

Max weber protestant work ethic



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

While functionalism and Marxism discuss how religion is a conservative force in preventing social change, weber argued that sometimes, religion can cause social change. Marx and weber are upside down in relation to each others ideas. Marx believed that the economic system knowing as capitalism determined and shaped religion. Weber argued that it was the other way around. Sometimes religion can influence how the economy is organised. Weber was a social action theorist. He believed human behaviour is shaped by individual's motives and desires. Weber talked about people having a world view.

This is the idea or opinion, of the world that members of a community or society. Religion is often a very important part of a societies world view. So weber wanted to test out his idea, that religious beliefs can sometimes shape economic systems. " I ... want to register a protest against ... the proposition ... that anything, be it technology or economics, is the ... " ultimate" or " essential" cause of anything else. . . . The chain of causation ... runs sometimes from technological to economic and political, sometimes from political to religious and then to economic matters, etc.

At no point do we come to a resting place. "(1) Weber noticed that the western capitalism developed in particular European countries. He also noticed that these countries had followed Calvinist Protestantism. Calvinist saw their work was a calling from god. It was a moral duty. Calvinist believed in the elect. People chosen and predestined by god, before birth, to go to heaven. No matter how hard you worked on earth, if you were not one of the elect, you wouldn't go to heaven. So how could this belief motivate people to work hard? ...deeply religious individuals who came from business families,

especially in the seventeenth century, within the Calvinist diaspora of that time.

In the light of these examples, he suggested an "affinity" between ascetic piety and active participation in economic life, or between the "spirit of work" and "progress"(2) Lutheran Protestantism was a bit different. It believed that people could earn a place in heaven through good works on earth. This sounds a bit more like capitalist ideology perhaps. But the difference was that Lutheran Protestantism encouraged people to earn no more than they needed to survive. o there was no emphasis on making excess money or profits. " In his Braudelian social history of early modern Europe, George Huppert has presented the clash between the late medieval pursuit of holiness and the pursuit of profit as an uneven battle: "neither wars nor epidemics could stay its course. Moralists complained about the insidious effects of money, peasants rebelled against the pressures of a rudimentary capitalism, clerics thundered against usury..." (3) Weber found another problem with Calvinist Protestantism.

They didn't know if they were part of the elect or not. This uncertainty led to them to work hard, not to earn them a place in heaven. They knew that was pointless. It was to convince themselves that they had been chosen to go to heaven. So this made them to feel like they behaved like the elect. " Calvin recognizes that God's decree of election necessarily has as its corollary His decree of reprobation -the condemnation of the reprobate, before they are even born.

Calvin discusses the question raised by Paul in Rom. 9: 14: "What then? Is there injustice [iniquitas] with God? Rejecting the argument of a minority of

medieval theologians, 38 that God chose the elect because He foresaw that they would be good..." (4) This was the protestant work ethic. This extreme work ethic led to the development of capitalism. Because as weber describes, the protestant had an ascetic work ethic. This means they denied comfort and pleasure to themselves. They worked very hard in their jobs or "callings" from god. Making lots of money was a clear sign of your hard work and therefore earning gods favour. " I fear, wherever riches have increased, the essence of religion has decreased in the same proportion.

Therefore I do not see how it is possible, in the nature of things, for any revival of true religion to continue long. For religion must necessarily produce both industry and frugality, and these cannot but produce riches. But as riches increase, so will pride, anger, and love of the world in all its branches. How then is it possible that Methodism, that is, a religion of the heart, though it flourishes now as a green bay tree, should continue in this state? For the Methodists in every place grow diligent and frugal; consequently they increase in goods.

Hence they proportionately increase in pride, in anger, in the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life. So, although the form of religion remains, the spirit is swiftly vanishing away. Is there no way to prevent this - this continual decay of pure religion? We ought not to prevent people from being diligent and frugal; we must exhort all Christians to gain all they can, and to save all they can; that is, in effect, to grow rich. " (5) John Wesley. Because luxuries and pleasures were forbidden, profits were ploughed back into the businesses. This is exactly what capitalism does.

Protestants despise laziness and hedonism. Protestants made money for the sake of making money, while others would spend their profits on luxuries. The spirit of capitalism is the values and attitudes of making money. Time is money. Making money became religious and a business way of life. “ Remember, that time is money. He that can earn ten shillings a day by his labour, and goes abroad, or sits idle, one half of that day, though he spends but six pence during his diversion or idleness, ought not to reckon that the only expense; he has really spent, or rather thrown away, five shillings besides. (6)

Benjamin Franklin So weber concluded that religion could cause economic change. But what about the consequences of the development of capitalism through Protestantism? Weber argued that the Protestants helped create modern capitalism. Running money making business needed people to use rational calculations to make decisions. A way of thinking called formal rationality was used in calculating the best ways to make money. Capitalists still rely on this method. “ The economically active strata of artisans, merchants, and entrepreneurs were seemingly the most diverse social groups in their religious orientations.

Nevertheless, affinities with certain types of religiosity are discernible precisely within these occupations. What they shared was practical rationalism in their conduct of life. Their whole existence was based upon the technically and economically calculated domination of nature and of other men. The inherited form of life could rigidify into traditionalism in their case as well. But there was always the possibility that their technical and

economic rationality would engender ethically rational conduct of life as well" (7) Religion relies on a different way of thinking.

Substantive rationality is about achieving emotional goals like happiness and everlasting life. Formal rationality as a way of thinking (world view) dominated in Calvinist/ capitalists countries. Eventually formal rationality would undermine religion. It isn't rational to believe in the supernaturalism of religion. So weber argued supernaturalism would inevitability in rational capitalist countries. That religion, in this instance, would eventually destroy itself.