

A black and white portrait of Max Weber, a man with a full beard and mustache, wearing a suit and tie. The portrait is positioned on the left side of the page, partially overlapping a dark purple vertical bar.

MAX WEBER AND ASIAN CIVILIZATION

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ABSTRACT

The following presentation explores the possibility of renewing and completing Max Weber's project which he called "Economic Ethics of World Religions". These were studies that he started at the beginning of the twenty-first century and whose results were published, partly at the time of his untimely death in 1920, partly posthumously by his wife Marianne Weber. The studies spanned an enormously rich aggregate of academic fields (some still in the early stages of professional development), such as cultural history, international law, economic history, religious traditions, political stratification, as well as philosophical aspects of specific cultural forms known in Weber's time as "*Kulturkreis*". His project of studying the effects of economic ethics and ethos upon the world religions encompassed Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Unfortunately, the publications on Christianity and Islam were left incomplete due to his untimely death. The independent studies on India and China that dealt with the *Kulturkreis* (cultural circle) of Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism had enormous influence in the field what became known as sociology of religion. However, his work on Christianity, especially Protestantism, attained world fame with his monograph "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism". The subsequent volumes on India and China were published in the early 1920, but translated into English in the early 1950s. His work on Islam was published, despite the incomplete manuscript. Our study will focus specifically on Asian Civilization that includes India, China, Korea, the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia, as well as Japan. From a Weberian point of view, we are focusing on Asia not on the political unit called nation state, but on the cultural community (*Kulturkreis*), especially of the interaction of economic forces and religious community life. This should be of great interest in the new century, since Asia in general, is appearing on the global stage of world history, to use a Hegelian metaphor, that is provoking many questions, still unanswered. What was the hidden secret of the economic upsurge of Japan, Korea, India, and China, and lately Indonesia, not to mention Malaysia? There have been specialized studies made on religion, on technology, or aesthetics, of Asian civilization, but it was Max Weber who seriously investigated the subtle interplay, not to say dialectic, between economic ethos and religious communities, or members and followers of belief systems. This presentation suggests that we are now, during the process of global communications possibility, in a position that we can start strategic researches for each *Kulturkreis* making up the panorama called Asian Civilization, to ask Weberian questions which Weber himself was not able to investigate empirically.

Keywords: Weber, Asian civilizations, Islam, Hinduism, Protestantism, Christianity, Buddhism, Confucianism

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I. INTRODUCTION

The following study explores the possibility of renewing and completing Max Weber's project which he called "Economic Ethics of World Religions". These were studies that he started at the beginning of the twentieth century and whose results were published, partly at the time of his untimely death in 1920, partly posthumously by his wife Marianne Weber. The studies spanned an enormously rich aggregate of academic fields (some still in the early stages of professional development), such as cultural history, international law, economic history, religious traditions, political stratification, as well as philosophical aspects of specific cultural forms known in Weber's time as "*Kulturkreis*". His project of studying the effects of economic ethics and ethos upon the world religions encompassed Confucianism, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Unfortunately, the publications on Ancient Christianity and Islam were left incomplete due to his untimely death. The independent studies on India and China that dealt with the *Kulturkreis* (cultural circle) of Confucianism, Buddhism and Hinduism had enormous influence in the field what became known as sociology of religion. However, his work on Christianity, especially Protestantism, attained world fame with his monograph "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", published 1904/05 (translated by Talcott Parsons in 1930). The subsequent volumes on India and China were published in the early 1920, but translated into English in the early 1950s. His work on Islam was published, despite the incomplete manuscript. Yet, even this study many scholars, especially in the social sciences, not the least in the West, found inspiration and inquisitiveness as to the fascinating topic, namely, how and to what extent does a specific economic ethos influence the sociological structure of religious cultural communities? Specifically, why did the economic ethos of modern capitalism exclusively shape Western Civilization in the form of Protestantism? Weber provided hypothesis in his famous "Protestant Ethic" monograph that is still, one century later, hotly debated not only among western scholars, but also on a global scale, as we can see with the numerous publications in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Our examination will focus specifically on Asian Civilization that includes India, China, Korea, the Malay Peninsula, Indonesia, as well as Japan. From a Weberian point of view, we are focusing on Asia not on the political unit called nation state, but on the cultural community (*Kulturkreis*), especially of the interaction of economic forces and religious community life. This should be of great interest in the new century, since Asia in general, is appearing on the global stage of world history, to use a Hegelian metaphor, that is provoking many questions,

still unanswered. What was the hidden secret of the economic upsurge of Japan, Korea, India, and China, and lately Indonesia, not to mention Malaysia? Normally, colonialism by western powers of the 19th century, is cited as being a culprit of inhibiting the social, political and economic development of countries that were duped "Third World", or more politely, underdeveloped. Yet, surveying the general news reports and academic studies on the so-called developing countries, we find exclusively a focus on economics and politics. There are very few authentic studies on the social and economic impact of religious forces in Asian countries. There have been specialized studies made on religion, on technology, or aesthetics, of Asian civilization, but it was Max Weber who seriously investigated the subtle interplay, not to say dialectic, between economic ethos and religious communities, or members and followers of belief-systems. This presentation suggests that we are now, during the process of global communications possibility, in a position that we can start strategic researches for each *Kulturkreis* making up the panorama called Asian Civilization, to ask Weberian questions which Weber himself was not able to investigate empirically.

The disciplines that are included such a strategic research program would include comparative civilization, sociology of religion, historical sociology, political science, economic history, not to mention literature and local history. We also need to re-organize and re-arrange our categories of investigation that we inherited from the 19th century, such as Near East, Far East, or the Orient. Of course, the term Middle East is also not satisfactory, or South-East Asia, very limited in scope. By focusing on *Kulturkreis* (the specific cultural form or pattern of a given society) we can delineate more clearly the detailed structures, in its social science components and religious belief systems and its actors who shape the structures, forms, and system. Weber asked why Asia, specifically China and India, did not develop a modern rational middle-class capitalist society? What were the cultural inhibitors of a modern capitalist ethos within the local religious forces at work? These are controversial question, but they will give us a clue as to where to start our investigation. What was so special about the Protestant Ethic that was not present in Confucianism or Hinduism? How does local traditional law play out in interaction with international law, or, Islamic law? To what extent does the legitimate order reflect constitutional law, if at all, or traditions that shaped a particular society for centuries? How does cultural transfer in ideas, goods, and people influence local structures? These are some of the questions that will promote a better understanding of the dynamics of globalization, not the least, to what extent economic development and dynamics is influenced by religious ethos, forces, ideas, and actors peculiar to a local region.

We suggest that we do not simply ape Max Weber or try to recapitulate his results. What is needed is to approach an understanding of the dynamics of Asian civilization, in a Weberian spirit and questioning catalogue, without falling into ideological Eurocentric or Orientalism talk and uncover the enormous developmental progress undergone by countries that encompass Asian Civilization within the last half-century.

II. ON METHODOLOGICAL AND CATEGORICAL CONSIDERATIONS SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION AND “RELIGIONSWISSENSCHAFT” IN A GLOBAL CONTEXT

In order to approach a meaningful study of Asian Civilization, or for that matter, any developed civilization in world history, like Ancient Egypt, we must reconsider, seriously our social science methodology and categorical considerations. The reason why we see these issues connected as a package is simply, they either supplement each other, or have to make adjustments, according to the object of study. Especially in view of an enormous panorama of academic disciplines that Weber offered us, which to many, seem almost incomprehensible and Faustian, we must reassess how to deal with this Weberian panorama.

A person who may never have heard of Weber, and this is not surprisingly many, including academics, may ask the simply question: what exactly was Weber and what area of studies did he pursue? This question alone will be simply difficult to answer because of what we call “the Weberian panorama”. We can reply: Weber was a professor of economic history, he was also a legal scholar, he was a sociologist of religion, or he was a scholar of comparative religion (in academic German “*Religionswissenschaftler*”) and a historian of culture, or he was a political scientist and, of course, a university professor. In fact, he was all of this in one person; anyone in the academic world in the first decade of the twentieth-century has serious problems conceptualizing anyone being competent and able dealing with this intellectual panorama. Of course, in order to understand why we encounter this problem has to reflect upon the development of the academic disciplines in institutions of higher learning, especially in Europe and the United States, and the emergence of a clearer contour of what we consider the social sciences. Thus, engaging Weber and Asian Civilization means that we must unravel the whole gamut and state of the social sciences, not the least, what it means to

“study a civilization” as complex as the Asian *Kulturkreis*. This is one of the reasons why this presentation can only take on a preliminary nature for the simple reason that we need serious local and global methodological strategies to study a specific *Kulturkreis* in team work. The idea of a single genius, or a Oswald Spengler, dealing with a whole civilization, in this case the Western Civilization, can’t be taken serious anymore because the wealth of data and newly emerging historical items that new sciences like underwater archeology (I think of recent studies at Alexandria, Egypt), or ecological sciences that support classical archeology, need teams of well-trained specialist in a respective field of studies. This doesn’t mean that Oswald Spengler or Edward Gibbon’s work on the Roman Empire is futile, it just means, that we must reconsider many more factors and data, that have emerged within the last century, that may or may not contradict the basic ideas of the German and British historian. Gibbon is still read for his literary quality, but not necessarily a guide to historical facts and definite conclusions. That Christianity, as a social-political movement, may have contributed to the decline of the Western Roman Empire may carry some truth, but we can’t state that it was the major cause of the fall of the Roman Empire in the West. Likewise, the famous work by Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, written without his personal library in Istanbul between 1942-1945, as an exile scholar from Nazi Germany, and guest of the Turkish government and Istanbul University, achieved the status of a modern classic in literary criticism. In the fiftieth-anniversary edition, published by Princeton University Press in 2003, Edward Said honored Auerbach by reiterating what he had said in person at a Cairo University Lecture in 1999 (at which this writer was present in the audience) that men of letters such as Erich Auerbach, Karl Vossler, Leo Spitzer, or Ernst Robert Curtius are no longer possible in future academia. He pointed out exactly the intellectual panorama which these scholars provided that we also see in Weber. This was the last generation of mandarin scholars, especially from Wilhelmine Germany, supported by the Humboldt philosophy of education and based upon “Freedom of Research and Teaching”. Yet, we must realize that, if we search for the economic-socio-political platform which provided the basic support for this type of academic activity, we must conclude that “times are changing”. This is not only a fact in the West, but, even more so in Asia and the Middle East. Any discussion with an intellectual person in Café Riche in downtown Cairo, the famous intellectual institution of pre-Nasser times, of an older generation, will notice immediately how the social and political world of Egypt has changed since the exile of King Faruk. This statement could be extended to Istanbul and Ankara, as well as New Delhi, Peking, Tokyo, or Jakarta. Clearly along with the

change comes, sooner or later, the pressure to reevaluate our categories of thinking, especially of the social world. There are signs everywhere that a new evolving global world is, in fact, developing. As to how this new global world will look like in 2050 is anyone's guess. Along with this almost, revolutionary change, is the necessity to rethink the categories and research strategies to come to terms with this change and, contribute to this change, by utilizing Weber's insight and questions, and be able to apply Weberian categories of thinking about the social world in a reasonable and meaningful way.

Analogous to Weber studies during the turn of the century, from the 19th to the 20th century, we can trail the development of the social science as they emerge from the new Humboldt system of higher education onto a professional modern state of research programs, strategies, and teaching applications. It is no surprise that American and Japanese students were at the forefront of those academics and intellectuals that travelled to the universities of Wilhelminian Germany, and not surprise, that German was at the forefront of the sciences as the academic language par excellence. Weber, along with Ferdinand Tönnies, Georg Simmel, and Werner Sombart promoted the very idea of sociology as a future science in academic studies. Thus, in Weber's time there was no such thing as sociology, or anthropology, or psychology as established textbook sciences. There was the psychological laboratory of Wilhelm Wundt in Leipzig, more of an advanced research institute, there were social philosophic studies and a kind of philosophy of history orientation, along the track of Hegel, Dilthey, and Marx. And, of course, Freud's psychoanalytic explorations which, however, read more like higher cultural studies of the relationship between mind, soul, and social environment. It is no surprise that Freud is more and more studied in the category as cultural studies. The specific problem we are addressing becomes more clear and exemplified also in the works of Marx. Marx, like Weber, is many things to different people. In that sense Marx and Weber resemble more a work, in scope and nature, of Aristotle's Politics and Ethics. In these works the freshman students finds many things, but then, he or she asks, what has this got to do with philosophy? And this is exactly our dilemma: how can we differentiate items in Weber and in the global world that makes sense to us today. In fact, the very geographical orientation, west, east, north, south, are really arbitrary; is Egypt part of Africa or the Middle East, or both? In matters of football Egypt is part of Africa, in matters of politics, economics, and social affairs, it is part of the Middle East. Is Australia part of Asia proper, or is it a late-comer colony of white western settlers, or both? One of the major reasons why specific critical areas in the world are in continues crises is precisely because matters of geography,

cultural autonomy, social identity, is not settled. These problems may appear not to relate to a discussion of methodology and category in the social sciences, but, in fact, they do. Anyone studying the Ottoman Empire can't simply deal with Islam and the Turkish nation it must deal with all the ethnicities that were part of the Ottoman Empire. The perennial historians' question what caused the downfall of the Ottoman Empire is a fascinating question and needs more research in the archives in Istanbul. Mere mono-causal explanation are no longer admissible since we know, the world of the Ottoman Empire was much more complex and full of paradoxes as to nicely come up with some magic formula as to what happened to the empire. Likewise, Malaysia or Indonesia; of course we must study British policy for the former and Dutch colonial rule in the latter. The Boxer Rebellion is an important event in the relationship between the West and China, not to mention, the Japanese occupation of South-East Asia. This requires sophisticated history approach, it requires sensitivity, yet, at the same time, facing the truth. It is not sufficient to use ideological language about imperialism, racism, or slavery. It is important how Islam entered into the region of Aceh, how Arab Muslim seafarers engaged in trade with South-East Asia and along with it their religion. In Weber's time many methodological methods were in the making and there was quite a bit of confusion as to what constitutes the social sciences, or, as academic German had it, the *Kulturwissenschaften*. The academic struggle between natural science and the humanities, in Germany, *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften* (science of the spirit), takes on a debate that lasted at least one-half-century, from *Windelband* via Dilthey and Rickert, to Weber, deep into the debates between the Viennese positivism and the dialectic school of Frankfurt, between Popper and Adorno, Carnap and Thomas S. Kuhn. Of course, the whole problem of what is what in terms of body, mind, spirit already attained a crisis in the West with Cusanus, Leibniz, Newton, and clearly formulated by Descartes. Newton was a natural philosopher and doesn't do physics, in the modern sense of the world. The natural sciences take on contours and edges recognizable with the help of calculus. However, the sciences that are supposed to deliver answers as to what cements society and individuals are not that clear and confusing. There is no social equation developed that give us the key as to what society is, or, even more strange, what is the human being. When ethnology or anthropology is born in the West in the late 18th century and professionally in the late 19th century Asia is in the hands of the British, Dutch, and French colonials. The English writer Somerset Maugham gives us an interesting literary picture of Malaya in the early 20th century but nothing about the Malay people and their psychology. Lafcadio Hearn gives us an interesting portrayal of Japanese

traditional culture and how a westerner feels at home in tradition he had lost in the West. Yet, where is the Japanese psyche and cultural ramification, like its art history? Japanese art history, especially, has never been treated separately from that of China, until recently. Thus, it becomes obvious what needs to be done: a reassessment of all cultural elements, especially the spiritual components of each specific *Kulturkreis* encompassing Asia that gives meaning as to what actually expresses the uniqueness that is Asian Civilization. In that task Weber can help us. What he and his generation considered *Religionswissenschaft* (comparative religious studies) and *Religionssoziologie* (sociology of religion), we have to re-evaluate. We have to re-think the specific relation between spiritual values and economic activities: is there, in fact, a causal explanation? How does Islam, transported from the Arabian deserts and Yemen, fare under very different geographical and cultural traditions that it encountered in Aceh, the Island of Java and the Archipelago of Malaya? How does Buddhism handle the different situation in China, South-East Asia, and Japan? Is it a different Buddhism, then the original form having its source in India? And, the fact that the internet revolution gives us moveable and electronic tools of research with a global reach that casts the net of data gathering is no substitute for thinking about recasting our categories of research that does justice to the contemporary situation at hand. The social science methodology must be recast and the categories of thinking reassembled in order to be able to make proper judgment as to what constitutes, in fact, Asian Civilization.

III. ON WEBER'S PRESUPPOSITIONS

We remind ourselves that the work of Weber, especially on Ancient Judaism, India (Hinduism and Buddhism), and China (Confucius) were available to the English-only-reader in the 1950s. This was at the time several countries were still under colonial rule, such as Kuwait, or Hong Kong. The major comprehensive work on Weber by the German exile Reinhard Bendix was published in 1960 and the important Weber biography by his wife Marianne Weber was published in English translation in 1975. Aside Parson's translation in 1930 of the Protestant Ethic, the most readable text in English was translated, edited and published by Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills in 1948, that is to say, the access to Weber's work, including the works on Asia and Islam, were almost fifty years after the original publication in German. During the cold war, of course, the struggle with communism reigned supreme in the minds

of the western elite while Marx was either hailed as the savior by some or the devil by others. A reasonable assessment of the social, economic, and political situation was hardly possible, while the religious sphere was almost neglected on a global scale. The modern prophets, historians and political scientists, not to mention ideologist, turned out to be wrong; human affairs can't be predicated. Only in the recent future some spoke of the "end of history", others of "the war of civilizations", and, yet others of "the dialogue of civilizations". It seems these were temporary solutions to avert total anomie and chaos on the world stage. The social science in a strictly academic sense didn't do its job well of delivering a set of proposals that shows a deep understanding of people's needs in specific kind of settings and environment. Global terrorism is the result of deep seated anxiety of those who feel ill at ease in a global world of stock markets, computer games, and moneyed human relations. The true believer feels that he and she have been betrayed in an enchanted promised garden of progress and well being, instead they find themselves in huts with undrinkable water and inhuman hygienic condition.

Weber sees a sharp and decisive difference in the modern world between civilizations that developed a monotheistic *Weltanschauung* with a universal transcended personal God, who turns out to be the primary mover of the global historical process, the maker of world history; on the other hand, he sees civilizations that didn't develop such a transcended Being, all powerful, autonomous, creator of the beginning and the final judge at the end, namely, these civilizations developed belief-systems and came to align themselves and appeased their system of beliefs according to the nature of things. The first set of civilizations, the Western Civilization and Islamic as well as Jewish Civilizations were set in great tension, paradox, and contradiction between this-worldliness and the eternal, immutable, other-worldliness, namely paradise, or eternal life. The tension is played out in world history in which the forces of the world and the ideals of an after-life clash continuously in the process of history. At times these tensions surface like in Ancient Egypt in Amarna, when Pharo Ikhnoton and his wife Nefertiti proclaimed a monotheistic Sun god as the true deity as compared to the traditional religions of the temple priest. The revenge by the temple priest on Ikhnoton must have been savage; most of Ikhnoton imagery are gone, total destruction of his image intended. This is what Weber had pointed out in some of his deep insights: the savagery of the religious adherence and their inner-worldly asceticism explodes from the debts of the sublimated psyche. Revenge and total destruction is the order of the day for those who do not conform to the devotees of the inner-worldliness and attuned soul. Western Civilization, especially, finds itself in this predicament.

Not so Asian Civilization whereby subtle techniques of balance and harmony are used as tools to align oneself with the natural forces. There is no counterpart in the other-worldliness, no paradise to look forward to, but bliss in harmony with the heavens and the natural forces on earth. In India and China the cyclical and enlightened perspective has turned out to be the guiding force of the soul. The gardens in Kyoto shows the visitor a keen sense of garden aesthetics that easily moves to psychology of harmonious perception encountered in the Zen Buddhist Ryoan Gardens. A Jain Temple offers its respect to the animal world and vegetarian attitudes become part of a natural harmony with nature in terms of showing respect for living beings, other than humans. The sharp delineation between light and darkness, good and evil we find in the culture of Zarathustrians of Persia, which guide us to a bifurcated world-paradise not to be compromised with. Plato's Cave cannot be substituted as a classroom laboratory since the Cave, by its very nature, spells darkness and evil. Only the sunlight can save us and bring about purity of heart, it is either/or and no educational experiment can erase that fact.

In Weber we find a subtle analogy between the spiritual world and the world of sociology. He points towards the elite and their followers of prospective civilizations. He guides us to the question: under what condition was prophecy possible? What were the special interests of the elite of each civilization? What were the economic consequences of a specific type of spiritual psychology? Especially, we find this question traversed in his famous Protestant Ethic monograph. Here we find the Janus-face Protestantism of inner-worldly asceticism whereby the believer engages in a disciplined life-style in the name of his Lord, yet, at the same time, that life-style produces wealth to be invested, producing more profit and Kapital. In simple words, the more devoted someone is to the religious ideal, the more accumulation of wealth is possible through savings, investments, and, consequently profit. Marx and Weber are not necessarily antithetic, but, upon closer inspection, more complementary.

A prospective reader of Weber is advised to start with his more philosophic general remarks that focus, intensely, on the conclusions so far reached, and provoke the reader to some disturbing paradoxical thought structures. These are constructed in the collected essays on the sociology of religion (*Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, Bd. 1), especially, the so-called "Preface" (Vorbemerkung, pp. 1-16), the "Introduction" (*Einleitung*, pp. 237-275), and the famous "Intermediate Reflection" (*Zwischenbetrachtung*, pp. 536-573). The pages, almost one hundred, give the prospective reader a deep philosophic-historic-analytic version of Weber's vision of the spiritual life in world history. By focusing on Asian Civilization Weber sets out to

contrast a specific form of handling the world, that is, to conform to this-worldliness in terms of the harmony of the heavens, or the cycling nature of the eternal wheel. In the Asian world the soul need not struggle between this-worldliness and paradise, but needs to conform to the eternal natural cycle of nature. Harmony in nature and conformity of the soul with nature is the key to the spiritual life of Asian Civilization. Of course, our immediate question is: to what extent does this analysis help us in order to come to terms of the modern Asia?

IV. ON ASIA AND INNER-WORLDLY ASCETICISM IN CONFORMITY WITH THE WORLD

We want to focus simply, as an example, on Weber's perspective on China and India in world history, specifically, to what extent the spiritual life of China in the form of the teachings of Confucius and the Hindu/Buddhistic forms of spirituality shaped their civilization respectively. We speak, on purpose of a system of belief and a spirituality in terms of China and India and not exclusively in terms of religion, since this would give the prospective reader, if he or she stems from a civilization that deals in salvation religions, as is the case of Western Civilization, Judaism and, perhaps, Islam, entertain a narrow sense of spirituality on Asian Civilization terms.

At the beginning section of his "Intermediate Reflection" Weber we read the following: "The Confucian rationalism means the conformity with the world; the Puritan rationalism, rational control of the world." This conclusion, couched in simple language, hides a deep seated psychological analysis by Weber of the outcome of the spiritual life in China, and, ultimately in India. In the China of Confucius the world is basically in harmony with the world. There is no inner-tension between humankind and a transcendent God, since Confucian ethics had adjusted to "human nature" and to the natural things in life. This sort of ethics reminds us of Aristotelian ethics and ethos that operates along the dictum, according to nature. China wanted to preserve the world-order in order to reflect the cosmic order in alignment with human nature. The puritan Christian psychology operates as a Janus-face: on the one hand it is disciplined and is guided by inner-worldly asceticism that pins up the libidinal forces for the sake of a better future in an after-life. Work and labor turn out to be central to the puritan mind, as the saying goes in the monastery, pray and work (*ora et labora*), and God will see kindly upon you. Thus, an ironic twist of fate occurs in that world: the more puritan

attitude, the more sublimated passion in the form of hard work and labor, the more savings and wealth accumulation is possible, thereby controlling the forces of social life and nature. It is no accident that the scientific revolution in Western Europe located in Amsterdam, as well as the stock market. Already Descartes made sharp comments on the money changers at the bursa in his Dutch exile. The code of ethics was accordingly, harsh to the non-conformist and agnostic such as Spinoza.

In terms of economic consequences of the teachings of Confucius and Chinese village life, the Confucian ethos supports the traditional house-keeping-practices (economics); protestant ethic revolutionizes economics and makes a turn towards the Dutch East India Company. Peking is not Amsterdam, at least not in traditional China. Methods of life-guidance (*Lebensführung*) and life-style of the puritan divine and the Chinese literati gentlemen are quite different. The Protestant puritan wants to reshape social life in accordance with God's will; there always lurks the confrontation with the transcendent God in terms of disciplining the population and preaching the frugal life. In the world of the Chinese literati and the ordinary people there is a gap between what the elite believe and enacts and the people. The latter involves itself with material matters and fighting evil spirits as well as engaging in ancestor cult of the village. Patrimonial rule operates in the family as well as on the state level; kinship and tribalism are the basic unit of social life which ushers into a popular family piety. The literati are scholars and scribes and constitute, by the very nature of their activity, being able to read and write, a special class in the society. Bureaucracy emerges in Chinese life as an extension of the patrimonial life-guidance. Heterodox religious systems appear among the people like Taoism and Buddhism. The former life-guidance deals with spiritual healing between humankind and nature, as well as the attempt at the divine union with the heavens. Lao-Tzu spearheads the critique of the literati; he feels that they are lazy and really don't conform to their own principles. Yet, as far as Weber is concerned, it is magic at work against labor. The Chinese religious world resembles a "magical garden" where magical events influence people's lives. Rituals, cultic worship of the ancestor and the absolute obedience to the emperor evades the idea of controlling external events in their favor. Buddhism withdraws from mundane affairs and opts for the spiritual journey of the cycling of the soul. Earth and heaven form one unity since there is no transcendent entity interfering, no tension arising between the reality of the earth and the expectations of the heavens. The opium symbolizes the situation of the populace abnegation of the world in the sense of delirium. The psychological motivation for the Chinese literati and the populace is imposed from the outside, nature and the heavens

demand tribute for unity. The puritans feel a compulsion from the inside, a self-propelled motivation to master the world, on an individual base. Thus, the result is a more revolutionary form of economic consequences, than the institutionalized kinship psychology embedded in China. The more pure the religious motivation, the more extreme and revolutionary the consequences for social life: negation turns into mastery and control. The rational adjustment, according to the Confucian gentlemen-ideal doesn't lead to revolution but to an appeasement and alignment between mankind and nature. It was this, Weber pointed out, that hampered the Chinese literati to turn revolutionary in his life-guidance. Chinese Marxism, in the form of Maoism of the 1960s and the dictums of the famous little Red Book, adjusted this Chinese conformity towards an aggressive life-guidance, in the form of sublimated blind forces of passion, the former opium of the masses. This was to be eradicated through tough discipline, obedience, and sacrifice of a life in conformity with nature. The inner-worldly asceticism of the literati was misguided towards union and harmony between the heavens and humankind, while Maoist Marxism adjusted this historical mistake by imposing a life-guidance on the populace of strict conformity with revolutionary action, meaning brutal and obedient service to the undisputed leader with absolute power, namely Mao. Of course, Weber could not witness this modern Chinese development, but it seems that the consequences from his analysis as to the bedrock situation of tradition China gives clues as to how Marxism and Mao supplemented the mastery of nature principle. The East, especially China, was awakened from its enchanted garden, through the red revolution, to a disenchanting China and steers towards mastery of nature. The twist and ironies of traditional Chinese history have been transformed into another ironic fate: *Kapital* turns the workers' enchanted garden into a disenchanting Chinese Disneyland, the worker's paradise on earth in the name of Mao and Marx. We live in interesting times and will, perhaps see, how the Chinese experiment, of replacing the old enchanted garden with a re-enchanting plastic one, plays out. We, perhaps, will witness how the traditional spirituality has an effect on the populace, when the historical kinship group no longer provides the material security of old, considering the one-child policy by the peoples' leaders.

The example of India is somewhat different but similar. Weber sees the Hindu *Kulturkreis* of achieving an extreme form of inner-worldly asceticism, abnegating the world completely. He sees the Hindu cosmology as a well-ordered rational system, but not theocentric, a creator imposing order, like Newton's *Pantokrator*, or Plato's *Demiurgos*. There is a continual cycle of rebirths and the transmigration of the soul (samsara) as well as ethical purification (karma).

Moral obligation (dharma) is distributed among the various classes or castes as well as occupation within the respective caste. The legitimacy of the specific caste is spelled out as obligation in the form of rituals and imposed duties; from the top, the Brahmins, to the bottom, the untouchables. The elite, the Brahmins exhibit for the populace exemplary ethical behavior and psychological attitude in performing the rituals of the path to salvation. Yet, as far as Weber is concerned, the quest for salvation denigrates the worldly in favor of the mystical transcendent union between the human and the divine. However, the transcendent spirituality is not embedded in a monotheistic deity transcending humankind and nature; it is cosmic spirituality. The Brahmin like his counterpart, the Chinese literati were interested in self-perfection of the gentlemen-ideal and indifferent to worldly labor. The pen, rather than the sword, or plough, was the symbol of their existence. The Brahmin, skilled in interpreting the sacred texts of the Vedas, while the Chinese literati handled the emperors edicts and bureaucratic exams, thereby controlling social and political stratification on behalf of their own social-political interests. Thus, for both, the Brahmin and literati the world would be manipulated in terms of adjustment to the real world, yet, keeping open an alternative door towards union between nature and man. There was no reason for any sublimated tension, since a transcendent monotheistic deity was not present to be appeased and sacrificed for; the Christian puritan Janus-face didn't appear since the paradox didn't develop in the spiritual history of China and India: the more sacrifice, the more sublimated irrational passions accumulated, ushering into extreme tension, the more material wealth accumulated and, indirectly leading to the control and mastery of the body and nature. The Western Enlightenment was the historical product of this kind of "negative spirituality", while the opium operated on China and India for more centuries, until, with re-awakening of the national spirit and Marxism, another form of historical imposition over nature started to take place. China's Maoism is another form of the Christian puritan Janus-face, while India's sublime technique of abnegating the world to achieve and escape from the cycle of rebirth remains to be seen to transform itself into another form of "negative spirituality".

V. PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

We have sketched some aspects, philosophical and sociological in nature, of Max Weber assessment of traditional Asian Civilization. No doubt, our comments and interpretation, based on Weber's insights, are incomplete and must be so accordingly. More research, on a team level is needed in order to understand some detailed aspects of, not only Chinese and Indian traditional history, but also the tradition histories of Indonesia, Malaysia, Korea, Japan, or Vietnam. If we take the development of the Philippines, as well as Australia and New Zealand, as different type of stories, but happening in the historical context of Asia, for instance, exile, immigration, the Roman Catholic Church's historical role in Asia, then we have a more complete picture. However, this will take a few more generations.

In order to do justice to an adequate picture of the historical development of Asian Civilization we need more knowledge and data than what was available to Weber. However, Weberian question as to the subtle relationship between various forms of spirituality and economic consequences seems legitimate and interesting aspects to pursue. We live in a world, on its way of becoming a global one, where we can't be naïve anymore and assume that human beings turn to religion for the sake of what they merely believe. Of course, there are honorable ways of conforming to one's religious duties for the sake of obedience to the ancestors and the honor of one's family and society. Yet, this misses the point, a super-class or a global elite will emerge that will be a few generations ahead of local elites and populace. The specific problem is the time-lag in which different type of elites and classes and sections of society will operate. We see this happening in more sophisticated societies in Europe in which parallel societies develop for the reason that there is such a social "time difference" between various classes of people that a synchronization of purpose and goal is, at this moment impossible.

The application of Weber's insight to Asian Civilization could easily be used for any other civilization. Perhaps on another occasion this interpretation of the course of world history, ushering into a global world, is warranted. One item, however, does stand out: that Asia in its traditional history was not confronted with a transcendent monotheistic deity and thereby was not forced into a no-compromise situation. The psychological attitude of inner-worldly asceticism was prevalent in every spiritual situation, East and West, however, the consequence for both played out differently. The one promoted the conformity between humankind, nature and the divine, the other, was confronted with a decision it took on behalf of the transcendent God, which, however, at a price: the sublimation of the irrational passions that were bundled

into a dangerous prism to implode generating into a frenzied workaholic world with severe consequences for a forthcoming global world. The 21st century could very well be the end game of a development that started three centuries ago and transformed this world into almost an earthly paradise for humankind, except the demons of Plato's Cave are difficult to get rid of. Whether the philosopher king, or the magician, or the priest, or the prophet will appear to save a world, intoxicated with frenzied passions and irrationality, we will see. If it is true, as the saying goes, that there is nothing new under the sun, then we can expect, perhaps, another cycle of destruction and awakening, unless we can manage a way to escape from the recycle of birth and death.

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