werner Sombart reports: "When I once spoke with Max Weber about the future and we raised the question when the witch's sabbath that humanity in the capitalist countries had been in since the beginning of the nineteenth century would end, he answered, 'When the last ton of ore will have been smelted with the last ton of coal.'"⁹²