



MAX WEBER AND CONFUCIUS ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE ASIAN COMMUNITY IN TERMS OF ITS CONFUCIAN HERITAGE AND GLOBALIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The following essay is of a preliminary nature, because the complexity of the topic at hand needs a more careful and detailed analysis. However, we do not have the more specific knowledge base, on a global scale, in order to say anything definitive at this point. Yet, relevant questions and the direction of research and inquiry mandate that we deal with the question at hand that Max Weber formulated at the beginning of the previous century: to what extent did the heritage of the teachings of Master K'ung (551-479 B.C., known in the West as Confucius) have any bearings upon the economic motifs, psychology and incentive of the so-called "Four little Dragons" (Singapore, Hong Kong, the Republic of Korea, and Japan)? Needless to say, we now have to include the Peoples Republic of China. Our aim in this presentation is not a strictly political, economic, social, or religious one for that would be more of a specialists undertaking. Ours is more complex, since we are trying, following the spirit of Weber, to see how the interacting and interweaving patterns, habits and activities, such as religion and economics, relate in the lives of Asian peoples. We are aiming at finding out how meaningful the teachings of Master K'ung and its traditions (such as Neo-Confucianism) are in the actual living experience of Asian peoples. We are aware, of course, that other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Taoism, or Shinto left its mark upon the cultural ramification of East Asia. Yet, for the sake of brevity and economics of space and time we concentrated merely upon Confucius, its tradition, as well as Weber's specific study on China and East Asia. The critical comprehensive work on Weber's leading questions and Asia still needs to be written in the future. At this point we are more modest and merely hint at the possibility of such an undertaking. The full historical dimension of East Asia needs to be better known, especially, to western educated minds. The present essay comes to terms with Max Weber's treatment of East Asia as a sociology of religion, with some philosophic underpinning; to be more specific, Confucianism and to some extent Buddhism and Taoism, as belief-systems in East Asia. At this point we keep our aim on a preliminary level and suggest a direction to be taken in research of the respective topic in order to make more sense of a world transformed on a global scale.

Keywords: Max Weber, Confucius, globalization, four little dragons, Master K'ung

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This presentation is exploratory and participates in the “debate in progress”, since the 1980s, as to how the “miracle” of rapid economic and social development in South-East Asia and the Far East was possible. More specific, how was the sudden rise of “The Four Little Dragons”, namely Taiwan, South Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore, possible in a relatively short period of time? At this point we should add mainland China since the 1990’s. Normally these topics are discussed by economists, political theorists, or Asian studies experts. Not to neglect the research results produced by these disciplines, our perspective puts some light on the respective question, in terms of the cultural heritage, sociological foundations and philosophic-empirical experience.

The present author did not focus on the question because of exclusive academic concerns. His personal interest in the area stems from his travels and living experience in Japan (1984), a visiting professorship in Malaysia (1995, 1996) and short periods of visits to Singapore (1995, 1996). Already at that time he wondered why Japan, Korea and the “four little dragons” developed in a quite different way, in speed and “philosophic attitude”, from the Middle East. The “four little dragon” question, in terms of Malaysia, is especially poignant, since Malaysia’s majority population claims Islam as its heritage; yet, a sizable portion of Malay society is of Chinese background and claims Confucius as part of its heritage.¹

Returning to the more specific academic question we subject the whole economic and social development of SE Asia and the Far East to the cultural and philosophic question: to what extent did the Confucian heritage promote the modern development of Asia? This more specific question will lead us to the academic discipline of the sociology of religion and Max Weber. Weber along with Emile Durkheim are considered to be the founding fathers of the sociology of religion and promoted in their respective writings cross-cultural studies (at the time when the term didn’t exist) that highlight the subtle interplay between economics, sociology, politics, religion and ethics. The reason why both didn’t achieve the distinction of being “household names” is simply because of the ideological and political successes of Karl Marx, the Russian revolution and the establishment of socialist states in Eastern Europe, not to mention Chinese communism of Mao Zedong style. The fall of the Soviet Union, the reforms of post-Mao China, and the reemergence of religious fervor, especially in communities with predominantly Islamic background, favored especially the sociology of religion of Max Weber. Thus, the topic is explainable in that it concentrates to relating a cultural heritage to several

Asian countries in terms of the work of Max Weber, upgraded by recent research, and the author’s personal experience of Asian peoples and their heritage.

Max Weber’s widow Marianne Weber, a well-known activists for political rights of women in Germany in the 1920s, published her husband’s monograph “Confucianism and Taoism” in 1920 (the year of Max Weber’s death), alongside studies on Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, in three volumes of collected essays entitled *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*.² These collected essays consolidated the sociology of religion as a serious academic field. They were the outcome of Weber’s broader project entitled, “Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen: Vergleichende religionssoziologische Versuche” (Economic ethos of world religions: A comparative sociology of religions) in which Weber tries to sort out the interplay between religious belief and economic activity among various cultural communities, on a world scale. Needless to say, the debate and critical discussion is still going on, since the 1920s, and have not subsided, concerning Weber’s claims. Of course, Weber’s fame rests on his monograph *Die Protestantische Ethik und der Geist des Kapitalismus* (The Protestant Ethos and the Spirit of Capitalism, first published in German in 1904/05; in English translation in 1930 by Talcott Parsons). Last year the world of the social science and beyond celebrated the centennial anniversary of the “Protestant Ethics” and lead to the intensification, considering world events within the last decade, to deal with Weber’s work anew. Weber’s claim that the protestant ethos, the inner-worldly asceticism, personal discipline, thrift, hard work, and the conscious methods of life style promoted by the puritans (Weber’s term is *Lebensführung*), provided favorably for a kind of modern capitalist system of economic ethos. What is important to catch is that Weber never claimed that Puritanism and the West discovered capitalism (this is the half-educated version we hear usually about Weber), but that in western Europe the modern version of capitalism did emerge, alongside with a very conscious sense of leading a specific type of systematic life style, namely modernist. This claim, interestingly, connected a specific kind of religious ethos, with a specific type of economic and personal life style that we didn’t find in any other world community. As anyone can imagine, the controversy continues and seems to increase, promoting an explosion of research and publications about religious communities, their symbolic values, and life values. What makes Weber claims special is that he demands an objective methodology (not ideology) that gives reasonable insight into the infrastructure of respective religious community’s worldwide, or

¹ It would be instructive to see Maurice Freedman’s book *The Study of Chinese Society*, especially chapter entitled “The Chinese in Southeast Asia” (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 3-231.

² This collection of essays is republished in paperback edition by J. C. B. Mohr Siebeck (Tubingen: UTB, 9th edition, 1988).

contemporaneously, on a global scale. The question relevant to our present concern, again, is, “How relevant is Weber’s claims in terms of the Confucian heritage applied to present-day South-East Asia and the Far East”? This question had been on the mind of the late LSE professor of economics Michio Morishima (1923-2004) who, in his Cambridge University Marshall Lectures as early as 1981, followed exactly this sort of Weberian question, namely, ‘Why has Japan ‘succeeded’?’³ In the Preface we read, we set “... out the problem in a Weberian manner.” During the 1990s the “Weberian manner” was continued by Harvard University Professor Ezra F. Vogel in his Reischauer Lectures of 1990 and published as “Japan as No. 1: Lessons for America” in 1999 (it reached the New York bestseller list during that year).

In light of these developments in research and empirical reality, within the last decades, we follow the leading questions: How was the astonishing economic success of South-East Asia and the Far East possible in terms of its Confucian heritage? What lessons can we learn from “the Weberian manner” and questions applied the Asian community? What transformations took place in these communities? Or, what transformation was the heritage subjected too? We can’t, of course, solve all these question as once, anything related to human activity can’t be spoken of in certainty, but we can enlighten and promote the leading questions that give us insight into human activity, on a global scale, that slowly dawn in our consciousness.

I. WEBER’S PROJECT: “ECONOMIC ETHOS OF WORLD RELIGIONS”

The idea of seeing the relationship between economics and religious belief was entertained by Weber around the turn of the century, from the 19th into the 20th. By 1904/05 he published his monograph “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism” that made him an internationally recognized figure in the social sciences. In the ensuing years the monograph was published in numerous languages that established Weber world fame. Yet, this was not enough for him; he continued to press on his leading questions into other belief-systems such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, Judaism and Islam. By studying these religious systems Weber thinks of them as cultural configurations, more in the sense of Gestalt psychology (with which he was familiar). Religious systems are cultural entities and take on various patterns and configurations (*Gestalten*). Weber himself was not religious, his

background was protestant, yet he recognized the importance of religious belief and activities that have high significance to people cementing together their communities. The “opium” of which Marx spoke may have some truth, however, it’s only half of a truth. The existential situation of human beings is so fragile and precarious that religious aspects, or whatever we may call it, have importance and play a significant part of people’s everyday life. Although Weber was a man of the enlightenment and open to new forms of knowledge and insight, for instance, he was quite open to Freud’s work and understood the cultural significance thereof, considering the Freud had only recently published his Interpretation of Dreams in 1900. Unfortunately, early death cut short Weber inquiry into the erotic dimensions of religiosity that appear in some texts, unedited. Thus, Weber’s inquiry as to the causality of religious belief and economic activity in terms of motifs and psychology must be understood as cultural studies on a global scale. Considering the fact that we, at present, actually live in the very process of a modern globalization makes us aware of the significance of Weber’s work. The received opinion by many who may not be that familiar with the original work of Weber is that he leans towards positivism and that he was Eurocentric. These are opinion either slanted from a Marxist or a post-modern ideology. Weber was never a man one could use for ideological campaign, he is too complex, too subtle and too much aware that human affairs are never simply ideological. Any close and serious reading of Weber (in the original German) makes clear to the reader that he thought that the western world did come up with a certain kind of rational life style (*Lebensführung*), but that it was not unique, in the sense, that it was the only kind of rationality in the world. He was, however, aware that historically speaking something did happen in Western Europe that did not happen to the rest of the world. The significant question is, what exactly was it? Many contemporary history books that deal with the first confrontation between the West and Islam, or East Asia, will tell us about the military and technological superiority of western nations, as the encountered lands beyond Europe. Very rarely do we read anything about the intellectual or cultural encounter between Europe and other lands. Even today, public opinion in many so called “third world countries” or, the more polite term is “emerging economies”, holds that Europe and North American are only superior in terms of technology and science, but not in cultural or moral values. It is this sort of misunderstanding that Weber wanted to make clear. It is doubtful whether science, the military, or technology, exclusively, made the West “superior” to other nations. The more significant questions that can give us a lead into a more critical assessment, as to why Europe turned out differently at a specific stage of world history, may have something to do with

³ Michio Morishima. *Western Technology and Japanese Ethos* (Cambridge University Press, 1982).

questions such as, why was there no Socrates to be found in other cultures? Why no Galileo? At this point we need not recount the stories of Socrates and Galileo since most people, who can read and write, are familiar with the broad outline of their story. Thus, the question why the West turned out different from East Asia, at a particular turn of world history, is a relevant question in terms of Weber. Likewise, the question, why East Asia (lead by the so-called “Four little Dragons”) emerges on the world stage, in a most impressive economic performance and dynamic social potentiality in the late 20th century, and continues this performance into the early years of the 21st century? Why did the “economic miracle” not happen in most countries on the African Continent? Why do countries such as Turkey, Tunisia or Malaysia function much better than most other countries with Islamic background? These are open secret questions that many ask who actually know and experienced these countries in comparison to Arab speaking nations. The simply answer does not lie in military technology or science, but in a much more complex configurations that deal exactly with the kind of questions Max Weber proposed in his work. Thus, we need to rediscover these questions and, if necessary, refine and adopt them to our present-day circumstance of the early 21st century. Our contribution is a small down payment for such an enterprise. Many more specialists, experts and generalists, but not ideologically motivated work, as was the case in the last decade is needed, in order to sort things out. The world will not be saved through ideology, but through serious work and honest moral purpose in order to make events a little bit more meaningful to rational beings.

The original idea of publishing the essay on the sociology of religion, encompassing the socio-economic-religious ethos of world religions, as part of Weber’s monumental “Economy and Society” (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*) did not materialize. We now know that Weber’s widow, Marianne Weber, a leading spokeswoman of the German feminist movement at the turn of the century, edited the forbidding manuscript and published it in 1920. A revised 5th edition was published by Johannes Winkelmann in 2002. An English-American version was published by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich in a three volume set in 1968. Of course, this was untimely since Marx, Mao Tse-Tung and his little Red Book were the center of discussion of academic youth in the West, instead of Weber. Yet, in 2005, on the anniversary of Weber’s “Protestant Ethic” a new expanded reader was published by Stephen Kalberg, *Max Weber: Readings and Commentary on Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell), as well as *Max Weber’s Economy and Society: A critical Companion*, edited by Charles Camic et al. (Stanford University Press). Weber’s essays on the sociology of religion (*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*) were published by Marianne Weber in 1921, after Weber’s death, in three separate volumes. The

8th edition of the three volumes was published in 1988 in paperback format. *The Collected Works of Max Weber* (*Max Weber-Gesamtausgabe*, edited by Horst Baier et. al.) are nearly completed. The recently published biographies by the historian Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: Die Leidenschaft des Denkens* (M. Weber: The Passion of Thinking, Munich: Hanser, 2005), as well as Michael Sukale’s *Max Weber: Leidenschaft und Disziplin* (*M. Weber: Passion and Discipline*, Tübingen: Siebeck, 2002), supplement comfortably the classic works by Marianne Weber, Reinhard Bendix, or Eduard Baumgarten, on the life and work of Max Weber.

According to Weber, in a long-drawn-out footnote in the Introduction to the essays on the sociology of religion, he points out that due to his military service as a hospital administrator in Heidelberg, during the First World War, he decided to publish the original essays on world religions in the newly founded Archives of Social Sciences, between 1915 and 1920. In fact, during Weber’s life time his most brilliant work and ideas were published in Journals and not in book form. This is one of the reasons why it took some time to find translations of Weber’s work, for instance, aside his “Protestant Ethic” essay translated into English and published in 1930 by Talcott Parsons, his other works were published in English in the 1950s and 60s. Again, since Marx and Marxism controlled the ideological market, supported by the Soviet Union and East Germany, Weber was not “in” as the saying used to go. Weber’s works were not available in reasonably priced paperbacks in the 1960s, but only in expensive and bulky hardcover editions. Marx and Marxist literature was easily available to any student in Europe in the 1960 and sold quite inexpensive Student Unions of many West German universities. I couldn’t have imagined that Max Weber would lend itself to shouting choreography alongside Marx, Mao and Marcuse. It is only in the 1990s that Weber’s most important texts became available to German students in the well-known and inexpensive Reclam editions. And with the unexpected resurgence of religious consciousness, alongside the electronic mass communication revolution within the process of globalization, it is no surprise that Weber’s potential for understanding complex interacting processes (worldwide) would be rediscovered. Globalization means to rethink the local situation in global terms and this means readjustment of many presuppositions, patterns, configurations and paradigms. We are now in the midst of the new research potential and reformatting of local consciousness. Weber, so it seems, has an important role to play in this enterprise.

In the introduction to his Collected Essay of the Sociology of Religion (Volume One) Weber gives us important hints as to the specific focus on special themes the essays will treat. The specific title of the sociological essays on world religions is “*Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen*”

with the subtitle (normally not translated) *Vergleichende religionswissenschaftliche Versuche* (Comparative attempts at scientific religious investigations). Thus, Weber's work has to be understood as a work in progress, or an open-ended research program, in the sense of American philosopher C. S. Peirce. Weber's work was never to be understood as definitive, but an ongoing process, from generation of researchers to the next. In the long run, as Peirce would say, we would find some truth that is relevant to the situation, but then be supplemented by further research and the previous results adjusted, accordingly. This was an ongoing dynamic process of truth-finding. Absolute truth had no place in this kind of research program. Weber's studies are sketchy, at times, but there are forceful, synthetic and full of surprising insights. Despite some shortcomings his studies are still valuable in that he suggests and hints at areas, in the emergence of East Asia into the modern age, that are basically not well known; precisely, the subtle relationship between religion and economics.

The editor, Yao Xinzong, of the recently published *Encyclopaedia of Confucianism* points out, "If Weber's theory is to be extended to include late 20th century economic development, these transformations of Confucianism its status and influences must be taken very seriously."⁴ Maurice Freedman pointed out in his anthropological study, "Confucianism had very prominent non-religious, secular features."⁵ We can see that the Weber question is alive and searching for research results. The Confucian ethos and late 20th century economic development in East Asia needs to be addressed. The normal television opinion is that the Far East is an excellent imitator of western technology and some intake of western values of efficiency, hard work and administration made the "miracle" possible. No mention is made of the indigenous culture of the Confucian ethos, as well as Buddhist elements, not to mention Taoist and Shinto aesthetic values. Instead of simple minded television opinion, and apparent surveys from the "streets", we should become serious and address Weber's questions within a transformed context of the 21st century in terms of East Asia. How did the teachings of Master K'ung play out, historically, in the Asian communities that comprise the Far East? To what extent did Buddhism (wandering from India to the Far East) affect Asian communities? How did Taoism and Shinto, especially in Japan, shape the emotional and aesthetic aspects of peoples' lives? These are the questions that must be posed and set within the context of economic development. Special studies have been offered, but very few even hinted at the

cultural (religious) elements of social-economic resurgence of Asian communities. There are plenty of ideological studies offered, but none are viable. It is not enough to merely talk about "Asian values"; what we need is, specifics, facts and serious historical research with competence in economic history as well as religious institutions. This may be an enormous enterprise, as Weber realized, and suggested that research teams, over generations must work at this. Truth is not to be had by a push of a button, but hard work, and it takes time. Time can be abbreviated and speeded up, but truth cannot, since human life is part of this truth. For, otherwise, why bother searching for truth? We don't want to belittle some "western influence" in Asia, especially in the 19th and 20th century, but religious forms of life has their own time framework and their own psychological disposition. The framework and disposition has an impact of the normal everyday life of ordinary people and citizens in a longer span of generations than a quick assessment of a newscast. Television pictures may tell us a lot of a moment's event, but doesn't tell us anything about the disposition of the soul of those making up the event. Let us return to Weber's basic position in his Introduction (*Einleitung*) to the socio-religious essays.

Weber's forty page introduction presupposition his central thesis of the "Protestant Ethic" that Calvinist Protestantism was the central source for the promotion of an ascetic modernist capitalist spirit. More specific, that the inner-worldly-asceticism of the western European, for instance, world-denying psychology in which profit is made in order to save or reinvest for more profit, as a sign of God's bestowing good fortune of humankind. Here again, we find the curious mix of rational efficiency and irrational motifs that Weber pointed out, more and more, in his later texts. This is an extremely important point since it dispels the idea that only European rationality is the only rationality that qualifies as legitimate ways of seeing the world in a rational manner. Weber emphasized numerous times that other nations had developed forms of rationality, but that it was only in the western (northern Europe, predominantly Calvinist Protestantism and Lutheranism) cultural context that modern "*Wissenschaft*" and the phenomena of the "*Fachmenschentum*" (a species of experts), as well as the modern civil servant (*Fachbeamte*), as well as rational chemistry, or freely contracted labor emerged (see "*Vorbemerkung*", Remarks to Volume one). Again, this shouldn't be interpreted that the West was better than the rest of the world, but simply, that socio-economic-political-religious patterns developed that were, at a point, significantly different from other world communities. It is exactly this point, in a comparative way that must be more carefully research on a global level. What is needed is to connect theological doctrines with religious life-attitudes and

4 Yao Xinzong. *Encyclopaedia of Confucianism* 2 vols. (London: Routledge Curzon Series on World Religions, 2003), 1. 105.

5 Maurice Freedman. *The Study of Chinese Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 104.

institutions and legal bodies that support these relationships within the context of the relevant political forces. In the English-speaking world R.H. Tawney, professor of economics at the London School of Economics, published a well-known work entitled, "Religion and the Rise of Capitalism" in 1925. This longish essay in book form was critical of Weber, but Weberian in manner. Weber had set the tone and direction in the social sciences, competing with Marxist oriented literature.

How does Weber understand "World Religions"? He treats in separate monographs, between 1915 and 1920, Confucianism, Taoism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, as well as Judaism, although the latter, strictly speaking, is not considered a world religion. Weber felt that, for historical reasons and its relation to Christianity and Islam, Judaism should be included in his socio-historical analysis. Yet, he must have been interested in the respective theme for some time, since the secondary literature relating to the world religions show dissertations and special thesis published in the late 19th century, many of whom he must have discovered in the university library of Columbia University in New York City, during his St. Louis Exhibition visit, in 1904. A careful perusal of the numerous footnotes throughout the essay will support this observation. Moreover, we notice that many works cited indicate a practical aspect reporting, or providing information, on how religious activities were lived in everyday life. Almanacs, prayer books, guides, or practical orientation brochures can be found cited, upon careful inspection of the many footnotes provided to support Weber's contentions. He defines these religions as life-systems, legitimized by religious doctrines, regimented and conditioned by habitual seasonal enactment, symbolically or otherwise, of major strands embedded in the system. It is important to identify religion as a system of life-guiding-orientation (*Lebensführung*). We shy away from simply using the more popular term life style (imported from Ferdinand Tönnies and Georg Simmel into the English language), since the term doesn't necessarily convey a presupposed legitimate-moral mandate. A "Lebensführung" according to Feyerabend's "anything goes" is a contradiction. Life style may signify an aesthetically appealing life rhythm, according to marketing criteria, but this doesn't make it a guiding principle presupposition moral and legitimizing institutional framework. A life orientation includes tradition and future oriented projects, with respective existential decisions, relating to a curriculum vitae and anything that relates to elements between birth and death of an individual, or generation. Thus, the economic ethos, which includes the ethics and anthropological aspects embedded in an ethos (*Wirklichkeitsethik* is Weber's term, an ethics of actuality), constitutes a life-guiding-system which is underpinned by psycho-pragmatic

considerations, demanding social action. Social actions don't appear in a vacuum, but exhibit structures, patterns and values. This conceptual ethos demands meaningful interpretation which Weber called "*verstehende Soziologie*". The ethos of meaningful sociology (rationally conceptualized) must be grasped in terms of "innere Momente" ("prehensive moments" of the inner life), which conditions a human being towards the world. Again, this is an important point and often missed by a careless reader: Weber reiterates throughout his text, in his sociology of religion, that the spiritual and "*innerliche Momente*" (see Volume One, p. 238) are decisive in *Lebensführung* (life-guiding-principles). For instance, Confucianism is identified as an "estate ethic" (*Standesethik*), promoted by Chinese literati, structured in a worldly-rationalized bureaucracy and class community. The secular aspects of this elite ethos, despite its religious undertones, had a decisive imprint of Chinese culture and beyond its border in Korea and Japan. The decisive inner moments, that is to say, the subjective meaningful feelings of an individual, a group, or a generation supports the socio-economic factors, mixed with functional political forces, promoting a specific *Lebensführung*. Weber disagrees with the standard Marxian version of an economic situation mirroring the religious sentiments, or class of peoples. He seems to be more sensitive to the reality (*Wirklichkeit*) of everyday life of people and their respective emotional and spiritual needs. Moulids are festivities in honor of a saint in which many Egyptians participate, Christians and Muslims alike, and satisfy the emotional needs of people to honor ideals, according to which they want to model their lives. The saints, in the Weberian manner, operate as ideal types that provide regulative normative functions (to borrow terminology from Kant) that people can incorporate in their respective *Lebensführung*. Prayer and devotional action, public religious celebration reinforce annual bonding in the community, have historical and theological sources, but satisfy the basic religious needs of various kinds of people.

The phenomena of sickness, bad luck, misfortune, or death are topics that Weber's tries to put into perspective of the world religions. The non-prophetic, non-revelatory religions, such as Confucianism and Buddhism, emphasize the salvation of humankind in terms of "this-worldly-goods", such as health, wealth, and a long life. Salvation is treated as a theory of suffering. Different methods and techniques are introduced in the history of humankind in order to relief people from suffering, pain and a nasty, brutish life. In ancient Egypt we celebrate the pyramids as one of the wonders of the world symbolizing the religious spirit, transcending the finality of life. The pyramids also symbolize the perennial tension trying to transcend this-worldiness in awe of the vast cosmos. The ancient Egyptian revelation was

not empowered in a prophet, but in the process of transcendence, such as mummification and its rituals, between the pharos and the heavens. The stars were to be the guides to the other-worldiness. The pyramids were designed as orientations points for the transcending journey of the pharos from this to the other-world. A prophet or seer, developed by Semitic religions was not necessary, since the ancient Egyptians applied natural knowledge, especially advanced in astronomy and medicine, to their religious needs. Economics and religion found each other in the pyramidal work project that exhibits highly efficient administrative and organizational talent. The ancient Egyptians were less interested in doctrinaire aspect of religiosity than practical results for the living. In ancient Egypt we find more practical rationality than in Semitic religions that stress revelatory reason.

The perennial problem of evil is highly relevant to Weber's project. How do world religions come to terms with the phenomenon of evil in the world? The Europe of 1755, meditating the destruction of Lisbon in an earthquake, confronted the Christian faith and the apparent all-powerful and benevolent God. Leibniz postulated how evil is meaningful in the best of all possible worlds, while the 21st century is looking out for a new Leibniz, not yet in sight. For Weber, prophets have a specific function and obligation towards their people, namely to provide a systematic-rational world-view in order to explain convincingly why suffering and evil exist in the world. Again, we find a redirection by Weber of the concept of rationality: Faith and belief-system produce different sorts of rationality focusing on revelation, suffering, evil, goodness, or salvation. This sort of rationality is enacted through special techniques and methods, such as prayer, meditation, or fasting. The cleansing of the body from sin, by wondering and roaming in the desert for forty days is such as technique and method. The life of Islamic thinkers, such as Al Ghazali, or Mulla Sadra tells us about this intellectual cleansing ritual. Many mystics, yogis and Sufis experience the purification of the soul preparing for other-worldiness. Annual celebrations and rituals, as well as modern national holidays, take on the role of national therapy, reconciliation or reenactment of hostility with the enemy, real or imagined, with have religious overtones. Celebrations of Shams el Nessim (spring equinox) or Norouz, are ancient events that still have meaning to present day Egyptians and Iranians, celebrating wherever they might be. These are celebrations of enacted return to roots that promote identity, well-being, and at times therapeutic function. Natural seasonal events, such as Halloween or carnival hold the imagination of European and Latin American peoples amidst prophetic religions. Thus, the practical aspects of everyday religiosity was of great interest to Weber, since we can see thereby the actual acting-out of religious sentiment

that provides the energy for appropriated social action. Economics from this point of view is not simply textbook economics by Paul Samuelson, but basic psychology. It is no surprise that Weber was fond of the work by William James, especially his "Varieties of Religious Experience". A science of sociology of religion needs to be a "*Wissenschaft*" of "*Wirklichkeit*" (a science of reality as he understands economics, religion and psychology). Weber's discourse operates contrary to dialectic materialism and Nietzsche's "slave morality" on the basis that there is such a phenomenon as religious rationality. Here too, there seems to be a metaphysical need for the more intellectual class of people for a rationally purified religiosity that we find in an Ibn Khaldun, or Ibn Rushd, or Thomas Aquinas, or Maimonides. Religiosity is not denied, but there must be some sort of meaningfulness. There is a need for the proof of the existence of God, in Semitic religions, for some the logic is important, for others the belief in the logic. Yet, the actual celebrations take on varies forms in which all partake, irrespective of logic or belief. In a globalization process this state should not surprise us.

II. ON THE CONSEQUENCES OF PROTESTANTISM AND CONFUCIANISM

Weber's comments on the affinities and differences between Protestantism and Confucianism are instructive and enlightening. Yet, we need to focus, at this point, less on specific historical strands, rather than on the consequences of Protestant and Confucian configurations in the late 20th, early 21st century. For the sake of brevity we shall enunciate several aspects that are directly relevant to Weber's comments in his respective sociological essay on East Asia. We understand Calvinist Protestantism and classical/neo-classical Confucianism not in the manner of history textbooks presentations, but as an unconscious psychological attitude, prevalent among numerous peoples in the Asian communities, providing the basis for a normative life orientation. In the West the question appears on varies occasions, like Christmas or Easter, to what extent is the classical form of Christianity relevant to Europe's population? This is a typical post-modern European question, but not an American one. In the heartland of the United States, that Weber traveled in the summer and fall of 1904, we find a population that still believe in the simple version of hard work, community service, and a steadfast believe in moral goodness in the name of Jesus. This can be explained in terms of an immigration society (formerly the poor and destitute of Europe) that bursts

alive in their suppressed energy to “make it in this world” and follow the will of the Christian God. The genre of the Cowboy Western cinema and the idea of the “Wild West” conveys the belief-system that America is the chosen land, in which all are free from the shackles of the oppressor in Europe (referred to as the “old country”), and get their chance of making an “honest buck”. That business enterprise mix with the showdown of law and order, and the ladies appears either, as pious churchgoing women or prostitutes, kindly called “saloon girls”, is instructive for America’s puritanical streak, foreign to French or Swedish cinema. The world appears in black and white, good and evil, believers and heathen, rich and poor, and anything else that doesn’t agree with the time honored doctrine of George Washington (the founding father), motherhood, and apple pie, is the work of the devil. The America in the early phases of the 21st century is somewhat more complex and colorful, yet, the themes at hand are still very much alive in the subconscious of America’s heartland. We need not to stress and go into detail, at this point, what sort of consequences this kind of puritanical attitude has, if applied beyond the heartland, not to mention beyond America’s coastlines. We should not forget, and this Weber sensed, that the United States is the first immigration societies that attained the status of a world power.

Contemporary East Asia, especially China is a very old cultural entity and civilization. Asian communities had their ups and downs, and some were colonized by Europeans. We need not tell the story here. Yet, the basic foundational elements of Buddhism, Taoism, Shinto, and not the least Confucianism, remained in the collective memory of Asian peoples, despite Marxism or any other ideology, contrary to the time honored belief systems. The Confucian ideals functioned as a point of orientation, especially of the elite of China and beyond. Of course, we know the story of the contact with the European 19th century powers, the missionary activities and modernist transformations of respective societies in Asia. The focus, however, has always been heavily economic and military, and very little on the cultural framework and underpinnings of Asian societies. This was reserved for Asian western experts called anthropologists. However, the time has come to ask serious questions, to what extent was China’s transformation of a traditional Confucian society into a socialist state possible? Why was Japan, and later Korea, able to adjust to a modern kind of societal structure, despite occupation and colonization? To what extent did moral traits in these respective societies reemerge, from time to time, in order to invigorate its population? Confucianism is used, at the point, only as an ideal type (in Weber’s sense) to show the basics of a life-guiding-orientation (*Lebensführung*) of ancient cultures don’t disappear. They fade and reemerge as

needed, from time to time. Contemporary China is an excellent example whereby a selective memory discards useless cultural baggage, i.e. the cult of Mao (for the time being), and reminds itself of the traditional teachings of Master K’ung, that is supported in children’s curriculum by the State (a State based upon the doctrines of Marx and Mao). In the West educated people ask how? Of course, educated Asian people may ask how Hitler was possible in a country, as modern as Germany in the 1930s.

The Confucian incentive to learn and adopt natural knowledge to practical affairs is quickly picked up and transformed into a modern form of zealous acquisitive scientific knowledge. The Confucian set of mind needed time to adjust its knowledge of nature to modern scientific knowledge by adaptation of “Dutch learning” (as it was called in Japan), imitation in the traditional understanding of the Master’s teaching, and revision as events arrive for the application of respective contemporary needs. The amalgamation of the teachings of the American education master and philosopher John Dewey with the moral precepts of the Chinese master was not lost on the audience in Japan and China during the former’s lectures in 1919. Dewey spoke of the necessity of a “new philosophy”, while his audience thought of a new restructuring of their society. This attitude seems to be very much a fundamental element in Confucian heritage operating in the subconscious of its respective peoples. We are not totally wrong if we see a strange mix of Marx, Dewey, and Confucius operating in a transformed way on the mind set of Asian peoples. Needless to say, if we think Turkey, we immediately think of Dewey (who visited Ankara in 1924) and Atatürk, or Ibn Khaldun, Comte and the French socialist Jean Jaures, whom the founding father of modern Tunisia, Habib Bourguiba, admired. We can think of many more amalgamations, but the basics always seem to prevail in the peoples’ collective memory.

There are ecological concerns as well as structural differences between the modern city and rural areas in contemporary China. We see that Weber’s disenchantment-process does not to be a one-way ticket to modernity. He never thought about the possibility of re-enchantment, promoted by traditional studies and scholars like Professor S. N. Nasr. The disenchantment with the cult of Mao and the Little Red Book (this author still has his from the 1960s student days) and the disenchantment campaign against the “Gang of Four” (including Mao’s widow), we see that Chinese pragmatism, with a Confucian slant, is a subtle way in the process of transforming an agricultural based society into a dynamic modern state. The cost may be very high, yet Europe also paid a high cost in its two world wars. Modern day Shanghai may exhibit some window dressing, as the saying goes in the West, but the seriousness of pushing China

ahead onto the global stage of world history, by the State, is obvious. It is important not too stress economics as the exclusive motor of China's will to succeed in its endeavor to become a leading modern society. What is needed is more research into details of the cultural aspects of Asian communities (and not just those of Asia), with the intention to come to understand how indigenous cultural elements were used as chemistry to mix with non-indigenous elements (like "Dutch learning"), in order to transform native communities into modern states.

This complex process is not that well understood, considering the speechlessness of some more developed countries when they hear "nation building". Nation building is not simply imitation or blind adaptation, but a subtly handling of native elements and tradition with a pragmatic touch from the foreign, in such a way, that the native transforms itself into the new embedding borrowed elements from any other cultural entities, if it fits into a contemporary situation. This lesson has not been well understood by some policy makers in the West. The Literati in East Asia may be gone, those in the West have vanished, because the socio-economic platform that supported them is gone, but the ideal of normative rules as to modern ways is very much in demand, be it environmental concerns, be it world wide web electronic communications. To put matters a little rough, socialism and capitalism in contemporary China need not be a contradiction, but just another face of the possibility of the teaching of Master K'ung. The West must deal with its own transformation; yet, whether Calvinist Protestantism will be able to provide the backbone for a new horizon remains an open question, for the simple reason, that mere secularization may not be sufficient to satisfy the need of people. That is the reason why some scholars and thinkers in the West have advocated for their own nation to learn new lessons from the Far East.

III. CONCLUSION

In this essay we focused specifically on Weber's treatment of East Asia in terms of the contemporary situation at the turn of the century, from the 20th to the 21st century. Weber gave us guidelines as to where to research and what kind of questions may be fruitfully employed in our present-day situation. This preliminary essay by nature didn't intend to give the reader a minute by minute account as to what Weber said about the Far East. We leave this up to those who are seriously interested in the subject matter and care as to how the process of modern-day globalization will play out. Nevertheless, we did encourage a scholarly approach as to come

to terms seriously, without ideological concerns, about the emergence of the "Little Dragons", Singapore, Hong Kong, Korea, Japan, and lately the "Tiger", namely China. The normal path is exclusively economic and military consideration without sensitivity to the cultural aspects and its historical underpinnings that are still at work in the unconsciousness of peoples' souls.

We concentrated on Weber's specific concerns in his essay in sociology of religion treating the world religions, respectively, and the geographies of East Asia. What are, indeed, the specific historical-cultural conditions under which a rational modern lifestyle (a normative guiding-principle) is possible? Those familiar with Kant will notice immediately the family resemblance between Weber and Kant, rightly so. Weber doesn't pose a transcendental question, as Kant did, in his famous first *Kritik*, but he does introduce a subtle Kantian theme into the arena of research in the sociology of religion. What are the specific conditions in the Far East, or any other geographic region, that we can identify as being relevant to our concerns (economic consequences of religious attitudes)? What particular cultural form or pattern or paradigm is required to lead a rational existence of life? Can the rational modern lifestyle claim universality? We must remind ourselves that Weber never maintained that the western modern rational life style is the best of all possible worlds for the rest of humankind. In fact, Weber towards the end of his life, was rather skeptical about such statements. Weber is only Eurocentric (some criticism from post-modern ideologists) in the sense that he uses his original European analysis of the relationship between protestant Christianity and western capitalism as a focal point in order then, to move to other geographic areas and cultures in search, as to what can be found in the causality between religion and economics. Weber's Eurocentrism is not normative, but operates as a regulative principle (in the Kantian sense) which he uses as a foliage in order to come to terms with, as he used to say, "Was ist", i.e., what is factual and objectively truth to be found in the geography and memory of the Far East.

We must ask about the causality between the religious sphere and the respective economic system called capitalism. How can communist China call herself socialist, promote for its current generations the positive aspects of Confucianism, yet, in everyday economic life promote a sort of Manchester Capitalism, as Engels used to call the 19th century British economic system, at the zenith of empire? To what extent is the Chinese garden disenchanted? Is the inner-directed ethics necessary for a normative ideal that transcends this-worldliness? The world of rationality is a world full of contradictions. Contradiction, as Hegel taught us, is part of the real world. The protestant ethic, in view of Weber is such a rational world, whereby irrationality plays a meaningful dialectical role in the affairs of people. The founders of the

Frankfurt School of Philosophy, Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno had reemphasized this theme in their celebrated work entitled *The Dialectic of the Enlightenment*. Not many had noted that Horkheimer, in his early years, was an admirer of Weber and was one of the students present in Munich when Weber presented his famous lectures *Science as a Vocation and Politics as a Vocation (Wissenschaft als Beruf; Politik als Beruf)* in January 1919. Hence, we must find out what sort of element are decisive in varies belief-systems promoting and expressing a modern rational life style. Weber presented such as program called the Economic Ethics (Ethos) of World Religions. We can build upon such a program and supplement his finding with our new analytical tools and methodologies and research materials. A key to unlock the “rationality of religion” as a meaningful (*sinngesamt*) world-view is Kant. The Kantian motif in the first Critique (*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*) is transferred into Weber’s analysis dissecting the economic ethos of Protestantism, then the world religions. Yet, if we take Kant out of the research game what have we got? A God, or Deity who functions as a sacred story for the populace, meaning the enchantment process (*Verzauberungsstrategie*) in a pre-Kantian world, that rediscovers the magic garden, after the experience of disenchantment of modernity turned out to be a rather harsh reality. Goethe’s Doctor Faust may give us a hint: if you are ready to sell your soul to the devil for unlimited knowledge, you must be ready to pay for the consequences.

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