Weber, Passion and Profits

'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism' in Context

JACK BARBALET

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Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is one of the best known and most enduring texts of classical sociology, continually inspirational and widely read by both scholars and students. In an insightful and original interpretation, Jack Barbalet discloses that Weber's work is not simply about the cultural origins of capitalism but an allegory concerning the Germany of his day. Situating *The Protestant Ethic* in the development of Weber's prior and subsequent writing, Barbalet traces changes in his understanding of key concepts, including 'calling' and 'rationality'. In a close analysis of the ethical underpinnings of the capitalist spirit and of the institutional structure of capitalism, Barbalet identifies continuities between Weber and the eighteenth-century founder of economic science, Adam Smith, as well as Weber's cotemporary, the American firebrand, Thorstein Veblen. Finally, by considering Weber's investigation of Judaism and capitalism, important aspects of his account of Protestantism and capitalism are revealed.

JACK BARBALET is Professor of Sociology at the University of Western Sydney. He is a leading scholar of classical sociology and social theory and his previous publications include *Emotion, Social Theory, and Social Structure: A Macrosociological Approach* (Cambridge, 2001).

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CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

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Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo

Cambridge University Press
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK
Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York
www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521895095

First published in print format 2008

ISBN-13 978-0-511-41418-3 eBook (EBL)

ISBN-13 978-0-521-89509-5 hardback

For my son
Felix

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Acknowledgements

This book took much longer to complete than it should have. During the period of research and writing I was Head of Department at a difficult time for Sociology in the University of Leicester. If an author's acknowledgements are to be complete, then impediments as well as facilitations deserve mention. But acknowledgements are never complete. Authors are unnervingly possessive of their books, especially before they are finished. But even at that time – it should be said especially at that time – more people are involved in a book's production than can be listed. A number of people have made tangible contributions through comments on various chapters, and in particular I want to thank Suzanne Barbalet, Randall Collins, Helena Flam, Andrew Sayer, Richard Swedberg, Jonathan Turner and Sam Whimster. None of them, however, is responsible for what is written in the pages to follow. John Haslam, of Cambridge University Press, is thanked for suggesting the title of this book. In addition, three anonymous reviewers provided helpful reports. Early versions of the first two chapters and the last were previously published, although extensively rewritten for the present book. I wish to acknowledge, therefore, the *Journal of Classical Sociology*, the *European Journal of Sociology* and *Max Weber Studies*. Also, parts of chapters 3 and 4 had their beginnings in an article originally published in the *British Journal of Sociology*, which is similarly gratefully acknowledged. The most enduring support for this work has been provided by my family. My wife Suzanne, busy with her own research and teaching, has listened to my ideas about Weber and offered good advice on substance and style. My stepson Ryan and sons Felix, David and Tom have been justifiably much less interested in Weber. They nevertheless helped this book along in numerous ways, both nebulous and essential.

Jack Barbalet
July 2007
Leicester

Note on citations

In the text, reference to a source indicates the year of first publication rather than the edition used. This is to preserve something of the historical context of authors who have contributed to the discussion. The exception is reference to Weber's *Protestant Ethic*, which appears as Weber (1920) to indicate that the second rather than the first edition is quoted or referred to throughout. There are other, although very few, exceptions. The year of first publication of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, for instance, is not exactly known, and readers will have no difficulty in appreciating Aristotle's historical context, no matter how vaguely they do so.

Complete references are given in the *References* section at the end of the book, including both year of original publication and that of the edition used.

Introduction

Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is a remarkable essay that has had an even more remarkable history. It was first published in 1905 as two articles in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, a journal in which Weber had an editorial interest. This structure, consisting of two parts, was preserved in a later and amended, or revised, version that Weber prepared in 1919 and which was published in a posthumous collection of his papers on the sociology of religion, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, in 1920. The first part of the *Protestant Ethic* consists of three chapters which respectively indicate a contemporary correlation between Protestant religious affiliation and capitalistic involvement, that describes the capitalist spirit as the motive of money-making for its own sake through rational means, and which shows that this spirit was an unintended consequence of the Protestant Reformation and especially the Calvinist form of the notion of calling. The second part has two chapters; one of which focuses on the psychological sanctions of religious belief that influences and directs practical conduct, while the other documents the impact of religious teaching in the seventeenth century on social and economic affairs. Weber is clear that these chapters do not add up to an account of the origins of modern capitalism. Rather, he says, they attempt to ascertain the way in which religious forces have been expressed in the formation of capitalist motivation (Weber 1920: 90–1), or to put it slightly differently, to indicate the basis of the irrational element in capitalistic culture (Weber 1920: 78).

Soon after its first appearance in 1905 the *Protestant Ethic* attracted sufficient critical reaction to generate a secondary literature of debate that included assessment, interpretation and defence (Baehr and Wells 2002; Chalcraft and Harrington 2001). This is a pattern that has been repeated and augmented enormously since the first appearance in 1930 of the English, or more properly American, translation of the

Protestant Ethic by Talcott Parsons. Parsons' translation of Weber's later revised edition effectively established the *Protestant Ethic* as a classic source of the sociological canon. This was not the first English-language translation of a Weber text, as Frank Knight's translation of *General Economic History* preceded it by three years. But the Parsons translation presented a Weber that American (and British) readers quickly made their own and which led Weber, through the *Protestant Ethic*, to become assimilated into a broad sociological consciousness. This is noteworthy for a number of reasons. First, the *Protestant Ethic* was not originally a work of sociology at all insofar as Weber saw himself in 1905 as a social economist writing cultural history. Too much can be made of this, however. Certainly by 1919 Weber was not embarrassed to accept the title Professor of Sociology and, in any event, through Parsons' translation the *Protestant Ethic* has been responsible for contributing to the constitution of American sociology from the mid twentieth century, and through it sociology of a more global nature. Second, on the surface the *Protestant Ethic* is an unlikely candidate for classic status. Its basic contention, that the motivational force or 'spirit' of modern capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was an unintended consequence of the intensity of strict Protestant devotion, is arguably obtuse, practically impossible to confirm or demonstrate, and remote from twentieth-century concerns. And yet the very audacity of Weber's argument, the methodological novelty of the 'ideal-type' conceptions in which it was delivered, and elements of its ambiguity – which generated the prospects of innumerable interpretations – all contributed, in fact, to its appeal to students and scholars alike. There are other reasons why the *Protestant Ethic* has continued to enjoy enormous appeal since Parsons' translation.

Although undeniably a German text, Parsons' translation of the *Protestant Ethic* gave American readers, and non-Americans who saw themselves as part of or swept along by the American century, access to what was taken to be an appreciation of a culture and personality type that resonated with an American self-image. More than anything this led to an immediate and integral acceptance, indeed absorption, of the *Protestant Ethic* with an English-language readership. The *Protestant Ethic* makes a number of more-than-passing references to American virtues. Not only does Weber locate the archetypical presence of the capitalist spirit in the quintessential

historic American Benjamin Franklin, but he wrote the second part of the *Protestant Ethic* in the afterglow of an immensely satisfying American visit (Marianne Weber 1926: 279–304; Scaff 1998) through which he had first-hand experience of the 'quiet self-control' that distinguishes the 'best type of ... American gentleman today' (Weber 1920: 119). The Protestant virtues that Weber points to in the *Protestant Ethic* were ones that American readers believed they possessed in abundance. To be reminded of such attributes when they most needed confidence in their institutions and the mentality those institutions reflected, in emerging from economic depression during the 1930s and ideological conflict with alien systems, especially international communism, from mid-century, American liberal academics embraced the *Protestant Ethic* as an implicit portrayal of their strongest attributes. It is no accident that all major English-language translations of Weber up to the close of the twentieth century are American: in addition to Knight's translation of *General Economic History* and Parsons' *Protestant Ethic*, already mentioned, there is Edward Shils' translations of the methodology essays (Shils and Finch 1949), Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills' translations of sociological essays (Gerth and Mills 1970) and Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich's translation of the monumental *Economy and Society* (Weber 1921), to mention only the most obvious. The Americanization of the *Protestant Ethic* was not absolute, of course. It cannot be ignored as a compelling element in the history of its appeal, but there were resistive readings. Thorstein Veblen, for one, held to an independent vision, as we shall see in chapter 5.

The importance of the *Protestant Ethic* to American self-confidence suggests a further basis for the success or appeal of the work and of Parsons' translation: the *Protestant Ethic* was to serve as a ready antidote to the Marxist materialist view of economy, society and history. It is true that Weber's references in the *Protestant Ethic* to Marx and historical materialism are gentle rebuttals, not harsh critiques (Weber 1920: 55, 75, 91–2, 183), and in fact it is unlikely that Marx was of much concern to Weber in the period 1903–5 when writing the *Protestant Ethic* (see Oakes 1975: 21–3). It is also important to notice that with some exceptions (Grossman 1934), Marxist writers have historically been remarkably accepting of the *Protestant Ethic* (Bukharin 1920: 154–5, 291–2; Gramsci 1978: 338–9; Hobsbawm 1965: 17 note 2; Lichtheim 1961: 385 note 3;

Lukacs 1923: 95, 318). Nevertheless, the focus on cultural and ideational forces as opposed to economic structures and institutions as motivating profit seeking in Weber's account, and his treatment of capitalistic practices premised on religious devotion and moral impulses, all stand as alternatives to and an implicit critique of Marxist theory. But more than that, the ideal-type conceptualization that Weber applied in the *Protestant Ethic* and the cultural interpretive apprehension of his material, were taken as an alternative to Marx's model of economic causation. Indeed, this is how Weber himself took them. At the University of Munich in 1919, Weber presented much of the content of the *Protestant Ethic* in a lecture series called 'A positive critique of the Marxist theory of history' (Löwith 1960: 100). In Albert Salomon's famous and apt phrase, English-language readers of the *Protestant Ethic* believed that Weber was engaged 'in a long and intense debate with the ghost of Marx' (quoted in Zeitlin 1968: 111).

There is a further basis of the appeal of the *Protestant Ethic* to an English-language readership during the last two-thirds of the twentieth century that is seldom mentioned but all the more powerful for being implicit. This is the insistence in Weber's discussion of both the Protestant ethicists and the early capitalists that in order to succeed in a rationally chosen course of action it is necessary to suppress the emotions. Weber associates the Calvinist idea of proof of faith by objective results with rejection of emotion from religious life, for emotion distracts from constancy and steadiness of application to worldly activity (Weber 1920: 114, 119). Indeed, emotions are seen by Weber in the *Protestant Ethic* as inherently anti-rational (Weber 1920: 136, 224 note 30). To the idea that Weber regards the Calvinist doctrines as contingent precursors of the capitalist spirit it must be added that he believed that the efficacy of these doctrines required the absence of emotional religious expression: Calvinism and Pietism are doctrinally indistinguishable (Weber 1920: 128–9) and yet by emphasizing the 'emotional side of religion' Pietist groups, unlike the Calvinists, were unable to 'engage in the ascetic struggle for certainty about the future world' (Weber 1920: 130). The *Protestant Ethic* as a Cartesian text in this sense resonates perfectly with the suppressive emotional style of twentieth-century America (Stearns 1994), indeed of the Anglo-western world in general. This theme will be discussed extensively in chapters to follow.

As with the *Protestant Ethic* itself so the flaws and not only the virtues of Parsons' translation have generated interest in it and led to a subsequent literature of complaint and critique (Cohen, Hazelrigg and Pope 1975; Eliaeson 2002: 63–74; Ghosh 1994; Hinkle 1986). About the technical failures of Parsons' translation it is necessary to no more than acknowledge the growing sophistication and sensitivity of linguistic technique and scholarship since the 1930s. In part a consequence of recognition of Parsons' limitations, readers of the *Protestant Ethic* in English today have a choice of texts. Against the monopoly position Parsons' translation held during the twentieth century, twenty-first century readers of the *Protestant Ethic* in English have alternative options that shall continue to extend over the next few years as even more translations currently in preparation become available. At the present time, in addition to the Parsons translation of the 1920 edition of the *Protestant Ethic*, there is a new translation by Stephen Kalberg (2002). There is also now available a translation of the 1905 edition, by Peter Baehr and Gordon Wells (2002). It is no comment on the intrinsic value of these new translations that the chapters below refer to and quote only Parsons' translation. In spite of its faults this latter text is the established source of the *Protestant Ethic* in English and has earned its place as a literary basis of sociological thought through its use by numerous authors, many of whom are also referred to in the present text. For simplicity and consistency of cross-referencing it seemed necessary, therefore, to continue relying upon Parsons' translation in the present work.

This latter element of the present book indicates something else about it that needs to be made clear. Whereas Parsons consolidated Weber's reputation as a sociologist, the dissatisfaction with Parsons' translation of the *Protestant Ethic* is at least in part connected with and parallel to a move that operates in some of the current Weber discussion to place Weber in a context that is not exclusively sociological. Indeed, interest in Weber today goes well beyond a sociological constituency and includes writers who not only want to provide a more biographical and historical dimension to consideration of Weber than sociologists in the past have shown interest in, but some who even wish to rescue Weber from the sociological frame in which Parsons so effectively placed him (Hennis 1988, 2000). There is no doubt that there are themes in Weber's thought that transcend sociology as a discipline even after acknowledging that what

constitutes 'sociology' changes over time and is frequently different in different societies or cultures. One would expect that a thinker with interests as broad as Weber's would attract the attention of philosophers, cultural theorists, literary scholars, historians, political theorists, and others, in addition to sociologists. The chapters to follow are not indifferent to the broader contexts of Weber's concerns and experiences, but they are designed to address largely sociological questions in the broadest sense and this book is principally directed to a readership that is engaged by the sociological concerns that the *Protestant Ethic* raises.

It is not unfair to say that much Weber scholarship today is intensive in the sense that it relates Weber's writing to his life, his milieu, and his intellectual project and the various ways in which this latter might be constructed. The *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* [Complete Works] have become available in instalments since 1984 and the publication of Weber's correspondence especially has given enormous impetus to the formation of an understanding of the internal detail of his work, his own understanding of his intentions and his relationships with contemporaries. That these form the cutting edge of current Weber scholarship is not only to be expected, therefore, but welcomed. At the same time, why we should be interested in Weber at all must relate to what might be called his extensive connections, which is his apprehension of the material that he treats in his writing and also his intellectual and not necessarily his personal relations with the arguments of others who have addressed the same subjects. It is an underlying assumption of the present book that earlier periods of Weber scholarship were incomplete in their discussion of the extensive connections of the *Protestant Ethic* argument and also that the current dominant approach to the study of Weber is in need of a continuing attention to the objects of Weber's argument and how that argument compares with those of others who have also addressed the subjects that Weber treated. The context of the *Protestant Ethic*, then, is both the intensive matter of Weber's intentions that form out of the concerns of his experiences and also the extensive matter of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century market formations in Europe, for instance, and the treatment of these formations by comparable thinkers. It is this context, both intensive and extensive, that is referred to in the sub-title of the present book.

Given the *Protestant Ethic*'s relatively long history and the large secondary literature that surrounds it, it is reasonable to ask whether there is any need for another book on the *Protestant Ethic* and whether anything new might be said about it. Indeed, familiarity with some key sources over the last twenty years could arguably be seen to exhaust information about and interpretation of the *Protestant Ethic* (Lehmann and Roth 1995; Marshall 1982; Poggi 1983; Ray 1987). Yet, as we shall see, much does remain to be said, for instance, about why Weber wrote the *Protestant Ethic* and how it relates to his thought, both preceding this work and subsequent to it. Also, Weber's argument about the foundations of original capitalist motivation covers ground that other luminaries of social and economic analysis have addressed but which at best has been only glancingly touched upon in the existing literature on the *Protestant Ethic*. In particular, much can be learned about Weber's account of the sources and make-up of the capitalist 'spirit' by comparing it with the detailed and important but relatively neglected contributions of the eighteenth-century pioneer of economic analysis Adam Smith and the twentieth-century firebrand of economic critique Thorstein Veblen, as different chapters below will show. Because the *Protestant Ethic* is still the singular principal text of exposure to sociology at university level – anyone enrolled in a sociology course will not only have heard of but would be expected to have read at least part of the *Protestant Ethic* – it is the source of a pervasive historical image of early modern Europe. Most sociologists, including those who write about Weber and know his sources, typically assume that his historical understanding presented in the *Protestant Ethic* is sufficiently sound to deserve repeating. It has been necessary in the present book, however, to provide a view of early modern market society that is not derived from Weber's vision and which incidentally challenges it. Indeed, the method itself through which Weber apprehended early modern European capitalism and especially the relationship between religious thought and economic activity, is shown throughout the present book to be open to challenges seldom indicated in the existing secondary literature on the *Protestant Ethic*. In the final chapter, in which Weber's treatment of the Jews and pariah capitalism is discussed, the limitations of Weber's historical perspective and methodological assumptions become starkly apparent.

From what has just been written it may appear that the present book is essentially a negative appraisal of the *Protestant Ethic* and its author. Just such an approach to the work has a history as long as the *Protestant Ethic* itself. Indeed, Weber responded to criticism with a style that is robust, combative, even cruelly aggressive and dismissive. He did not take criticism well and was not inhibited from mixing evidence and argument with derogatory personal attacks on his detractors. The present work is not purely critical and destructive and when limitations and defects in Weber's logic or factual presentations are indicated, then corrective and alternative material restores the narrative account, so that at worst Weber's writing is a point of departure for consideration of not only his but other points of view. Thus the discussion that he presents, and which is considered here, is augmented so that our understanding may be enlarged. Serious scholars treat Weber with a good deal of respect. His contribution to our intellectual heritage is enormous. Perhaps the justifiable regard for Weber's overall importance has tended to encourage an accepting attitude to the *Protestant Ethic* when a more testing and sceptical approach is readily justified by the nature of the work itself and its place in Weber's intellectual development. The present book is not a summary of or a guide to the *Protestant Ethic*, but rather a close examination of a number of issues that it raises. This examination not only illuminates Weber's intentions and the formation and development of his ideas, but also places them in a context seldom found in the existing literature.

The first two chapters of the present book place the *Protestant Ethic* in the context of the larger body of Weber's writing. Chapter 1, 'From the inaugural lecture to the *Protestant Ethic*', considers the arguments of the *Protestant Ethic* in the context of Weber's preceding and largely ignored writings on agrarian questions and especially his inaugural lecture of 1895, 'The National State and Economic Policy'. The inaugural lecture was written from the point of view of a social economist committed to articulating and advancing the German national interest, as he saw it, under conditions of Catholic Polish farm labourers displacing Protestant German farm workers. A clear programmatic concern is expressed in the lecture about tasks for the political education of future defenders of German national interest in the face of middle-class impotence, and in particular the needs of a vocation for leadership. Connectedly, the lecture also presents a case

about the independence of fact and values and the capacity of persons to choose the values that serve and advance their collective or national interests. The association of religion and economic interest, spelled out in the 1895 lecture, the value question, and the proper foundations of vocation or calling, are all continued, although in a different key, in the *Protestant Ethic* first published a decade later. Indeed, Weber's treatment in the *Protestant Ethic* of the unequal capacities of Lutheranism and Calvinism to furnish differentially the content of a modern form of calling and a commensurate personality that could rationally pursue a constant programme of purposes is readily seen to be the solution to the problem of fully competent social agency and political leadership that Weber first set himself in the inaugural lecture. By placing it in the context of the inaugural lecture, the *Protestant Ethic* ceases to be primarily an historical narrative of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century developments, and becomes instead an allegory about Weber's Germany and its alternative possible futures, based on different prospects of political education, one following the traditional Lutheran form of calling and one following the modern and more dynamic Calvinist form that Weber believed was at the heart of British and American national ascendancy and success.

Chapter 2, 'From the *Protestant Ethic* to the vocation lectures', continues to place the *Protestant Ethic* in the context of Weber's other writings, in this instance those subsequent to it, and also maintains the focus on his account of vocation or calling in the *Protestant Ethic* and later writings. The concept of 'vocation' or 'calling' (*Beruf*) refers to the practice of systematic self-control in pursuing constant goals or purposes, which Weber, in the *Protestant Ethic*, found in its modern form in Calvinist religious practice and capitalistic entrepreneurship and labour. But he does not confine the term to only these applications; it is also central to his lectures 'Science as a Vocation' and also 'Politics as a Vocation', delivered in 1917 and 1919 respectively. The general significance of the idea of *Beruf* is that it accounts for the mechanisms required to realize in action the quality of rationality, another of Weber's characteristic terms. The connection between rational activity and calling is constant throughout Weber's different discussions. In the *Protestant Ethic*, however, practices of *Beruf* achieve rationality through the suppression of emotion. In the later vocation lectures, on the other hand, *Beruf* is achieved through and expresses passion and emotions. This turn about in Weber's various

statements of the foundation of *Beruf* has considerable importance for an understanding of the concept and practice of rationality, and also for Weber's own biography and calling as a sociological theorist. In tracing Weber's retreat from ascetic rationalism after the writing of the *Protestant Ethic*, the chapter shows that Weber provides a serious and detailed albeit implicit critique of that work in subsequent writings that is parallel to and paradoxical with his continued presentation of the Protestant ethic argument. This fact gives additional weight to the interpretation of the preceding chapter that the importance of the *Protestant Ethic* is not primarily in its intellectual apprehension of early modern historical developments so much as its addressing the programmatic concern of German political education.

Having shown that Weber's underlying intention in the *Protestant Ethic* was to advance an argument primarily concerned with elite recruitment on the basis of a historical metaphor of the Protestant reformation as providing a model of calling, the next three chapters consider the veracity of the historical vision that is his vehicle for conveying the argument about the religious ethic and capitalist motivation.

Chapter 3, 'Passions and profits: the emotional origins of capitalism in seventeenth-century England', continues the discussion of the preceding chapter that considered the approach to emotions in the *Protestant Ethic* and shows that rather than reject or suppress emotions the early modern capitalist economy required articulation of and attention to emotions. Reliance on credit and also commerce between virtual strangers meant that formation of trust for market relations required a sense of the intentions and feelings of the other and a consciousness of a market actor's own relevant emotions. During the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries a large number of books on the passions were published in London that offered reflection about and instruction on emotions. Some of these were clearly directed to readers engaged in economic activity. Drawing upon the method Weber recommends, the chapter goes on to explore one of these books in particular and demonstrates not only that it provides an operative account of emotions but also that it encourages commercial activity and profit making as an end in itself through religious argument. This inducement to capitalistic practices was delivered a generation before Richard Baxter's sermons, which Weber focuses on in the last chapter of the *Protestant Ethic*, and unlike Baxter its author, Thomas Wright,

was a Catholic. The argument of the chapter is not that a Catholic rather than a Protestant ethic prefigured the spirit of capitalism. Rather, the point is that writers of all religious persuasions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe addressed issues raised by the economic transformations they experienced. Weber's insistence on the intrinsic limitations of Catholic accommodations with and exhortations to participation in capitalistic market opportunities reflects a misunderstanding of the Catholic Counter-Reformation. Weber had a very strong sense of the significance of a cultural apparatus that facilitates market activities. As the chapter shows, he unfortunately fails to separate his conception of such an apparatus from the quite separate question of motivation, and in the *Protestant Ethic* – although not in later works – he treats the latter largely in terms of values and especially those drawn from Protestant religious doctrine. The chapter addresses therefore not only an understanding of Weber's arguments concerning the Protestant ethic and its relation to the spirit of capitalism, but also the cultural configuration of seventeenth-century English capitalism.

The following chapter, chapter 4, 'Protestant virtues and deferred gratification: Max Weber and Adam Smith on the spirit of capitalism', also considers aspects of Weber's historical argument by contrasting it with an earlier, but in many ways similar, account of the basis of capitalistic motivation. While the *Protestant Ethic* does not engage the eighteenth-century Scottish founder of modern economics, Adam Smith, Weber knew his work reasonably well. Curiously, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* presents a conceptualization of the spirit of capitalism that shares many features with Weber's ideal-type model of it, although Smith has no requirement of a precondition of the Protestant ethic that Weber insists upon. The comparison of the two works in this chapter draws out aspects of Weber's argument that are seldom examined in discussion of the *Protestant Ethic*. Smith's *Moral Sentiments* and Weber's *Protestant Ethic* share a number of relevant assumptions, especially concerning the spirit of capitalism as an ethical imperative directed to money-making for its own sake, and also the social location of this spirit in the modest middle strata of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European society. Yet Smith understands the source and mobilization of this ethic to be in the social sanctioning of individuals availing themselves of newly emergent opportunities for a return on investment, supported by other

institutional changes including the availability of third-party credit. Weber is not unaware of these factors, as the chapter demonstrates, but confines his statement of the nature and operations of the spirit of capitalism to a focus on religious support for an abstentious orientation to mundane activities and consumption. While Weber treats capitalist frugality in terms of value-rational commitments, Smith regards it as deferred gratification; while Weber understands profit seeking for its own sake in terms of ethical socialization, Smith sees it as a result of communal social control through sympathy. Other aspects of the difference between Smith and Weber, including their contrasting appreciations of the role of emotion in self-command and self-control, as they each refer to the core of market vocation, belies similarities drawn out in the chapter. In particular, in later discussion Weber holds that in terms of its global role, religion – and Protestantism in particular – provides a legitimating function for wealth-holding that is analogous to Smith's account of social emulation and approbation. While this is a route to the spirit of capitalism that circumvents the Calvinist doctrine of predestination that is Weber's focus in the *Protestant Ethic*, it directly harmonizes with Smith's account of the basis of the capitalist spirit in terms of social processes rather than religious doctrinal subscription.

Whereas the third and fourth chapters consider Weber in the context of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century thought respectively, the fifth chapter, 'Ideal-type, institutional and evolutionary analyses of the origins of capitalism', considers the *Protestant Ethic* in comparison with the work of a contemporary thinker, the American economist and sociologist Thorstein Veblen. The substance of the chapter continues to be Weber's historical vision, as in the previous two chapters, but this one is more focused on methodological issues. As with previous chapters, discussion of the *Protestant Ethic* is conducted also in terms of its relationship with Weber's other writings. In this chapter the institutional analysis of *General Economic History* is given special attention. It is shown that in his discussion in *General Economic History* Weber agrees with Veblen on a number of crucial issues concerning the institutional components of capitalist economy and society and that they together point to common features of the origins of capitalism in the development of a particular type of personality. They also provide strikingly similar accounts of the role of expansion of production and the development of the political

state in the formation and extension of the capitalist economy. Veblen augments Weber's institutional account of capitalist development by providing an explanation of the historically sequential geographic distribution of capitalism, its shifting centre of gravity through early modern Europe. Although this argument is absent in *General Economic History*, it is implied in it, but it is not compatible with the argument of the *Protestant Ethic*. The chapter goes on to discuss issues that arise out of Weber's requirement in the *Protestant Ethic*, which is not properly discharged in *General Economic History*, to entertain two distinct theories of capitalism, one explaining origins, the other operations. Following Joseph Schumpeter's argument, it is shown that this is a consequence of the ideal-type methodology and is unnecessary in Veblen's evolutionary approach.

Methodological concerns and attention to details of historical narrative and analysis continue in the final chapter, 'The Jewish question: religious doctrine and sociological method'. Weber's argument that the religious beliefs of a social group are responsible for its economic circumstance is more or less taken for granted through repetition and familiarity, and its application in explaining the situation and fortunes of certain Protestant groups is widely regarded as more or less sufficient. Yet to explain the social and economic situation of the Jews, for instance, only in terms of their religious beliefs without regard to the details of their specific relationships with the host society and key groups within it must be regarded as limited in the extreme. Nevertheless, this is Weber's explanation in the *Protestant Ethic* of post-exilic Judaism and it is exactly parallel to the methodology he adopts in that work to explain the social and economic outcomes for Protestant and Catholic alike – in terms of their religious beliefs rather than the broader pattern of their interactions. The chapter discusses Weber's account in the *Protestant Ethic* of the relationship between biblical Jewish and early Protestant rationalism and goes on to detail Weber's elaboration of the concept of the Jews as a 'pariah' people in works written between the first edition of the *Protestant Ethic* (1905) and the second (1920). Discussion continues with an account of the historical and social-relational basis of Jewish marginalization that indicates the entirely secondary significance of religious belief in exchanges between Jews and other social groups. It is shown in the chapter that Weber's characterization of the Jews in terms of religious belief to the exclusion of social and economic

relations is internal to his elaboration of the ideal-type method. By defining the Jews in terms of the Christian transcendence of Judaism in his methodological essays written at the same time as the first edition of the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber reifies the religious and ritual aspects of Judaism in his ideal-type concept of the Jews, which he later elaborates to incorporate the 'pariah' elements. The chapter concludes with a consideration of religious beliefs as social causes.

Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* is possibly the most audacious, infuriating, misleading and enduring sociological text written. Its argument is entirely audacious, claiming that the original motivating force for a frame of mind that has regard only for material values was a consequence – albeit unintended – of a profound spirituality born of religious revolution in the sixteenth century. It is infuriating because Weber seems to be almost constantly switching the grounds of his argument: sometimes Protestantism simply encourages economic rationalization, sometimes it causes the motivational apparatus of capitalism, and sometimes it is responsible for capitalism itself. Because the argument is ostensibly about capitalism but serves to promote a theory of personality and elite recruitment, it is misleading. In spite of these things, or more likely because of them, the *Protestant Ethic* continues to excite discussion and stimulate further reflection. And it has done so for a long time. While the shelf life of most sociology books is very brief indeed, the *Protestant Ethic* remains in print over one hundred years after it first appeared in 1905 – and there is no indication that interest in it is likely to decline in the foreseeable future. One reason that it endures is because every undergraduate student enrolled in a sociology course will be expected to know the *Protestant Ethic*. The present book is intended to enliven discussion of Weber's best-known work. If students themselves do not read it, it is possible that their teachers may. In any event, gaps remain still in consideration of the *Protestant Ethic* and it is hoped that some of these may be filled by the present book and, more important still, that this book may stimulate others to look at the *Protestant Ethic* in a different light and encourage them to address it not with an accepting embrace but in a passionate conversation.

1 *From the inaugural lecture to the* Protestant Ethic: *political education and German futures*

Max Weber's early studies of agrarian social structure, including his inaugural lecture of 1895, have been largely ignored by sociologists. It will be shown in the discussion to follow that the 1895 lecture is, however, an absolutely necessary key to the proper appreciation of Weber's subsequent work, including – it might be said especially – *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Indeed, a reading of Weber's subsequent writings through the prism of the inaugural lecture provides an incisive route to an understanding of Weber's enduring argument concerning social and cultural forms and the meaning and purpose of his methodological constructions. Any discussion of the *Protestant Ethic* and the contemporaneous and subsequent methodological essays will find that a consideration of the 1895 lecture is nothing less than essential. Indeed, it will be shown in this chapter that an appreciation of Weber's argument in the inaugural lecture transforms the current and conventional understandings of the *Protestant Ethic* as well as the supporting methodological essays.

The long-standing sociological disregard of Max Weber's writings before the *Protestant Ethic* is extremely curious. Conventional wisdom has it that Weber began writing sociology after he came out of a depressive illness around 1903, which is when he began drafting the *Protestant Ethic* (Marianne Weber 1926: 325–6). The post-depression essays, on the methods of cultural analysis as well as the Protestant ethic, it is held, stood apart from his previous research and publications, including the inaugural lecture, which are characterized as essentially legal and economic in nature. While there has always been some dissent from this long-standing and influential assessment (Bendix 1959: 46–8; Giddens 1971: 121; 1972: 18), Talcott Parsons'

claim, that a 'changed orientation came in rather dramatic fashion with Weber's recovery' (Parsons 1937: 503), authoritatively established the view that there was no possibility of continuity between papers on the conditions of agricultural workers published in the 1890s, for instance, and the *Protestant Ethic*, first published in 1905. Parsons' argument, that it is Weber's distinctive sociological method that holds the key to his 'changed orientation', has been accepted at face value. This is the method that places the primacy of values and other cultural factors over material conditions in explaining social processes and change, exemplified in the *Protestant Ethic*.

The method of Weber's earlier writings, especially his studies of agrarian economy conducted under the auspices of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* [Association for Social Reform] during the period 1892–5, is distinguished for Parsons by its 'preoccup[ation] with "material" factors ... in the Marxian sense' (Parsons 1937: 502). It is true that Weber's agrarian writings are replete with references to and concern with objects defined through a materialist or ostensibly Marxist terminology. In his essay, 'Developmental Tendencies in the Situation of East Elbian Rural Labourers', for instance, Weber makes much use of concepts such as 'class consciousness' (Weber 1894: 161), 'bourgeois-capitalist' enterprises (Weber 1894: 162), 'labour power' (Weber 1894: 164), and similar categories. But, even so, Weber's characteristic account of economic forms in terms of social orientations, rather than the other way around, which Parsons associates with the *Protestant Ethic* and later writings, is already fully explicit in the earlier work. In 'Developmental Tendencies', for instance, the class position of the rural workforce, Weber says, is determined by 'a decisive psychological factor', namely 'a search for personal emancipation' (Weber 1894: 172), by culturally given expectations of lifestyle and work style (Weber 1894: 175), and in general, Weber insists, it is the social organization of workers that 'decides their material situation' (Weber 1894: 178), rather than the other way around. This account from the 1890s is therefore entirely continuous with the type of explanation that Weber provided in the *Protestant Ethic* and certainly would have no place in a Marxian text, as Parsons supposes. While it has not yet been consolidated in the conventional vision of Weber's opus, the fact that the sociological method associated with his later writings is already to be located in his agrarian publications of the 1890s has not gone unnoticed (Riesebrodt 1986; Scaff 1984).

The inaugural lecture

A crucial text of this earlier period of Weber's writing, that will be at the centre of the discussion to follow, stands as a solid link between the agrarian studies on the one hand, and the *Protestant Ethic* and Weber's methodological essays on the other. This is Weber's *Antrittsrede*, his inaugural lecture, 'Der Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik', given in May 1895 after he had taken up the Chair in Economics and Finance at the University of Freiburg in the previous year. This was not the last thing Weber wrote before his supposed metamorphosis from economist to sociologist, but 'The Nation State and Economic Policy', as it is known in English, summarizes his earlier research on the standing and changing situation of German and Polish agricultural workers in a manner that prefigures key aspects of the *Protestant Ethic* and other later works, as we shall see. But as the title of the lecture suggests, Weber discusses the treatment of national differences within an economic policy framework, and this latter context raises questions for Weber not so much about technical analysis but concerning values and professional and personal commitments. Yet it is not merely that the inaugural lecture 'contains many of the *themes* which will recur throughout Weber's later work', as Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs say (Lassman and Speirs 1994: xiii; emphasis added). Rather, the inaugural lecture provides a structure within which Weber's subsequent thought is elaborated.

It will be shown in what follows that the inaugural lecture is an absolutely necessary key to the proper appreciation of Weber's later writing on religion and values and his methodological thought. This is because the inaugural lecture provides an understanding of Weber's intentions, pattern of thought and politico-intellectual tasks that continues to animate his later writing. For instance, in the inaugural lecture Weber poses a question concerning the task of a class-conscious defender of the German national interest that he answers in the *Protestant Ethic* and his methodological essays (Weber 1904; 1917a). We shall see that Weber's arguments in the *Protestant Ethic*, for instance, concerning the capacity of Calvinism and Lutheranism to differentially furnish the content of the modern personality, are commensurate with and extend the line of argument developed in the inaugural lecture. The prevailing debate over the validity of Weber's historical judgement

in the *Protestant Ethic* is therefore inappropriately focused on the form and not the substance of Weber's concerns. Additionally, the inaugural lecture presents an argument about values and social science that, though brief, is in many ways more complete than later statements of his position, and therefore makes clear what is otherwise obscure in Weber's later discussion of value freedom and value relevance. In providing an intellectual and not simply a political context for his later writing, the inaugural lecture casts light on otherwise neglected aspects of Weber's sociology, and provides new meaning to familiar works.

The Freiburg address is by no means unknown, but it has occupied an uneasy place in the sociological appreciation of Weber's thought. The text 'became notorious' (Bendix 1959: 31 note 22) for its strident nationalism, which made it repugnant to many sociologists. Indeed, there is a nationalist thread of Weber's thought, from the inaugural lecture and continuing through to his mature writings, which has been thoroughly explored by the late Wolfgang Mommsen (1974). Mommsen discussed the 1895 lecture in terms of its demonstration of the economic nationalism that he saw as central to and constant in Weber's life-long political outlook (Mommsen 1974: 36–40). The inaugural lecture gives bold expression to that nationalism. One approach to the inaugural lecture adopted by sociologists has simply been to ignore it. Alan Sica (1990), for instance, provides over twelve pages of discussion of Weber's 'early works', written between 1889 and 1897, without referring to the inaugural lecture even once (Sica 1990: 99–112). Yet to ignore the 1895 lecture, which at the time 'caused a sensation right across the academic community' (Käsler 1988: 9; see also Marianne Weber 1926: 216), leads to a distorted appreciation of Weber's thinking and writing, including his subsequent work. Another approach has been to regard the talk as only of political not sociological interest. Thus Arthur Mitzman discusses it intensely, but only for what it reveals of Weber's political mind at the time (Mitzman 1971: 136–47). If the work has nothing but political relevance, relating not only to Weber's political ideas but especially to his political participation, then it would be correct to describe it as part of an 'engagement ... not renewed' in subsequent work (Tribe 1983: 86–7). But Weber's politics are supported by methodological and sociological principles that are also expressed in the lecture, and these are continuous with later works, as we shall see.

Other scholars have acknowledged the text, but rendered it irrelevant by more or less denying that Weber meant what he said in it. Wilhelm Hennis, for instance, discusses the inaugural lecture in terms of Weber's development of a 'science of man' in which values are important insofar as they inform or guide the 'purposes of life', a concern with which he saw Weber engaged (Hennis 1988; 2000). Similarly, there is discussion of the treatment of values and methodological concerns in the inaugural lecture, but to regard these as distinct from the nationalist convictions Weber also displays in the lecture again cuts the lecture off from rather than connecting it to Weber's subsequent writing (Aldenhoff-Hübinger 2004). There is also some discussion of Weber's account of the agrarian social structure and employment relations to be found in the inaugural lecture. But when that discussion is designed to defend Weber against his attitude toward Catholic Polish workers, the resulting impression prevents the drawing of larger conclusions concerning other treatments of national and religious stratification in later works, including the *Protestant Ethic* (Agevall 2004). There are also writers who, while acknowledging the relevance of Weber's earlier study of agricultural labour, summarized in the 1895 address, for an understanding of the *Protestant Ethic*, fail to mention the inaugural lecture itself in this context (Bendix 1959: 46–8; Giddens 1971: 121, 124). The special significance of the inaugural lecture, however, as we shall see, is the way in which it explicitly raises questions about the German middle class' ability to satisfy national aspirations. These are questions that Weber goes on to answer in the *Protestant Ethic*.

In addition to the construction of economic forces through religious and cultural factors and posing the question of the sociocultural strength of the German middle class, the 1895 lecture is linked with later works, including the *Protestant Ethic*, through a further set of issues with which Weber's later discussion is genetically connected. These are enunciated in the inaugural lecture as basic methodological principles from which Weber never departed. In the inaugural lecture Weber argues that value positions cannot be sustained by science, and that a person's values are chosen, not determined. Indeed, his adherence to the fact–value distinction and the notion of value freedom are defining features of Weber's sociology. That they were formulated in the inaugural lecture and not abandoned but refined in subsequent discussion (Mommsen 1989: 8–9; Turner and Factor 1984: 57) would

be enough to heighten sociological interest in and enhance the sociological respectability of the inaugural lecture. That these principles derive from the idea of the supremacy of the interests of the national state, clearly outlined in the earlier work and only incompletely stated in later works, such as 'Politics as a Vocation' (Weber 1919), renders the inaugural lecture simply indispensable for an understanding of Weber's concern with and approach to values.

Placing the inaugural lecture in the context of Weber's sociological development means not only that its disparate components can be seen in their connectedness, but the significance for an understanding of subsequent works, including the *Protestant Ethic* and associated methodological essays, gives additional meaning to the lecture and markedly modifies the conventional understanding of the *Protestant Ethic*.

Religion and economic outcomes

Max Weber's *Protestant Ethic* is a classic of the sociological canon. The debate concerning Weber's characterization of capitalism; the conceptualization, theological lineage, and social incidence of innerworldly asceticism; and the historical relationship between Protestant sects and entrepreneurial activity, to name only the most obvious themes, has ensued unabated from the time of its first publication in 1905 to the present. Weber entered the debate himself, of course, not only with his responses in 1907 and 1908 to Karl Fischer's review of the *Protestant Ethic* and his two rebuttals in 1910 of Felix Rachfahl's critique, collected with Peter Baehr and Gordon Wells' translation of the first (1905) edition of the *Protestant Ethic* (Baehr and Wells 2002: 221–339), but also in the second version of the *Protestant Ethic* that Weber prepared for the *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, published, although unfinished at the time of his death, in 1920, in which many pages of contentious response are directed against Lujo Brentano and Werner Sombart in particular. In her biography, Marianne Weber describes the *Protestant Ethic* in terms of its 'most surprising synthesis above the line and the most painstaking scholarly documentation below the line' (Marianne Weber 1926: 336). She goes on to say that the second version was 'unchanged' by Weber except that 'the "footnote inflation" was considerably increased by arguments with those among his critics ... whom he had not already

refuted' (Marianne Weber 1926: 336). But whether the critics have been finally refuted is a moot point; certainly, they have not gone away. Weber remains ultimately unconvincing to those who will not be persuaded by the *Protestant Ethic*. In the middle of one of the antiphonal notes, consisting of four pages of small print, Weber describes the 'point of this whole essay', which 'to speak frankly', as he says with complete exasperation, 'I had not expected to find so completely overlooked' (Weber 1920: 197).

Sociological allegiance to Weber's position is thus by no means total, and the current situation is not unfairly described as an almost futile struggle between 'believers' and 'infidels' (Münch 1995: 51). Not only is the divide between opponents unbreachable, the focus of the debate continues to fail to get beyond the framework of the text indicated in its author's stated intentions, unclear as he acknowledges them to be. The intellectual task that emerges from these conditions cannot be an application of the sociological imagination in penetrating surface meanings, but instead becomes one of defending or rebutting Weber's position as he states it in the work. The spectacle of a refined focus by sociologists on theological doctrines, arcane and obscure historical figures, such as John Cotton (1585–1652) and Richard Baxter (1615–91), and the minutiae of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century church and economic history attests to the versatility and assiduousness of sociological effort, but not necessarily its perspicacity. The controversy over the *Protestant Ethic* will remain interminable and futile while it is no more than a debate over the validity of Weber's historical judgement.

The Gordian knot described here can be simply cut by acknowledging, as Harry Liebersohn (1988), for instance, suggests, that within the *Protestant Ethic*'s 'narrative about economic history [Weber] hid an allegory about Germany in his own day' (Liebersohn 1988: 96). To give attention to this subtext would be wholly to transform the discussion of the *Protestant Ethic*, from a debate primarily focused on Reformation sources to one concerned with the sociological problems of the bases of national development and especially the transformative capacities of social actors to initiate and control such developments. In fact, there is a move in this direction with the recent revival of interest in the question of calling, not simply in Calvinism, but in Weber's sociology, as a 'discourse concerning ... the "empowerment" of the "self"' (Goldman 1995: 161;

see also Alexander 1987; Barbalet 2000; Eisen 1979; Goldman 1988; Schroeder 1991). This theme will be pursued in the following chapter. Of particular interest in the present context is the fact that a reading of Weber's inaugural lecture leads directly to an appreciation of the *Protestant Ethic* as providing a discussion primarily of social agency and political leadership and only secondarily concerned with doctrinal and historical issues.

In stark contrast with the *Protestant Ethic* and its focus on the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the contemporality of Weber's 1895 address is impossible to doubt. In this latter work Weber is exercised by the contrasting fortunes of German and Polish peasants and agricultural workers in the area east of the River Elbe. His intention, simply stated, is to clarify the role of 'racial differences between nationalities in the economic struggle for existence' (Weber 1895a: 2). The national composition of the population in the region, he says, is related inversely to the quality of the soil (Weber 1895a: 4). As the fertility of the land deteriorates, the number of Poles increases. And the increase in seasonal workers and peasants of Polish origin stands in contrast to the declining German agrarian population that for its own reasons is at the same time leaving the land. Weber accounts for these contrary but mutually supporting movements in terms of 'the transformation of the forms of agricultural enterprise and the tremendous crisis in agriculture', through which Polish peasants and seasonal workers, who can live on lower incomes and on more marginal land, displace German peasants and labourers (Weber 1895a: 11). Weber explains the economic situation described here, in spite of his opening reference to 'racial differences', through the play of cultural forces.

The two nationalities, Weber notes, 'have competed for centuries on the same soil, and with essentially the same chances [or opportunities]' (Weber 1895a: 5). The black humour of the reference to the 'same opportunities' of German and Pole reflects on the changing Prussian policy toward the Poles: of exclusion, followed by permissibility of their migration coupled with prohibition on settlement (see Weber 1895a: 11–12). The basis of the distinction between German and Pole, Weber goes on to say, is in their culturally borne capacity to adapt to different economic and social conditions of existence. In particular he points to the 'lower expectations of the standard of living' on the part of the Poles (Weber 1895a: 8), and the inability of the German

agricultural labourers to 'adapt to the *social* conditions of life in their homeland' (Weber 1895a: 9; emphasis in original). In an earlier paper, 'Developmental Tendencies', Weber had referred to the 'cultural ... tast[e for] freedom' that has 'increasingly inclined [the German agriculturalist] to sacrifice his material welfare' (Weber 1894: 183): German agrarians traded economic security for personal independence. It must be remembered that peasant emancipation in Germany, especially in the east, was muted by an ordinance in 1810, which continued to regulate labour relations throughout the nineteenth century. Under these conditions obedience of labourer to employer 'was due to the point of absolute servility', as one historical source put it (Clapham 1948: 205). This led German agrarians in the east to desert the land, which was then to be occupied by Poles. In order to demonstrate the demographic and class relocations of Germans and Poles, Weber turned to data on religious affiliation (Weber 1895a: 4).

It is instructive to compare this part of the inaugural lecture with the opening paragraphs of the *Protestant Ethic*. Weber answers his own question in the inaugural lecture, concerning the social stratificatory location of 'the bearers of German and Polish nationality (*Deutschtum* and *Polentum*) in the country districts' by turning to the 1885 population census (Weber 1895a: 4). He says that while it is not possible to 'derive the national composition of parishes directly from these figures', it can be done 'indirectly' (Weber 1895a: 4). Weber immediately goes on to say that the 'link in the equation [is] the figures for religious affiliation which coincides with nationality to within a few per cent in this region of mixed nationalities' (Weber 1895a: 4). He then proceeds to provide the figures for estates and villages by fertility of soil in terms of 'Catholic' and 'Protestant' populations: in the fertile districts Catholics are relatively more numerous on the estates and Protestants are relatively more numerous in villages; in less fertile districts, the opposite relation obtains (Weber 1895a: 4).

This account from the inaugural lecture can be stood against the opening words of the first chapter of the *Protestant Ethic*, 'Religious Affiliation and Social Stratification':

> A glance at the occupational statistics of any country of mixed religious composition brings to light with remarkable frequency ... the fact that business leaders and owners of capital, as well as higher grades of skilled

labour, and even more the higher technically and commercially trained personnel of modern enterprises, are overwhelmingly Protestant. This is true not only in cases where the difference in religion coincides with one of nationality, and thus of cultural development, as in Eastern Germany between Germans and Poles. The same thing is shown in the figures of religious affiliation almost wherever capitalism, at the time of its great expansion, has had a free hand to alter the social distribution of the population in accordance with its needs, and to determine its occupational structure. (Weber 1920: 35)

There are obvious affinities between the two texts. Indeed, the clear differences between them indicate the elements of their commonality. First, in 1905, in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber generalizes beyond the districts of East Elbia, the focus of the 1895 text, to '*any country* of mixed religious composition'. Second, in the *Protestant Ethic* religion is treated as the independent variable and not as a proxy for nationality. Third, whereas in the 1895 text Weber is concerned with the disadvantage Protestant Germans suffer in being displaced by Catholic Poles, in the 1905 text the focus is on the occupational advantage that Protestants have enjoyed under capitalist conditions. These differences may be connected with a fourth thing to notice, that is not at first obvious: in this passage from the *Protestant Ethic* Weber wishes to have nothing to do with the inaugural lecture or any of the studies that it summarizes. The point deserves elaboration.

Roughly 47 per cent of the volume of *Protestant Ethic* that Weber left in 1920 consists of notes (about 54,000 words of text and 49,000 words of notes). The notes are extremely detailed and highly informative. Yet the notes to the passage from the *Protestant Ethic* just quoted are brief and inappropriate, even misleading. For instance, to his point concerning the differential occupational outcomes of Catholics and Protestants in 'any country' Weber adds a wholly inappropriate note that provides not national but rather regional data, and not from eastern but western Germany – Baden in fact (Weber 1920: 188 note 4). More curious still, after his remarks on eastern Germany and the situation of Germans and Poles, there is no note, even though his own research, published in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* from 1892, was an important and unique source in this discussion. Weber was never embarrassed to refer to his own work, and did so in the *Protestant Ethic* at least nine times, such as when he refers to his papers on education and industrial

labour (Weber 1920: 62, 199 note 18), for example, and the ideal type (Weber 1920: 71, 200 note 28), both originally published in the *Archiv*, in 1913 and 1904 respectively. But he refrains from mentioning his very relevant and highly important research on agrarian classes in particular. Nothing can be made of this silence in itself. But we shall see that it enhances the role of the *Protestant Ethic* as an instrument of political education, a role most effective when least attention is drawn to it.

Political education and calling

To understand how the *Protestant Ethic* realizes what the inaugural lecture aspires to, we must return to the differences between them. In the inaugural lecture Weber is concerned with the displacement of German by Polish agricultural workers. This he explains through the tolerance of the Catholic Poles for standards of life lower than those acceptable to Protestant Germans. But the cultural difference between the two populations in this regard has significance to him because of its political implications. Indeed, Weber says that he is not interested in theoretically developing the pertinent facts (Weber 1895a: 11). Neither is he prepared to elaborate on 'what can and should be done in this situation' (Weber 1895a: 11), as he had previously, in a paper given to the Protestant Social Congress of 1894. He does, though, insist that there is a *situation*; namely that the German character of the east is under threat and that '[it] *ought to* ... be defend[ed]' (Weber 1895a: 13; emphasis in original).

In the previous year, at the Protestant Social Congress, Weber recommended a number of measures that he had earlier reached in his massive report to the *Verein* in 1892 (Käsler 1988: 7) and which he repeats in a summary in the inaugural lecture (Weber 1895a: 12). These measures are designed to solve the problem of East Elbia and included the redistribution of Junker estates to German labourers. The purpose of these reforms was to stabilize the local economy, remove the need for Polish labour, undermine the power of the outdated Junkers and re-Germanize the region. But Weber's 1894 speech, outlining these proposals, 'plunged the [Protestant Social Congress] into a crisis from which it barely recovered' (Liebersohn 1988: 90). The disagreement between Weber and his audience in 1894 centred on his attack on the Junkers, whose continuing influence on policy undermined the

interests of the German nation, in Weber's view. Weber's attitude to the Junkers had not changed in the inaugural lecture, but the attack was now tempered with praise for the 'strength of their political instincts' (Weber 1895a: 22), much in the manner of Marx's praise for the bourgeoisie in *The Communist Manifesto*, a class Marx describes as sufficiently progressive to dig its own grave. The fact remained, said Weber, that at the end of the nineteenth century the Junkers were economically and politically eclipsed, the question therefore becomes: 'into whose hands is the *political function* of the Junkers passing, and what are we to make of the *political vocation* of those who take it over?' (Weber 1895a: 23; emphasis added). There was no easy answer.

Weber's disgust during this period with Imperial policies, and especially with the role of the Junkers in them, is well documented (Bendix 1959: 43–5). Relatedly, Weber experienced deep disappointment with German liberalism and its incapacity to remain coherent or have an influence on political developments (Liebersohn 1988: 79). Indeed, Weber felt that the natural constituency of liberalism, the upper middle class, was indecisive, anti-rational, and passive. This was his complaint in 1895 (Liebersohn 1988: 102–3; Bendix and Roth 1971: 20), a view he continued to hold and express with some force in a series of articles published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* in 1917 and republished in expanded form with a new preface as 'Parliament and Government in Germany Under a New Political Order' (Weber 1917c), which became the standard reference for Weber's statement of these sentiments (see Ruggiero 1927: 272–4). So the question concerning the inheritance of representation of the German national interest was entirely vexed for Weber. And it was palpably real to him because of his avowed and profound nationalist sentiments.

This is the underlying problem articulated by Weber in the 1895 address, central to Weber's intellectual concerns and to the future of the German nation: the incapacity of the German bourgeoisie for the 'vocation' of political leadership, a term he uses four or more times in this text (Weber 1895a: 20, 23, 26). The concept of 'vocation' is core to the *Protestant Ethic*, as we shall see below and go on to explore further in the next chapter. While the Junker's political capacities are largely a thing of the past, according to Weber (1895a: 22), and the working class suffers from political 'philistinism' (Weber 1895a: 25–6), the 'broad strata of the German bourgeoisie' is marked by

'political immaturity' (Weber 1895a: 25). This raises what Weber describes as the 'vital question' of whether it is 'too *late* for [the bourgeoisie] to make up the lost ground' on its political education (Weber 1895a: 25; emphasis in original). For his own part, Weber indicates a glimmer of optimism when he identifies what he believes is a task – indeed, a supreme task – for economics: 'the ultimate goal of our science', Weber says, must remain that of 'contributing to the *political* education of our nation' (Weber 1895a: 27; emphasis in original). Weber takes this as not merely a professional undertaking, although it is that, but more especially a deeply felt personal one. He says that 'there is an immense work of *political* education to be done, and there is no more serious duty for each of us in our narrow spheres of activity than to be aware of *this* task' (Weber 1895a: 27; emphasis in original). We shall see that by writing and publishing the *Protestant Ethic* and the methodological essays, Weber discharged this duty.

In the inaugural lecture itself, Weber offers no suggestion as to how the task of political education is to be carried out, save two serious qualifications. He insists that the 'very opposite of political education' is the formulation of 'a vote of no confidence' and that it is necessary to avoid an approach that 'believes it is possible to replace political with "ethical" ideals' (Weber 1895a: 27). These two broad prospects are important paths to avoid. First, Weber believes that it is counterproductive simply to draw attention to the political failings of the bourgeoisie for political leadership. A more positive form of encouragement is required to overcome the political immaturity of the class from which those who are to represent the nation will be drawn. Second, it is pointless to pretend that political leadership can be achieved by redefining politics itself. Indeed, this is part of the problem, according to Weber. He complains that the field is increasingly occupied by 'the hackneyed yelping of the ever-growing chorus of amateur social politicians ... [who] believe it is possible to replace political with "ethical" ideals' (Weber 1895a: 27). Weber's vision of German national political leadership, on the other hand, is to give expression to 'the *great* passions' (Weber 1895a: 28; emphasis in original) that lead its advocates to expand 'the amount of elbow-room in the world which [they] conquer and bequeath to [future generations]' and who can serve 'the enduring power-political interests of the nation' (Weber 1895a: 16).

Thus political education, in this sense, must equip a new leadership with confidence in and commitment to a program of nationalist action and expansion. While the specific content of such a political education is not indicated in the inaugural lecture, the source of what gives rise to the need for it is identified. It is necessary, for a solution to be formulated, that the problem be delineated. The characteristic orientation of the politically involved bourgeois of his day, according to Weber, was paradoxically an absence of involvement. In the inaugural lecture Weber says that the legacy of Bismarck's rule is the political inactivity of the bourgeoisie, longing for the protection of a new Caesar (Weber 1895a: 24), simply unpractised in the political arts (Weber 1895a: 25), and with a fateful inclination to nostalgia (Weber 1895a: 24) and sentimentality (Weber 1895a: 25–6). These charges are repeated in 'Parliament and Government in Germany Under a New Political Order' (Weber 1917c: 143–5). Weber's own orientation, developed in his early adult years, was that these tendencies required the corrective of a secularized Protestantism that emphasized the 'ideal of individuals free to shape their own destiny amid adverse conditions' (Liebersohn 1988: 87). Writing of Weber's life in the mid 1880s Marianne Weber reports that he acquired at this time a conviction of the correctness of 'intellectual and moral freedom, "self-determination" of the personality by a *Soll* [moral obligation], [that] remained a basic law for him all his life, a law to which he consciously subjected himself and of which he constantly assured himself by testing his practical observance of it' (Marianne Weber 1926: 88; see also 106).

Weber's own inclinations, then, against those of the sentimental and uncommitted bourgeois, are encapsulated in the notion of *Beruf*, vocation or calling, a concept he went on to develop and elaborate in the *Protestant Ethic* and which, in the inaugural lecture, he observes, the German bourgeoisie lacks but requires if it is to fulfil the destiny of the nation, as we noted above. Even more revealing of the way in which the *Protestant Ethic* amplifies the argument of the inaugural lecture is the provision in it of an explanation of the German political character that is more profoundly cultural than the essentially political explanation in the inaugural lecture, and also in 'Parliament and Government', in terms of Bismarck's legacy. The failure of German political culture, Weber holds in the *Protestant Ethic*, goes back to Luther and the Lutheran influence on German culture. Weber says that Lutheranism 'left the spontaneous vitality of impulsive action

and naïve emotion more nearly unchanged [because the] motive to constant self-control and thus to a deliberate regulation of one's own life, which the gloomy doctrine of Calvinism gave, was lacking' (Weber 1920: 126). Here in the *Protestant Ethic* is the completion of the inaugural lecture: the solution to the problem of political education is the development of a calling. The practice of a modern calling is absent from the German personality, which is natural and spontaneous because of the influence of the essentially conservative Lutheranism, but developed in Calvinism, which is the basis of British and American national strength that Weber so admired (Roth 1995).

If Weber were merely developing an argument about the significance of religious ethics in the formation of the cultural basis of capitalism, then the obvious contrasts would be Protestantism and Catholicism. Weber does discuss Catholicism in the *Protestant Ethic*, of course, but only in passing. The principal contrasts he draws are between Lutheranism and Calvinism. The argument concerning the religious foundations of capitalism is wrapping for an argument concerning the religious foundations of national character. In one of his rejoinders to a critic of the *Protestant Ethic*, 'Final Rebuttal of Rachfahl', Weber admits as much himself when he writes: 'it was not the promotion of capitalist expansion that *primarily* interested me, but the development of the *type of humanity [Menschentum]* that was created by the coincidence of religiously and economically determined components' (Weber 1910: 299–300; emphasis in original). Weber says in the *Protestant Ethic* that it is not 'the differences of their political history' that explains the 'fundamental difference between the English and German characters' (Weber 1920: 89). While the historical reference of this passage is the 'end of the Middle Ages' the remark is not solely of academic interest because the real power and immediate relevance of the efficacious cause is brought sharply home when Weber immediately adds that 'It was the power of religious influence, not alone, but more than anything else, which created the differences *of which we are conscious today*' (Weber 1920: 89; emphasis added). If Germany is to enjoy the power and prestige England and America enjoyed at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, then German rulers must understand the damaging legacy of their Lutheranism and appreciate the power of the Calvinistic calling. Lutheranism is essentially conservative (Weber 1920: 82–3), and, like middle-class politics in the Germany of

Weber's own time, it is conservative because it is politically expedient (Weber 1920: 84–5). The idea of calling in the Lutheran sense, Weber says, 'is at best of questionable importance for the problems in which we are interested' (Weber 1920: 86).

The problems attracting Weber's attention in the *Protestant Ethic* are those associated with the question of calling: 'the valuation of the fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume' and 'the fulfilment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world' (Weber 1920: 80). This is what is required of a political leadership committed to furthering the interests of the German nation. The chapter in the *Protestant Ethic* on 'Luther's Conception of the Calling' indicates that Weber is 'attempting to clarify the part which religious forces have played in forming the developing web of our specifically worldly modern culture' (Weber 1920: 90; see also 91–2). It is the practice of a calling, according to Weber, that gives the Puritan the revolutionary power to change the religious world, and the capitalist entrepreneur the ability to transform the world of commerce and production, against all odds, through a particular 'clarity of vision and ability to act' (Weber 1920: 69). Indeed, the notion and practice of calling are the bases of an individual's power in the world against the forces of both rationalization in social and economic institutions and nature. The ascetic practices of self-definition and self-justification create not just personality but personality expressed through commitment to a purpose. The possibilities for political leadership thus arise only through the adoption of a calling in this Calvinistic sense, according to Weber.

Thus, if the *Protestant Ethic* is set in the context of its continuity with the inaugural lecture, the focus on *Beruf* or vocation or calling makes obvious sense, and its application to the problem of the requisite personality for national development is a project that gives meaning to the argument of the *Protestant Ethic* as a document with a subtext of political education. Indeed, there is no novelty in the general idea of the Protestant–capitalist nexus spelt out in the *Protestant Ethic*, and for which it has become known, only in the details of Weber's exposition of it (see Graf 1995: 32–4). The argument, concerning the Calvinist origins of capitalism, pre-dates Weber's treatment. In his 'Final Rebuttal of Rachfahl', Weber refers to Eberhard Gothein when claiming that the 'specific elective affinity ... between

Calvinism ... and capitalism' 'has long been established' (Weber 1910: 301), a case Gothein made in *Wirtschaftsgeschichte des Schwarzwaldes* [Economic History of the Blackforest], published in 1892. In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber refers to the historian Henry Thomas Buckle and the poet John Keats, who 'have emphasized these same relationships' (Weber 1920: 44). No references are given here and the sources remain obscure, although in an endnote in 'Final Rebuttal' Weber provides a brief quotation from John Keats' correspondence of 1818 to his brother, claiming 'These Kirkmen [have] formed Scotland into Phalanges of savers and gainers' (Weber 1910: 337 note 25a). Indeed, writing in 1879, the Scottish essayist and novelist, Robert Louis Stevenson, for instance, in anticipation of Weber, asked: 'Can it be that the Puritan school, by divorcing a man from his nature, by thinning out his instincts, and setting a stamp of its disapproval on whole fields of human activity and interest, leads at least directly to material greed?' (Stevenson 1879: 36). Weber's 'task', as he acknowledges for himself, is to 'explain the relation' – which others had earlier observed – between early modern religion and later modern culture (Weber 1920: 191). And the purpose of that has been to reveal the limitations of a Lutheran and the advantages of a Calvinist notion and practice of vocation or calling.

The political educative role of the *Protestant Ethic* is confirmed further by the interpretive practices engaged by Weber. In making his case for the limitations of the German Lutheran notion of calling and for the strength of Calvinistic calling, for example, Weber emphasizes the communal nature of the one against the individualistic nature of the other. Liebersohn has shown that in doing so Weber 'distorted the chief interpretations Weber himself drew on for his portrait of the two confessional psychologies' (Liebersohn 1988: 105). This is not the place to enter the extensive debate on Weber's treatment of covenant theology (Eisen 1979; MacKinnon 1988, 1995; Oakes 1995; von Greyerz 1995; Zaret 1992, 1995). It cannot go unnoticed, however, that when it suited him Weber claimed that Calvinism was individualistic, as in the *Protestant Ethic*, and at other times that it was communitarian, as when he explained the success of Cromwell's army (Weber 1921: 1152), or the social bonds across class lines of American Puritan sects (Weber 1905a). The political pedagogic function of Weber's account does appear to enjoy priority over what would otherwise be an unchanging representation of historical fact.

Indeed, Weber's treatment of Calvinist individualism in the *Protestant Ethic* is more than a little strained. Weber begins by carefully establishing the profound individualism generated by the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. He refers to 'a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual' (Weber 1920: 104), the 'inner isolation of the individual' and 'that disillusioned and pessimistically inclined individualism' (Weber 1920: 105), the 'deep spiritual isolation' in which the Calvinist relates to his God, the Puritan's 'thinking only of his own salvation' (Weber 1920: 107), and the 'inner isolation of the individual through the Calvinist faith' (Weber 1920: 108). But there is a problem: the religiously born isolated individualism that Weber finds in the Calvinist occurs, he acknowledges, 'in spite of the necessity of membership in the true Church for salvation' (Weber 1920: 106). In Weber's view it is the individualism that predominates over organizational membership, but the demonstration of this claim in not convincing.

In an endnote to the statement concerning 'membership in the true Church', quoted above, Weber attempts to explain or, as he says, interpret, the 'psychological basis of Calvinistic social organizations' (Weber 1920: 223 note 27). In particular, he maintains that the social organizations in question comprise individuals whose orientations are 'spiritually individualistic', whose motives for membership are 'rational', and who as individuals 'never enter emotionally into them [the organizations]' (Weber 1920: 223 note 27). While the organizations of the Calvinist church have undoubted importance for the maintenance and dissemination of its creed and the communities of adherents, Weber seems to be saying here that Calvinist social organizations fail to achieve a commitment from their members. There is implicit acknowledgement of the unsatisfactory nature of this conclusion when Weber goes on to say: 'It seems at first a mystery how the *undoubted superiority of Calvinism in social organization* can be connected with this tendency to tear the individual away from the closed ties with which he is bound to this world' (Weber 1920: 108; emphasis added). Attached to this statement is a further and lengthy endnote which contains additional qualifications, but which adds nothing to the argument. Weber begins by acknowledging the irrelevance of spiritual communion for the social character of Calvinism and proceeds with an obscure discussion of social theology that fails to illuminate the 'mystery' with which he began (Weber 1920: 224–5 note 30).

In terms of Weber's declared concerns and the method he adopted to pursue them, however, the distilling of individualistic motives from the Calvinist religious communities and organizations does not pose a serious problem. Near the beginning of the chapter in which Calvinist individualism is outlined, Weber indicates that rather than being concerned with the organizational instruments of 'Church discipline, pastoral work, and preaching', he is, instead, 'interested rather in something entirely different: the influence of those *psychological* sanctions which ... [gave] direction to practical conduct and held the *individual* to it' (Weber 1920: 97; emphasis added). How the psychological sanctions to which the individual is subject are accessed by Weber is ingenious and bold, or fraught and improbable, depending on the reader's perspective. In any event, his method of deducing psychological sanctions 'from the peculiarities of the religious ideas behind them' can only proceed, he continues, 'by presenting these religious ideas in the *artificial simplicity* of ideal types, as they could at best but seldom be found in history' (Weber 1920: 98; emphasis added).

The concept of 'ideal type' was given clear exposition in an essay, '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy', written at the same time that Weber was writing the *Protestant Ethic*. The ideal-type construction is necessary, according to Weber, because there 'is no absolutely "objective" scientific analysis of culture' (Weber 1904: 72). On the contrary, Weber holds that 'social phenomena' are necessarily constituted by the perspective or viewpoint of the researcher and that the cognitive content of social phenomena 'are selected, analyzed and organised for expository purposes' by the researcher (Weber 1904: 72). The concept of ideal type is outlined and developed by Weber to regularize and give self-conscious order to the delineation of meaningful objects for research (Weber 1904: 90–102). The difficulty, however, and we shall return to it many times in the chapters that follow, is that there is no safeguard in Weber's procedure against interpretive distortions of understanding historical processes because the ideal type is not subject to factual or empirical correction once it is operationalized in research or historical argument. Indeed, Weber holds that 'concepts are primarily analytical instruments for the intellectual mastery of empirical data *and can be only that*' (Weber 1904: 106; emphasis in original) so that ideal types reflect more the preconceptions of the researcher than the social reality they ostensibly

address. It is not an exaggeration to say that if Weber's purpose is to demonstrate the individualistic nature of Calvinism over Lutheranism in spite of the higher salience of the collective form in the former, then an ideal-type construction that filters out the social organizational predominance of Calvinist communities can be readily applied to develop the argument concerning the psychological sanctions to which individual Calvinists are subjected.

Minding the gap

Two questions remain. If the links between the inaugural lecture and the *Protestant Ethic* indicated in the discussion above are meaningful and important, then it can be asked, first, why did Weber not mention the 1895 lecture in the 1905 essays? Second, why did it take nearly ten years to make the move from the inaugural lecture to the *Protestant Ethic*?

The fact that Weber distanced himself from the inaugural lecture in the *Protestant Ethic* is readily explained by the hostile reception it received. He is reported to have declared that 'My inaugural lecture aroused horror at the brutality of my views' (quoted in Marianne Weber 1926: 216), and he opens the published version of it, which appeared July 1895, with the words: 'I was prompted to publish the following arguments by the opposition rather than the assent which they elicited from my audience' (Weber 1895a: 1). Additionally, the political educative nature of the *Protestant Ethic* is enhanced by the absence of reference to the text that calls for it. It should not be assumed, though, that because Weber does not mention the inaugural lecture in the *Protestant Ethic* that it is simply left behind and forgotten by him. In fact, Weber used the 1895 address and associated material in 1903, the year he began work on the *Protestant Ethic*. Marianne Weber writes:

> His old interests in national policy and particularly agrarian policy could flare up at any time. In the fall of 1903, when he was already planning two other studies, there appeared a new bill that was intended to facilitate the expansion and establishment of *fideicommissa*. Part of its ideology was the preservation of the aristocratic tradition and mentality by supporting the landed gentry. This inspired Weber to attack the conservative romanticism behind which material and political class interests were hidden. He took from his drawer the agrarian statistics he had worked up

in his Berlin and Freiburg periods and tore the bill to shreds in an essay that combined careful scholarly argument with razor-sharp polemics … He showed that the proposed law would promote the accumulation of land and capital in the hands of the few, aggravate the social conflicts in rural regions, inevitably drive out the independent German peasants, and bring Slavic foreigners into the country. (Marianne Weber 1926: 327)

These themes, then, were with Weber as he was sharpening his pencils for writing the *Protestant Ethic*.

Why did it take Weber nearly a decade to make the very short move from the idea, in 1895, that there are needs for a political education of the German middle class, to the idea, presented in 1905, of a calling as providing transformative social and political agents with the requisite personality? The short answer, of course, is that Weber was occupied in the intervening period with a severe nervous breakdown. Talcott Parsons and other authoritative sources, including Marianne Weber, treat the work of the period of recovery as a new beginning. But this entirely begs the question. It has already been noted that at the time that he was beginning to work on the *Protestant Ethic*, in 1903, Weber was drawing upon the East Elbian material and writing on the themes of the 1895 lecture. The essays contemporary with the *Protestant Ethic*, on Roscher and Knies, spell out, among other things, the preferred notion of personality, against the prevailing German manifestations of the day (Weber 1906: 192). But the continuities between the 1895 lecture and the *Protestant Ethic*, connected through the nervous breakdown of 1897–1903, are even more complex yet suggestive of continuity.

The possible causes of Weber's breakdown are typically described in terms of his frantic work pace and heavy workload, and family tensions and anxieties, especially associated with his relationship with his father (Käsler 1988: 11–12). But an additional factor, overlaying these, intertwined with them, but deserving separate mention, was Weber's nationalistic enthusiasms. Referring to the years from the mid 1880s to the early 1890s, Weber's biographer notes that 'in addition to his scholarly concerns, he was *passionately* interested in political events' (Marianne Weber 1926: 115; emphasis added). She goes on to say, referring to the period from the mid 1890s to the time of his breakdown, that Weber's 'nationalism was *too ardent* for him to be permanently satisfied with the effectiveness of his writings'

(Marianne Weber 1926: 223; emphasis added). The evidence shows that it cannot be an exaggeration to say that Weber was obsessed with the problems of German national interest. He did address the issue on a number of occasions at distinguished public forums, including the Pan German Union in 1893, the Protestant Social Congress in 1894, his inaugural lecture in 1895, and the Protestant Social Congress in 1896. Each of these interventions was a fraught, tense, and divisive episode in which Weber argued his case with only the satisfaction of being opposed. It is little wonder that he suffered a collapse through nervous exhaustion in 1898. Indeed, that his nationalist enthusiasm may have been implicated in his breakdown further explains why the theme of the solution to the problem of political education is presented in the *Protestant Ethic* in the form of a subtext in the first major statement after his recovery.

Science and values

Alongside the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber's immediate post-breakdown texts were methodological, and focused on the question of values (Weber 1904, 1906). Values are central to Weber's approach to sociology, and his treatment of them uniquely characterizes his thought. For Weber, values define human purposes and are the non-rational attributes of agency that sustain rationality. Of the many connected propositions concerning values in Weber's writing, three in particular stand out as defining of his position: these are the idea of value freedom, the proposition that scientific findings cannot be productive of values, and the notion that values constitute a precondition for scientific pursuits in particular and rationality in general.

The notion of value freedom entails that persons are free to choose their values. The condition held to make this possible, according to Weber, is the supposition that there is no objective or factual compulsion over values (Weber 1904: 52; 1917a: 12; 1917b: 146–7, 150). This latter idea is consonant with the second notion mentioned above, namely that facts cannot lead to values. The function that value freedom as value choice provides to Weber's larger argument is that it is productive of meaning in a person's life (Weber 1917a: 18); at the individual level this is the realization of personality (Weber 1904: 55) and calling (Weber 1904: 98; 1917a: 5–6), and at the social level is productive of culture (Weber 1904: 81). Weber's insistence that facts

and values are fundamentally distinct is most evident in his claim that 'an empirical science' can never 'provide binding norms and ideals' (Weber 1904: 52), or, as he was later to say, that it is not possible to rationally determine ends (Weber 1917a: 12). An important corollary of this position for Weber is that 'what [is] normatively right' bears no necessary relationship with what he obscurely calls 'the immutably existent' (Weber 1904: 51). Yet, what separates science from faith, according to Weber, is not an abyss but a 'hair line' (Weber 1904: 110); since facts cannot furnish norms, values are the preconditions of science, the 'very recognition of the existence of a scientific problem coincides, personally, with the possession of specifically oriented motives and values' (Weber 1904: 61; see also 1917a: 10). We shall see that these themes also contribute to political education, and not only convey the dictum of the inaugural lecture of 1895, but are already expressed in it.

Weber's position on values, briefly described in the above account, is well known. The veracity of these and related propositions is not self-evident, however. Indeed, Weber's arguments concerning values require a 'deductionist' notion of rationality, a disregard for the consequences of actions on an actor's future choices, a confusion between kinds of choice and similar oversights and errors (see Turner and Factor 1984: 30–46). Rather than dwell here on the form of Weber's approach to values, we shall attempt to indicate what support his position on values provides to the broader purpose or intentions underlying the *Protestant Ethic*, for instance, and document the extent to which they are announced in the inaugural lecture, and given a meaningful context in that work. Before considering the position Weber spells out in the inaugural lecture, however, it is necessary to indicate the broad perspective Weber is known to have on the question of values, and demonstrate how this perspective serves the political educative purpose that has been shown above to underlie the argument of the *Protestant Ethic*.

Weber doggedly stuck to his own account of values in a wide-ranging debate with his colleagues during the period from 1909 to 1914. While not ignored in subsequent discussion, Weber's conduct in these debates is as useful in understanding his position on values as the much more frequently sourced essays, '"Objectivity" in Social Science and Social Policy' (Weber 1904) and 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics' (Weber 1917a). The second

of these Weber wrote as a position paper, used during these debates, but not published for a further three or four years.

There were two concurrent arenas in which Weber conducted a forceful campaign for the expulsion of values from scientific inquiry, and for keeping science out of social policy. The first of these was provided by the *Verein*, in which a value-judgement dispute broke out in 1909, largely initiated by Weber, which continued until 1914. The second arena of Weber's value advocacy was the *Deutsche Gesellshaft für Soziologie* [German Sociological Society], a professional organization which Weber was central in establishing, that held its first meeting in 1910 and from which Weber resigned in 1912. Weber's participation in these debates reveals different aspects of his approach to values.

At the Vienna conference of the *Verein* in 1909, Eugen von Philippovich, Weber's predecessor at Freiburg, gave a paper on national economic productivity, which, according to one description, was 'the first purely scientific-theoretical paper in the history of the *Verein*' (Käsler 1988: 188). Weber took strong exception to the notion of economic productivity central to the paper because it conflated 'scholarly findings and an ethical-political judgement' (Marianne Weber 1926: 417). Weber's objection here is not especially that the scientific terms are value laden, but rather that a scientific account is directed toward a policy conclusion. He said:

> The reason why I take every opportunity ... to attack in such extremely emphatic terms the jumbling of what ought to be with what exists is not that I underestimate the question of what ought to be. On the contrary, it is because I cannot bear it if problems of world-shaking importance ... are here changed into a technical-economic problem of production and made the subject of a scholarly discussion. We know no *scientifically* demonstrable ideals. (Quoted in Marianne Weber 1926: 418; emphasis in original)

In this way Weber led the value debate in the *Verein*, a debate that was concluded in 1914, with Weber's paper on 'Ethical Neutrality' and the commencement of the First World War. But before these later events Weber attempted to further the cause of value freedom in the formation of the *Deutsche Gesellshaft für Soziologie*.

Weber was instrumental in the founding of this Society and recruited its organization to his purpose of the expulsion of values from science, which he achieved at least in the founding statements

and statutes of the Society (Käsler 1988: 189–90). The first meeting of the *Deutsche Gesellshaft für Soziologie* was held in late 1910 in Frankfurt. A number of papers were read and many were, it seems, to Weber's extreme irritation, found to contain value judgements. In order to curb such illegal behaviour the afternoon session of the second day opened 'with a solemn injunction from the Society's governing committee to the audience not to make value-judgements by applauding' (Liebersohn 1988: 114). On the third day of the meeting Hermann Kantorowicz, a sociologist of law, was scolded by Weber for introducing value judgements into his discussion (see Liebersohn 1988: 114). This provoked Kantorowicz to declare: 'That a methodological-philosophical principle, namely the exclusion of value-judgements, can be reduced to a point of order, is clearly a piece of play acting of the most remarkable sort' (quoted in Turner and Factor 1984: 54). Indeed, these episodes and Weber's involvement in them, demonstrate not simply the practical impossibility of avoiding evaluation in rendering a factual account, but that the calling for freedom from values quickly degenerates into a slogan and a means of political manipulation and censorship. Weber did not simply fail to acknowledge but was opposed to the idea that the issue cannot be the absence of values from factual accounts, but rather a consideration of what values might be appropriate.

The next meeting of the Society, in Berlin in 1912, was stage to the same drama, of presentations containing value judgements interrupted by Weber, who on at least one occasion cried out 'It is strictly forbidden. You are not allowed to make value-judgements!' (quoted in Liebersohn 1988: 116). At the conclusion of the meeting Weber withdrew from the organization he had expended so much energy in establishing explicitly to further the cause of value freedom:

> Frankly, I took such an active part in the founding of this organization only because I hoped to find there a place for value-neutral scholarly work and discussion ... At the Berlin convention of 1912, with one exception ... *all* official speakers violated the same statutory principle – and this is constantly held up to me as 'proof' of its unfeasibility ... Will these gentlemen, not *one* of whom can stifle the impulse (for that's just it!) to bother me with his subjective 'valuations', all infinitely uninteresting to me, kindly stay in their own circle. I am sick and tired of appearing time and again as a Don Quixote of an allegedly unfeasible principle and of provoking embarrassing 'scenes'. (Quoted in Marianne Weber 1926: 424–5; emphasis in original)

While Weber withdrew from the German Sociological Society, he did not withdraw from the controversy over values. The year following the second meeting of the Society, in 1913, the *Verein* called a special committee session to specifically discuss the value-freedom controversy (Krüger 1987). As noted above, the position paper Weber prepared for the meeting that took place in 1914 was published in 1917, as 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics'.

The 'Ethical Neutrality' paper is widely regarded as a discussion of aspects of the logic of social science method. But whereas logical statements necessarily purport to be disinterested and timeless, the major points of this essay are neither. What we find instead is a discussion concerning values that attempts to realize the capacities necessary for the type of political education called for in the inaugural lecture of 1895. Weber's insistence, for instance, that values be kept out of the classroom, is not designed to de-politicize university teaching. Rather, it is part of an endeavour to inculcate one political style against another. Weber mentions three things a university student should obtain from a teacher: 'the capacity: (1) to fulfil a given task in a workmanlike fashion; (2) definitely to recognize facts, even those which may be personally uncomfortable, and to distinguish them from his own evaluations; (3) to subordinate himself to his tasks and to repress the impulse to exhibit his personal tastes or other sentiments unnecessarily' (Weber 1917a: 5). Weber makes the point that this is something that has to be done because of circumstances that are current at the time: 'This is vastly more important today than it was forty years ago when the problem did not even exist in this form' (Weber 1917a: 5). The situation of the preceding forty years was one in which the national leadership of Germany was securely in Bismarck's hands, and the education of the German middle class for suitability for political rule was simply not an issue. Weber addresses the 'generation which is now growing up' (Weber 1917a: 5). He insists that this generation must understand that 'being a personality' can only be achieved by 'the whole-hearted devotion to a "task" whatever it (and its derivative "demands of the hour") may be' (Weber 1917a: 5). The 'ethical significance' of 'vocation', Weber insists, can only be achieved through 'self-restraint' (Weber 1917a: 6). This is Weber's point: 'a lecturer who makes his lectures stimulating by the insertion of personal evaluations will, in the long run, weaken the

students' taste for sober empirical analysis' (Weber 1917a: 9), and therefore undermine their political maturity.

Insistence on the importance of value freedom in 'Ethical Neutrality' comes with two other points that further reinforce its importance for Weber's programme of political education. First, Weber is not simply opposed to those who introduce values into teaching, but also to those who either wish to avoid value disputes or seek a middle road between conflicting values: Weber is adamantly opposed to compromise (Weber 1917a: 10). Second, the values that Weber does endorse, in comparing societies, for instance, are not those of social justice or technical efficiency (which might be expected of a liberal reformer), but elite recruitment: 'every type of social order, without exception, must, if one wishes to *evaluate* it, be examined with reference to the opportunities which it affords to *certain types of persons* to rise to positions of superiority through the operation of the various objective and subjective selective factors' (Weber 1917a: 27; emphasis in original). The concern with elite recruitment was a theme Weber pursued in the 1909 meeting of the *Verein*, at which he introduced the value dispute: he argued there that 'the ultimate criterion for a social reformation was the question of what *type of personality* it promoted – a free, responsible person, or a politically and psychologically dependent one who bows to authorities and superiors for the sake of external security' (Marianne Weber 1926: 415; emphasis in original).

An appreciation of the role of the discussion of value freedom in Weber's not so hidden agenda of political education for satisfaction of the German national interest would be better understood if his arguments were seen to be restatements of the position he spelled out in the inaugural lecture of 1895. But this remains impossible while scholars insist that Weber did not begin to discuss the value question until 1903–4 (Albrow 1990: 231; Käsler 1988: 13). In fact, the essential difference between his treatment of values in the 1895 lecture and the 'Objectivity' and 'Value freedom' essays is that the value rationale behind Weber's argument is more clearly expressed in the 1895 discussion than it is in the later essays.

The question of values is introduced in the inaugural lecture when Weber asserts 'the fact that we consider that the German race should be protected in the east of the country, and that the state's economic policies *ought to* rise to the challenge of defending it' (Weber 1895a: 13; emphasis in original). This is because a subsequent question arises

concerning how economics as a discipline and profession 'regard[s] such nationalist value judgements' (Weber 1895a: 13). The discussion immediately following the posing of this question is to demonstrate that economic science is confused about its values (Weber 1895a: 14–16). In this polemic exercise Weber engages various rhetorical devises to show that national chauvinism is ultimately unavoidable in national policy formation. But, he insists, this cannot be a conclusion science provides. It might be added parenthetically that this meta-conclusion serves Weber's nationalist values, insulating them from critique by fact of the consequences of pursuit of national interest in a world of competing national interests. Weber's consistency in sticking to the principle of value choice unencumbered by consideration of the consequences of the values in question is demonstrated by the fact that his insistence on the value of the supremacy of national political interest survived the catastrophe of the First World War. In the immediately following discussion in the inaugural lecture, Weber acknowledges the empirical multiplicity of 'evaluative criteria' (Weber 1895a: 18) and sarcastically dismisses the idea, which he believes to be current, that 'political economy is able to derive ideals of its "own" from its subject matter' (Weber 1895a: 18), which is to say that facts cannot lead to or produce values. The next step in his argument is to show that it is impossible not to make value judgements, that it is illusory to believe 'that we are able to *refrain entirely* from making conscious value judgements of our own' (Weber 1895a: 19; emphasis in original). The consequence of being ill-informed about values is that persons are inadvertently led to select courses of action poorly, with the risk that an actor's circumstances rather than their volition will come to determine their judgements, and, while still able to choose their own strategies, the probability under such conditions is high that they will do so erroneously (Weber 1895a: 19–20). In a world in which value choice is inevitable, clear-headedness is requisite as spelled out in Weber's dictum on the distinction between facts and values.

Up to this point of its argument the inaugural lecture holds that science, and economic science in particular, is no guarantee of political maturity. Weber then goes on to make a very important distinction between economic and political maturity. He argues that the economic maturity of a class is not a sufficient condition for its political maturity. By political maturity Weber means the ability to grasp 'the nation's enduring economic and political power interests' and the

ability to 'place these interests above all other considerations' (Weber 1895a: 20–1). As we have seen, Weber envisages training for such maturity in the ability to form goals independently under conditions of self-restraint. This requires a matter-of-fact approach that could only be attained when the prevailing sentimentality of the contemporary German middle class is overcome. Such sentimentality Weber detects in those with an inclination to compromise and in general among those who would avoid the responsibility of muscular national conquest (Weber 1895a: 16). Weber indicates just these preferences when he says: 'We do not want to breed well-being in people, but rather those characteristics which we think of as constituting the human greatness and nobility of our nature' (Weber 1895a: 15). It is for such creatures, as he later went on to point out, that the requirement of distinguishing between fact and value is important, to be able to clearly detect an opponent's stand (Weber 1917a: 14), and to be in a position to forcefully apply one's own values on the basis of knowing what is possible to achieve in a given set of circumstances (Weber 1904: 54, 58, 98; 1917a: 10, 47).

Conclusion

Typical considerations of the development of Weber's ideas conceive the beginning point of his sociologically relevant thought to be the *Protestant Ethic*, and the trajectory of that thought is understood in terms of the elaboration of an historical sociology focused on rationalization and especially the role of cultural transformations mediated through changes in religious ideas (Löwith 1960: 28–67; Schluchter 1996: 179–243; Tenbruck 1980). It has been shown in this chapter, on the other hand, that the *Protestant Ethic* is not in fact the originating text of Weber's intellectual career and that the neglected inaugural lecture of 1895 underpins what is novel and important in the *Protestant Ethic*. By placing the *Protestant Ethic* in the context of the preceding 1895 lecture, an understanding of the *Protestant Ethic* emerges that is quite unlike the image of it found in the bulk of the secondary literature. Viewed through the lens of the inaugural lecture, the *Protestant Ethic* becomes transformed from a work that contributes to our understanding of the historical relations of Protestantism and capitalism, which is the obvious content of its narrative, to one in which the clarification of the concept and practice of vocation is

necessary for the political education of the German middle class. This subtext of the *Protestant Ethic* is continuous with the treatment of political vocation in the inaugural lecture which precedes and forms the intellectual basis of the transformation of the concept of calling in the *Protestant Ethic*, including Weber's assessment of Lutheranism as conservative and Calvinism as progressive in its conceptualization of vocation.

Related to the neglected politically educative purpose of the *Protestant Ethic* is Weber's treatment of values, both in the inaugural lecture and the essays written contemporaneously with the *Protestant Ethic*. It has been shown in the present chapter that behind the question of value freedom is the idea of interests of national power, which, Weber says, rest on 'deeply rooted psychological foundations in' all strata, and that the 'specific function' of leading strata is 'to be the bearers of the nation's sense of political purpose' (Weber 1895a: 21). It is the connection between this last proposition and the notion of value freedom that makes sense of Weber's otherwise confusing treatment of values as both the basis of commitment and free of factual influence. It has incidentally been demonstrated how the *Protestant Ethic* relates to the methodological essays written at the time and later, which also draw upon and are informed by the inaugural lecture.

The lines connecting the inaugural lecture on the one hand, and the *Protestant Ethic* and the value essays on the other, are undeniable – once seen. But the absence of a serious discussion of the inaugural lecture among sociologists has meant that these lines are indeed seldom perceived. The inaugural lecture is not unknown to Weber scholars and sociologists, of course. Keith Tribe's translation (Weber 1895b), for instance, has made the inaugural lecture available to English-reading sociologists since 1989, and the better known translation of Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Weber 1895a), since 1994. But these resources have not been sufficiently utilized in sociological appraisals of Weber's work, and there has been insufficient discussion of the inaugural lecture by sociologists in its own right and as a contribution to an appreciation of Weber's later thought.

The purpose of the present chapter has been to bring the inaugural lecture into focus, and demonstrate how an appreciation of this text necessarily alters our understanding of key aspects of Weber's writing, and especially the purpose and meaning of the *Protestant Ethic*

and the essays on value freedom. Thus a reading of the inaugural lecture enhances our knowledge of Weber's sociology overall, and of Weber's contribution to sociology in general. In the next chapter, Weber's treatment of the concept of vocation, initiated in the inaugural lecture, will be examined more closely. The chapters following the next one will consider key aspects of Weber's apprehension of the historical relations between Protestantism and capitalism.

2 *From the* Protestant Ethic *to the vocation lectures:* Beruf, *rationality and emotion*

In the *Protestant Ethic* the concept of *Beruf*, variously translated as 'calling' or 'vocation', refers to the practice of systematic self-control in pursuing constant goals or purposes, which Weber found in both Calvinist religious practice and capitalistic entrepreneurship and labour. But the term is not confined to only these applications. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is key to Weber's discussion of political maturity in the inaugural lecture of 1895 (Weber 1895a: 20, 23, 26). But in that work it remains underdeveloped and indeed gives rise to the need for Weber to explore and elaborate the notion further, which he does in the *Protestant Ethic*. The concept is also central in the so-called vocation lectures, 'Science as a Vocation' and 'Politics as a Vocation', written and delivered in late 1917 and early 1919 respectively (see Schluchter 1996: 9, 46–7). The general significance of the idea of *Beruf* as set out in the *Protestant Ethic* and subsequent work is that it accounts for the mechanisms required to realize in action the quality of rationality, another of Weber's characteristic terms. The connection between rational activity and calling is constant in Weber's discussion at least from the *Protestant Ethic*. In his statement of the argument in this work, however, practices of *Beruf* achieve rationality through the suppression of emotion. In his later discussion, *Beruf* is achieved through and expresses passion and emotions. This absolute turn about in his account of the foundation of *Beruf* has considerable importance for an understanding of the concept and practice of rationality, and also for Weber's own biography and calling as a sociological theorist. These shall be explored in the present chapter in order to understand Weber's own later implicit assessment of the *Protestant Ethic* and its argument in subsequent accounts of the theses associated with that work, which continued to occupy his attention.

While Weber separates emotion from vocation in the *Protestant Ethic*, it is arguable that these two things remain integral in the inaugural lecture insofar as in that work Weber recommends a passionate commitment to nationalism (Weber 1895a: 28). Nevertheless, these passions function in the context of a collective destiny and, being subordinate to a higher world-historic purpose, are rather unlike the emotions that express human individual and group purposes (see Hirschman 1977: 19). In the *Protestant Ethic*, on the other hand, Weber is quite clear that systematic action requires not feelings or passions but belief and commitment to values, and the suppression of emotion.

While the *Protestant Ethic* is a product of the early period of Weber's career, first published in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* in 1905, it occupied the rest of his life's work. As Talcott Parson indicates, Weber's 'Introduction' dates from 1920, written for a new printing of the work for which 'he made considerable changes, and appended both new material and replies to criticism in footnotes' (Parsons 1930: 9). A number of the footnotes and associated material constitute a further element of the text that we are familiar with today but that was absent in 1905 (see Nelson 1974). It is fair to say that Weber continued to work on the *Protestant Ethic* at least up until 1919. Furthermore, the theme of the *Protestant Ethic* is restated, in a series of lectures delivered in 1919–20 at the University of Munich, with a freshness indicative of the continuing grip the argument had on him.

The lectures of 1919–20 were published posthumously in 1927 as *General Economic History*. Chapter 30 of that work, 'The Evolution of the Capitalistic Spirit', goes well beyond the material of the *Protestant Ethic*, as Randall Collins (1990a), for instance, has shown. But an essential core of Weber's early argument is preserved in the later account. This is the notion of 'calling', its Protestant origins and its function in steadying the orientation of the entrepreneur and also 'industrious workers' to the practices of capitalism (Weber 1927: 367). In the *Protestant Ethic* and the *General Economic History*, Weber applies *Beruf* to both religious and economic roles in the formation of Protestant asceticism and capitalistic entrepreneurship. The single term is used to describe each in order to indicate the links between them. But, as already noted, the term is not confined to these applications alone in Weber's work. In two other sources, 'Science as a Vocation' and 'Politics as a Vocation', the concept *Beruf* is applied to the spheres of knowledge production in one and state activity in

the other. These additional applications of the concept indicate further the continuities of Weber's discussion and concerns over a lifetime. They confirm also the appropriateness of later treatments by other sociologists in recognizing the general relevance of the concept of *Beruf*, a possibility Weber acknowledged when he said in the *Protestant Ethic* that the concept of calling is fundamental not only to the spirit of modern capitalism, but to 'all modern culture' (Weber 1920: 180).

The concept of *Beruf* – 'calling' or 'vocation' – is thus a notion that spans Weber's sociological writings, literally from the beginning to the end. The significance of the idea, as we shall see, is in its relevance and application beyond Weber's own work, testifying to the power of the latter. The connection between rational activity and calling is constant in Weber's discussion, from the *Protestant Ethic* to the *General Economic History*, and including the two vocation lectures. It has been noted above that while in the *Protestant Ethic* the practice of *Beruf* achieves rationality through the suppression of emotion, in later discussion it is achieved through and expresses passion and emotions. The relationship between *Beruf* and emotion in Weber's writing will be traced out in the present chapter. Weber's treatment in the *Protestant Ethic* of calling or vocation in terms of the expulsion of emotion will be examined, and then his assimilation of emotion into *Beruf* as its foundation, in the vocation lectures, will be outlined. The passage from the earlier of these formulations to the later will then be considered in terms of aspects of Weber's biography, and also in terms of the incremental theoretical development undergone to reach the view of the primacy of emotion for *Beruf* from a position which denied emotion any role in its formation. But first it is necessary to indicate why the concept of *Beruf* is important, not just for Weber but for sociology in general.

Beruf, rationality and the modern personality

For Weber the concept of *Beruf* is a fundamental tool for understanding the circumstance and activities of modern social actors. Here *Beruf* characterizes an aspect of social being in which an orientation to particular tasks and goals is formative not only of an individual career, but, in providing such direction, also of the process of self-formation, the making of one's self or, as Weber has it, the

creation of 'personality'. In the *Protestant Ethic* it is particularly clear that the source of any rationality that obtains in both Calvinist asceticism and the spirit of capitalism derives from the practices of calling in which the social actor engages. This line of thinking is curiously at odds with a predominant characterization of Weber's thought that emphasizes instead the subordination of individual lives to compelling and incomprehensible external forces of rationalization. Whereas an earlier phase of Weber studies emphasized this latter aspect of Weber's work (Bendix 1959; Wrong 1970) – to the dismay of some scholars (Tenbruck 1980) – more recent writers have tended to emphasize instead the self-forming practices of *Beruf* (Alexander 1987; Goldman 1988, 1995; Schroeder 1991; Shields 1999).

Indeed, the more accurate characterization of Weber's approach to modernity will not emphasize the overarching processes of rationalization or systematization. It will focus instead on the tension between such impersonal processes, on the one hand, and the creation of a personal order and 'rationality' in the face of them, on the other, through commitment to self-defined purposes, which is marked by its 'clarity of self-consciousness', as Weber puts it in *Economy and Society* (Weber 1921: 30). Weber's own terminology, however, does not always encourage the clear distinction made here between impersonal rationalization, and the rationality of action achieved through *Beruf*. In the passage from which the above quotation is taken, for instance, Weber refers not to rationality but 'the process of the "rationalization" of action' (Weber 1921: 30). Such lack of clarity in Weber's usage has led to remedial endeavours (Eisen 1978; Swidler 1973). What needs to be noted here, though, is the way in which Weber always emphasized the contextual basis of rationality, and the significance of perspective in discerning rationality, such that different fields of practice may be rationalized in terms of different values and ends, so that 'what is rational from one point of view may be irrational from another' (Weber 1920: 26). This is consistent with the idea that the construction of modern rationality is dependent upon the practices of *Beruf*. It follows, therefore, that in Weber's intellectual formation the concept of rationality is dependent upon the prior concept of *Beruf*.

The core attributes of calling that Weber identifies in the *Protestant Ethic* are self-control in both overcoming natural impulses and

maintaining and realizing constant motives. These qualities define both the Calvinist ascetic (Weber 1920: 118–19) and the capitalist entrepreneur (Weber 1920: 69). It is through such self-discipline and application to an external purpose, realized through the acceptance of a calling, that persons experience the psychological process of becoming 'a personality' (Weber 1920: 119; see also 131), according to Weber. These *are* the foundations of bourgeois life, for Weber, and the only sources of individual capacities, indeed power, in modern society. It is through these qualities of a calling, namely, self-limitation, self-purpose and personality, that social actors can meaningfully influence events. Such control, of self and circumstance, is required for action to be rational.

Weber reiterates the relationship between self-control and purpose constitutive of *Beruf* in 'Knies and the Problem of Irrationality', published just after the *Protestant Ethic*. Here Weber contrasts the romantic notion of personality, which emphasizes 'the diffuse, undifferentiated, vegetative "underground" of personal life' (Weber 1906: 192), and his preferred conceptualization of personality. For Weber, personality entails instead 'a constant and intrinsic relation to certain ultimate "values" and "meanings" of life ... which are forged into purposes and thereby translated into rational-teleological action' (Weber 1906: 192). This appreciation of personality as formed through the acceptance of goals beyond the self in pursuance of a purpose or calling is repeated in a later paper. In 'The Meaning of "Ethical Neutrality" in Sociology and Economics', Weber notes the 'shallowness of our routinized daily existence', in which persons lose sight of the 'motley of irreconcilable antagonistic values' to which they are nevertheless subjected (Weber 1917a: 18). The inescapable antidote, he says, 'consists in the insight that every single important activity and ultimately life as a whole, if it is not to be permitted to run on as an event in nature but is instead to be consciously guided, is a series of ultimate decisions through which the soul – as in Plato – chooses its own fate' (Weber 1917a: 18). Here the themes of self-control against external or natural forces in pursuing constant motives are again orchestrated to a single tune. The powers of calling, and the resilience of personality founded upon it, are indicated in a contemporary lecture, in which Weber refers to the 'steadfastness of heart' found in those who have a vocation, 'which can brave even the crumbling of all hopes' (Weber 1919: 128).

Other sociological writers have captured the modern basis of individuality and autonomy, the self-ordering of purpose and the purpose of creating a self-persona, that Weber finds in *Beruf*. Henry Maine, for instance, writing twenty years before Weber, more than alluded to this process when he famously contrasted status and contract. Contract, which is free of the familial and traditional superordination found in status, is based instead on individual initiative capable of achieving tangible outcomes (Maine 1884: 149–51). He says that the 'first essential' presupposition of contract is the 'faculty [in a person] of forming a judgment of their own interests' (Maine 1884: 150). The interests themselves, and not only the judgement of those interests, derive from the control of self and circumstance that free those entering a contract from the 'extrinsic control' of not just status but nature (Maine 1884: 150). It can be seen that Maine's allusion to the formation of personality and purpose through contract is not only an analogue of Weber's concept of a calling, but his treatment of it, as somehow crystallizing the modern world, makes it a genuine anticipation of the notion of *Beruf* in Weber.

Not only did others anticipate Weber (Goldman 1988: 120–30), but the concept of *Beruf* as he understood it has been given an independent life by later writers. Karl Mannheim, for instance, domesticated the notion of calling with his account of 'career' and 'life plan'. He describes the concept of career as 'one of the most important in social psychology and sociology', and cites not only Weber but also Charles Cooley, Maria Lazarsfeld-Yahoda, Harold Lasswell and Everett Hughes as relevant authorities (Mannheim 1940: 56 note 1). For Mannheim, however, career is more an extension of than a counter to rationalization: it administers the controlling power of the external requirements of occupational tasks through 'self-mastery' with the 'prescriptive regulation both of the ideas and feelings that one is permitted to have and of one's leisure time' (Mannheim 1940: 56). The life plan of the individual is 'a vital form of personal rationalization, inasmuch as it restrains the individual from responding immediately to every passing stimulus' (Mannheim 1940: 104 note 2). Unemployment, because it is destructive of an individual's life plan, is therefore much more likely to create 'apathy rather than rebellion in the minds of its victims' (Mannheim 1940: 181). Without reference to Mannheim, or Weber for that matter, Diego Gambetta (1987) uses the

concept of 'life plan', and, by extension, *Beruf*, to explain successful outcomes of educational experiences.

The concept of reflexivity in the work of Anthony Giddens, and its wider acceptance through the popularity of Giddens' work, indicates the continuing relevance and current immediacy of Weber's notion of calling. Giddens acknowledges Weber as having 'done more than anyone else to make clear' the pervasiveness of 'reflexive self-regulation ... in many sectors of social life' (Giddens 1984: 205). But in Giddens' account the richness of Weber's concept of *Beruf* is reduced to reflexivity as 'the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life' (Giddens 1984: 3). In late modernity there arises 'extreme reflexivity' (Giddens 1991: 29), in which self-monitoring takes on a cybernetic quality, in the sense that examination of social practices leads to immediate revision of the character and purpose of such practices. These would be the circumstances in which Weber might recommend a vocation or calling to hold at bay the flow of external events.

Giddens is consistent with Weber in acknowledging that the self may become a reflexive project (Giddens 1991: 32, 52–5), but his account of this process in terms of therapy and similar means ignores entirely Weber's appreciation of the implications of the practice of *Beruf* for the psychology of personality. Indeed, Weber's discussion, in covering all of modernity and not just late modernity, is more consonant than Giddens' with the way in which self-making has a historically broader reach. Benjamin Disraeli, for instance, and also James Mill, are two Victorian, not late modern men, who did indeed make themselves in pursuing their respective callings of politician and philosophical reformer (Mazlish 1975; Richmond and Smith 1998).

Disraeli and Mill, like so many individuals of the modern period, characteristically possessed personalities they rationally constructed by pursuing their respective callings. They each selectively formed their personae through the cultivation of activities and alliances, each fashioned their 'self' through their own endeavours and circumstances realized through their own choosing. Through self-discipline and adherence to an external purpose, they became other than they were. Particular accounts of this general process have focused on religious ethnicity (Berlin 1981), for instance, the historical process of industrialization (Pollard 1968: 127–88), or political revolution

(Hobsbawm 1962: 182–99). But underlying each of these and similar accounts is the concept of *Beruf*, if not the term.

Beruf, rationality and emotion in the *Protestant Ethic*

In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber does not argue that Protestantism was intentionally the source of capitalism, or of the capitalistic spirit (Weber 1920: 90), nor even that 'the spirit of capitalism ... could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation' (Weber 1920: 91). He wishes to ascertain, rather, 'the manner in which ideas become effective forces in history' (Weber 1920: 90). The idea he is particularly interested in is the idea of *Beruf* or calling (see Goldman 1988: 35–41; Robertson 1933: 1–32). Weber argues that the idea of a calling was a unique product of the Reformation (Weber 1920: 80), shared by all Protestants but unknown to Catholics and others (Weber 1920: 79). This is the idea of 'a life task, a definite field in which to work' (Weber 1920: 79); and, 'the valuation of the fulfillment of duty in worldly affairs as the highest form which the moral activity of the individual could assume' (Weber 1920: 80). According to these principles, an acceptable godly life need not be lived apart from the world, as with monastic asceticism, for instance, but 'solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual by his position in the world. This was his calling' (Weber 1920: 80).

While Luther's contribution to the development of this idea of calling is essential in providing a new point of departure, according to Weber, the Lutheran concept of calling 'remained traditionalistic' (Weber 1920: 85). Weber means by this that in the Lutheran understanding of calling the activity of work is necessarily providential, requiring that the individual 'remain once and for all in the station and calling in which God had placed him' (Weber 1920: 85). Calvin, on the other hand, according to Weber, saw the possibility of a calling in *any* activity in which a person might engage. Weber traces this entirely modern understanding of calling from the Calvinist doctrine of predestination. This doctrine holds that only God chooses who is 'saved', and that God's choice cannot be influenced by mortals or by the actions of mortals.

The doctrine of predestination, Weber says, imposes on Calvinists the requirement of utmost faith: there is no hope of salvation for those

whom God did not choose, and no one can ever know whether they are saved. Calvinists coped with the ensuing helpless uncertainty through the practice of a calling. Weber explains:

> So far as predestination was not reinterpreted, toned down, or fundamentally abandoned, two principal, mutually connected, types of pastoral advice appear. On the one hand it is held to be an absolute duty to consider oneself chosen, and to combat all doubts as temptations of the devil, since lack of self-confidence is the result of insufficient faith, hence of imperfect grace. The exhortation of the apostle to make fast one's own call is here interpreted as a duty to attain certainty of one's own election and justification in the daily struggle of life … On the other hand, in order to attain that self-confidence intense worldly activity is recommended as the most suitable means. It and it alone disperses religious doubts and gives the certainty of grace. (Weber 1920: 111–12)

The Calvinist basis of practical worldly activity as a calling is thus theologically required as a demonstration of God's grace, and, pragmatically, as Weber says, it is 'the most suitable means of counteracting feelings of religious anxiety' (Weber 1920: 112).

Weber's reference to religious anxiety in this context could be noted as evidence contrary to the argument presented here, namely that in this instance Weber provides a positive explanatory role to emotion, or at least the emotion of anxiety, in accounting for vocation and therefore rationality, and ultimately the spirit of capitalism. But it is not the anxiety that Weber says Calvinists feel that produces the effects he refers to in this passage, but the religious doctrine of predestination, as shaped by Calvin, that is the postulated source of the supposed anxiety and with which it is integrally connected (Weber 1920: 104). As Weber makes clear in his passing criticism of William James, he believes that it is religious ideas that are primary, not religious emotions (Weber 1920: 115). It is necessary to say 'supposed anxiety' because, as historians have indicated, there is no evidence that the doctrine of predestination produced anxiety in seventeenth-century Calvinists and Puritans: it is not revealed in contemporary diaries and journals, and discussions by observant Protestants have not associated the doctrine of predestination with the experience of religious anxiety. Indeed, in Calvin's own estimation the development of the doctrine of predestination with which he is associated was to relieve late-Medieval anxiety concerning salvation. On this basis the

doctrine was a source of confidence and provided a sense of security to believers. It was these latter attributes of the doctrine of predestination that released energy for worldly activity amongst the faithful. This is the argument of Ernst Troeltsch, from whom Weber borrowed extensively, but, as indicated here, selectively (see Graf 1995: 33–4; Zaret 1995: 264–6). Indeed, not only does Weber in effect distort Troeltsch's evidence and arguments concerning the psychological and subsequent practical consequences of Calvinist predestination doctrine, he misunderstands other sources he uses. Weber supposes that the doctrine of predestination gives rise to 'a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual' (Weber 1920: 104). He supports this assertion of the individual Calvinist's deep spiritual loneliness with a note quoting Edward Dowden's discussion of John Bunyan (Weber 1920: 221 note 16), but whereas Dowden refers to social relations between man and man Weber erroneously assumed he is pointing to relations between man and God (see Liebersohn 1988: 105 and 229).

After referring to calling in worldly activity as an antidote to feelings of religious anxiety, Weber goes on to extrapolate social practices from religious principles. The Calvinists' commitment to practical worldly activity, according to Weber, derives from the inclination to perform 'good works', not as a means of attaining salvation, but as a means 'of getting rid of the fear of damnation' (Weber 1920: 115). It is not the isolated and single good work, however, but a 'life of good works combined into a unified system' (Weber 1920: 117) that is the hallmark of the Calvinistic ethic, according to Weber. Weber's argument is not that rational asceticism is exclusively Calvinist. He agrees that it was found in the Catholic monasteries (Weber 1920: 118–19) and in *Old Testament* Judaism (1920: 123). Calvinism, though, transforms rational asceticism 'to activity within the world' (Weber 1920: 120). The notion of calling sponsored by Calvinism is regarded by Weber as an expression of modern rationality as the seventeenth-century philosopher René Descartes characterized it: 'Only a life guided by constant thought could achieve conquest over the state of nature. Descartes's *cogito ergo sum* was taken over by the contemporary Puritans with this ethical reinterpretation. It was this rationalization which gave the Reformed faith its peculiar ascetic tendency' (Weber 1920: 118). The rational thrust explicit in the Calvinist notion of calling carries a further Cartesian dimension, namely the distrust

and repression of emotion. Weber says that: 'The Puritan, like every rational type of asceticism, tried to enable a man to maintain and act upon his constant motives, especially those which it taught him itself, against the emotions. In this formal psychological sense of the term it tried to make him into a personality' (Weber 1920: 119). Thus, calling and rationality are coterminous, and rationality requires the suppression of the emotions.

The Calvinist idea of proof of faith by objective results, realized through the practice of a calling, is tied up with a rejection of a purely contemplative or mystical religious experience that Weber associates with Calvin's suspicion of emotion in religious life (Weber 1920: 114). The Calvinists opposed emotion because it constitutes a source of spontaneous and impulsive enjoyment (Weber 1920: 119) that tended to distract from the constant and steady application of worldly activity in a calling. Puritanism, according to Weber, had an entirely negative attitude to the emotional elements of culture and religion 'because they are of no use toward salvation' (Weber 1920: 105). Thus Weber, following Calvin as he saw him, regards emotion as a force undermining of calling and the rationality it entails.

Weber's argument concerning the opposition between rationality and religious emotionality is especially clear in his discussion of Pietism, a movement doctrinally indistinguishable from Calvinism, according to Weber (Weber 1920: 128–9). Unlike orthodox Calvinists, Pietist groups 'wished, by means of intensified asceticism, to enjoy the blissfulness of community with God in this life', which has the consequence of 'a greater emphasis on the emotional side of religion' (Weber 1920: 130). This in turn had its own effects: it 'led religion in practice to strive for the enjoyment of salvation in this world rather than to engage in the ascetic struggle for certainty about the future world' (Weber 1920: 130). Whereas rationality provides certainty about the future, according to this view, emotion, as a transient impulse, fails to go beyond experience of the present.

In the Calvinist-sponsored notion of calling, then, emotion and rationality are opposites. Following the discussion just referred to Weber indicates that Pietist practices 'meant a weakening of the inhibitions which protected the rational personality of the Calvinist from his passions' (Weber 1920: 131). Here is the rational nature of emotional inhibition. The idea that the opposition of emotion and rationality has its practical expression in the rational containment of

emotion is to be found throughout the *Protestant Ethic*. Weber refers, for instance, to 'anti-rational, emotional elements' (Weber 1920: 136), the 'rational suppression ... of the whole emotional side of religion' (Weber 1920: 123), and to the 'purely emotional, that is not rationally motivated, personal relation' (Weber 1920: 224 note 30). This opposition between what is rational and what is emotional, to their different outcomes and purposes, is well expressed in the following passage: '[The] end of [Puritan] asceticism was to be able to lead an alert, intelligent life: the most urgent task the destruction of spontaneous, impulsive enjoyment, the most important means was to bring order into the conduct of its adherents' (Weber 1920: 119).

Against such endeavours, emotion is understood by Weber to be spontaneous, unruly and disorganizing. Rational action, therefore, in realizing motives that are long held and seriously regarded, must be against the emotions because, as Weber explains, the emotions are spontaneous and impulsive forces that distract a person from their purposes. The implication is that emotion will create disorder in human affairs where rationality will 'bring order into the conduct' of persons.

This is precisely Weber's understanding of rationality in the *Protestant Ethic*: the realization of individual purpose against impulse and against nature. The 'definitely rational character' of 'Christian asceticism' in the realization of a calling is described by Weber in the following terms:

> It had developed a systematic method of rational conduct with the purpose of overcoming the *status naturae*, to free man from the power of irrational impulses and his dependence on the world and on nature. It attempted to subject man to the supremacy of a purposeful will, to bring his actions under constant self-control with a careful consideration of their ethical consequences. (Weber 1920: 118–19)

In this account the qualities of purpose, self-control and forethought not only constitute the substance of rationality, but also are contrasted with irrational impulse, dependency and nature. In the Calvinist form of Christian asceticism, these latter qualities crystallize as emotion. Here is the full structure of the Cartesian *cogito*.

Weber refers to the 'entirely negative attitude of Puritanism to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion' (Weber 1920: 105). He also reports that 'Calvin viewed all pure feelings and emotions, no matter how exalted they might seem to be, with

suspicion' (Weber 1920: 114). Indeed, Weber refers to '[Calvinism's] rational suppression of ... the whole emotional side of religion' (Weber 1920: 123). In these statements Weber is reporting the conceptions and actions of others. However, in stating that Calvin and the Calvinists were not only suspicious of emotion, but suppressed emotion in their construction of a rational programme and practice, Weber indicates his own acceptance of such an account of rationality, of emotion, and of the relations between them. In his own voice, Weber refers to 'emotional elements' as 'anti-rational' (Weber 1920: 136). It can be said with confidence that this is Weber's position because he fully developed it in his discussion of Knies in 1905–6, without reference to Calvin or any other extraneous source (see Barbalet 1998: 35–6). It is also clear that he believed that the anti-emotionality of calling in its Calvinist form carries over to the calling of secular capitalism (Weber 1920: 174, 180).

Beruf, rationality and emotion in the vocation lectures

Weber returns to the formation and practice of calling in his lectures of 1917 and 1919, respectively 'Science as a Vocation' and 'Politics as a Vocation'. Self-limitation remains at the core of the concept, as it did in his 1905 discussion of calling in the *Protestant Ethic*. But in the vocation lectures, *Beruf* is founded on emotion and not opposed to it. It is particularly ironic, therefore, that one of Weber's contemporary critics, Erich von Kahler (1920), accused him of perpetuating in 'Science as a Vocation' the conventional separation of 'feeling and thought' (von Kahler 1920: 43). The difference between Weber and von Kahler on this question lies in their different conceptions of emotion and passion. For von Kahler (1920: 44), emotion is a life force, necessarily opposed to intellectualization, a Bergsonian cloud encompassing all experience; what Schluchter (1996: 41) describes as 'passion in the sense of Platonic mania'. We shall see that Weber is able to embrace passion in the vocation lectures because he discerns a distinction between types of emotions that this critic ignores.

Weber's lectures were part of a series organized by the Munich Free Students, entitled 'Intellectual Labor as a Vocation'. The lecture series was provoked by an essay published in early 1917 by Franz Schwab which insisted that vocation was a basis of subordination to occupation, and therefore a manifestation of bourgeois alienation: an 'idol

that had to be smashed' (see Schluchter 1996: 32–4). Weber, on the other hand, not only insists upon the importance, indeed, necessity, of vocation, but also challenges the romantic anti-capitalism that Schwab's argument represents. Neither is Weber accepting of what he sees in his student audience. The lecture 'Politics as a Vocation', for instance, was delivered against the background of the politics of the day, including the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Spartakus uprising in Germany. The students who invited Weber to speak were enthusiastically engaged by these events. Weber's opening remarks make clear his own intentions:

> This lecture, which I give at your request, will necessarily disappoint you in a number of ways. You will naturally expect me to take a position on the actual problems of the day ... In today's lecture, all questions that refer to [current] ... political activity must be eliminated. For such questions have nothing to do with the general question of what politics as a vocation means and what it can mean. (Weber 1919: 77)

By the end of the lecture it is clear that Weber wishes to show his young audience how unsuited they are for a political vocation. He speculates what things will be like ten years hence, when 'the period of reaction will have long since broken over us' (Weber 1919: 127). He goes on to say that those 'who share in the intoxication signified by this revolution' (Weber 1919: 127–8) will then realize that they have not 'the calling for politics' (Weber 1919: 128).

Between these opening and concluding remarks, Weber provides a definition of politics and shows how politics requires a certain rare mettle of those who seek their vocation in it. Politics, says Weber, is 'the leadership, or the influencing of the leadership, of a political association, hence today, of a state' (Weber 1919: 77). He goes on to famously define the state as 'a human community that (successfully) claims the *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force* within a given territory' (Weber 1919: 78; emphasis in original). Most persons involved in politics at any given time, according to Weber, do not have a political calling. Indeed, those without a calling may even be at certain times 'decisive figures in the cross-currents of the political struggle for power' (Weber 1919: 80). We are all of us 'occasional' politicians (Weber 1919: 83), says Weber, and even the majority of parliamentarians, for instance, are 'nothing better than well-disciplined "yes" men' (Weber 1919: 106). The peculiarities of the

political vocation arise from the nature of politics itself. Because the 'decisive means for politics is violence' there is in political life a necessary 'tension between means and ends' (Weber 1919: 121). Weber sees this as constituting 'the peculiarity of all ethical problems in politics' (Weber 1919: 124). Before reflecting on these ethical problems, it is important to notice the distinction Weber draws between the 'ethic of ultimate ends' and the 'ethic of responsibility' (Weber 1919: 120). Whereas the one is activated by the rightness of the action pursued, the other functions in terms of the consequences of the actions in question. This distinction is not of Weber's own making, of course. Weber's contribution, though, is to demonstrate how such a distinction ultimately loses its clarity in politics, and how the consequences of that loss of ethical clarity are essential in understanding the political vocation.

A person who enters politics, Weber says, 'contracts with diabolical powers' (Weber 1919: 123). This is because action that applies force as a means to some end renders false the idea that good can only come from good and evil only from evil: indeed, 'often the opposite is true' (Weber 1919: 123). 'Anyone who fails to see this', says Weber, is 'a political infant' (Weber 1919: 123). Those who can successfully work with such powers, not only in terms of managing the actual political process but also their own sense of self within that process, have the political vocation, according to Weber:

> [I]t is immensely moving when a ... man ... is aware of a responsibility for the consequences of his conduct and really feels such responsibility with heart and soul. He then acts by following an ethic of responsibility and somewhere he reaches the point where he says: 'Here I stand: I can do no other.' ... [Here] an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute a genuine man – man who *can* have a 'calling for politics'. (Weber 1919: 127; emphasis in original)

It is the burden of working with moral demons that is the essence of politics. And it is this that thus informs what special qualities are required for a political vocation.

Weber's discussion at this point is remarkable not only in his admission that a calling for politics requires a passionate feeling of responsibility ('with heart and soul'), but also in that the ethics of ultimate ends and of responsibility are somehow harmonized

through the vocation for politics, through the practice of a calling. Conventionally, Weber is understood to hold that while these distinct value positions make sense in their own terms, there is therefore no independent means of arbitrating between them. As Weber said in a different but parallel context: 'We are placed into various life-spheres, each of which is governed by different laws' (Weber 1919: 123). This is consistent with Weber's view that values cannot be rationally sustained; indeed, that 'irrational elements' are foundation to 'the rationalization of reality' (Weber 1915a: 281). In the harmonization of these disparate ethics in the practice of the calling of politics, however, they cease to occupy different 'life spheres' and, as we shall see below, the possibility arises of their rational foundation in the practice of *Beruf*. But this is to proceed ahead of the argument.

Underlying the political vocation, then, is passion. Indeed, it is absolutely foundational for a political calling. It is only by being 'passionate' that a person can 'take a stand' (Weber 1919: 95). A little later in this discussion Weber says that there are 'three pre-eminent qualities [that] are decisive for the politician: passion, a feeling of responsibility, and a sense of proportion' (Weber 1919: 115). In fact, the feeling of responsibility is a consequence of the politician's passion, as already indicated. What of the sense of proportion? Weber says that 'the decisive psychological quality of the politician [is] his ability to let realities work upon him with inner concentration and calmness' (Weber 1919: 115). Such a concentration and calmness has only one source: his 'devotion to a "cause"', and this devotion, if it is to be effective, Weber says, must be passionate (Weber 1919: 115). He goes on to say that: 'Politics is made with the head, not with other parts of the body or soul. And yet devotion to politics, if it is not to be frivolous intellectual play but rather genuinely human conduct, can be born and nourished from passion alone' (Weber 1919: 115). Passion, in this context, Weber says, is meant 'in the sense of *matter-of-factness*' (Weber 1919: 115; emphasis in original).

Weber's qualification of the understanding of passion is crucial because he distinguishes at least two meanings of the term. Passion in the sense of matter-of-factness, Weber continues, means 'passionate devotion to a "cause", to the god or demon who is overlord' (Weber 1919: 115). This is to be distinguished from 'passion in the sense of ... inner bearing ... as sterile excitation' (Weber 1919: 115). What separates these distinct usages is whether the emotions are

attached to forces outside the person, who is then moved by them, or whether the emotions come from an inner sensibility or sentimentality. In the former case, 'passion as devotion to a "cause"', Weber says, 'makes responsibility to this cause the guiding star of action' (Weber 1919: 115). In the other case, the emotion is attached only to an inward feeling, grounded in self-reflection and a turning away from the task. This latter form of emotion, of emotionality for its own sake, which Weber rejects, is characteristic of the cultivation of feelings found in the *salon* culture of his time (Heller 1979: 209–13; see also James 1890a: 125).

Weber is reasonably consistent in his understanding of the terms that make up this distinction, and in his evaluation of them, even though he did not always appreciate that both were possible. In 'Knies and the Problem of Irrationality', for instance, Weber is dismissive of emotion in general because he only sees it as sterile excitation. He is opposed to intuition, in particular, and also empathy, because it never gets beyond such subjective states (Weber 1906: 177–81, 164). It is particularly interesting that in this particular discussion Weber goes on to say that 'In contrast to mere "emotional contents", we ascribe "value" to an item if and only if it can be the content of commitment' (Weber 1906: 182). By the time he wrote *Ancient Judaism* (1917–19), Weber saw that emotion could indeed be the content of commitment, of devotion to a cause. The emotions of the Jewish prophets, Weber says, 'did not flow from the pathos of ... psycho-pathological states, but from the vehement certainty of successfully having grasped the meaning of what the prophet had experienced' (Weber 1917–19: 290).

The political vocation is based on passion not because politics is an especially emotional game, even though politics is an emotional game. Weber indicates that action in a political community is determined 'by highly robust motives of fear and hope' (Weber 1919: 79), that modern politics is based on the exploitation of 'mass emotionality' (Weber 1919: 107), that 'guilt' has enduring political consequences (Weber 1919: 118), and so on. But more to the point, passion is an indispensable condition of the political vocation or calling because of the nature of *Beruf* itself. It would have been perfectly consistent for Weber to have described the Calvinistic calling in this way in 1905 in the *Protestant Ethic*, as we shall see. But he could not do so because of the Cartesian–Calvinist contrast between rationality and emotion that he accepted at that time. Alternatively, it could be argued that, as

there is no rationality in politics, it is possible to treat the political vocation in terms of passion without abandoning the assumptions of the *Protestant Ethic* concerning the opposition between emotion and rationality. But such an argument fails to appreciate that in his 1917 lecture Weber understood the calling of science also to be based on passionate commitment.

A number of themes are pursued in 'Science as a Vocation', many of which are characteristic of Weber, including an account of the responsibilities of the lecture podium and also of the loss of meaning in a world subjected to the progress of rationalization: 'The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the "disenchantment of the world". Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations' (Weber 1917b: 155). Science itself, of course, is an aspect of this trend of rationalization and intellectualization. Weber says that scientific progress is a part, indeed 'the most important' part 'of the process of intellectualization which we have been undergoing for thousands of years' (Weber 1917b: 138). This process means that essentially 'there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play, but rather that one can, in principle, master all things by calculation' (Weber 1917b: 139). This situation presents an ironic problem for a vocation of science. Science, as a sponsor of rationalization, therefore engenders meaninglessness. But for science to be done, persons must be vocationally attached to it, and science itself must therefore possess meaning for them.

Scientific progress, says Weber, means that each scientific achievement '*asks* to be "surpassed" and outdated' (Weber 1917b: 138; emphasis in original). This, Weber says, 'is the very *meaning* of scientific work' (Weber 1917b: 138; emphasis in original); but it is a meaning of a practice which itself takes the meaning out of the world. Weber goes on to recount how the great Russian writer Tolstoy, for one, is led to conclude that as life itself comes to lose all meaning, so science, in failing to answer the question 'What shall we do and how shall we live?', is necessarily without value (Weber 1917b: 140, 143). Weber takes these matters seriously enough to attempt to dispel them in his concern to demonstrate the basis of a scientific vocation. This cannot be because he agrees or disagrees with Tolstoy, but because it is a fact that science is done, and for it to be done a scientific calling

must be postulated. Weber's sociological task, then, is to find a basis of the scientific vocation.

It can parenthetically be observed that Weber's desire to specify the basis of the scientific vocation effectively corrects an error in his own reasoning which takes him close to Tolstoy's position. Weber says that persons are free to accept any value position, because there is no objective or factual compulsion over values (Weber 1917b: 146, 150). But he goes on to suggest that facts do indeed inform values when he acknowledges that for every 'party opinion' there are 'inconvenient facts' (Weber 1917b: 147). Weber again comes close to acknowledging objective constraints on values when he indicates the positive contributions of science to practical life; namely, that science contributes to technology, methods of thinking, and the gaining of clarity (Weber 1917b: 150–1). He singles out clarity in particular, as a basis of integrity (Weber 1917b: 151). But because of his relativism, Weber holds that the limits of clarity are self-evident, and he construes this as also forming the 'limits of science' (Weber 1917b: 151). However, Weber has revealed a certain ambiguity on a point that is widely regarded as defining of his position. It is of course true that the ultimate issue in this context is that of the rationality of facts. His view is definitive: facts have no inherent meaning. That some facts remain 'inconvenient' must be inconvenient for his acceptance of that position also.

The characterization of science in Weber's account indicated to this point has obvious implications for the requirements of the scientific calling. Because of the progressive nature of science, the scientific vocation includes the 'hop[e] that others will advance further than we have' (Weber 1917b: 138). Relatedly, the pursuit of knowledge 'for its own sake' is required for the scientific vocation (Weber 1917b: 144). These are strange gods to worship: that one's own achievements be surpassed, and that only intrinsic satisfactions, not broader utilities, be sought. But in a sense these are the perverse qualities of rationality itself, in its logical consistency and systematization, and also of vocation in general, in its quality of self-limitation. But it is in Weber's discussion of the details of scientific rationality that the underpinning requirements of the scientific vocation are fully identified.

He says that intellectualization, rationalization and specialization are aspects of a single process. Thus the scientific worker is subject to an intense specialization of the discipline (Weber 1917b: 134). Weber

notes that the conventional view of science is that of an activity dominated by 'calculation involving only the cool intellect' (Weber 1917b: 135). This image, he says, fails to appreciate that an intensity of concentration in pursuit of results requires a 'strange intoxication' which is nothing less than a 'passion' (Weber 1917b: 135). Without this passionate devotion to the relevant activities 'you have *no* calling for science' (Weber 1917b: 135; emphasis in original). Here, then, is the requirement of passion for the conduct of science, indeed, for rationality. Without the 'inner devotion to the task' (Weber 1917b: 137) the scientist would have no vocation. 'In the field of science', says Weber, 'only he who is devoted *solely* to the work at hand has "personality"' (Weber 1917b: 137; emphasis in original). Not only the science but the scientist is produced by the passionate devotion that is core to the scientific calling, to *Beruf*.

The account of *Beruf* in 'Science as a Vocation' is not so different from the account in the *Protestant Ethic*. Each relates to how the activity within a calling contributes to the achievement of rationality. Yet whereas rationality is located in the exclusion of emotion in the *Protestant Ethic*, it is founded upon emotion in 'Science as a Vocation'.

Weber's retreat from ascetic rationalism

The heading of this section is taken from a chapter title in Arthur Mitzman's *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (1971). Mitzman's argument is that: '[Weber's] evolution after his breakdown shows a powerful and highly significant [move] away from the unqualified celebration of ascetic rationalism he had himself embodied in his youth' (Mitzman 1971: 254). Without necessarily accepting the particular twist Mitzman puts on this observation, it follows that the *Protestant Ethic* is a work of a different intellectual formation than that in which the vocation lectures are located. For our purposes the difference is to be found in the characterization of *Beruf*, and rationality, as against emotion in the earlier intellectual formation, and coterminous with it in the later one. Mitzman points to certain biographical factors to explain Weber's change of orientation.

Weber's personal life was tormented, and, in crucial aspects must remain unknown because of the destruction of personal documents. But two sets of events are held to stand out as contributory at least

to his move away from ascetic emotional repression. One is the extramarital sexual relationship that he had between 1911 and 1914, a relationship which continued 'on a less passionate level until his death in 1920' (Mitzman 1971: 287). The other is the encounter with anarchist culture that Weber experienced through spring vacations in 1913 and 1914 (Mitzman 1971: 288). Over these two Easter stays in Ascona, a village on Lake Maggiore on the Swiss side of the border with Italy, together being a period of approximately six weeks, Weber wrote thirty-five letters to his wife Marianne. These have now been collected, translated, and published, along with a number of papers that explore Weber's engagement with eroticism, extra-legal politics, personal and political conviction, and power (Whimster 1999). Following Mitzman and anticipating Whimster, Bruce Mazlish (1989) summarizes the argument when, in referring to Weber's sexual career, he says that these 'experiences powerfully affected [Weber's] sociological work ... [making] him more aware of emotionalism, and helped prepare the way for his deeper understanding of charisma' (Mazlish 1989: 223).

It might be that Weber's erotic and counter-cultural experiences did influence his intellectual and sociological development, and that his sexual experiences led to a more subtle approach to emotion and its relationship with rationality, and with *Beruf*. But how they did so can only be argued from an extrinsic theoretical position. In any event, such a case must depend on acceptance of supposition, speculation and conjecture. Friedrich Tenbruck derisively commented that for 'no other sociologist has biography played such an extensive and commanding role in interpretation' (Tenbruck 1980: 318). It is unnecessary to discount the value of biography in contextualizing an author's intellectual development. What stands out in the approach of Mitzman and possibly Whimster, though, are the limited types of experience to which they refer. Indeed, Weber's erotic experiences are not necessarily prime sources of a loosening attitude to emotion. Given that he was never able to discuss these affairs with his wife, as far as we know, and that he continued to remain staunchly committed to conventional moralities, it is equally plausible to expect that his sexual experiences lead in a contrary direction, to anxious rigidity, and a denial of affect and emotionality.

This latter prospect is not being recommended here, but neither is its contrary, the position associated with Mitzman, simply accepted. If

Weber's growing acceptance of the significance of emotion is to be situated in terms of his life experiences, then other incidents must be seriously considered. From August 1914 to September 1915, for instance, Weber developed and administered the military reserve hospitals in the Heidelberg area. He was therefore responsible for the physical and psychological health of large numbers of wounded soldiers and foreign prisoners of war, with whom he had frequent and close contact. In his discussion of these experiences Karl-Ludwig Ay notes that Weber was not moved, through them, to change his attitude towards the war (Ay 1999: 114). Weber did, though, experience 'violent emotions caused by the plight of the wounded soldiers', and the manner with which he dealt with those feelings reflected his 'elite' membership, 'martial disposition', and 'gallant temperament' (Ay 1999: 113).

Weber was emotionally moved by his encounters with large numbers of wounded soldiers. Through them he was led to abandon the convention of his class, which held that ordinary people were politically inferior. Indeed, by 1917 Weber advocated a program of constitutional democracy based on the equal suffrage of the common soldier (Ay 1999: 114). The effect on Weber's sociological thinking of these emotional experiences was more immediate. In an article, the title of which literally translates as 'Intermediate Reflections', published in November 1915 in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, Weber refers to the 'very extraordinary quality of brotherliness of war' (Weber 1915b: 336). In contrast to political rationalization, in which politics is freed 'of passionate feelings' (Weber 1915b: 335), he says war poses a counter-tendency that reveals the impossibility of the former:

> As the consummated threat of violence among modern polities, war creates a pathos and a sentiment of community. War thereby makes for an unconditionally devoted and sacrificial community among the combatants and releases an active mass compassion and love for those who are in need. And as a mass phenomenon, these feelings break down all the naturally given barriers of association. (Weber 1915b: 335)

This is, no doubt, a personal testament to the transformative powers of emotion, and possibly reveals a new sensitivity to the social significance of emotion. But whether it is indicative of a theoretical revision and new departure is less clear.

There is another set of experiences, loosely connected with the war, that is more strongly associated with Weber's later inclination to attach passion positively to *Beruf*. After his breakdown of 1898–9, Weber's sole vocation was scholarship, having removed himself from both political involvement and teaching. This situation changed entirely by 1916 and 1917, when he returned to both the political forum and the lecture podium. Before he delivered his speech, 'Science as a Vocation', in early November 1917, he had already decided to give a trial lecture course at the University of Vienna the following year in consideration of a professorial appointment. A return to teaching was unavoidable for Weber, as war inflation had rendered his rentier income insufficient as a means of livelihood. The Vienna lectures exhausted Weber, leading him to accept that a return to teaching involved personal sacrifices greater than he had anticipated (see Schluchter 1996: 18–21). The offer of a professorial appointment at Vienna was turned down in the middle of 1918, but Weber accepted one at the University of Munich in March 1919. Between these events he delivered his address on 'Politics as a Vocation'. Both of the vocation lectures, then, were given at a time when Weber was fully involved in weighing the significance for him of alternate callings – scholarship, politics and teaching – and of the sacrifices involved in choosing between them; for he had, indeed, to choose between them. What better experience than this could force his awareness of the emotional basis of vocation, which he described in both talks.

While experience and theory do interact in various ways, it is possible to point more definitively to the real developments in Weber's sociological writings that lead from his early rejection of emotion as the basis of calling or *Beruf*, to his later acceptance of the foundation of *Beruf* in emotions. Indeed, the tensions in Weber's account of emotion in the *Protestant Ethic* are incrementally resolved in subsequent writings up until the alternative treatment of emotion, found in the vocation lectures.

In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber refers to the narrow focus and attention to purpose typical of Puritan rationalism that lead the Calvinist into opposition not only with emotion but anything that negated or disrupted the application of energy to the achievement of particular outcomes commensurate with his calling. In line with such a prospect, Weber reports '[t]he Puritan's ferocious hatred of everything which smacked of superstition' (Weber 1920: 168). It is

important to pause a moment at this remark and notice that here a particular emotion, hatred, is in the service of rational asceticism. Earlier in the text, Weber recounts the Puritan's response 'toward the sin of one's neighbor', which was 'hatred and contempt for him as an enemy of God' (Weber 1920: 122). The most telling aspect of Weber's discussion in this passage is his description of these feelings not as an emotion but as an 'attitude' (Weber 1920: 122).

The apparent inconsistency, of the Puritan suppression of emotion on the one hand, and their *hatred* of sin on the other, is not solved by describing such particular emotions as attitudes. Indeed, the concept of attitude implicitly acknowledges a role for affective or emotional factors in cognitive and purposive, indeed, in rational processes. But it does so by excluding emotion in its own right from consideration of such processes and therefore leaves unquestioned the view that reason and emotion are opposed. Weber is correct to acknowledge the importance of emotions in setting goals and forming motives and orientations. However, it is inadequate licence to treat emotion in general as irrational by describing a particular emotion as an attitude. In the *Protestant Ethic* there is an understanding of emotion that has its roots in Cartesian thought and is conventional still. It holds that rational action is undermined by emotion, and that rationality opposes and suppresses emotion. It also emerges that particular emotions or 'attitudes' may function to define purposes that become subject to rational realization. In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber, no more than other adherents of this view, does not deal with the obvious question that arises from this characterization of his position: the ultimate impossibility of the rational suppression of emotion in general and the requirement of particular emotions for deliberatively formed motives. Indeed, the obfuscation of the real contribution of emotions in goal-defining practices, by incorporating them in the concept of attitude, reflects the limitations of a general opposition of reason and emotion.

Weber's recourse to emotion in his characterization of Calvinist attitudes and practices reveals something of the unavoidability of emotion in reasoned conduct. In spite of his intentions and primary analysis in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber in effect indicates that emotions cannot be eliminated from human affairs and also that they have a positive role in clarifying intentions and ordering action. This points to a quite different understanding of the relationship between rationality

and emotion than the one Weber assumed and set out to portray in the *Protestant Ethic*. Against this conventional approach, therefore, there is an alternative perspective which holds that reason and emotion are not necessarily opposed but clearly different faculties, and that their differences allow each to serve in a division of labour in which their distinct capacities contribute to a unified outcome. This relationship is clearly articulated in the vocation lectures. But Weber did not come to it in a single move.

Weber's article of 1915, 'Zwischenbetrachtung' [Intermediate Reflections], better known as 'Religious Rejections of the World and their Directions', has already been mentioned in this context. It is widely regarded as a transitional work, and for the considerations of the present argument it certainly is. It bears comparison with 'Politics as a Vocation', especially, because the definition of the state in that work is already formulated in the earlier article: 'an association that claims the monopoly of the *legitimate use of violence*' (Weber 1915b: 334; emphasis in original). But the account of the vocation of politics (without that term being used), in contrast to the vocation lecture, holds that 'the political man' is without passion, depersonalized in the manner of the economic man (Weber 1915b: 333–4). Weber's conception of the 'very extraordinary quality of brotherliness of war' (Weber 1915b: 336), in which the political community is infused with emotion, is as much a religious as a political experience, thus bringing politics 'into direct competition with religious ethics' (Weber 1915b: 335). But the competition between emotion and rationalized politics is not conclusive.

The idea that emotional or affective experiences or forces might remain distinct from, but support rather than undermine, rational processes is in fact emphasized in this article, in discussion of aesthetic and erotic spheres. Under conditions of 'intellectualization and the rationalization of life', Weber says, art 'provides a *salvation* from the routines of everyday life, and especially from the increasing pressures of theoretical and practical rationalism' (Weber 1915b: 342; emphasis in original). The erotic sphere offers parallel synchronies. Erotic experiences, says Weber, provide a sense of vital being that is simply 'inaccessible to any rational endeavor' (Weber 1915b: 347). Eroticism thus frees persons 'from the cold skeleton hands of rational orders, just as completely as from the banality of everyday routine' (Weber 1915b: 347). In this discussion, then, emotions and rationality remain

quite different things, but rather than being opposed, one undermining of the other, they serve in a mutually supporting relationship, with emotions enhancing rationalization by providing supplementary relief to those subjected to it.

A further step in the development of Weber's appreciation of the importance of emotion as a basis of *Beruf* is in his research on the prophets of *Ancient Judaism*, written in 1916 (Schluchter 1996: 11; see also 15), and first published in 1917–19 in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. Weber saw that the prophets were 'objectively political and, above all, world political demagogues and publicists' (Weber 1917–19: 275; see also 272). Additionally, and with added fascination, Weber understood that the prophets experienced their charisma as a 'calling' and a 'duty' (Weber 1917–19: 294), even though they were not subject to an 'inner-worldly asceticism' and there was no possibility of a Protestant-type of religious concept of 'vocation' (Weber 1917–19: 343–5, 401–2). But Weber recognized that foundation to their calling was emotion (Weber 1917–19: 290), indeed passion (Weber 1917–19: 272, 291). He says: 'The prophet discharges his glowing passion and experiences all the abysses of the human heart. And yet, despite all these human frailties ... it is not their private motives but the cause of Yahwe ... that reigns supreme over the uproar' (Weber 1917–19: 273). The prophet's emotion is in the service of a larger purpose than his own, and it is through his emotion that he is connected to the cause he pursues. The basis of calling is emotion. The argument here entirely prefigures that concerning the emotional foundation of *Beruf* in the vocation lectures.

Conclusion

Two leading themes have been developed in the present chapter. First is the importance of emotion to social action, including the formation of rational action through *Beruf*. Second is the emergence in Weber's sociological writings from 1905 to 1920 of a progressive apprehension of the emotional foundations of *Beruf*, against the background of his early insistence in the *Protestant Ethic* that such a prospect is not possible.

It is impossible not to draw conclusions concerning the need for a reevaluation of the *Protestant Ethic* in light of the above discussion. Weber's *Protestant Ethic* remains a central text in sociology. Its

importance, though, may not lie primarily in its argument about the origins of modern capitalism, or in its development of a sociological method against economic determinism. Indeed, the discussion above encourages consideration of an additional possibility. At the time Weber wrote the *Protestant Ethic* there was a wide concern with the issues on which he so firmly set his mind, even though he was later to change it.

The *Protestant Ethic* advocates a position against another that was already gaining ascendancy at the time, namely that emotions are central to social action. Just a few years before Weber began writing the *Protestant Ethic* Sigmund Freud, for instance, published *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899). In this work he argued that dreams provide information about the dreamer's early development and emotional relations, that these things have meaning, and that they can be translated into adult waking thought. In the same year as Freud's *Dreams* appeared, another work was published that also addressed the importance of emotional currents, but for social and economic not psychological processes. In *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Thorstein Veblen outlined the practices of pecuniary emulation, conspicuous leisure, and conspicuous consumption, which he argued underlie the operations of American institutions. These are practices central to market societies, which function essentially by promoting envy in others. We shall treat Veblen, and the challenge he offers to an understanding of Weber, in greater detail in chapter 5. By 1908 Graham Wallas (1908) had proposed that the 'intellectualist fallacy', which held that calculation is the basis of political activity, be abandoned for the sake of an appreciation of the role of emotions in political processes. In the same year Arthur Bentley (1908) insisted that emotions not be given a causal role in explanation of political action (but see Barbalet 1998: 20).

Thus during the period in which Weber wrote the *Protestant Ethic*, indeed even before he lifted his pen to begin it, a debate ensued in social scientific circles as to whether ideas or emotions are primary in social and political action. Although there is no evidence that Weber read either Freud (1899) or Veblen (1899) at this time, he was alert to the issues and firmly committed to the view that ideas are primary (Weber 1920: 40, 90) and that emotions have no place in rational action or sociological explanation.

There is another book that cannot be ignored in this context, also contemporary with the writing of the *Protestant Ethic*, namely William James' *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature* (1902). In summary, James argued 'to defend ... "experience" against "philosophy" as being the real backbone of the world's religious life' (quoted in Perry 1935: 326–7). For James, experience has a necessary emotional quality (see Barbalet 1999). He does not deny that philosophy or ideas have a place in religion, or any other domain of human involvement. But he does hold that:

> the logical reason of man operates in this field of divinity exactly as it has always operated in love, or in patriotism, or in politics, or in any other of the wider affairs of state, in which our passions or our mystical intuitions fix our beliefs beforehand. It finds arguments for our conviction, for indeed it *has* to find them. It amplifies and defines our faith, and dignifies it and lends it words and plausibility. It hardly ever engenders it; it cannot now secure it. (James 1902: 436)

James makes the point that whatever value, interest or meaning there is in the world comes from our emotional experience of it (James 1902: 150).

Weber was very aware of William James and his work. In the *Protestant Ethic*, for instance, Weber makes passing reference to the Lutheran 'doctrine of salvation by works' (Weber 1920: 115) that provokes a lengthy footnote. His subject is Protestantism, but his object is to attack James. He says that 'the content of ideas of a religion is, as Calvinism shows, far more important than William James (*Varieties of Religious Experience*, 1902, 444 f.) is inclined to admit'. This is to draw the battle line on ideas, in order to attack James' position on emotions. Commentators have failed to notice this essential difference between Weber and James (Hennis 1998; Scaff 1998; see also Barbalet 2007: 29–35). It is important to observe that in rejecting James, and implicitly also Freud and Veblen, Weber in the *Protestant Ethic* insists that emotions may not be crucial in understanding reason and reasons for action.

Although it is seldom understood in this light, the single most significant text of sociology, Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, is a manual of Cartesian principles concerning rationality, emotion, and the opposition between them. Indeed, there

is no better way of demonstrating the limitations of this approach to emotion than by following Weber's own development of the concept *Beruf*, and his later arguments concerning its foundation in human passions. This also demonstrates, of course, Weber's own assessment and revision of his treatment of a key concept in the *Protestant Ethic*. It might additionally inform scholarly appreciation of the work.

3 *Passions and profits: the emotional origins of capitalism in seventeenth-century England*

Weber's approach to the constitution of capitalist motivation is part of a larger framework, the merits of which cannot be overlooked. In order to understand any social process it is necessary to consider not simply how persons are subjected to external forces, but also how they accommodate themselves to those forces, and in doing so give them further direction. As an emergent historical formation capitalism grew out of a number of large-scale changes that began in the late Middle Ages and included innovation in techniques of agricultural production and patterns of trade. The economic opportunities that arose from these changes, including expanding market demand, price competition and profit taking, are background to the reorientations that persons experienced in their own evaluations, attachments, commitments and practices, which were undertaken in order to realize the potential of the new opportunities available to them and, in taking those opportunities, enhance further the nascent trends they represented and promoted. These reorientations of persons Weber summarized in the *Protestant Ethic* as the 'spirit' of capitalism. The source of these reorientations, Weber insisted, could not derive from the economic changes themselves (Weber 1920: 65–69), but had their impetus instead in the Protestant religious faith that he examined and discussed in the *Protestant Ethic*.

The spirit of capitalism, Weber says, is expressed in the 'idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as an end in itself' (Weber 1920: 51). In this sense, he goes on to say, the making of money for its own sake is 'the result and the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling' (Weber 1920: 54). Weber famously postulates that the capitalist calling has elective affinities with and derives its original expression from the calling of

Protestant asceticism. This is because he believes that the latter uniquely promotes 'the individualistic motives of rational legal acquisition by virtue of one's own ability and initiative' (Weber 1920: 179). In acting on what Weber calls their 'constant motives' rationally ascetic Protestants, and also the capitalists who inherit their ethos and capacities for self-control, must act 'against the emotions' (Weber 1920: 119). Protestant asceticism, Weber says, in fighting 'the inhibitions of traditionalistic ethics' (Weber 1920: 171) was involved in the 'radical elimination of magic from the world' (Weber 1920: 149). This is relevant to our considerations not necessarily for its own sake but because it reinforces the suppression of emotion as it is 'the reason for the entirely negative attitude of Puritanism to all the sensuous and emotional elements in culture and in religion' (Weber 1920: 105). An additional dimension to the religious antipathy to emotion that encourages the capitalist spirit is the suppression of emotion in 'act[ing] powerfully against the spontaneous enjoyment of possessions' (Weber 1920: 171). In foregoing the pleasures of consumption Protestant asceticism provides the necessary condition of saving and accumulation and therefore capitalistic profit-making practices.

Weber's image of the modern capitalist who emerges from the Protestant Reformation is therefore a self-denying, individualistically calculating and emotionally cool market actor. While this is an enduring stereotype of the quintessential capitalist, the question arises of how appropriate it is as a characterization of a capitalist in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe, to which Weber applied it. Michael Walzer (1976: 304), for instance, notes that the Calvinist doctrine and practice that Weber saw as underpinning the capitalist spirit in fact 'led to a fearful demand for economic restriction (and political control) rather than to entrepreneurial activity as Weber has described it'. Indeed, it is difficult to see how a set of religious doctrines that, in Weber's words, inculcated a sense of 'inner loneliness' and mistrust of others (Weber 1920: 104, 106) and gave rise to '*disillusioned* and *pessimistically* inclined individualism' (Weber 1920: 105; emphasis added) could be foundation to ethical principles behind successful entrepreneurship and market activity in general. Indeed, early capitalist markets, in which credit through reputation was essential, tended to promote the fortunes of outward-looking optimists rather than persons of inward piety (Muldrew 1998: 2–5).

The preceding comments suggest a mismatch of religious and economic orientations that has been frequently noted but which offer no clear means of testing the argument Weber proposes because the translation mechanism that relates Protestant creed to market confidence and expectation is ill-stated by Weber, subject to varying interpretation and may indeed be beside the point, as suggested in chapter 1. Rather than plot the inclinations of the Protestant soul against the aspirations of capitalist confidence in necessarily uncertain markets the discussion of the present chapter will focus on other questions of the structure of motivation that Weber's discussion raises. In particular, Weber's description of a market actor freely pursuing individualistic motives deserves to be considered in terms of the character of profit seeking in the emergent capitalist economy of, say, seventeenth-century England. We shall see that an institutional framework and also a distinct set of expectations operated at this time in which the drive for profit was subject to requirements that were quite different from those that operated in nineteenth-century laissez-faire capitalism, for instance, in which Weber's ideal-type capitalist would have found greater credence.

After treating the motive of profit making in a seventeenth-century capitalist economy a second consideration Weber raises of changes in the orientations of persons at the time shall be considered. The Protestant tracts that Weber examined are arguably less relevant to an understanding of this transformation in human nature than another body of literature, hitherto ignored in sociological discussion of the origins of capitalism in seventeenth-century Europe. Whereas the suppression of emotions as a prerequisite for capitalist market activities is widely assumed, following Weber's example, an appreciation of the intentions of others and therefore a concern with their emotional dispositions is more reasonably necessary for successful market actors who must anticipate the intentions and trustworthiness of those with whom they exchange, give and take credit, and generally do business. The present chapter, therefore, will show that the historical origin of capitalism, in seventeenth-century England, coincided with and was encouraged by a widespread examination of emotions and their practical deployment in self-control or self-direction and the management of relationships with other self-directed persons. It will also be shown that this revolution of the emotions – it was nothing

less than that – incidentally came from the work of Catholic as well as non-Catholic writers.

Profits

While the quest for profit dominated the early modern economy of mid sixteenth-century England, the concept of profit, while in many ways similar to current usage, included a social dimension that has since disappeared. Thomas Wilson, for instance, in *The Arte of Rhetorique* (1553), indicated that profit, the 'gettyng of gaine, and the eschewyng of harme' is not only to be located in the acquisition of a 'fortune' in which 'wealth, honor and frendes are gotten', but also possibly found in other things, including in a person's body, where there is profit in 'beautie, strength and healthe' (Wilson 1553: 44). In sixteenth-century usage, therefore, the term 'profit' refers to advantage over a broader spectrum of activity than the merely commercial. Nevertheless, profit as economic gain – as opposed to harm, which ensures that profit 'beareth the name of goodnesse' (Wilson 1553: 44) – is itself connected with social relationships, including some that are emotionally defined. Wealth, as we have just seen Wilson indicate, is a form of fortune along with honour, or how one is regarded by others in social standing, and friendship, which is the affectionate attachment to others. Wealth, and the profit that generates it, therefore have essential social and emotional elements in the early modern economy that are easily overlooked from the perspective of current usage.

Not only did financial profit underlie market transactions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century commercial exchanges, the motivational capacities of profit making were established in practice and understood by participants and commentators alike as a positive driving force for undertaking activities which furnished their own financial rewards. Thomas Wilson, for instance, observed: 'Take awaie the hope of lucre, and you shall se fewe take any paines' (Wilson 1553: 50). The currency of this notion is further supported by the idea, recorded in the Southampton Court Leet Records of 1587, that it is 'a happy man that can make his bargain so well to take it when there is profit and refuse to serve when the profit faileth, and to raise it at his own will for his best advantage' (Bland, Brown and Tawney 1914: 296). Similarly, more than a century and a half before

Adam Smith's famous statement, concerning the propensity to 'truck, barter and exchange' (Smith 1776: 25), John Wheeler was able to declare that there is 'nothing in the world so ordinarie and naturall vnto men, as to contract, truck, merchandise, and trafficque one with another, so that it is almost vnpossible for three persons to converse together two houres, but they wil fall into talke of one bargaine or another, chopping, changing, or some other kinde of contract' (Wheeler 1601: 2–3). Wheeler goes on to note, emphasizing the vocation of profit making, that 'Marchandise which is vsed by way of proper *vacatiō*' is an 'honorable' estate that may be practiced by both commoners and nobles 'with commendable *profite*, and without anie derogation to their Nobilities, high Degrees, & conditions' (Wheeler 1601: 4; emphasis added).

Wheeler was secretary of the Society of Merchant Adventurers, an incorporated trading company that by this time controlled three-quarters of English foreign trade. He wrote the above portrait of commercial virtue in a tract defending the trading monopoly of his Society. Indeed, *A Treatise of Commerce* (1601) was written by him not only to defend monopoly but warn against the rapid spread of purely self-interested commercial activity that he described as the 'dispersed, stragling, & promiscuous trade' (Wheeler 1601: 73) that was everywhere challenging the chartered and licensed monopolies of the old trading companies. The question arises, therefore, as to whether the social dimensions of profit found in Wilson's discussion, mentioned above, attach to a pre-capitalist type associated with what Weber calls 'organic social organization in the fiscal-monopolistic form' and 'politically privileged commercial, putting-out, and colonial capitalism' (Weber 1920: 179), exemplified here by Wheeler, as opposed to the individualistically motivated commerce and acquisition that Wheeler opposes and Weber describes as a 'superior middle class business morality' (Weber 1920: 179).

While Weber refers to William Petty's *Political Arithmetic*, completed in about 1676, as recognizing the significance of this 'middle class business morality', a discussion from the beginning of the seventeenth century not only supports freedom of individual aspirations for trade, against the monopolies, but indicates why social limitations on this 'business morality' were part of the rationale for 'the individualistic motives of rational legal acquisition by virtue of one's own ability and initiative' (Weber 1920: 179) that is assumed in

the operations of the modern capitalist economy. While the crown granted commercial monopolies it is not surprising therefore that the movement against monopoly had a parliamentary source. The differences between these opposed positions were made clear in Sir Edwin Sandys' 'Report from the Committee [of the House of Commons] on Free Trade, 1604'. Sir Edwin found that 'the mass of the whole trade of all the realm is in the hands of some two hundred persons at the most, the rest serving for a show only, and reaping small benefits' (Sandys 1604: 437). The restriction of freedom of trade imposed by monopoly, he found, was 'against the *natural right* and *liberty* of the subjects of England' (Sandys 1604: 437; emphasis added). His expectation was that when trade is free there would not be a fall in the price of commodities, as the defenders of monopoly feared, but rather that 'many young men will seek out new places, and trade further for great benefit' (Sandys 1604: 439). In its expression here, as in its later manifestation, most famously in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776), the argument for free trade was one for the further expansion of commercial activity. But the idea that individual pursuit of profit could be without social restraint had to wait another century and a half because as a 'natural right', as Sandys calls it, the profit making of one could not be permitted to infringe the profit making of another.

Only partly as an aspect of the continuing corporate nature of the economy, therefore, in which it was possible to hold that the prerogatives of one trade could not be pursued at the expense of another, but also because of a vision of a right of all individuals to seek profit as a collective and mutual benefit, in the early modern economy individual profit making could be legitimately satisfied only when there was avoidance of disadvantage to the profit to others. As early as 1575, for instance, a petition was upheld that asserted 'the state of a common weal is preferred before the private gain of a few' (Bland, Brown and Tawney 1914: 295). Rather later in the seventeenth century, Samuel Fortrey, writing of *England's Interest and Improvement* (1673) indicates that 'private advantages are often impediments of publick profit; for in what any single person shall be a loser, there, endeavours will be made to hinder the publick gain' (Fortrey 1673: 218–19). Indeed, it is because market transactions had become so pervasive and significant that Dudley North, in *Discourses upon Trade* (1691), wrote 'for although to buy and sell, be the Employment

of every man, more or less; and the Common People, for the most part, depend upon it for their daily subsistence ... there are many, who to gain a little in their own Trades, care not how much others suffer; and each Man strives, that all others may be forc'd, in their dealings, to act subserviently for his Profit, but under the covert of the Publick' (North 1691: 511–12). If profit making on 'individualistic motives of rational legal acquisition by virtue of one's own ability and initiative' is a virtue, then everyone should have the right to pursue such motives, which means that no one has the right to infringe another's exercise of that right. Acceptance of this principle in seventeenth-century England was a basis of social limits on profit making as an end in itself.

An analogous limitation is noted by Weber, although he does not allow it to influence his treatment of seventeenth-century capitalistic money-making. He says, for instance, that 'the usefulness of a calling, and thus its favour in the sight of God, is measured primarily in moral terms, and thus in terms of the importance of the goods produced in it for the community' (Weber 1920: 162). This statement accords with the principles reported in the preceding paragraph insofar as it accepts social constraints on production. Weber immediately adds, though, what he takes to be a qualifying and overriding addendum: 'But a further, and, above all, in practice the most important, criterion is found in private profitableness', for if opportunities for profit making occur, then 'the faithful Christian must follow the call by taking advantage of the opportunity' (Weber 1920: 162). In Richard Baxter's words: 'If God shows you a way in which you may lawfully get more than in another way ... you may labour to be rich for God, though not for the flesh and sin' (quoted in Weber 1920: 162). But this subsequent statement does not contradict or qualify the preceding: first, they relate to different things, which Aristotle summarized as production on the one hand and acquisition or trade on the other. More importantly, though, Baxter is not endorsing laissez-faire principles of buying cheap, selling dear and therefore maximizing profit. Indeed, if opportunities for profit making must be taken because they are given by God, then they would be given to all equally by God, at least within the faithful community. The profit making of one person under these conditions cannot be at the expense of another's opportunities for profit making even though, rather, especially, because private profitableness is so highly regarded. In advocating a religiously based

injunction to take opportunities for gaining wealth Baxter is decidedly not referring to profit maximization or profit making as an end in itself, which is without social restraint and only subject to the limits of the market. But rather than pursue this issue Weber raises another.

Referring to Baxter's remarks quoted above Weber says: 'Wealth is thus bad ethically only in so far as it is a temptation to idleness and sinful enjoyment of life ... but as a performance of duty in a calling it is not only morally permissible, but actually enjoined' (Weber 1920: 163). In a note to this passage Weber disarmingly begins by saying that he is 'not so much concerned with what concepts the theological moralists developed in their ethical theories, but, rather, what was the effective morality in the life of the believers – that is, how the religious background of economic ethics affected practice' (Weber 1920: 267 note 42). It might fairly be asked, then, why he discusses Baxter at all, for he could only be regarded as a 'theological moralist' and has nothing to say about the actual practices affected by religious background. Leaving this question aside, Weber immediately goes on to acknowledge that injunctions similar to Baxter's can be found in Catholic, including Jesuit sources, and then he asserts, though:

> there is the fundamental difference, even in theory, that these latitudinarian ideas within Catholicism were the products of peculiarly lax ethical theories, not sanctioned by the authority of the Church ... [while] the Protestant idea of a calling *in effect* placed the most serious enthusiasts for asceticism in the service of capitalistic acquisition. What in the one case might under certain conditions be allowed, appeared in the other as a positive moral good. (Weber 1920: 267 note 42; emphasis added)

But this is pure rhetoric on Weber's part: he asserts the thesis he assumes rather than demonstrating it. Calvin shared with Aquinas the idea that economic activity had to be judged in terms of its contribution to a social good beyond the immediate beneficiary. Baxter does not go beyond this same general principle. Indeed, a direct religious injunction to profit making would not be made for another century.

The presumption of accumulation and profit making under Protestant auspices does not really occur until John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, published his sermon 'The Use of Money' (Wesley 1771: 702–15). Weber's account of Wesley and Methodism in the *Protestant Ethic* (Weber 1920: 139–43) emphasizes the emotional character of the religion, regarding it as a Lutheran-sympathetic and anti-Calvinistic

faction – therefore more traditional than modern, and generally deserving of neglect 'as it added nothing new to the development of the idea of calling' (Weber 1920: 143). And yet Wesley's sermon, 'The Use of Money', delivered in 1744 and then after many times, is the first unequivocal religious encouragement to capitalistic motivation. Weber fails to refer to it. Wesley's text is the passage in *Luke*: 'I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations' (quoted Wesley 1771: 702). According to Wesley, three rules can be deduced from this scripture, the following of which will realize the capacities God has given for execution in 'all the common affairs of life' (Wesley 1771: 704). The first rule is to maximize gain: 'it is the bounden duty of all who are engaged in worldly business to observe that first and great rule of Christian wisdom, with respect to money, "Gain all you can" ... by honest industry ... [and] all possible diligence in your calling' (Wesley 1771: 708). Wesley goes on to say: 'the second rule of Christian prudence is, "Save all you can"' (Wesley 1771: 708). The strictness of this rule is indicated in the warning that saving should not be compromised by giving in to the temptation to spend on one's family, or as Wesley says, 'throw away money upon your children' (Wesley 1771: 711). The third rule is to 'give all you can' in order to fulfil God's requirement of stewardship to 'do good to them that are of the household of faith' (Wesley 1771: 712, 713).

The active encouragement in Wesley to gain and save 'all you can' is rather stronger than Baxter's injunction to take advantage of opportunity. Wesley's third rule of charity qualifies but does not nullify the capitalistic aspect of his economic morality. Warnings of the negative effects of charity for capitalist development were issued as early as the seventeenth century by economic writers. While not addressing directly the point of Wesley's charity rule, Edward Misselden warns that to 'giue to idle poore in the streets ... make's the Citty swarme with poor, with idle poore: who as long as they can liue by begging, will neuer fall to working, nor liue by labour' (Misselden 1623: 137). The obvious difference between Baxter and Wesley is that they write at different times and at different stages of economic development. It is helpful to be aware of the historical sequence; as Calvin (1509–64) preceded Baxter (1615–91) by a century, so did Baxter precede Wesley (1703–91) by a century. While Baxter wrote when the capitalist economy was still at a mercantile stage, Wesley was writing at a time

of nascent industrial development supported by canal and road building, increased iron production and the growth of towns. These differences are sufficient to explain the incremental doctrinal augmentations between the religious thinkers that would lead to the conclusion that religious thinking follows economic change rather than the other way around (Tawney 1926).

There is an additional factor, distinct from and unconnected with the institutional framework of market restriction, either corporate or ethical, that has already been considered, which makes Weber's model of the spirit of capitalism inappropriate for early modern capitalism. The market economy of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was made up of households that not only relied on market transactions for the greater part of their income, but which were only able to participate in those transactions because of their creditworthiness. Credit was particularly important at this time because of a shortage of specie or coin, thus making immediate payment for purchase difficult in many cases. Credit requires that the lender trust the debtor, and therefore emotional appraisal comes to play a greater not a lesser role under conditions of market transactions. As Craig Muldrew notes, the structure of credit at the time meant that 'all these transactions had to be mediated through the emotional responses of the agents involved' (Muldrew 1998: 94). It is necessary to refer to the agent of market transactions as emotional – 'credit was extended between individual emotional agents' (Muldrew 1998: 3) – because without the affective commitment to a contract and the emotional assessment of the reliability and trustworthiness of participants, trade and market exchanges could simply not occur. It is for this reason that Muldrew insists that the distinction between the emotionally cool world of economics and the 'more "subjective" social world of feelings and events' could not be separated (Muldrew 1998: 65). This is in clear contrast to Weber's portrayal of an economy in which the participants are not only rational calculators of self-interest, intent only on their own accumulation of wealth, but also oriented only on the market commodity and without emotional involvement. A very different description of the market society is required, however, of the period to which Weber refers. The market participants of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were necessarily emotionally engaged in the pursuit of their market objectives.

Passions

From the late sixteenth century and through the seventeenth, a number of books on the passions were published in London. Some are translations of French and Spanish authors. These include, for instance, Marin Cureau de la Chambre, *The Characters of the Passions*, originally published in French in 1648 with an English translation published in 1650; Nicholas de Coeffeteau, *The Table of Humane Passions*, originally published in French in 1619 with an English translation in 1621; Juan Huarte, *The Examination of Men's Wits*, originally published in Spanish in 1575 with an English translation in 1594; Jean-François Senault, *The Use of Passions*, French original in 1641 and English translation in 1649 and 1671. There were also a large number of works on the passions published at this time by English writers, including, for instance, Timothy Bright, *A Treatise on Melancholy*, 1586; Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621; Walter Charleton, *Natural History of the Passions*, 1674; Edward Reynolds, *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man*, 1640; Thomas Rogers, *A Philosophical Discourse Entitled The Anatomy of the Mind*, 1576; Thomas Walkington, *The Optick Glasse of Humors*, 1607; and Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, 1601.

Many of these works have a devotional element, in keeping with the times, but they could not be described as religious tracts; some have a medical focus, but by no means all. These works are not known today, although some have been recently discussed as contributing to early modern philosophy of mind (James 1997). Those of interest here responded to the emergent significance at the time of market exchanges and diplomacy in which it is necessary to form an understanding of the intentions of others (Muldrew 1998; Solomon 1998). Thus these writers moved away from the earlier view of emotions as ardent, vehement and overpowering passions, to an operational approach to emotions relatively loosened from theological prejudice.

There was a departure, therefore, in the seventeenth century, from the understanding of the passions of the previous and earlier centuries, in which the Augustinian notion of the passions, as implicated in original sin and the 'Fall of Man' from Christian grace (Harrison 1998), made it impossible to see any meaningful practical application

of passions in daily life. This approach can be seen to persist in the thought of early Renaissance humanists, for instance, such as Desiderius Erasmus, for whom treatment of the passions and sentiments was entirely embedded in discussion of vice and virtue, associated with the 'war ... within ourselves' in which the 'passions of the body seek to override the reason' of the soul, otherwise capable of divinity; indeed the passions are doubly pernicious because 'there are certain passions so similar to virtue that there is danger lest we be deceived by the doubtful distinction between them' (Erasmus 1503: 42, 43, 46).

The seventeenth-century writers, on the other hand, while not indifferent to the issues that animated Erasmus, were less willing to so wholly dismiss the passions as only negative capacities. They were concerned with the passions as a source of self-knowledge, self-control, and power over others, themes current today but then predicated on assumptions no longer familiar (see Babb 1951: 1–20; Gardiner, Metcalf and Beebe-Center 1937: 119–209; James 1997: 1–25, 1998a, 1998b). Indeed, the more practical and social understanding of the passions found in seventeenth-century writers, that is continuous with eighteenth-century thinkers, for instance, such as David Hume, Adam Ferguson and Adam Smith – who incidentally shall be considered in the following chapter – had its own theological basis. This was the idea that the passions were created by God for man's preservation. Thomas Wright, for instance, insists that 'there are some affections in the highest and chiefest part of the soule, not vnlike vnto the passion of the Minde: for to God the Scriptures ascribe loue, hate, ire, zeale, who cannot be subject to any sensitive operations' (Wright 1604: 31). Edward Reynolds in a similar vein holds that the passions have a dual or double nature, one part 'quieting and satisfactory' while the other is 'disturbing and destroying' (Reynolds 1640: 29). This is because 'Passions are nothing else, but those natural, perfective, and unrestrained motions of the creatures unto that advancement of their natures, which they are, by the wisdom, power, and providence of their Creator ... or by an antipathy and aversion from those ... must needs be noxious and destructive' (Reynolds 1640: 28). Similarly, but more elaborately, Jean-François Senault argues that passions predate the Fall and were therefore present in the 'state of innocency' as part of God's creation (Senault 1671: 39–46). He goes on to argue that there were passions in Christ (Senault 1671: 46–53; see also Wright 1604: 17). The inference that contemporary readers drew from this

discussion is that passions are not necessarily alien to man's own nature and while not morally neutral can be deployed for good and not only directed to evil.

Indeed, Wright, for instance, challenges the notion that people are ever in danger of falling victim to unbridled appetites for sensual and sinful passions. The prevailing doctrine of his day was that the passions arose from the sensitive soul, which humankind shares with animals, and that the uniquely human or reasonable soul, in which appetite for rationality as moral judgement is located, could only be contaminated through emotion. Wright, on the other hand, holds that there are passions in the reasonable soul (Wright 1604: 30–2). He agrees that excess may have fearful consequences, but insists that moderate passions can be 'instruments of virtue' (Wright 1604: 15). 'By this Discourse may be gathered', Wright goes on to say, 'that Passions, are not only, not wholy to be extinguished (as the Stoicks seemed to affirme) but sometimes to be moved, & stired up for the service of virtue' (Wright 1604: 17).

Once it is accepted that the passions have positive attributes the possibility arises that they may also be useful. Indeed, as we shall see more fully below, many of these seventeenth-century publications on the passions were handbooks in a method of reading the intentions of others through an appreciation of their emotions. They were essential texts in assisting market actors to decide who could be engaged – trusted or not – for commercial exchanges, among other things. As people increasingly entered market exchanges they needed to know whether they could trust the other participant in exchange, something not necessary when religious institutions set the parameters and content of economic and social exchanges. Knowing whether the other could be trusted required a reading of their intentions from their behaviour, their speech, deportment and their dispositions as these are revealed through their emotional expression. These claims concerning the utility of the passions texts to market actors raise a number of questions about the importance of these texts, and also the significance of the passions, or the emotions, at the time. Consideration of the importance of these texts raises another set of questions about the contemporary status of books in general, the degree to which there was means of access to them – which is a question of contemporary literacy, and also the popularity of these particular books.

There was indeed an enormous appetite for books in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, created and fed by social and technical changes, including the earlier advent of the printing press. It can be mentioned in this context that even though there were heavy penalties in England during this period for reading or possessing books by Catholic writers, English non-Catholic readers so enjoyed controversial reading that Catholic authors frequently had wide readership (see Southern 1950: 38–42). Second, literacy at this time was remarkably high, for both sexes. During the period from 1560 to 1640, England went through what Lawrence Stone described as an 'educational revolution' (Stone 1964). Stone reports, for instance: 'Of the 204 men sentenced to death for a first offence by the Middlesex Justices in 1612–14, no fewer than ninety-five [47 per cent] successfully pleaded benefit of clergy' (Stone 1964: 43). Benefit of clergy was a literacy test. Not only was literacy widespread, but among the most literate of social groups were merchants and businessmen, the first occupational group in Europe to acquire professional libraries (Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 50, 56, 63). Finally, although it is not possible to establish directly how large a readership any particular book enjoyed in the seventeenth century, an indirect measure is the number of editions a title went through. Practically all of the significant books on the passions were published through multiple editions. Samson Lennard's translation of Charron's *Of Wisdome*, for instance, was first published in 1608 with later editions in 1630, 1640, and 1670. Wright's *Passions of the Minde* was first published in 1601, with later editions in 1604 (twice), 1620, 1621, and 1630. Wright died in 1624. Further examples can be seen in the Appendix to this chapter.

The contemporary significance of the passions has already been discussed in terms of the historical movement from a largely negative to a more positive moral assessment of them in the seventeenth century. The considerable contemporary attention to the passions through these books attests to the estimation of their importance in human affairs. In his Dedication to *The Passions of the Minde* Wright refers to the opinion of 'diverse worthy Gentlemen' that the passions 'were things ever in use, and seldom without abuse: they were dayly, yea and almost hourly felt no lesse craftie, then dangerous, [and] much talkt of' (Wright 1604: liv). It is fair to say that at this time the passions are regarded as an inescapable element of human nature, compelling and fundamental.

The passions were understood in terms of elemental properties of bodies, so they were ultimately tied to questions of health and illness. Wright, for instance, says that 'there is no passion very vehement, but that it alters extremely some of the four humours of the body ... among devers other extrinsical causes of disease, one and not the least, is the excess of some inordinate passions' (Wright 1604: 4; see also 17). But it would be wrong to see this medical focus as the principal concern of Wright and of the other works referred to here. There were books published during the period devoted to this aspect of the passions, one remembered today is Robert Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). But it is simply erroneous to conceive this genre to be predominant, or to include Wright in it.

Even more central to contemporary concerns than the consequences of the passions for physical well-being is their role in moral well-being. Wright reminds his readers that 'the inordinate motions of passions, their preventing of reason, their rebellion of virtue, are thorny briars sprung from the infected root of original sin and all the deformed brood thereby ingendered' (Wright 1604: 2). We have already seen that this is not his final view. The Renaissance twist to this medieval Christian theme, as hinted earlier, is that self-knowledge permits control of the passions. According to one writer: 'these treatises tend to identify the acquisition of self knowledge with the ability to master and manipulate passion' (James 1997: 3). Indeed, the conception at the time of the basis of moral problems leads to scientific inquiries and developments: 'Since man's greatest enemies lie within himself, his greatest moral problem is self-mastery. Before self-mastery must come self-knowledge, for no man can govern his lower nature without an understanding of it. For this reason the moralists write treatises on psychology' (Babb 1951: 19).

There is a dimension of moralizing psychology in Wright and the others, certainly. But the purpose of self-mastery for these writers is not simply moral rectitude but also to varying degrees practical purpose and effect, and not merely practical purpose but also including commercial and market success. Second, for the first time with Wright, Senault, Reynolds and others in the associated literature, Christian writers hold that passions are not necessarily a moral threat. This is a modern transformation of the earlier tradition of necessarily fearing the passions, as was evident even with an early-modern humanist such as Erasmus, for example. In this sense at least,

Calvin, *contra* Weber, belongs to the pre-modern rather than the modern world.

Although theologically infused and touching on medical, moral and psychological themes, the texts on the passions referred to here are at the same time centrally concerned with mundane and practical issues of ordinary experience. In this respect they are similar to the Protestant tracts that Weber drew upon in his account of the spirit of capitalism through his treatment of the Protestant ethic. In replying to his critics Weber says that the ostensibly religious texts 'are crucial for my study of the influence on the conduct of life' because '[t]hey are concerned with the problems of everyday living' (Weber 1908: 232). In reply to another critic, he says that his

> empirical investigation of the question of whether those fundamental matters of religious psychology really did have the specific effects for the practice of the conduct of life I claimed for them ... I did not base this investigation on textbooks of dogma, or on theoretical treatises on ethics, but on quite different source material, namely, Baxter's and Spener's publications in particular, which are based on pastoral care, and especially on answers to questions on concrete practical problems put to them by those in their care. (Weber 1910: 311)

The passions texts referred to here also had a significant influence on the conduct of life and both reflected and encouraged changes in the perception and application of emotions in the practical affairs of persons, including their business and market relations. It is also important to notice that a number of these texts were historically earlier than Baxter and Spener, by a couple of generations.

Weber's suggestion, that an appropriate method for apprehending prevailing cultural currents, is to focus on a representative text (Weber 1920: 155), is taken up here through focus on Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, which went through six editions from 1601 to 1630.

A presentation of *Passions of the Minde*

Thomas Wright (1561–1624) is an author with entirely modern pretensions, nationalist and scientific. His 'Preface to the Reader' proclaims that in writing *Passions of the Minde*, a book he hopes will contribute to the 'good of my Countrie', he has 'endevoured first

of all', in this study of emotions, 'to draw into forme and method, according to the principles of Sciences' (Wright 1604: lxiii). In his own estimation, set out in his Dedication, interest in the passions has never been greater even though there is much confusion about them, 'and as yet never well taught' (Wright 1604: liv). Wright's contention is that the passions are relevant to everyone and for any end or purpose: 'there be few estates or conditions of men that have no interest in this matter: the Divine, the Philosopher, the curers both of body and soule . . . & the prudent civill Gentleman . . . may reap some commoditie touching their professions' (Wright 1604: 2). The relevance of the passions is not merely that they are forces to be controlled in attainment of Christian virtue, but that they offer positive value in achieving purposes, no matter what those purposes might be.

Soon after its publication in 1601 *Passions of the Minde* was expanded and revised for a new edition in 1604. This second edition and subsequent ones consist of six books. The 'essence of the passions' is treated in the first book, in which it is shown that the passions have positive as well as negative capacities. Of note is chapter 4, 'How the Passions may be well directed and made profitable', and chapter 8, 'That there are Passions in the reasonable soule'. Considering the negative side of the passions, Book 2 examines four effects of inordinate passions. But this is not a purely negative assessment: 'small profit the knowledge of our Passions would afford us, if we could not attaine unto some good means to direct them' (Wright 1604: 77). Hence Book 3, which concerns the means to know and modify passions, what today is called emotions management. Book 4 explains how the passions may be discovered, that is, how to detect the emotions of others in their speech, actions and so on: 'I will briefly deliver some means, whereby in particular conversation, every one may discover his fellowes naturall inclinations' (Wright 1604: 104). Book 5 considers means to move the passions of others. The final part, Book 6, considers the defects of men's souls: the passions are only one of nine causes of such defects discussed.

For Wright, the passions are a 'sort of action' that are neither 'internall and immateriall, as the acts of our wits and wils' nor 'mere externall and materiall, as the acts of our senses', but 'stand betwixt these two extremes, and border upon them both' (Wright 1604: 7). The passions are physically located: they 'must have some corporall organ and instrument', which Wright says is the heart, although

'the passions inhabite, not only the heart, but also are stirred up in every part of the body' (Wright 1604: 33, 34). Indeed, in keeping with his scientific temper Wright's discussion of the passions is mechanical and not only material or physical. One example is his explanation of the emotional effects of music – entirely erroneous by our standards but nevertheless scientific in form: 'The very sound itselfe ... is nothing else but a certaine artificiall shaking, crispling or tickling of the ayre ... which passeth through the eares, and by them unto the heart, and there beateth and tickleth it in such sort, as it is moved with semblable passions' (Wright 1604: 170). In evaluating this account it must be remembered that William Harvey published his work on *The Motion of the Heart and Blood in Animals* in 1628, more than a quarter of a century after Wright first wrote this passage, and that the move from a humoural to a nervous system approach to emotions was not undertaken until 1672 with the publication of Thomas Willis' *De Anima Brutorum*.

As well as this physical basis of the passions in Wright, there is also a psychological dimension, for the passions also influence thought, possibly 'corrupting the judgement and seducing the will' (Wright 1604: 8). It has been claimed that such consideration is a new departure of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century writing on the passions, compared with Aristotle's treatment of emotions in terms of their external causes and behavioural consequences (Elster 1999: 76). This assessment, however, is neither an accurate reflection of Aristotle's contribution – it ignores Aristotle's definition of emotions, in the *Rhetoric*, as 'all those affections which cause men to change their opinion in regard to their judgements' (Aristotle 2000: 173) – nor appreciative of the medieval and early modern Christian concern with the effect of the passions on a person's disposition, evaluation, inclination and judgement.

The originality of the seventeenth-century writers on the passions consists, rather, in two additional attributes, namely an understanding of the management of emotions and also emotional expression. Both of these are developed by Wright. In his treatment of the 'mortification' of the passions, their alteration or management, Wright indicates a number of measures that prefigure current discussion of emotions management. The purpose is not primarily to expel or suppress emotions, but to make them 'moderate' (Wright 1604: 82), or, as might be said today, 'appropriate'. One method in

particular is crucial: 'with one naile drive out another' (Wright 1604: 84). Baruch Spinoza said it slightly differently some years later: 'An emotion can neither be hindered nor removed save by a contrary emotion' (Spinoza 1663: 148). Wright's argument, to be stated more fully below, is that by using one emotion to control another, economic self-interest can become virtuous, for 'What can more deterre men from wickednesse then their owne private losse, or move them more to vertue then their owne present gaine?' (Wright 1604: 326). This principle is central to Albert Hirschman's celebrated argument concerning the transformation of emotions in legitimating capitalism in early modern Europe, to which we shall now turn. Emotional expression will be treated in the section after the following.

Management of passion by means of passion

Albert Hirschman, in *The Passions and the Interests: Political Arguments for Capitalism Before Its Triumph* (1977), holds that a crucial step on the road toward modern capitalism was the application of a principle, to 'utilize one set of innocuous passions to countervail another more dangerous set' (Hirschman 1977: 20). In particular, he refers to the transformation of avarice, the 'foulest passion', into innocuous economic 'interest' (Hirschman 1977: 41). In this way, economic pursuits avert political dangers (Hirschman 1977: 69) – innocuous passions for economic gain displace destructive passions leading to war. But rather than refer to Wright's performance of this manipulation, briefly mentioned above, or Edward Reynolds' extensive discussion of the principle (Reynolds 1640: 41–6), for instance, Hirschman quotes instead Francis Bacon's *The Advancement of Learning* (Bacon 1605), in which is stated the idea 'to set affection against affection and to master one by another' (Hirschman 1977: 22). Hirschman says that Bacon's statement was without influence at the time and that it became effective only in the eighteenth century (Hirschman 1977: 22–3). Because he is not aware of Wright's *Passions of the Minde*, Hirschman does not realize how much Wright's work modifies the historical time frame that he proposes.

Against the suggestion by Hirschman that in this regard Bacon is the forerunner of Spinoza and Hume, for instance, it must be noted that *The Advancement of Learning* was first published in 1605 and augmented, in Latin, in 1623; *Passions of the Minde*, on the other hand,

was first published in English in 1601 with a second and third edition in 1604 and three subsequent up to 1630. While there is no evidence that Bacon read Wright's treatment of the passions, the two men did know each other. Indeed, Bacon interceded at least twice to have Wright released from imprisonment during the time that he was writing *Passions of the Minde* (Stroud 1951: 199). In 1598 Wright wrote to Bacon's brother, Anthony, that he had just completed a book on the passions of the mind (Stroud 1951: 201). It is necessary to add that Bacon's formulation, 'to set affection against affection and to master one by another', sits uncomfortably with the point of his general proposition, left out of the passage quoted by Hirschman: 'upon which foundation is erected that excellent use of *praemium* [bribe] and *poena* [punishment], whereby civil states consist: employing the predominant affections of fear and hope, for the suppressing and bridling the rest' (Bacon 1605: 145). The concern of this passage is not the utilization of an innocuous passion in countervailing a more dangerous one, but the exercise of power in political communities. The formulation follows Machiavelli, an author extolled throughout *The Advancement of Learning*, leads forward to Weber's observation, that '[political] obedience is determined by highly robust motives of fear and hope' (Weber 1919: 79), rather than to, say, Adam Smith in the eighteenth century, and is not properly a statement of the principle to which Hirschman refers. A consistent and forceful statement of the latter, as noted above, is to be found in Wright's *Passions of the Minde*.

Wright's formulation of the move that Hirschman describes is hesitant and ambiguous, typical of a pioneering statement, but its overall effect is beyond doubt. In *Passions of the Minde* Book 1, chapter 3, on 'Self Love', Wright repeats the Christian assumption concerning the duality of man: 'God gave every man an inclination to love himself, yet subordinated to reason: and how, by the pleasure of sensualitie, it is growne to such a head, that rather it ruleth reason, then reason ruleth it. Selfe-love then may be defined, an inordinate inclination of the soul' (Wright 1604: 14). But Wright wishes to show that these tensions do not necessarily lead in only one direction. The domestication or taming of self-love is achieved incrementally in Wright's discussion.

In chapter 5 of Book 1 of *Passions*, Wright turns to the distinction between the 'concupiscibile' and the 'irascibile' components of the

sensitive appetite. This is a distinction that can be traced back to Plato's location of separate parts of the soul in the chest and the stomach respectively, one part endowed with courage and passion and the other pertaining to bodily appetites (Gardiner, Metcalf and Beebe-Center 1937: 22–3). The refinement of the distinction between the concupiscibile and the irascibile appetites by Thomas Aquinas provided a typology of emotions that found application in different forms up until the eighteenth century (Gardiner, Metcalf and Beebe-Center 1937: 107–11). Following Aquinas, Wright describes the concupiscibile appetites as 'Coveting, Desiring, Wishing' and the irascibile as 'Anger, Inuading, or impugning' (Wright 1604: 19). The conventional view, Wright continues, is that 'the coueting appetite, inclineth only to the obtaining of those obiects which may easily be come by, and to the eschewing of those that may easily be escaped: the inuading appetite onely inclineth to the possessing of those obiects which may hardly be gotten, and hardly escaped' (Wright 1604: 20). This is Aquinas' view, that the concupiscibile appetite is directed to those enjoyable objects easily obtained and those repellent easily avoided, and the irascibile affections directed to the more difficult to acquire or avoid objects that require the overcoming of obstacles. In his account of the 'animal motions in the body' Robert Burton's description in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* of the concupiscibile and irascibile inclinations, for instance, does no more that reproduce this conventional schema (Burton 1621: 140–2).

Wright's innovation is to link the concupiscibile and irascibile powers in a dynamic combination in which they work together in serving self-interest, as God intended, without necessary departure from virtue. Wright says:

> God and Nature gaue men and beasts these natural instincts or inclinatiōs, to prouide for themselues all those things that are profitable, and to auoid all those things which are damnifiable: and this inclination may be called, *concupiscibilis*, coueting; yet because that GOD did foresee, that oftentimes there should occurred impediments to hinder them from the execution of such inclinations, therefore he gaue them another inclination, to helpe themselues to ouercome or auoid those impedimēts, and to inuade or impugne whatsoeuer resisteth. (Wright 1604: 21; emphasis in original)

Whereas the concupiscibile inclinations lead persons to provide for themselves, the irascibile overcome impediments that may inhibit the

operation of the concupiscibile. Where one leads to the direct satisfaction of self-interest, the other facilitates its accomplishment.

In Book 6, in a discussion of 'Difficulty to do well', Wright asks: 'What can more deterre men from wickednesse then their own private losse, or move them more to vertue then their owne present gaine?' (Wright 1604: 326). Here self-love is not negative or simply neutral, but positively serves virtue. It is possible to read this statement of Wright's as religious and metaphorical, for it is that: 'By vice our soules are spoyled of their riches' (Wright 1604: 326). But it is more than that. The reference to 'private loss' and 'present gain' indicates material, civil and commercial circumstances. Even more telling, Wright anticipates a traditional reaction: virtue pertains to a *spiritual* soul, and *material* losses and gains are not relevant to its fortunes. Wright's retort is: 'Do we not see daily men dye? Is not death of the body caused by death of the soule?' (Wright 1604: 327). With this deft move the realm of the soul is invoked, even given priority, so that it is rendered practically redundant: if the fortunes of the body are an index of the state of the soul, then the body is a sufficient measure of virtue.

In a remarkable discussion of 'The seventh motive to love, which is profit', in Book 5 of *Passions*, on means to move the passions, Wright indicates that commercial profit is continuous with worship of God (Wright 1604: 207–8). He says that: 'wee esteeme trades and merchandise profitable, because by them we gaine riches, which in effect are all things. What shall I say here, O Soveraigne Lord? Shall I make thee a meane to get me profit, who art the end of all profits and commodities' (Wright 1604: 207). Read in conjunction with Wright's negotiated conceptualization of self-love, described above, this statement resonates well with contemporary accounts of the passionate foundations of market transactions, and of the coterminous expressions of religious and commercial devotion. Even more interesting, this is approximately two decades before Richard Baxter's similar endeavours, indicated by Weber to be fundamental for his argument of the Protestant ethic providing the source for the spirit of capitalism.

It is of interest that later in the seventeenth century economic pamphleteers wrote of the emotional basis of economic activity, describing as virtues what would traditionally have been sins. John Houghton, for instance, writing in 1681, says that 'those who are guilty of Prodigality, Pride, Vanity, and Luxury, do cause more wealth

to the Kingdom, than loss to their own estates' and Sir Dudley North in a publication of 1691 saw that in envying the rich the poor 'are spurr'd up to imitate their Industry' (quoted Appleby 1978: 171, 172). After quoting these and similar passages from other authors, Joyce Appleby comments: 'Not content merely to catalog the psychological stimulants to demand, these writers drew attention to the specific economic function of each emotion' (Appleby 1978: 171). Indeed, these writers, in linking economic or market demand to speculations concerning the effects of human passions, took an intellectual stance that turned 'the subjectivity of desire' into 'an objective and measurable force by assuming a constancy in human beings' market behavior' (Appleby 1978: 184). Appleby suggests that this is the beginning of economic science. It is worth noting how consonant with this project was Wright's search for the underlying general principles of passional psychology. Even when he is considering the diversity of human responses and sensitivities he stresses the operations of patterning principles (Wright 1604: 38–44).

Expression of emotions

The other innovation of the seventeenth-century treatment of the passions, in addition to the management of passions by means of passions, is the appreciation of the expressive function of the emotions, which is the substance of *Passions of the Minde*, Book 4. Exploration of the externality of internal feeling through expression is often thought to be a nineteenth-century development, best represented in Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872). Darwin, however, dates his earliest source to 1746, and his modern editor, Paul Ekman, takes it 100 years earlier to 1649 (Ekman 1998: 435 notes 1 and 2). But Wright's discussion from 1601 of how 'the passions of our mindes worke divers effects in our faces' (Wright 1604: 26) should not be overlooked as an important anticipation of the discussion of expression. Indeed, Wright's account of blushing not only contains the elements of Darwin's account, but also improves on it by indicating not only the social source but also the social function of blushing (Wright 1604: 30), and in doing so anticipates recent developments (Castelfranchi and Poggi 1990: 240–3).

Another common misapprehension is to place the rise of interest in and understanding of the significance of emotional expression, not in

the nineteenth century, but a century or more prior to Wright and associated thinkers. Montaigne's reference of the early 1570s, for instance, to the 'movements of our face [that] bear witness to the thoughts that we were holding secret' (Montaigne 1948: 72), might be mentioned in this context. Much more frequently stated is the idea that a theory of emotional expression was developed in Italian artistic theory during the fifteenth century, especially through the writings of Leon Battista Alberti and Leonardo da Vinci (see Blunt 1964: 12, 34–5). But there is still confusion at this time and in these writers of expression of emotion and feeling on the one hand and decorum, social position and moral standing on the other (see Blunt 1964: 35, 52). Indeed, in the physiognomic theory of Renaissance Europe a person's emotions are held to be commensurate with and an index of their spiritual character and moral virtue. As in so many other things the influence of Aristotle is apparent. In *Rhetoric*, Book 3, Aristotle considers the expressivity of styles of speech, for instance, and immediately moves from emotion to expression of character and moral states (Aristotle 2000: 379). The disentanglement of gesture, bodily disposition and other expressions of character from facial expression of emotion, what Rodolphe Töpffer characterizes as a distinction between permanent and non-permanent aspects of expressive signs in the human face (Töpffer 1845: 17–23), is a move that is, in effect, achieved by the beginning of the seventeenth century by Wright and others. In this development the earlier theory of the passions is effectively replaced with a proto-modern theory of the emotions.

The significance of Wright's account and its continuity with later developments is amplified when contrasted with the contemporary statement of John Donne's Sermon XIV, for instance, in which a person's outward appearance is taken to reflect their inner state of religious grace: 'we have the image of God imprinted in our souls; we have the character, and seal of God stamped in us, in our baptism; and, all this is bound up in this vellum, in this parchment in this skin of ours' (Donne 1622: 365). Donne's perspective is continuous with earlier physiognomics that accounted for expression in terms of moral character rather than emotion (Baxandall 1988: 56–70), a doctrine that began to be challenged and transformed only in the late sixteenth century. Writing between 1598 and 1602 the English portrait painter Nicholas Hilliard, for instance, notes that 'countenances of wroth, of

feare, or of sorowe, haue their seuerall alterance of the face, and fare according to the mind is affected' (Hilliard 2001: 56). This is a modern apprehension of expression, against Donne's retrogressive statement, and commensurate with Wright's seventeenth-century appreciation of emotional expression.

To 'discover his fellowes naturall inclinations' (Wright 1604: 104), as Wright puts it, through an ability to read emotions from expression, serves not only virtue in the Christian ethical sense, but also the virtue of profit. Books 4 and 5 in *Passions of the Minde* especially have considerable practical significance for those seeking success in market exchanges. 'The understanding of the market', as one commentator on the seventeenth-century English economy noted, 'involved an understanding of other market participants. Motives had to be imputed, responses predicted, circumstances assessed, and norms surmised' (Appleby 1978: 246–7). Before the nineteenth century, most commodities were exchanged without the benefit of a fixed price. Also absent at this time were financial institutions through which market trust is given institutional form. Max Weber's idea of the market community, therefore, in which orientation is only to the commodity (Weber 1921: 636), is in this context misplaced. If they are anything, commercial exchanges function as a system of promises, and for promises to be made the persons involved must feel that they can trust each other (Appleby 1978: 188). Such trust can be achieved in large part by reading the intentions or emotional expressions of those with whom transactions are made.

These requirements of market participation, while general to market transactions, became first extensively practised during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. There is another point to mention about markets at this time, but which is historically unique to them, namely that because of a scarcity of metal coinage during the preceding century, mentioned earlier in the chapter, commerce relied intensely on informal credit. Market exchanges, dependent on such credit, were typically conducted during lengthy periods of negotiation, often in a tavern, and always in front of witnesses (see Muldrew 1998). When this fuller context of Wright's work is noted, then, the practical relevance to his readers of discussion of the uses of emotion and the importance of understanding the emotions of others becomes clear.

Indeed, it is evident in Wright's 'Preface' to *Passions of the Minde* that the commercial scene is indeed background to his interest, and

his readers' interest in the passions. Even 'rurall Gentlemen', Wright says, 'are as well acquainted with the civill dealing, conversing, and practise of Citties' (Wright 1604: lx–lxi). Prudence and policy, indeed craftiness, are more likely to develop in a commercial population: 'which in Citties is better attained unto then in Villages, and in Citties of greater commerce and resort, than in Cities of lesser repayre' (Wright 1604: lix). Thus it is commonly assumed that 'the inhabitants of Seatownes to be more craftie than the rural colonies' (Wright 1604: lix). Reference to craftiness here is further evidence that commerce is at least a likely application of the skills and knowledge that Wright imparts. While providing means to ascertain the concealed emotions of others Wright advises prudence in passions. The point of prudence, Wright says: 'is to conceale, as much as thou canst, thy inclinatiōs, or that passion thou knowest thy selfe most prone to follow, and this for two causes: first, for *credite*: secondarily for many inconveniences that may thereby ensue' (Wright 1604: 90; emphasis added; see also 105). Concealment of one's own emotions and inclinations is important in market exchanges because exposure of eagerness to purchase is likely to lead to a rise in a commodity's price.

The implicit, and not so implicit practical application of Wright's study of the passions in commercial activity is reminiscent of the treatment of both 'moral sentiments' and the 'wealth of nations' a century later in the work of Adam Smith. Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) concluded an historical period of intellectual reflection on economic relations and institutions that set it on a scientific footing and marked the initial operations of mature capitalism. In doing so Smith built his own system by actively relating to the economic thought of earlier eighteenth-century writers, including Richard Cantillon, David Hume, Francis Hutcheson, Sir James Steuart, Josiah Tucker, A. J. Turgot, to name only the most well known. Aspects of their thought were accepted by Smith, other parts of it developed by him, and other elements still were reacted against. But the discussion of economic issues that Smith related to had begun in earnest in the seventeenth century, and he explicitly addressed in a similar manner the writings of Thomas Mun, for instance, and William Petty, among others, whose principle works were published respectively in 1664 and 1690, although each was circulated earlier. The intellectual force of their ideas derived its momentum from economic pamphleteers

of the early and mid seventeenth century, beginning with Wheeler (1601), who turned 'the subjectivity of desire' into 'an objective and measurable force by assuming a constancy in human beings' market behaviour' (Appleby 1978: 184).

It is important to note how consonant with this latter project was Wright's search for the underlying general principles of passional psychology. Even when he is considering the diversity of human responses and sensitivities, he stresses the operations of patterning principles (Wright 1604: 38–44). His inspiration is the Renaissance project of *nosce teipsum*, know thyself. But whereas for Erasmus (1503), say, one hundred years earlier, knowing thyself meant literally that, as a means to personal salvation; for Wright it was a basis for knowing others, not only hermeneutically but scientifically: 'this subject I intreat of comprehendeth the chiefe object ... that was *Nosce teipsum*, Know thy selfe: the which knowledge principally consisteth of a perfit experience every man hath of himselfe in particular, and an universall knowledge of mens inclinations in common; the former is helped by the latter, the which knowledge is delivered in this Treatise' (Wright 1604: 6–7). The test of this knowledge for Wright is in its application that was not simply for salvation but for practical purposes including commercial success.

Wright was not directly involved with trade, but is likely to have had contact with commerce through his involvement, as an ex-Jesuit controversialist, in the production and circulation of recusant writings which were distributed as an illicit dimension of legitimate commercial trade between England and Flanders (Bossy 1965: 235; Southern 1950: 34–6). Alone of all his works, *Passions of the Minde* is free of religious controversy. Typical of natural philosophy of its day Wright's work draws on Aristotle, Cicero and Plutarch; as a Catholic he reads them through the prism of Thomas Aquinas. But Wright's religious faith did not prevent the Anglican Robert Burton, for instance, drawing upon and referring to *Passions of the Mind* in writing *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). The suggestion that as a Thomist Wright's discourse is retrogressive, entertaining as it did a distinction between a sensitive soul and a rational soul when contemporary, usually Protestant, writers adopted a 'one-soul' approach (Pressler 2002), is not accepted here. Indeed, a number of significant discussions of emotions by Protestants throughout the seventeenth century continued to accept a soul theory practically

identical with Wright's, including Burton's *Anatomy*, Bacon's *De Augmentis Scientiarum* (1623), Thomas Willis' *De Anima Brutorum* (1672), and Walter Charleton's *Natural History of the Passions* (1674) – the last two explicitly directed against Descartes' one-soul theory of *The Passions of the Soul* (1649) as anatomically flawed and unscientific.

Apart from its religious controversies, the seventeenth century was marked by a growing spirit of inquiry that moved from experience to generalization, not only concerning experience of the physical world but also the mental world of psychological and socio-economic relations. At the same time, this was also a historical period in which the significance of market exchanges was increasingly relevant and in which attempts to make sense of market practices of early modern capitalism in both practical and theoretical terms were expanded. It was to these currents that Wright contributes in *Passions of the Minde* and that continued to make his work significant, arguably carrying awareness of its contributions into the following century. The culmination of this progressive intellectual development is expressed in Adam Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a foundational work of sociological social psychology, which shall be considered more fully in the following chapter. The point to make here is that Wright's endeavours were not only to have a legacy in the thought of the following century but were part of a current that was significant in his own time in the provision of cultural means to enhance capitalistic market practices.

Capitalism, seventeenth-century Catholicism and cultural apparatus for market actors

The discussion above, of Wright's *Passions of the Minde* and its role in equipping seventeenth-century market agents pursuant of capitalistic practices with practical skills and moral justifications, touches two aspects of Weber's account of the elective affinities between the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism: first, the postulated Protestant as opposed to Catholic background of the spirit of capitalism, and second, Weber's suppositions concerning emotional suppression in market rationality. The latter of these matters has already been extensively dealt with in chapter 2 and there is no need to add anything here. Weber's argument concerning the Protestant

antecedents of the capitalist spirit is complex and raises a number of distinct matters that are too easily conflated in his account. Two issues in particular require clarification here. One concerns Weber's judgement of the religious threads he discusses and the significance of religion at all for profit making. The other concerns confusion in his account between the cultural apparatus required for action and the motivation for action. These separate facilities are not distinguished in Weber's discussion and his account is consequently not adequate to the purpose he sets for it; namely, an understanding of the historical origins of the means to modern capitalistic behaviour.

It was mentioned earlier in this chapter that Weber's claim is purely rhetorical in that the Catholic injunctions to profit making, which he agrees are similar to Baxter's, are to be dismissed as 'latitudinarian ... products of peculiarly lax ethical theories, not sanctioned by the authority of the Church' (Weber 1920: 267). They are quite unlike the Protestant idea of calling, he continues, because 'in the one case [capitalistic acquisition] might under certain conditions be *allowed*, [while it] appeared in the other as a *positive moral good*' (Weber 1920: 267; emphasis added). Indeed, it has been shown here that Wright's theological justification for self-interest in market exchanges cannot be properly characterized as 'latitudinarian' and is more thoroughly reasoned than the examples from Baxter that Weber includes in the *Protestant Ethic*. But the argument here is not that a Catholic rather than a Protestant ethic prefigures the spirit of capitalism. The more sensible point would be that writers of all religious and philosophic persuasions in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe were addressing issues raised by ongoing economic transformations. Some of these writers in various ways encouraged or even facilitated participation in these developments by enhancing the means by which individuals could take opportunities for financially benefiting from market exchanges. Weber's insistence, however, on the limitations of Catholic contributions to an accommodation with and extension of capitalistic market opportunities reflects a misunderstanding of the character and significance of the Catholic Counter-Reformation and its relationship with the Protestant Reformation.

Weber's own studies point to a unique Protestant monopoly on the concept and notion of 'calling' that he sees as more than analogous to the motivational core of the spirit of capitalism: 'if we

trace the history of the word through the civilized languages, it appears that neither the predominantly Catholic peoples nor those of classical antiquity have possessed any expression of similar connotation for what we know as a calling (in the sense of a life-task, a definite field in which to work), while one has existed for all predominantly Protestant peoples' (Weber 1920: 79). Nevertheless, all the relevant attributes of the Protestant ethic that relate to Weber's characterization of calling have been located in medieval Catholic philosophy (Fanfani 1935: 190–2, 196–200; Marshall 1982: 82; Robertson 1933: 160–7). Indeed, there was arguably a common source to both the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and the changes characteristic of Protestantism at the time can similarly be found in contemporary Catholicism (see Dickens 1979; Mullett 1995). A number of commentators have observed that Weber tends to exaggerate the differences between the two Christian denominations. While correctly noting that Protestantism was not a retreat from but an intensification of religious devotion that penetrated more fully than previous religious forms into everyday life, Weber ignores contemporaneous and parallel developments in Catholicism. Indeed, it has been noted by historians that the differences that separate sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholicism and Protestantism are largely organizational rather than doctrinal: the predestination doctrine of Protestantism was also in the Catholic creed; while the Catholic service remained Latin, sermons were given in local languages; and the Catholic confession was, by the sixteenth century, subjective and private, indicating a predominance of individual conscience over collective and communal concerns.

An aspect of a significant distinction between Protestantism and Catholicism, however, could conceivably be in the different constructions of emotions in each religion. Weber addresses this latter question with regard to the distinct attitudes to emotion in the different Protestant sects, in which the relevance of Calvinism, Pietism, Methodism and Baptism to the capitalist spirit is inversely proportional to the sect's tolerance of religious emotion (Weber 1920: 98–154). The emotionality of Catholicism is of less concern to Weber, although he might have made something of the fact that Catholic writers, following the tradition of Aristotle and drawing on the relevant works of Aquinas and Loyola, did not have a negative

approach to emotions – in the manner of Calvin, say – and saw the possibility of an enabling potential in certain emotions. But it is difficult to demonstrate a division in the theory of emotions considered in this chapter between representative figures from the different denominations insofar as the Catholic Wright's account of emotions is not radically different from that of his contemporaries, including the Anglican Robert Burton and the Presbyterian Edward Reynolds. Indeed, the three of them, among others, contributed to an approach to emotions that encouraged self-direction and orientation to opportunities in a world of emergent market relations that covers key elements of what Weber describes as calling, although with clear differences also given Weber's strictures on emotions and the requirement of their suppression in both Protestant and capitalist forms of calling.

The religious background of these seventeenth-century writers is far less relevant than the skills for practical engagement in market relations that is provided by their operative understanding of emotions. As we have seen, their domestication of emotions from medieval passions associated with the Fall permitted, indeed encouraged, a remodelling of self-interest that accorded with a desire to seek advantage in the opportunities provided by capitalistic market exchanges, and at the same time provided instruction on how to read the intentions of other market actors in their behaviour, speech and general inclinations so that market actors could better negotiate market exchanges. For this reason seventeenth-century transformations in the understanding and practice of emotions can be appropriately seen as provision of a new set of cultural apparatuses that are necessary for engagement in the incipient capitalist relations that are consolidated at this historical time.

Weber does have an implicit sense of the importance of a cultural apparatus that facilitates market activity. But he fails to separate it from the question of motivation and seems to hold that the relevant directing and facilitating forces for capitalist action derive from Protestant or are inhibited by Catholic religious values. Indeed, Weber says that he is 'interested ... in ... the influence of those psychological sanctions which, originating in religious belief and the practice of religion, gave a direction to practical conduct and held the individuals to it' (Weber 1920: 97). A major difficulty with Weber's approach stated in this quotation is the impossibility of demonstrating

such a motivational connection. It is possible to go no further than hypothesize that such a connection exists.

This last point is particularly relevant to consideration of how Weber treats evidence that is contrary to his argument. When he finds Catholic support for market activities, for instance, he dismisses it as irrelevant because he says it is without the sanction of religious doctrine (see Weber 1920: 163, 267 note 42). Religious doctrine can be invoked in this context because, by hypothesis, it is germane to the spirit of capitalism. Yet it has to be asked whether this rhetorical move contravenes Weber's own assertion that he has 'no intention whatever of maintaining such a foolish and doctrinaire thesis as that the spirit of capitalism ... could only have arisen as the result of certain effects of the Reformation' (Weber 1920: 91).

Weber agrees that capitalism has no *need* of Protestant ethics, for, as he says, it educates and selects its own economic subjects (Weber 1920: 55). However, the origin of the capitalist spirit, Weber asserts, is in need of explanation, as he immediately goes on to say. The explanation that he offers is in the idea of calling, and the self-discipline and sense of purpose it engenders (Weber 1920: 80). But whereas Weber focuses on the history of the idea of calling, an appreciation of its practices requires a rather different approach than the one he proposes. Thomas Wright's treatment of the passions is arguably parallel to the present-day discussion of emotional intelligence: knowing one's own emotions, in order to better manage them, especially in self-motivation, and recognizing the emotions of others in order to better manage one's relations with them (Goleman 1995: 43–4). This is the obverse of the Calvinist suppression of emotions, but nevertheless a robust foundation to calling.

In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber focuses on the cultural values of Protestantism and their role in motivating individuals to achieve their personal goals. Values may indeed be the source of a person's particular actions, but precisely because values can be implicated in individual orientation they function at a different level of operation than the social relationships that constitute market exchanges and the requirement of engaging other market actors. This oversight comes out of Weber's methodological focus in the *Protestant Ethic* on values and also his insistence that emotions have no place in sociological analysis. The argument cannot be simply that Calvinist values are

inappropriate for market actors, but that values themselves are not sufficient for an understanding of market exchanges: they relate to the orientation of the actor but not to the social exchanges required for market activity.

It is very telling that when he attempted to establish a vocabulary for a general sociology in middle life, Weber moved from values to an exploration of and endeavour to conceptualize 'social relationships', as Martin Albrow's fascinating account demonstrates (Albrow 1990: 235). Coincidentally, this was also the time during which Weber had begun to understand the constructive function of emotions, as we have seen in the previous chapter. This later account of Weber's does not assume shared values or meanings, but expectations of the other's meaning. Expectation is an emotional state based on being able to read the emotions of others.

Conclusion

Questions concerning the historical origins of modern capitalism and its course of change have to a considerable extent guided the continuing development of sociology. Prevailing understandings of the constitution of the original modern capitalists and their animus quite literally owe everything to Weber's account of the Protestant origins of modern capitalism and its inculcation of rational as opposed to emotional orientations of entrepreneur and worker alike. It has been shown in the present chapter, however, that on a number of essential points Weber's account fails to represent adequately the seventeenth-century scene the *Protestant Ethic* purports to characterize. From the perspective of the view of Weber's intentions shown in chapter 1, this does not constitute a serious problem. If the argument concerning the significance of Weber's construction of Calvinist calling is to provide a basis for the political maturity of the German middle class at the beginning of the twentieth century, then his historical judgement concerning the post-Reformation origins of modern capitalism are of secondary concern. However, if generations of sociologists learn their historical lessons about the beginnings of modern capitalism from the *Protestant Ethic* and repeat them as adequate representations of the period and its agents, then it is very important indeed to measure Weber's image of early modern capitalists tutored by religious ideas against what really were seventeenth-century notions of profit making

and the practical cultural apparatus developed and used to achieve financial and commercial advantage.

A number of things have been revealed in the present chapter, all novel and some impossible from the point of view of Weber's *Protestant Ethic*. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century conceptions of profit and the contemporary restraints on profit making are more-or-less acknowledged, if underplayed, in Weber's text. But the associated idea that religious sanction for profit making, as Weber finds in Richard Baxter's writings, means that one person's profit making should not be to the detriment of another's, supports and does not undermine the social constraints on profit making in early modern capitalism. This qualifies Weber's presentation of the early modern capitalist idea of profit making for its own sake, an idea that only reaches meaningful currency in the eighteenth century and at that time is given religious sanction by the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, who Weber in fact dismisses in the *Protestant Ethic* as having nothing to offer the notion of calling (Weber 1920: 143).

Another card in Weber's pack that does not deserve to be placed on the table is his representation of the rational entrepreneur as emotionally cool and disengaged from his emotional faculties and unconcerned with emotional forces. This is a position that has been criticized in general terms by Norbert Elias, for instance, when he says: 'any investigation that considers only people's consciousness, their "reasons" or "ideas", while disregarding the structure of drives, the direction and form of human affects and passions, can from the outset be of only limited value' (Elias 1939: 408). Indeed, the problems of Weber's treatment of emotion in the *Protestant Ethic*, and his own implicit revision of that treatment in subsequent writings, were discussed in the previous chapter. The present chapter, however, has demonstrated that a number of publications on the passions coincided with the growing significance of market exchange in the seventeenth century. These books and the information they contained about 'reading' or perceiving and understanding the emotions of others constitute a significant cultural apparatus that equipped and encouraged early modern capitalists for engagement in market exchanges. Even more interesting, these seventeenth-century works on the passions contributed to the legitimation of self-interested motivation in profit seeking, quite independently of the Protestant tracts, including those by Baxter, which Weber refers to and draws upon in the

Protestant Ethic. Of additional interest is the fact that these sources of the capitalist spirit and its necessary cultural apparatus of emotional sensibilities and orientations came from Catholic as well as non-Catholic writers rather than those, including Calvinists, who advocated suppression of the emotions, as Weber's account would lead us to expect.

Some of the themes introduced in this chapter, concerning the details of the foundation and basis of development of modern capitalism, and Weber's understanding of them, shall be pursued in the following chapters.

Appendix: Late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century works on the passions: a sample

- Timothy Bright, *A Treatise on Melancholy*, 1586. Three editions, the last appeared in 1613.
- Richard Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, 1621. Five subsequent editions up to 1651.
- Marin Cureau de la Chambre, *The Characters of the Passions*, translated by J. Holden, 1650. French original, 1648.
- Walter Charleton, *Natural History of the Passions*, 1674.
- Pierre Charron, *Of Wisdome*, translated by Samson Lennard, 1608. Later editions in 1630, 1640, 1670. French original, 1601.
- Nicholas de Coeffeteau, *The Table of Humane Passions*, translated by Edward Grimeston, 1621. French original, 1619.
- Juan Huarte, *The Examination of Men's Wits*, translated by R. Carew, 1594. Spanish original, 1575. Carew's translation went through four editions.
- Philippe de Mornay, *The True Knowledge of Mans Owne Selfe*, translated by Anthony Munday, 1602.
- Pierre de la Primaudaye, *The French Academie*, 1618. French original, 1577.
- Edward Reynolds, *Treatise of the Passions and Faculties of the Soule of Man*, 1640 and 1647.
- Thomas Rogers, *A Philosophical Discourse Entitled The Anatomy of the Mind*, 1576.
- Jean-François Senault, *The Use of Passions*, translated by Henry Carey, Earl of Monmouth from *De l'Usage des Passions*, 1641, and published in 1649 with a subsequent edition in 1671. A version of

the translation appeared in 1772 as *The Philosophy of the Passions; demonstrating their nature, properties, effects, use and abuse* without mention of Senault as its author.

- Thomas Walkington, *The Optick Glasse of Humors*, 1607. Four editions, third in 1639.
- Thomas Wright, *The Passions of the Minde in Generall*, 1601. Later editions in 1604 (twice), 1620, 1621, 1630.

4 *Protestant virtues and deferred gratification: Max Weber and Adam Smith on the spirit of capitalism*

In 1895, in his inaugural lecture, delivered on being appointed Professor of Economics and Finance at the University of Freiburg, Max Weber incidentally described himself as '[a] disciple of the German Historical School' (Weber 1895a: 19). It can be added that he was taught economics by a leading representative of the older German Historical School, Carl Knies (Swedberg 1998: 180–1). Rather than these generational differences within it (see Swedberg 1998: 174–6; Tribe 2002: 5–14), it is the School's struggle with the ghost of Adam Smith – important for its intellectual formation – that is of particular interest here, and also Knies own contribution to the published discussion of Smith. Through these routes Smith was made known to Weber, even though he remained mostly absent from Weber's own writing. Adam Smith's relevance to our understanding of Weber is compounded through Smith's development of an argument in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* concerning the spirit of capitalism, which has been ignored in the secondary literature and, while not acknowledged by Weber, is important for an understanding of his *Protestant Ethic*.

Smith's *Wealth of Nations* was known in Germany almost immediately after its first publication in London in 1776 (Greenfeld 2001: 180). It was both praised for its scientific prescience by liberal progressives and suspiciously regarded by the defenders of the official doctrine of Kameralism, which promoted state sponsorship of economic activity, for its laissez-faire pronouncements (Greenfeld 2001: 180–7). By the early 1840s a group of economic writers, the most important of whom were Friedrich List, Wilhelm Roscher and Carl Knies, expressed their opposition to Smith's idea, core to the *Wealth of Nations*, that economies are governed by universal laws. The

problem with such universal laws, these proponents of what became known as the German Historical School held, is their failure to take account of the national, cultural and historical differences that determine the real qualities of economic systems (Tribe 2002: 5–7). As important as these criticisms were in setting the German economic thinkers of the time apart from the ideas contained in the *Wealth of Nations*, they were quite irrelevant, however, to the other book that Smith published in his lifetime, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*.

Smith's *Moral Sentiments*, originally published in 1759, was met with much acclaim when it first appeared and it went through a number of editions in a relatively short period, with a sixth by 1790. A German translation of the third edition was published in 1770, just three years after its appearance in English, and a translation of the sixth edition was published in 1795 (Raphael and Macfie 1976: 33). Indeed, German interest in *Moral Sentiments* was significant and continuing, and an important debate concerning the relationship between *Moral Sentiments* and *Wealth of Nations* was initiated by Carl Knies in a work on which Weber cut his economic teeth, *Die Politische Oekonomie vom Standpunkte der geschichtlichen Methode* (1853). While Weber refers to Smith and quotes *Wealth of Nations* in the *Protestant Ethic* (Weber 1920: 81, 161), and a contrast between their approaches concerning the origins of capitalism has focused on Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (Breiner 2005), the strongest resemblance and most interesting differences between Weber and Smith can be located in comparing the discussion of the *Protestant Ethic* with *Moral Sentiments*.

While *Wealth of Nations* is widely regarded as the foundation text of scientific economics, *Moral Sentiments*, on the other hand, which has a very different intellectual texture and tone, explains the basis of ethical value and conduct that informs attributes of behaviour, including those that have come to be regarded, through Weber's discussion, as Protestant virtues, namely those of 'frugality, industry and application' (Smith 1759: 190). Indeed, Smith's account of moral virtues, their bases and consequences, not only anticipates much of Weber, but even those parts of *Moral Sentiments* that challenge Weber's account encourage a deeper appreciation of the arguments of the *Protestant Ethic*. A key category of *Moral Sentiments*, self-command, for instance, is close to the core mechanism of Weber's understanding of *Beruf*, vocation or calling, which is central to his

account of both the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. This too shall be considered in the discussion to follow. Before *Moral Sentiments* and the *Protestant Ethic* are treated together, however, it is necessary to situate the former as not merely a text of sociological relevance, but a pioneering statement of modern sociology.

Moral Sentiments as a sociological text

While *Wealth of Nations* is a foundation text of scientific economics, *Moral Sentiments*, which has not been seen to have direct relevance for economic analysis, has almost universally been described as a work of philosophy, and more narrowly as a work of philosophical ethics (Raphael and Macfie 1976: 1–15). Yet *Moral Sentiments* has failed to contribute to the development of philosophy, in the way that the work of Smith's contemporary David Hume has, for instance, and is simply ignored in histories of philosophy and also ethics. The recent interest taken by philosophers in *Moral Sentiments* (Griswold 1999; Otteson 2002) rather confirms the two-and-a-half centuries' indifference of philosophy to the work. Indeed, there is a suggestion that chief aspects of recent philosophical concern with Smith's *Moral Sentiments* are artificial and forced (Weinstein 2004).

In contrast to its predominantly neglected position in economics and also philosophy, *Moral Sentiments* is the source of an enduring sociological theory of self and identity, summarized as the theory of the 'looking-glass self' by Charles Horton Cooley (1902), who developed it without acknowledgement, although later writers have made proper attribution to Smith (Barbalet 1998: 108; Coser 1977: 350–1; Merton 1968: 19 note; Strasser 1976: 47–8). Curiously, however, the most frequent sociological focus on Smith has been to the macrosociology of class structure and social change in the *Wealth of Nations* (Meek 1954; Pascal 1938), sometimes at the expense of *Moral Sentiments* – as when the early American sociologist Albion Small, for instance, praises the *Wealth of Nations* as an exemplary sociological text but derides *Moral Sentiments* as 'naïve' and 'subjective rather than objective, individual rather than social' (Small 1907: 45). While *Moral Sentiments* has not been wholly ignored in sociology (Clarke 1991: 21–4; Salomon 1945), it remains under-appreciated as a major sociological statement. Indeed, while Smith did not have the advantage of a sociological vocabulary or have

consciousness of a discipline of sociology at all, examination of his discussion in *Moral Sentiments* demonstrates that he was attempting an empirical and explicitly non-philosophical exploration of the sources of social behaviour and institutions.

The line of thinking that regards *Moral Sentiments* as a pioneering statement of empirical sociology has a number of threads to it. First is the question of language: when Smith uses the term 'moral', for instance, it is in the manner of the moral sciences as shorthand for social, economic and psychological studies overall. Thus for Smith, the term 'moral' operates in contrast to the terms 'physical' and 'metaphysical' (Smith 1978: 570). Indeed, he says that 'what is properly called moral philosophy' is to 'investigate and explain those connecting principles' of 'common life' (Smith 1776: 769), just as 'natural philosophy' investigates the 'connecting principles of nature' (Smith 1980: 45). Second, in *Moral Sentiments* Smith explicitly shuns, indeed disparages, philosophy (Smith 1759: 20–1; 315), and prior to Part VII, which considers systems of moral philosophy, there is no engagement with the work of philosophers. Instead Smith develops his argument by referring to the writings of playwrights, poets and historians. Charles Griswold (1999: 47, 65), for instance, misunderstands the significance of this, claiming that it reflects Smith's rhetorical style and his actor–spectator dialectic requiring a dramatic or theatre metaphor. Such an account misses the fact that Smith's use of drama points to his interest in empirical evidence in contrast to philosophical principle, which is the third point. In *Moral Sentiments* Smith builds an argument concerning the emotional basis of human social conduct on the empirical evidence available to him, including examples from everyday life, history, drama and traveller's tales.

The role of everyday and historical examples in providing data for Smith's empirical proto-sociology is clear and requires no further comment. It has to be noted, though, that at the time of Smith's writing it was believed that drama was an apposite source of valid information concerning social reality. A contemporary discussion of the verisimilitude of drama to life makes the point:

> In exhibit[ing] a picture of human life and manners ... it is universally allowed that the dramatic form is by far the most perfect. The circumstance of leaving every character to display itself in its own proper language, with all the variations of tone and gesture which distinguish it from others, and

which mark every emotion of the mind ... contribute to stamp such an appearance of reality upon dramatic representation as no other of the imitative arts can attain. Indeed, when in their perfection, they can scarcely be called imitations, but the very things themselves. (Aikin 1773: 1–2)

Smith's use of traveller's tales is also important to his argument, but Griswold fails to mention them. Accounts of American Indians, for instance, provide evidence that is central to Smith's pivotal treatment of self-command (Smith 1759: 205–10). There is no rhetorical value in this material, which also fails to satisfy the actor–spectator metaphor. It does, however, constitute an essential source of evidence about social relations in qualitatively dissimilar societies to Smith's own that allows him to draw general conclusions of an essentially empirical nature. This evidence, characteristically available at the time through the endeavours of explorers, traders and missionaries, was also used by English and French writers on social themes as well as by Smith and his Scottish contemporaries (Meek 1976; Olson 1993: 72–4).

In *Moral Sentiments* Smith builds an empirical case concerning the patterns of social life in general, including economic relations, and the sympathetic and emotional foundations of the 'moral' framework in which such patterns form. This work is not only the source of a sociological social psychology that has the 'looking-glass self' at its core, which incidentally is now staple to our understanding of social trans-subjectivity. As we shall see, Smith also outlined in it an understanding of the relationship between the ethical outlook of social strata or groups and their economic dispositions which were responsible for wide-ranging world-historical outcomes. The claim here is not simply that Smith anticipated Weber's argument concerning the spirit of capitalism, although it is not difficult to demonstrate that he did. Rather, it will be shown that Smith offers an alternative sociological explanation of the formation of dispositions and practices that consolidated the development of modern capitalism in Europe.

Protestant virtues

In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber famously explains the change from traditional to modern capitalism in terms of a change in the mentality of economic actors rather than a change in the form or content of economic institutions. Indeed, he makes the point that the 'spirit of

capitalism' must be conceptually and historically separated from the advent and incidence of capitalistic organization (Weber 1920: 64–8). This is because his chief concern is the attitudinal rather than the structural preconditions for modern capitalism: 'The question of the motive forces in the expansion of modern capitalism is not in the first instance a question of the origin of the capital sums which were available for capitalistic uses, but, above all, of the development of the spirit of capitalism' (Weber 1920: 68). This 'spirit' is given concrete expression in 'the *idea* of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital ... the '*feeling* of obligation to one's job ... that *attitude* which seeks profit rationally and systematically ... the *conception* of money-making as an end in itself' (Weber 1920: 51, 63, 64, 73; emphasis added). That these feelings, attitudes and conceptions constitute a 'motive force' derives from the fact that they are held as 'ethical' principles (Weber 1920: 69, 75). It is of particular interest that Smith similarly refers to ethical virtues that form a foundation to money-making for its own sake. He refers, for instance, to the 'practice of frugality, industry, and application', which, he says, is 'directed to no other purpose than the acquisition of fortune' (Smith 1759: 190). For 'encouraging industry, prudence, and circumspection', he says, there is '[s]uccess in every sort of business' (Smith 1759: 166). Smith continues in an ethical register by immediately going on to indicate that this is 'the reward most proper' for such a match of motive and outcome (Smith 1759: 166).

Not only do Weber and Smith agree, then, on an ethical basis of money-making that is original to capitalistic development, they similarly locate such an ethos in a particular social stratum, one which is inclined to practise its socially endowed capacities for self-control. Weber says that 'the predominant bearers of ... the spirit of capitalism' were not the wealthy commercial entrepreneurs, but 'the rising strata of the lower industrial middle classes' (Weber 1920: 65; see also 139, 277–8 note 84). Similarly, Smith observes that in 'the middling and inferior stations of life', the 'road to virtue and that to fortune ... [are] very nearly the same' (Smith 1759: 63). Along similar sociometric lines, Smith goes on to refer to 'their parsimonious frugality, their painful industry, and rigid adherence to rules' when describing the 'virtues of the inferior ranks of people' (Smith 1759: 201). The mechanism that achieves these virtues, according to Smith, is self-command. The 'respectable virtues of industry and frugality, derive

all that sober lustre which attends them', he says, 'from the unremitting steadiness of those gentler exertions of self-command' (Smith 1759: 242). Self-command, as we shall see, is equivalent to the core mechanism of Weber's concept of *Beruf*, calling or vocation, which underwrites the ethos of the capitalist spirit.

There is a further dimension of symmetry between Weber and Smith. They agree that the suppression of emotions is required for what they respectively describe as rational asceticism and self-command, and that this is necessary in order to achieve satisfaction of a future goal against the urgency of a present desire. Weber, for instance, says that 'rational ... asceticism' must act 'against the emotions' in order for a person to 'maintain and act on [their] constant motives' (Weber 1920: 119). This is because, as Weber warns, the emotions as spontaneous and impulsive forces distract a person from their purposes (Weber 1920: 118–19; see also 105, 114, 123, 136). In making what is effectively the same broad point Smith distinguishes between a miser and 'a person of exact economy and assiduity': the latter attends to money-making 'only in consequence of the scheme of life which he has laid down to himself' (Smith 1759: 173). The realization of such a 'scheme of life' necessarily requires the restraint provided by self-command, without which, Smith warns, 'every passion would, upon most occasions, rush headlong ... to its own gratification' (Smith 1759: 262–3). In what could be read as a premonition of Weber, Smith says that a man's 'passions are very apt to mislead him' and that 'self-command' must support self-knowledge to 'enable him to do his duty' (Smith 1759: 237; see also 157–8). The suppression of current impulses through self-command to realize future goals achieves the virtues characteristic of the capitalist ethos, according to Smith (Smith 1759: 196, 215). From the perspective of Weber's analysis the question arises: are these virtues Protestant, according to Smith, as they are for Weber?

Smith acknowledges the relevance of religious commitment and doctrine to the purpose of achieving extrinsic goals: 'The idea that ... we are always acting under the eye, and exposed to the punishment of God', says Smith, 'is a motive capable of restraining the most headstrong passions' (Smith 1759: 170). Indeed, he goes on to say, the power of religion has led many '*to suppose* that religious principles were the sole laudable motives of action' (Smith 1759: 171; emphasis added). It is at this crucial point in noting the symmetry of these two

thinkers that Weber and Smith cease to offer similar statements and explanations of the spirit of capitalism, however, because Smith provides an alternative account to the one Weber proposes concerning the cultural basis of the economic processes they agree occurred during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Smith's sociological treatment of the ethical foundation of market activity, which is without recourse to religious socialization, is a valuable measure against which Weber's account can be compared.

Deferred gratification

The spirit of capitalism, according to Weber, is a 'peculiar ethic' which is expressed in the 'idea of a duty of the individual toward the increase of his capital, which is assumed as *an end in itself*' (Weber 1920: 51; emphasis added). In this sense, he goes on to say, the making of money for its own sake is 'the result and the expression of virtue and proficiency in a calling' (Weber 1920: 54). The idea that money-making is an end in itself, for it to be an element of the spirit of capitalism, means that is must be 'combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life' (Weber 1920: 53; see also 64–5, 68). For Weber, this vocation of accumulation through denial arises out of the substratum of Protestant asceticism, which also entails denial of the satisfaction of consumption (Weber 1920: 170–1).

The notion that the peculiar ethic of money-making as an end in itself is characteristic of modern capitalism, is not original to Weber's account. Indeed, it is a hallmark of the motive force of an era that classical political economy from the late seventeenth century in England attempted to distil in its model of self-regulating markets within which only the motive of profit is necessary. This idea was satirized by Karl Marx when he famously wrote 'Accumulation for accumulation's sake, production for production's sake: by this formula classical economy expressed the historical mission of the bourgeoisie, and did not for a single instant deceive itself over the birth throes of wealth' (Marx 1867: 558). Weber agrees that once the capitalist system is established and operating as a dominant economic force there is no need for a special explanation of what we had earlier seen him describe as the 'peculiar ethic'. This is because in an established capitalist economy 'the calling of money making [is] ... so intimately bound up with the conditions of survival in the economic

struggle for existence' (Weber 1920: 72). The difference between Weber and Marx, however, is that whereas Marx regards this secular ethic as originally intrinsic to and not developmentally formed in capitalism, Weber believes that it has an extrinsic source in Protestant religious belief that was necessary to the formation or beginning of the spirit of capitalism, even though the religious element is redundant once capitalism is viable (Weber 1920: 72).

While Marx, then, was uninterested in the spirit of capitalism as a vector independent of capitalist relations of production and organization, the writer who could be described as responsible for the pinnacle statement of classical political economy, Adam Smith – as we have seen – shared Weber's concern with the ethical wellspring of capitalist activity. Marx, on the other hand, saw ethical stances as no more than a squeak of the turning wheel of capitalist production. Weber's argument, however, that a sense of duty to increase one's capital could be experienced as an end in itself, raises further questions that Smith shows are unnecessary and avoidable. Weber embraces a most radical understanding of the idea of 'an end in itself', for he insists that capitalistic money-making is so 'purely an end in itself' that it is necessarily combined with 'the strict avoidance' of enjoyment and pleasure, indeed any extrinsic satisfaction (Weber 1920: 53). This is a strange utilitarianism (Weber 1920: 52) that lacks both the premise of pleasure and the measure of consequence, for it is an illogical utility that is exclusively an 'end in itself'. Not only is Weber's particular formulation of the peculiar ethic intellectually unstable as it is illogical, it is historically unsubstantiated (Schama 1987), as he in effect acknowledges (Weber 1920: 169–70, 173–4). Such problems are avoided, however, by Smith's approach to the ethos of the spirit of capitalism.

For Smith, the abnegation of present enjoyment in order to save money or accumulate profit does not mean the avoidance of all enjoyment, broadly understood, and it does not mean the denial of satisfaction in consumption – although Smith does not understand the satisfaction of consumption in a literal or naive sense, as we shall see. This is not to deny that profit-motivated market activity requires sacrifice, foresight and constancy of effort and purpose, but, as Smith notes, this can itself be a source of satisfaction and does not necessarily require the denial and despair suggested by Weber's statement of the Protestant ethic, which leaves its practitioners isolated

and distrusting (Weber 1920: 104, 107). Smith sees a layered and apparently contradictory process in which present denial for future satisfaction requires a social appreciation of the apparently ascetic quest for profit making. He says that those who engage 'a steady perseverance in the practice of frugality, industry and application ... directed to no other purpose than the acquisition of fortune' are accorded the 'eminent esteem' of their fellows (Smith 1759: 189–90):

> The pleasure which we are to enjoy ten years hence interests us so little in comparison with that which we may enjoy today, the passion which the first excites, is naturally so weak in comparison with that violent emotion which the second is apt to give occasion to, that the one could never be any balance to the other, unless it was supported by the sense of propriety, by the consciousness that we merited the esteem and approbation of every body, by acting in the one way, and that we became the proper objects of their contempt and derision by behaving in the other. (Smith 1759: 190)

By explaining the denial of present pleasure (rather than pleasure per se) in profit seeking, Smith is able to show that achievement of deferred gratification requires not fear of failing to realize a theologically defined state of being or becoming, as with Weber, but through a social process of satisfying communal norms. Tellingly, Smith writes that 'this control of our passive feelings must be acquired, not from the abstruse syllogism of a quibbling dialect, but from that great discipline which Nature has established for the acquisition of this and every other virtue; a regard to the sentiments of the real or supposed spectator of our conduct' (Smith 1759: 145).

With a curious phrasing which almost appears to be a direct response to Smith's argument Weber concedes that 'the power and recognition which the mere fact of wealth brings plays its part' in the motivation of ascetic profit seeking, but he immediately adds, though, that 'in general [it is] not the real leaders, and especially not the permanently successful entrepreneurs, who are taken in by it' (Weber 1920: 70, 71). He goes on to say: 'The ideal-type of the capitalist entrepreneur ... avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditure, as well as *conscious* enjoyment of his power, and is embarrassed by the *outward* signs of the social recognition which he receives ... He gets nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well [fulfilling his vocation]' (Weber 1920: 71; emphasis added). The qualifications in this quotation must be taken

seriously: it is not that the entrepreneur avoids the satisfaction of his capacities, but *conscious* satisfaction or enjoyment; it is not that he is embarrassed by social recognition or esteem but by the *outward* signs of social esteem. Added to these possible concessions to a position rather like the one Smith clearly advanced, it is important to notice that Weber presents here an 'ideal-type' capitalist entrepreneur. It is no distortion to say that Weber's ideal-type conceptualizations are designed to fit the available facts to the argument rather than the argument to the facts. He says, for instance, 'it is absolutely necessary, in order to bring out the characteristic differences, to speak in terms of ideal-types, thus in a certain sense doing violence to historical reality' (Weber 1920: 233 note 68). There is a rhetorical flourish in Weber's presentation of the ideal-type capitalist entrepreneur and the historical development of the type. It begins with a storybook statement: 'We may imagine its routine somewhat as follows ...' (Weber 1920: 66), and continues with the style of a confidence trick: 'Often – I know of several cases of the sort – regular legends of mysterious shady spots in his previous life have been produced' (Weber 1920: 69). It ends with the claim that 'the conception of money-making as an end in itself to which people were bound, as a calling, was contrary to the ethical feelings of whole epochs, it is *hardly necessary to prove*' (Weber 1920: 73; emphasis added). These and similar problems with the ideal-type conception in general are discussed in other chapters and there is no need to continue a more detailed treatment of the character and problems of ideal-type conceptualizations here.

Later in the *Protestant Ethic* Weber returns to the theme of the discouragement of pleasure, enjoyment, and consumption that he claims is inherent in ascetic Protestantism. Again, what is of interest to the present discussion is the way in which a close reading of his account reveals the qualifications in it that curiously modify the strong presentation that Weber otherwise insists upon. After a number of pages in which he recounts the connection between the religious ideals of ascetic Protestantism on the one hand and mundane economic conduct and behaviour on the other, Weber says 'This worldly Protestant asceticism ... acted powerfully against the *spontaneous* enjoyment of possessions [and] restricted consumption, *especially of luxuries*' (Weber 1920: 170–1; emphasis added). Given Weber's qualifications in this statement it might be presumed that contemplative or considered enjoyment as opposed to spontaneous

enjoyment of possessions and the consumption of non-luxurious goods and services may provide their own satisfactions even to ascetic Protestants. Indeed, he does not disallow such a prospect and it would be unreasonable for him to do so, on both logical and historical grounds.

Allowing this much, even while remaining true to the other parts of Weber's account, does not mean that these particular satisfactions will not increase proportionately with increases in savings, production for profit and capital accumulation. In these circumstances it is unnecessary to insist that money-making for the sake of profit precludes pleasure in consumption. It does, however, require reflection on the nature of the pleasures involved and it shifts the focus from denial of consumption for its own sake – which is another way of stating Weber's expressed argument regarding the nexus of ascetic Protestantism and money-making as an end in itself – to the trade-off between the restriction of consumption on the one hand, and the capacity to save and invest on the other. This takes the argument very close to Smith's treatment of capitalistic frugality in terms of deferred gratification, and it is exactly what Weber goes on to point to: 'When the limitation of consumption is combined with this release of acquisitive activity, the inevitable practical result is obvious: accumulation of capital through ascetic compulsion to save. The restraints which were imposed upon the consumption of wealth naturally served to increase it by making possible the productive investment of capital' (Weber 1920: 172). There is no need here to explain accumulation in terms of the distaste for consumption but instead it can be treated in terms of a preference for savings. Ordinarily, an argument concerning the inclination or propensity to save rather than consume would make reference to the opportunities for returns on investment. This Weber fails to do. And yet the point that it is possible to choose between saving and spending would be sufficient to explain the origins and not only the mature maintenance of a spirit of capitalism, without the need for the religious basis of an affinity for money-making that Weber insists upon.

These alternative explanations of the spirit of capitalism point to different theories of action. Weber holds that a religiously based aversion to pleasure, including the pleasure of consumption, is the basis of the peculiar ethic of money-making as an end in itself. Another possibility is that saving in order to expand profit for its own

sake comes out of opportunities for returns on investment. Whereas one approach assumes that action can be explained in terms of the actor's values, the other assumes that the range of available opportunities explains the actions in which persons engage. Thus, Benjamin Franklin's alleged Puritanism explains the prosperity of the New England colonies in terms of the first approach, and the differential structure of agricultural and other economic opportunities in New England relative to the American South explain it in terms of the other approach (Samuelsson 1957: 114–15). The difference between these positions, emphasizing values and (opportunity) structures as alternative explanations of action, remains unresolved because neither is sufficient and both are necessary in any successful action theory (see Lockwood 1964). An emphasis only on values, and religiously based values at that, will always be open to rebuttal and in that sense will keep the debate alive. The question of opportunity structure is raised here because it is implicit in Weber's discussion in the *Protestant Ethic*, as we have seen, even though it runs against the explicit argument concerning the nature and source of the spirit of capitalism for which the work is known, and it corresponds with Smith's account of the spirit of capitalism mentioned earlier in this chapter. Additionally, what particular values operate in taking advantage of new opportunities can only properly be considered once the nature of the opportunity structure itself has been specified.

While the direction of action may correspond with the actor's values and opportunities, the realization of action requires both resources and motivation. The spirit of capitalism in Weber's account and especially its religious basis are widely thought to relate to the question of motivation – the desire or drive to accumulate for its own sake – for this is how Weber presented it, as we have seen. More shall be said about the idea of duty and its relevance to the spirit of capitalism in the following section. There is no reference in the *Protestant Ethic* to the resources required by capitalists to achieve accumulation. Elsewhere, though, Weber treats the evolution of credit institutions, for instance, which he says are 'indispensable for a modern capitalistic society' (Weber 1921: 682). Much of this discussion, brief as it is in *Economy and Society* (Weber 1921: 681–3) and especially *General Economic History* (Weber 1927: 251, 262–6), extends beyond the focus of the present chapter, as it is concerned with the expansion of purchasing power and hence the money supply through bank

credit, an institutional innovation crucial for the development of capitalism, historically present in Europe but absent in India and China (Weber 1927: 265–6), and also the role of credit – in which 'property can be represented by freely negotiable paper' – in speculation, which Weber sees as an additional characteristic and a prerequisite of capitalist enterprise (Weber 1927: 286). But the opportunities for money-making for its own sake that came with the expansion of trade in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in Europe, to be discussed more fully in the next chapter, could not have been taken without the availability of negotiable credit.

The ethical content of the spirit of capitalism, as the pursuit of opportunities for profit making and accumulation, and the related deferred gratification of restricting consumption in order to expand savings for investment, need not be religious at all. As Carlo Cipolla says, the 'ethical aspect' of enterprise at the beginning of the modern period was 'the precondition of a spirit of mutual trust and a sense of honesty in business' (Cipolla 1993: 164). Cipolla believes that this spirit of trust and sense of honesty are dependent on a sense of 'belonging to an integrated community' (Cipolla 1993: 164). Such an 'integrated community' can be taken to refer to legal and political institutionalization in the making of the modern state. In the more directly social realm, however, the ethical content of the sort Cipolla refers to can be sourced in the 'consciousness' of communal 'esteem and approbation' or 'contempt and derision' indicated by Smith when explaining the social basis of individual incentives, mentioned above, to seek future returns through the denial of present consumption in order to invest (Smith 1759: 190). Opportunities for return on investment, the resource of credit in the capitalistic sense of transferable instruments, and the ethic of trust, are all associated with the idea of money-making for its own sake, even though Weber mentions only the first of these, ever so briefly and obscurely, in the *Protestant Ethic*, and he does not there touch upon the other two. Given that his argument concerning the failure to take opportunities for money-making under traditional conditions in contrast to the situation of modern capitalism, in which such opportunities are actively sought, strangely relates to labour and wages rather than capital and profits (Weber 1920: 59–63), it is not surprising that Weber's discussion is inadequate for a proper explication of the latter.

The argument here is not designed to lead to doubt concerning Weber's claim that the new entrepreneur of the early modern period, filled with the spirit of capitalism, was more interested in investment than consumption – 'they did not wish to consume but to earn' (Weber 1920: 68). It has been shown, however, that Weber's explanation of a preference for investment over ostentatious or decorative consumption, in terms of ascetic Protestant religious beliefs, fails to live up to its promise. First, it misunderstands the nature of the pleasures and satisfactions available to early capitalists, especially the social satisfactions that might support frugality, as discussed by Smith. Second, it is simply irrelevant to the nature of the opportunities for profit making and the resources, including third-party credit, required by profit seekers in the formation of capitalist economic expansion. Yet, in fairness to Weber's argument concerning the Protestant basis of the spirit of capitalism, none of these matters address the motivation for profit in the idea of a sense of duty in the capitalist calling or vocation (Weber 1920: 54). This is the idea of 'systematic self-control' in order 'to maintain and act upon ... constant motives' (Weber 1920: 115, 119), or what Smith calls 'self-command'. These qualities of 'temperate self-control' are defining of the modern capitalist (Weber 1920: 69). And it is to them that we now turn.

Self-control and self-command

The core attributes of Weber's notion of calling are self-control, in both overcoming natural impulses and maintaining and realizing what he calls 'constant motives' (Weber 1920: 119). These qualities define both the Calvinist ascetic and the capitalist entrepreneur (Weber 1920: 118–19, 69). Indeed, these two roles are connected by the Calvinist idea that the 'fulfilment of duty in worldly affairs [is] the highest form which the moral activity of the individual can assume' (Weber 1920: 80). For Weber, moral activity – including the peculiar ethic of money-making as an end in itself – is necessarily formed in opposition to natural or emotional impulses, for moral purpose is always cognizant of consequences and therefore brings order to conduct through adherence to a long-term plan or framework (Weber 1920: 119). When referring to the basis of the Puritan's self-control, in *Economy and Society*, Weber similarly says it 'flowed from the necessity of his subjugating all creaturely impulses to a rational and methodological plan of conduct'

(Weber 1921: 619). Smith also describes self-command in terms of self-mastery and the self-disciplining of one's own emotional feelings (Smith 1759: 145). Nevertheless, Smith's account of self-command adds a dimension to the control of emotions or impulses that in absent is Weber's understanding of self-control. This is because Smith appreciates that the emotions are not simply to be denied, as Weber supposes in the *Protestant Ethic* – as we saw in chapter 2 and shall see further below – but trained or accommodated and turned to supporting self-command itself.

In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber understands, the control of emotions to function in terms of their moral suppression rather than the recruitment of emotions to moral purposes. Such a distinction as this, indeed, fails to make sense when the emotions are regarded as necessarily anti-rational (Weber 1920: 136) and subversive of the ethical commitment through which the life plan of a calling operates (Weber 1920: 174, 180), a view Weber not only holds himself but claims for the Calvinists about whom he is writing (Weber 1920: 105, 114, 123). Indeed, with regard to particular emotions he says that the Calvinist idea of a calling was both 'the most suitable means of counteracting feelings of religious *anxiety*' that the doctrine of predestination is held to create and also as a means of 'getting rid of the *fear* of damnation' (Weber 1920: 112, 115; emphasis added). And yet, even in the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber does indicate a socially positive role for other particular emotions, even though he refers to them as 'attitudes' rather than emotions when they serve rather than undermine the activities of a calling (Weber 1920: 122). Weber's confusion in the *Protestant Ethic* concerning emotions and how they might be related to the exercise and practice of both the Calvinist and capitalistic callings has been treated in chapter 2. What can be seen here is that the problems inherent in Weber's approach to emotions in his understanding of the concept of calling in the *Protestant Ethic* can be rethought by applying a distinction Smith makes when considering the self-disciplining of feelings as an aspect of self-command.

Smith says that those who practise self-command endeavour 'to model, not only his outward conduct and behaviour, but, as much as he can, even his inward sentiments and feelings' (Smith 1759: 147). But self-restraint, Smith holds, requires more than the mere control of one's emotional behaviour, it may also involve an ethically infused emotional self-training. The attitude to emotions in each

phase of self-command is distinct and it is necessary to distinguish between what might be called a suppressive and an educative or cultivational attitude, one holding that the emotions can be quieted or dismissed and the other acknowledging that control of emotions means not their eradication but cultivation. It is necessary to distinguish between constraints of emotions, then, in terms of two distinct means, what Smith calls prudence on the one hand and a sense of impropriety on the other. The first of these corresponds with the suppressive approach to the emotions that is found in Weber's discussion while the other is Smith's preferred approach and serves more effectively management of emotions for the self-control required for any vocation or life plan.

Smith cautions against merely attempting to suppress emotional feelings when he warns that when 'passions are restrained ... by prudential considerations of the bad consequences which might follow from their indulgence ... [they] are not always subdued, but often remain lurking in the breast with all their original fury' (Smith 1759: 263). He immediately continues to explain that in such cases the passions in questions, while restrained, may not be subdued: 'The man whose anger is restrained by fear, does not always lay aside his anger, but only reserves its gratification for a more safe opportunity' (Smith 1759: 263). It is only when a sense of the impropriety of the anger is properly formed, in Smith's view, that the requirements of self-command can be achieved. It was noted earlier that Smith does not believe that self-command arises from 'the abstruse syllogisms of a quibbling dialectic' (Smith 1759: 145). Rather, he says, it develops through training, and training sponsored by social conditions. Self-command, says Smith, 'by which we are enabled to abstain from present pleasure or to endure present pain, in order to obtain a greater pleasure or to avoid a greater pain in some future time', is one of the qualities through which individual achievement is possible (Smith 1759: 189). Without it there is only the prospect of indolence and irresolution (Smith 1759: 153). Smith shows that the usefulness of self-command derives not from religious doctrine but from practical need, and that it is achieved by overcoming the circumstances that provoke it.

The 'austere virtue' of self-command, Smith says, can be learned only through experience of '[h]ardships, dangers, injuries, misfortunes', for these are 'the only masters under whom we can learn the exercise of this virtue ... [even though] nobody willingly puts himself

to school' (Smith 1759: 153). This statement is reminiscent of Weber's description of the first generation of capitalists: 'men who have grown up in the *hard school of life*, calculating and daring at the same time above all temperate and reliable, shrew and completely devoted to their business' (Weber 1920: 69; emphasis added). But unlike Weber, Smith insists that it is not sufficient to have the disposition for self-command, either through religious conviction or some other extraneous source, because it can only be developed through '[e]xercise and practice' (Smith 1759: 152). Opportunities for the latter are found in an individual's exposure, for instance, to 'the violence of faction ... the hardships and hazards of war ... the insolence of his superiors, the jealous and malignant envy of his equals, on the pilfering injustice of inferiors' (Smith 1759: 152). These particular examples may indicate more about the society of Smith's times than the fine details of the acquisition of self-command, but the essential point that Smith insists upon is that 'the great school of self-command' comes not from the pulpit or study of religious tracts and acceptance of their creed, but is in 'the bustle and business of the world' (Smith 1759: 146).

Through his treatment of self-command, Smith demonstrates in his discussion above anything else that he is a sociologist of morals. The description of self-command as a 'virtue', for instance, refers principally to how it is seen by those in a community or society that experience it (Smith 1759: 77), a point to which we shall return. The achievement of these capacities culturally defined as virtuous, Smith shows, is accomplished in terms of particular social conditions. In a chapter called 'Of the Influence of Custom and Fashion upon Moral Sentiments' Smith notes that the occupational structure and the various lifestyles associated with the range of possibilities it encourages, correspondingly promotes 'very different characters and manners' (Smith 1759: 201). Similar differences also form out of life-cycle changes, he says (Smith 1759: 201), as well as epochal or historical and cultural differences: 'The different situations of different ages and countries are apt, in the same manner, to give different characters to the generality of those who live in them, and their sentiments concerning the particular degree of each quality, that is either blamable or praise-worthy, vary, according to that degree which is usual in their own country, and in their own times' (Smith 1759: 204). These considerations and remarks are preparatory to Smith's discussion of the social basis of self-command.

Opportunities for the practice and development of self-command are higher in barbarous nations, says Smith, than civilized. This is because of the 'wide ... difference between the degrees of self-command which are *required* in civilized and in barbarous nations' (Smith 1759: 208; emphasis added). As we have seen, Smith holds that it is exposure to 'hardships', not 'undisturbed tranquillity', that leads to the cultivation or opportunities for development of self-command (Smith 1759: 153). Thus it is that the 'general security and happiness which prevail in ages of civility and politeness, afford little exercise to the contempt of danger, to patience in enduring labour, hunger, and pain', while it is quite the reverse, Smith continues, '[a]mong savages and barbarians' (Smith 1759: 205). The details of the argument are developed through a careful account of the circumstances, practices, and self-command of the 'savages in North America', among other cases (Smith 1759: 205–11). Like many of his contemporaries, Smith drew upon reports of travellers and missionaries for evidence concerning other societies so that he could make empirically grounded general conclusions about his own society, as we noted above. As the deprivation of 'savage' nations promotes the self-control of their members, so the circumstances of those strata and classes without the advantages of civilization (Smith 1759: 201), even within 'civilized nations' (Smith 1759: 204), must also, by extrapolation from the broader argument, find not only their aspirations for improvement but also the social basis of the self-command that serves to assist achievement of such aspirations. While Smith treats self-command as necessary for the performance of duty in particular and virtue in general (Smith 1759: 237), and through the control of emotions, its means of achieving this control is especially emotional (Smith 1759: 237–62), a matter to which we now turn.

Emotion and reason in self-command

In the preceding discussion Smith's account of the social basis and function of self-command was considered in order to contrast it with Weber's account of self-control. It was shown that while Weber and Smith more or less correspond in their respective statements of the function of self-control and self-command, that is, they each serve to control spontaneous emotions that would otherwise distract persons from the purposes they accept in order to achieve valued goals, the

two thinkers diverged in their accounts of the basis of self-control and self-command. Whereas Weber famously indicates a primary role for acceptance of religious doctrine in formation of Protestant and initial capitalist self-control, Smith, on the other hand, points to an entirely social basis of capitalist self-command in the experience of hardship among aspirants drawn from the middle ranks of society. It is now necessary to consider the mechanisms through which self-control and self-command operate. Whereas in the *Protestant Ethic* Weber is predominantly concerned to regard self-control in terms of the repression of emotions, Smith's treatment of self-command in *Moral Sentiments* provides a sophisticated and sociologically satisfying appreciation of the facilitating role of emotions in achieving self-command. But before describing this role it is necessary to make some preliminary and background remarks about Smith's understanding of emotion, reason and action in general.

Emotions are central to practically all social processes, according to Smith. While he holds that some passions delude and mislead, others are necessary for social well-being. Even the 'unsocial passions' such as hatred and resentment, which are ostensibly 'disagreeable in ... themselves' (Smith 1759: 35), may be properly regarded 'as necessary parts of the character of human nature' (Smith 1759: 34). Indeed, it is their absence rather than their incidence under certain circumstances that may be the cause of concern: 'A person becomes contemptible who tamely sits still and submits to insults, without attempting either to repel or to revenge them' (Smith 1759: 34–5). Not only are emotions the motor of social processes for Smith, the measure of their appropriateness is itself social, according to him. Referring to gratitude and resentment, for instance, he says: 'But these, as well as all the other passions of human nature, seem proper and are approved of, when the heart of every impartial spectator entirely sympathises with them, when every indifferent bystander entirely enters into, and goes along with them' (Smith 1759: 69). The measure of an emotion, then, is not only in its intrinsic qualities, according to Smith, but also in its social reception and purpose.

It should not be supposed that in placing such emphasis on emotion, Smith is thereby opposed to reason or rationality. First, Smith does not entertain the opposition between reason and emotion with which Weber, for instance, has been associated (Barbalet 1998: 33–8). Rather he sees them as working together in a functional division of

labour, as we shall see. Second, Smith does not equate reason or rationality with self-interest, for reasons we shall understand below. As a matter of fact, in Smith's account reason serves to temper self-interest or what he calls self-love. He says that the force 'capable of counteracting the strongest impulses of self-love' is 'reason, principle, conscience, the inhabitant of the breast, the man within, the great judge and arbiter of our conduct' (Smith 1759: 137). Here the same 'impartial spectator' who we saw above as Smith's measure of the social appropriateness of gratitude and resentment is the instrument moderating self-interest or selfishness through reason. The impartial spectator, according to Smith, is a person's sense of the imagined gaze of society as a moral community or a public, and in that sense at least it is analogous to the notion of the 'generalized other' in the work of George Herbert Mead, for example (Mead 1934: 153–6). The impartial spectator, for Smith, is self's projection or imagination of a social perspective that while distinct or separate from self is not opposed to self. This exchange between self and the social through the advent of the impartial spectator is institutionalized in general rules of social conduct in Smith's account which, incidentally, demonstrates a further aspect of the nature of the link between reason and emotion that Smith characteristically highlights.

The formation of general rules of socially appropriate behaviour, according to Smith, can only be understood through the experience of those who accept the rules, which are therefore achieved through inductive reason: 'We do not originally approve or condemn particular actions; because, upon examination, they appear to be agreeable or inconsistent with a certain general rule. The general rule, on the contrary, is formed, by finding from experience, that all actions of a certain kind, or circumstanced in a certain manner, are approved or disapproved of' (Smith 1759: 159). This statement is immediately followed by the claim that detestation of horrid murder, for example, arises not through conformity with a condemnatory rule but rather the rule is founded on the spontaneous experiences of detestation at the witnessing and imagination of such events (Smith 1759: 159–60). Thus general rules of conduct are inductively formed or constructed by members of society on the basis of what actions or circumstances are approved, or not approved, through emotional experience of events. As induction is 'one of the operations of reason', it can be said that 'virtue consists in conformity to reason' (Smith 1759: 319). But it

is important not to confuse form with substance, because the general rules are not themselves the actual 'perceptions of right and wrong', and these latter are not derived from reason but from 'immediate sense and feeling' (Smith 1759: 320). Thus Smith does not place inductive reason and feelings or emotions in opposition, but rather shows how they work together, mutually serving each other in the formation of social behaviour.

Another instance of the necessary combination of emotion and reason is to be located in Smith's account of the basis of responsibility for action. Smith identifies three basic elements of action: the 'intention' of the actor, 'from which [the action] proceeds', the 'external action or movement of the body', and finally the outcome or 'consequences' that 'proceed' from the action (Smith 1759: 92). This account can be usefully compared with two others, namely Weber's typology of social action (Weber 1921: 24–6) and Talcott Parsons' concept of the unit act (Parsons 1937: 43–8). The thing to notice about Weber's statement of the types of social action, is that the emotions or affect is conceived to be possible in only one of the four types he identifies, namely affectual action, whereas rational-instrumental action, value-rational action and traditional action are held by Weber to be without any emotional content. The difficulties with Weber's account that are of interest here include the fact that instrumentally rational action is defined by him in terms of 'expectations' without any acknowledgement regarding the emotional nature of expectation; and also that his definition of affectual action is incomplete and, as Parsons says, at best 'to be regarded as a residual category' (Parsons 1937: 648). Problems of this sort do not arise for Smith, for the actor's intention is conceived by him as inherently emotional, as an 'affection of the heart' (Smith 1759: 92).

Indeed, emotions themselves can be understood in terms of their intentionality, which is to say that emotions have objects and direct their subjects, those who experience the emotion, in how they might prospectively relate to those objects – one's fear is fear of something, and the experience of that fear directs a person's action in relation to that thing. Not all emotions lead to action, however, but the desires, intentions and commitments that particular emotions promote arguably do shape the actions a person undertakes. More to the point, it is difficult to conceive an action that is not given direction and energy by an emotion or emotions. All action necessarily has direction, purpose

or intention. Parsons describes this aspect of action as the 'end' of an act, which he defines as 'a future state of affairs toward which the process of action is oriented' (Parsons 1937: 44). Notice there is no reference to emotion in this statement of the end or purpose of action. But if the end of action were understood in terms of the actor rather than the act, then it would be difficult to avoid describing the 'future state of affairs' in anything but emotional terms. Even an act the intention of which is profit, for instance, must ultimately be understood in terms of affective categories – these need not be 'greed' (Robertson 2001), for example, but even if the neutral terms of utilitarian economics were applied, then 'pleasure' or 'happiness' (Layard 2006) necessarily arises as an end or intention of the actions in question.

To return to Smith's concern: an actor's responsibility for the consequences of an action cannot be located in the actor's intention, for an actor may intend one thing and another may occur (Smith 1759: 106). This is because the consequence of action, Smith says, does not depend 'upon the agent' nor therefore upon the agent's intentions, 'but upon fortune' (Smith 1759: 93), which becomes for him the fourth element of action. The notion of fortune in Smith is very like an aspect of what Parsons characterizes as the 'situation' of the unit act 'of which the trends of development differ in one or more important respects from the state of affairs to which the action is oriented, the end' (Parsons 1937: 44), or, as Smith would say, the intention. Parsons distinguishes, within the category of 'situation', between the 'means' of action, over which the actor has some control, and the 'conditions' of action, over which the actor has no control (Parsons 1937: 44). Parsons' 'conditions' then, approximate to Smith's 'fortune'. While the conditions of action or fortune cannot be controlled by the actor, responsibility in action requires that given their intentions the actor foresees the consequences of their action, which is to say the agent's reason makes them responsible for their actions. Smith says: 'reason and understanding [are qualities] by which we are capable of discerning the remote consequences of all our actions, and of foreseeing the advantage or detriment which is likely to result from them' (Smith 1759: 189). This must include not only being aware of the conditions under which the action occurs but also requires that the actor is responsibly aware of his or her own intentions when making sense of their action and its consequences. And yet,

Smith warns, '[w]e can never survey our own sentiments and motives ... [nor] form any judgement concerning them; unless we remove ourselves, as it were, from our own natural station, and endeavour to view them as at a certain distance from us' (Smith 1759: 110). And this is to view them 'with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them' (Smith 1759: 110). This is the social perspective, the view of the impartial spectator (Smith 1759: 110–13, 130–2). We shall see that for Smith reason about social phenomena is significantly a function of self-command, and self-command is itself an emotional facility. Not only is there a mutual support of emotion and reason in the actor's responsibility, according to Smith, he shows that there is also continuity between them.

Having said that Smith regards emotion and reason as continuous, through self-command, it is appropriate to recall that he insists that self-command serves to restrain emotion, as we saw above. He refers, for instance, to the 'amazing superiority' of self-command 'over the most ungovernable passions of human nature' (Smith 1759: 25). But the mechanism through which self-command is able to overcome these particular emotions is itself an emotion, namely the pleasure or satisfaction the achievement of self-mastery provides. Smith says that in 'proportion to the degree of the self-command which is necessary in order to conquer' the circumstances of frugality and industry, for instance, 'the pleasure and pride of the conquest are so much the greater' (Smith 1759: 147). Thus, the person who exercises self-command experiences 'enjoyment of his own self-applause, [which] though it may not altogether extinguish, must certainly very much alleviate his sense of his own sufferings' (Smith 1759: 148). Thus self-command functions in terms of the emotional satisfaction of self-approbation. As Smith puts it: 'The degree of the self-approbation with which every man ... surveys his own conduct, is higher or lower, exactly in proportion to the degree of self-command which is necessary in order to obtain that self-approbation. Where little self-command is necessary, little self-approbation is due' (Smith 1759: 147). Smith is not describing here a simple psychological mechanism. The self-approbation underwriting self-command requires a social process of evaluation.

The command of passions, Smith reports, has an appeal that is independent of the utility to the individual which such command may afford or generate. He says that it 'has a beauty of its own, and seems

to deserve for its own sake a certain degree of esteem and admiration' (Smith 1759: 238). In a similar vein Smith notes that self-command is 'supported by the sense of propriety' (Smith 1759: 190). Smith means by this that through awareness of the perception of others, one's act of self-command becomes worthy or valued, because those who witness an act of self-command regard it with 'a considerable degree of wonder and admiration' (Smith 1759: 189). Smith immediately adds: 'Hence arises that eminent esteem with which all men naturally regard a steady perseverance in the practice of frugality, industry, and application, though directed to no other purpose than the acquisition of fortune' (Smith 1759: 189–90). Self-command is what principally draws acclaim from others, according to Smith, not the acquisition of fortune that it may achieve. Indeed, he says that it is 'the consciousness of this merited approbation and esteem which is alone capable of supporting the agent in this tenour of conduct' (Smith 1759: 190). And therefore to not act in the manner that earns social approval would make one, in the eyes of others, 'the proper objects of their contempt and derision' (Smith 1759: 190). It is for this reason that Smith describes self-command as 'awful and respectable' (Smith 1759: 25), 'awful' in the sense of attracting awe.

The entirely social basis of self-command in the applause or approval of others is also based upon emotional process, according to Smith. The capacity to enjoy the satisfaction of achieving one's own self-command derives from the ability to appreciate the approval of others. The ability to appreciate the approval of others, in turn, supports one's own self-command, according to Smith. He says:

> The very same principle or instinct which, in the misfortune of our neighbour, prompts us to compassionate his sorrow; in our own misfortune, prompts us to restrain the abject and miserable lamentation of our own sorrow … The man who feels the most for the joys and sorrows of others, is best fitted for acquiring the most complete control of his own joy and sorrows. The man of the most exquisite humanity, is naturally the most capable of acquiring the highest degree of self-command. (Smith 1759: 152)

It is this necessarily social basis of self-command, founded on sympathy, which sets Smith's account quite apart from Weber's. While there is little in Weber's work that indicates a serious consideration of the concept of sympathy in the way that Smith understands the

concept, his discussion of empathy and intuition in 'Knies and the Problem of Irrationality' strongly suggests that it is antithetical to his preferred methodology, apart from any other consideration (Weber 1906: 163–74).

Even though Weber may not be able to accept Smith's approach to sympathy, it is not inconceivable that Weber's Calvinists, through their religious anxiety and fear, experience the adversity that is a source of self-command. The pain of those who believe in the doctrine of predestination, as much as the religious belief of the doctrine itself, might arguably provide the opportunity and need for the development of an ethos of calling. But this Smithian line of reasoning runs counter to Weber's account, which operates in terms of psychological rather than social processes and in that regard is unlike the account Smith provides. Even more telling of the differences between them, Weber's account insists that the psychological processes he describes have the consequence of leaving the religious adherents in a state of denial and despair which means that its practitioners become isolated and distrusting (Weber 1920: 104, 107). These dispositions could never give rise to the social exchanges required for Smithian self-command. From Smith's standpoint, then, the Weberian Calvinist is left without an ethos and has only expedient prudence: there is no propriety of virtue in the sense that Smith describes, briefly outlined above.

The differences that have been noted here between Weber and Smith on self-control in calling and self-command respectively reveal something of the difference between them on the nature of the capitalist spirit. We have seen that for Smith self-command arises in situations of adversity, whether that adversity is experienced by tribal, peasant or commercial peoples. Weber, on the other hand, insists that the concept of calling, which is the basis of the spirit of capitalism, is a unique product of the Protestant Reformation in Europe (Weber 1920: 80). But the broadness of Smith's notion of self-command does not exclude its application to understanding and explaining the aspirant capitalists of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe. That the self-command of American Indians, as Smith reports, is directed to the activities of warrior clans, so the capitalist spirit in early modern Europe arises in lower and middle strata during periods of economic expansion. As the structural and institutional developments of the early modern economy occurred, a matter to be

considered more fully in the next chapter, so new opportunities were generated for material aggrandizement through commercial activities, for the lower and middle ranks in society. These opportunities were taken by such classes of people because of their subordinate social and economic positions, which both gave training for and led them to exercise self-command, through which they achieved economic advancement by exercising the protestant virtues of frugality, industry and application.

Weber's position more or less corresponds with Smith's claim that the capitalist spirit is located in the lower and middle ranks of society, and that it is realized in the virtues of frugality, industry and application. Their positions disagree, however, through Weber's insistence that the source of the ethic of calling, which includes self-command and an inherent quality of profit making for its own sake, arises out of a religious doctrine, or rather the psychological consequences of a religious doctrine. Smith, on the other hand, assumes a sociological account of self-command that explains the object of the latter in particular opportunity structures of social and economic process. Which of these approaches is preferred cannot simply be a matter of taste. It has been attempted here to distinguish and differentiate the two perspectives so that Weber's in particular could be better understood through a comparison with Smith, whose own position, incidentally, has needed to be more thoroughly outlined than usually encountered in existing sociological discussion of it.

A further notable difference between Weber and Smith is that while Weber's account is limited to the conditions and patterns of the Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Smith's argument concerning self-command has a much broader scope insofar as it includes a proto-sociological characterization of human nature itself. In the following section, then, Smith's general principles of social organization will be outlined which shall reveal a further point of contact with Weber.

Smith's social principles and Weber's religious legitimation

It was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that the enduring sociological theory of the self, summarized by Charles Horton Cooley as the 'looking-glass self', was first clearly articulated by Smith in

Moral Sentiments. The individual self is necessarily social, according to Smith, and even in its awareness of its own individuality there is an unavoidable social basis. If it were possible that a 'human creature' could attain adulthood in isolation from other humans, then such a person, Smith says, would have no conception 'of his own character, or the propriety or demerit of his own sentiments and conduct, of the beauty or deformity of his own mind' (Smith 1759: 110). It is from the company of others that the requisite awareness of self arises, for 'society ... [is] the mirror' which is necessary for persons to see themselves (Smith 1759: 110). Smith explains that it is 'in the countenance and behaviour of those he lives with ... [that one] first views the propriety and impropriety of his own passions, the beauty and deformity of his own mind' (Smith 1759: 110). The individual and society are not radically separate in this account, but continuous insofar as experience of self is through the prism of how one is regarded by others.

By emphasizing the social nature of self there is no paradox in the claim that a sense of self forms through the evaluation of others: 'If we are conscious that we do not deserve to be so favourably thought of', Smith says, 'our satisfaction is far from being complete' (Smith 1759: 114–15; see also 84–5, 110–13, 137, 145). The displeasure that arises from a sense of the awareness in others of one's transgressions, and also the pleasure of the favourable regard of others, means that persons possess 'not only ... a desire of being approved of, but ... a desire of being what ought to be approved of; or of being what he himself approves of in other[s]' (Smith 1759: 117). The sociality in this is not mere trans-subjectivity, but an internalization of social relationships through an affective evaluation of one's own behaviour and demeanour through a projection of how one might seem to others. Such reflexivity, and the consciousness that underpins it, requires a 'certain distance' from one's self, according to Smith (Smith 1759: 110), which can be achieved:

> in no other way than by endeavouring to view [one's own sentiments and motives] with the eyes of other people, or as other people are likely to view them. Whatever judgement we can form concerning them, accordingly, must always bear some secret reference, either to what are, or to what, upon a certain condition, would be, or to what, we imagine, ought to be the judgement of others. (Smith 1759: 110)

The constraint of others' actual judgement reinforces the self-monitoring that occurs in imagining the appraisal of others (Smith 1759: 153–4), according to Smith. But the primary source of sociality is the latter rather than the former. He says: 'We suppose ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour, and endeavour to imagine what effect it would, in this light, produce upon us. This is the only looking-glass by which we can, in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinize the propriety of our own conduct' (Smith 1759: 112). Thus conscience itself is a social faculty, according to Smith (Smith 1759: 130–1).

What of self-interest, then, when 'the members of human society stand in need of each others assistance, and are likewise exposed to mutual injuries' (Smith 1759: 85)? Smith does not deny the power and significance of self-interest, or self-love, as he calls it. Indeed, he pronounces the primacy of self-love and suggests its significance for liberal policies when he says: 'Every man is, no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care; and as he is fitter to take care of himself than of any other person, it is fit and right that it should be so. Every man, therefore, is much more deeply interested in whatever immediately concerns himself, than in what concerns any other man' (Smith 1759: 82–3). And yet self-love cannot be unconditionally determinative of conduct in society, for the self-interested action of one will 'always appear excessive and extravagant' to another (Smith 1759: 83), so that it is necessary for each person to 'humble the arrogance of self-love, and bring it down to something which other men can go along with' (Smith 1759: 83).

The mechanism that mutes or temporizes self-love is viewing one's own conduct through the eye of the impartial spectator (Smith 1759: 83, 135, 137). The impact of the moderation of self-love by sympathy is not necessarily to prevent ambition, but to avoid foul play: 'In the race for wealth, and honours, and preferments, [one] may run as hard as he can, and strain every nerve and every muscle, in order to outstrip all his competitors. But if he should justle or throw down any of them, the indulgence of the spectators is entirely at an end' (Smith 1759: 83). Indeed, Smith says that:

> Those great objects of self-interest, of which the loss or acquisition quite changes the rank of the person, are the object of the passion properly called ambition; a passion, which when it keeps within the bounds of prudence

and justice, is always admired in the world, and has even sometimes a certain irregular greatness, which dazzles the imagination, when it passes the limits of both these virtues, and is not only unjust but extravagant. (Smith 1759: 173)

But even here in its later form, ambition continues to achieve social approbation while its achievement of 'uncommon advantage' derives from 'earnestness' and 'enterprise' (Smith 1759: 173). Smith's point, then, is not that personal ambition is not possible, or should necessarily be curtailed, but that unbridled self-love is necessarily self-defeating, and by virtue of constraint through habit and experience, it fails to predominate in society (Smith 1759: 135–7). Against those who insist on the irreducible primacy of self-interest in social agency and social explanation (Smith 1759: 308–13, 315–17), Smith argues for the prior sociality of human agents (see also Smith 1759: 304).

The model of sociality developed by Smith, briefly outlined here, has important implications for his understanding of the role of consumption and accumulation in economic exchanges. It was discussed above that while Weber regards the disinclination to consumption as core to the capitalist spirit, Smith argues that deferred gratification is premised on the denial of present satisfaction, including consumption, in order to achieve a greater future satisfaction. It is now appropriate to outline more fully Smith's anatomy of such satisfaction. We shall see that Smith does not accept that consumption in itself is the end or purpose of acquisition and industry, and that his reasons for thinking so align with Weber's understanding of the larger role of religion in the social economics of inequality.

In a discussion, 'Of the Origin of Ambition, and of the Distinction of Ranks' Smith asks what advantages arise from 'bettering our condition?' (Smith 1759: 50). His answer is clear: 'To be observed, to be attended to, to be taken notice of with sympathy, complacency and approbation, are all the advantages which we can propose to derive from it. It is the vanity, not the ease, or the pleasure, which interests us. But vanity is always founded upon the belief of our being the object of attention and approbation' (Smith 1759: 50). The end or purpose of avarice and ambition, the pursuit of wealth, cannot be the consumption of life's necessities, Smith says, for the 'wages of the meanest labourer can supply them' (Smith 1759: 50). The superfluous consumption of the rich is not an end in itself, says Smith, for it yields

a social visibility and approval that is part of 'all those agreeable emotions with which the advantages of his situation so readily inspire' the wealthy man (Smith 1759: 51). Similarly, the 'poor man ... is ashamed of his poverty ... [as it] places him out of the sight of mankind' (Smith 1759: 51). Success 'in every sort of business' is the reward of 'industry, prudence and circumspection', according to Smith, and the sought result of that success is the 'confidence, the esteem, and love of those we live with' (Smith 1759: 166; see also 212–13).

Moving from this global perspective, which holds that '[h]umanity does not desire to be great, but to be beloved' (Smith 1759: 166), Smith observes that the carriers of Protestant virtues, those in 'the inferior and middling stations of life', require for their success 'the favour and good opinion of their neighbours and equals' (Smith 1759: 63). The universal desire and social need for the approbation of another is at the same time the source of 'that emulation which runs through all the different ranks of men' (Smith 1759: 50). The position that Smith indicates here is the same as the one associated with the American economic sociologist, Thorstein Veblen – who will be treated more fully in the next chapter. Veblen argued:

> But it is only when taken in a sense far removed from its naïve meaning that consumption of goods can be said to afford the incentive from which accumulation invariably proceeds. The motive that lies at the root of ownership is emulation; and the same motive of emulation continues active in the further development of the institution to which it has given rise and in the development of all those features of the social structure which this institution of ownership touches. The possession of wealth confers honour; it is an invidious distinction. Nothing equally cogent can be said for the consumption of goods, nor for any other conceivable incentive to acquisition, and especially not for any incentive to the accumulation of wealth. (Veblen 1899: 35)

Thus it is not consumption in a 'naïve' sense that is the end of acquisition and accumulation, but emulation, or as Smith has it, approbation.

The position indicated immediately above is very different from Weber's argument regarding the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism. In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber shows that Calvinism leads to self-abasement and denial, rather than self-approbation, and that a

religiously inspired pursuit of a life of good works is based on the distrust of others and their judgemental appraisal. Nevertheless, when he sets these doctrines and practices within a larger context, Weber is led to outline a set of conclusions that come very close to the position identified here with Smith, and also Veblen. This articulation of Weber to a conclusion close to Smith's enhances the veracity of Smith's broader argument concerning self-command and its emotional nature, and also his particular account of the capitalist spirit. This is to say that it encourages a further ground for appreciating the sociological sense of Smith's argument and conceptualization over Weber's more theologically infused claims concerning the Protestant basis of the capitalist spirit.

In an essay written in 1913 but not published until 1915, 'The Social Psychology of World Religions', Weber contextualizes his more particular and focused discussion of Calvinism in the *Protestant Ethic*, and religion in general. Among other things, Weber makes the point that religions are not simply a 'function' of the social stratum that is their bearer (Weber 1915a: 269–70), and goes on to say that 'religious doctrines are adjusted to *religious needs*' (Weber 1915a: 270; emphasis in original). The particular 'need' to which Weber refers is the need for legitimation:

> In treating suffering as a symptom of odiousness in the eyes of the gods and as a sign of secret guilt, religion has psychologically met a very general need. The fortunate is seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate. Beyond this, he needs to know that he has a *right* to his good fortune. He wants to be convinced that he 'deserves' it, and above all, that he deserves it in comparison with others. He wishes to be allowed the belief that the less fortunate also merely experience his due. Good fortune thus wants to be 'legitimate' fortune. (Weber 1915a: 271; emphasis in original)

This discussion supplements Smith's account insofar as it addresses an institutional aspect of the self-approbation of success or privilege. In terms more general than Weber's here, Smith indicates the importance of authority in general in supporting the 'approbation of [one's] own conscience' (Smith 1759: 134), and more narrowly, the importance to social arrangements of a 'sacred regard to general rules' (Smith 1759: 163). But Smith does not argue as adamantly as Weber that 'religion provides the theodicy of good fortune for those who are fortunate' (Weber 1915a: 271).

Weber, in effect agreeing with Smith, says that to be fortunate is to have 'honour, power, possession, and pleasure' (Weber 1915a: 271). And this, continues Weber, is 'the most general formula for the service of legitimation, which religion has had to accomplish for the external and inner interests of all ruling men, the propertied, the victorious, and the healthy' (Weber 1915a: 271). Of particular interest in this discussion is the way that Weber shows that this general social role of religion applies also to Puritanism, for this allows us to see how the argument of the *Protestant Ethic* does indeed articulate with Smith's discussions in *Moral Sentiments*. Weber says: 'Psychologically considered, man in quest of salvation has been primarily preoccupied by attitudes of the here and now. The Puritan *certitudo salutis*, the permanent state of grace that rests in the feeling of "having proved oneself", was psychologically the only concrete object among the sacred values of this ascetic religion' (Weber 1915a: 278). Puritanism, then, as a religious doctrine, legitimates the sense of achievement to which it refers. It provides, then, a vehicle through which one can claim to have proved oneself. That Puritanism sanctions or legitimates such a claim, and that this achievement, according to Weber, is the fundamental or underlying need that it serves, tends to the same direction as Smith's argument concerning the acclaim of one's fellows.

By rotating Weber's full argument concerning the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, it is possible to find a point of common contact with the underpinning sociology of Smith's *Moral Sentiments*. But in doing so, the basic argument concerning the necessary religious basis of the capitalist spirit, core to the *Protestant Ethic*, is compromised and appears to be redundant. If religious belief and theology serve a social purpose of legitimacy and approval of others, approbation itself can account for the spirit of capitalism when opportunities for accumulation obtain. These latter, though, could never be the result of a religious outlook.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to construct a conversation between Max Weber and Adam Smith. We saw at the beginning of the chapter that there are grounds for accepting that, although Weber did not explicitly engage with Smith's work, the exercise here is not entirely artificial. It is in the nature of a conversation that there is no

last word, for even after the conversational exchange has stopped at a given time, the ensuing pause is opportunity for reflection and consideration, possibly leading to a further episode of conversational exchanges. The contrast between Weber and Smith has not been more than a conversation in this sense. Positions have been stated and some relevant points have been made, but in comparing perspectives there is no definitive conclusion. To the extent that the chapter has an argument, it has been to show that Smith's *Moral Sentiments* provides grounds for a version of the spirit of capitalism that does not require the preconditions of the Protestant ethic that Weber insists upon. Through a contrast with the concerns of *Moral Sentiments*, Weber's arguments in the *Protestant Ethic* about the spirit of capitalism are revealed in a light in which they are seldom examined.

Curiously, Smith's *Moral Sentiments* is conventionally presented as a work of philosophical ethics and Weber's *Protestant Ethic* as a primer of cultural sociology. It has been shown in this chapter, however, that *Moral Sentiments* deserves to be seen as an important – and thorough – sociological statement, and by contrast Weber's arguments are ultimately dependent on more theological and psychological considerations. Yet, it has also been demonstrated that *Moral Sentiments* and the *Protestant Ethic* share a number of relevant assumptions, especially concerning the nature of the spirit of capitalism as directed to money-making for its own sake as an ethical imperative, and the social location of this spirit in the modest middle strata of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European society. Yet Smith, much more than Weber, understands the source and mobilization of this ethic in the social sanctioning of taking newly emergent opportunities for a return on investment, supported by other institutional changes including the availability of third-party credit. Weber is not unaware of these factors, as we have seen, but confines his statement of the nature and operations of the spirit of capitalism to a focus on religious support for an abstentious orientation to mundane activities.

These differences, we saw, are associated with others, especially concerning more or less opposed understandings of Weber and Smith concerning the role of emotions in social control, and the relationship between emotions in self-control and self-command in Weber and Smith respectively. And yet the more general or distant Weber's perspective, the more it tends to converge with Smith's. At the end of the

chapter it was shown that in terms of its global role, religion and Protestantism in particular, are seen by Weber as providing a legitimating function for wealth-holding that is analogous to Smith's account of social emulation and approbation. While this is a distinct route to the spirit of capitalism that circumvents the Calvinist doctrine of predestination as providing support for the spirit of capitalism, it does more directly harmonize with Smith's account of the basis of the capitalist spirit in terms of social processes rather than religious doctrinal subscription.

5 *Ideal-type, institutional and evolutionary analyses of the origins of capitalism: Max Weber and Thorstein Veblen*

In considering the force of Weber's argument concerning the origins of capitalism, it is useful to contrast it with the less-known but in many ways comparable account developed by the American thinker Thorstein Veblen. Weber and Veblen were contemporaries. They were both economists by training and profession, who contributed to the development of sociology and saw themselves as sociologists at different times in their careers, and neither of them was content to echo the prevailing thought and opinion.

It is uncontroversial to say that Max Weber's contribution to sociology is extensive and highly regarded. His single most acclaimed achievement is the account of the origin of capitalism in terms of the elective affinity between the Protestant ethic and the capitalist ethos that has been discussed in various ways in preceding chapters. The continuing currency of what is known as the 'Weber thesis', and its reputation among sociologists, remains unsurpassed. And yet, close, critical examinations of Weber's argument by diverse analysts have found his case not proven (Hamilton 2000; Hamilton 1996; Marshall 1982; Samuelsson 1957), even though others continue to celebrate its inventiveness and insights (Lehmann and Roth 1995). One response to the controversy about the *Protestant Ethic* has been to praise Weber's method and reject the conclusions drawn from its application (Greenfeld 2001: 11–21). Another is to redirect attention to Weber's later and more developed but relatively neglected theory of capitalism in the *General Economic History* (1927) (Collins 1990a). Indeed, the treatment of the origins of capitalism in *General Economic History* is not only arguably more sophisticated than the argument of the

Protestant Ethic, if only in the sense that it engages a greater number of variables, it is also more amenable to sociological consideration insofar as those variables are institutional rather than the belief states of inaccessible subjects.

Thorstein Veblen's contribution to sociology, in contrast to Weber's, is widely regarded as singular at best. His reputation among sociologists is diminishing, if representation in sociology textbooks over time is an adequate measure. While the term 'conspicuous consumption', for instance, has become part of the language, it has not sustained interest in its source, Veblen's *Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). Indeed, even though this latter work has been continuously in print since it was first published, other major and arguably more important books by Veblen, including *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904), *The Instinct of Workmanship* (1914), and *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution* (1915), are hardly known today.

It will be shown in this chapter that Veblen's neglected account of the origins of modern capitalism bears close comparison with Weber's in both the *Protestant Ethic* and the less-known account in *General Economic History*. Indeed, as we shall see, there is considerable overlap between Veblen's discussion of the institutional sources of modern capitalism and Weber's account in *General Economic History*. Methodologically, however, the differences between Weber and Veblen remain marked. Weber's ideal-type analysis, central to the *Protestant Ethic* even though somewhat relaxed in *General Economic History*, is in sharp contrast to Veblen's evolutionary approach. This difference in method makes the comparison of Weber and Veblen more, not less, interesting, because it encourages greater engagement with each of their contributions to historical economic sociology and sociological theory.

In intellectual and personal style, and not only in reputation and standing, Weber and Veblen are in many respects opposites. Weber's conservative, intensely constrained and extensively erudite comparative historical narratives, for instance, are in sharp contrast to Veblen's iconoclastic and radically critical analyses of American and European institutions. And yet these and other differences stand beside important similarities. First, they were contemporaries. Born in 1857, Veblen was seven years older than Weber, and died nine years after him, in 1929. Also, they inhabited overlapping intellectual

worlds: Kantian philosophy, for instance, saturates Weber's work (Albrow 1990: 29–45) and inspired Veblen's (Dorfman 1934: 49–53; Veblen 1884). Indeed, a common secular Protestantism, which emphasized work and avoidance of waste, underlies their distinct orientations (Marianne Weber 1926: 88, 106; Edgell 2001: 12). Weber and Veblen read and were influenced by the same German economic writers, including Karl Müller, Gustav Schmoller and especially Werner Sombart. Most important of all, they both concentrated enormous intellectual effort on understanding the origins of modern capitalism. Indeed, by contrasting their distinct but comparable approaches to the origins of modern capitalism Weber's account can be profitably tested against Veblen's.

It will be shown below that Veblen develops an account of the origins of capitalist motivation and ethos, the capitalist 'spirit', which stands as an alternative to and possible corrective of the one that Weber offers. Additionally, Veblen explains the context in which Weber's exploration of the origins of capitalism is to be located, which allows us to see the latter's work more clearly. There is much benefit to be derived, therefore, from a comparison of Weber and Veblen on the origins of capitalism that treats the same themes from different perspectives. It is of particular interest that Weber's later discussion, in *General Economic History*, of the origins of capitalism, implicitly endorses Veblen's account with which it significantly overlaps. The outstanding difference between Weber and Veblen is methodological. Whereas Weber's ideal-type analysis postulates the necessity of a special theory of the unique ethos of capitalism that is inconsistent with the institutional analysis that he later came to develop (and which Veblen exemplifies), Veblen's evolutionary framework has no need for a theory of origins distinct from operations and in fact shows why Weber's reliance on a religious basis of the capitalistic ethos is redundant.

Capitalist personality

Weber and Veblen were not unknown to each other. A year before the appearance of the *Protestant Ethic*, Veblen sketched an account of the origins and development of modern capitalism (Veblen 1904: 144–54). In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber described Veblen's work, *The Theory of Business Enterprise* (1904), as a 'suggestive book', while at the same time disagreeing with him on a minor point concerning the

time from which a particular capitalistic motto operated (Weber 1920: 258 note 187). Weber, however, did not take up other aspects of Veblen's argument even though his good opinion of *Business Enterprise* was reported again when in a later publication it was described as an 'excellent book' (Weber 1910: 331 note 13).

Veblen's arguments concerning the origins of capitalism were more fully developed in a work published ten years after *Business Enterprise*. In this later work, *The Instinct of Workmanship and the State of the Industrial Arts* (1914), Veblen refers to Weber's argument concerning the Protestant origins of the capitalist spirit, the 'Protestant rehabilitation of the cult and its tenets ... [generative of] a certain attitude of self-help and autonomy on the part of the laity' (Veblen 1914: 266). He does this without mentioning Weber by name. This argument, though, Veblen agrees, has a certain plausibility concerning the incidence of Protestantism in those 'several countries successively advanced to a high level of technological and commercial enterprise' and its absence, through the triumph of the 'ancient form of the faith over the heretics', in 'the so-called Latin countries ... and Central Europe ... [where] industrial and business enterprise closed in exhaustion and collapse' (Veblen 1914: 266–7). 'This concomitance between technological mastery and religious dissent', Veblen continues, 'is doubtless susceptible of a good and serviceable explanation at the hands of the religious experts' (Veblen 1914: 268). While he cites it 'without prejudice' Veblen fails to find the argument convincing, however, and suggests that the relationship thus set out between Protestantism and capitalism is spurious (Veblen 1914: 268 note).

Weber's argument, about which Veblen is unconvinced, holds that the Protestant ethic generates a new type of personality, historically unique and located in those lands subject to the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. Coincidentally, this new personality, Weber says, is central in the development of modern capitalism. This is because in producing capital and a supply of money, in commanding the confidence of customers and workers, there is required 'an unusually strong character' possessing 'clarity of vision and ability to act', as well as the 'highly developed ethical qualities ... [required] to overcome the innumerable obstacles, above all the infinitely more intensive work which is demanded of the modern entrepreneur' (Weber 1920: 69). Veblen agrees that such a personality is requisite to the foundation of modern capitalism. He refers to the 'class of

ungraded free men among whom self-help and individual workmanlike efficiency were the accepted grounds of repute and livelihood' (Veblen 1914: 276). With this tradition 'of initiative and democratic autonomy is associated', Veblen continues, 'as an integral fact of the system, the concomitant tradition that work is a means of livelihood' (Veblen 1914: 276–7). Such an individual, Veblen says, 'draws on the resources of his own person alone' (Veblen 1914: 235). The modern individual, psychologically self-sustaining and self-directed, is therefore identified by both Weber and Veblen in similar terms.

While Weber and Veblen agree, then, about the formation of a new personality necessary for the development of modern capitalism, they disagree about two crucial aspects of this phenomenon. First, Veblen's new personality is not a capitalist entrepreneur but an independent crafts worker who sets some of the conditions for the later advent of the capitalist entrepreneur. Thus Veblen would agree with Weber, for instance, that handicrafts' workers are best understood as belonging to the late prehistory of modern capitalism rather than treated as its immediate source (Weber 1920: 38–9, 65). And yet, the role Veblen ascribes to handicrafts in an evolutionary process productive of what Weber characterizes as the spirit of capitalism provides an approach that accounts for an outcome commensurate with Weber's spirit of capitalism but without recourse to Protestant antecedents.

It is the relationship between handicraft and petty trade in the development of the price system, according to Veblen, that is the source of the spirit of capitalism and the capitalistic personality, as we shall see. Veblen's crafts worker is thus arguably the functional equivalent of Weber's Protestant ethicist without the two being identical. This leads to the second difference between them. Weber insists – indeed, it is 'the point of [his] whole essay' – that the ethic and attitude of the capitalist entrepreneur originally derives from psychological sanctions that are the products of Protestant religious doctrine and practice (Weber 1920: 197, 118–19). Veblen, on the other hand, sees both capitalistic personality and reform religion as consequences of technological change (Veblen 1914: 255–7). As he says: 'The vulgar habits of thought bred in the workday populace by the routine of the workshop and the market place had stolen their way into the sanctuary and the counsels of divinity' (Veblen 1914: 257). We shall see that what might be called 'the capitalistic type' and its historic emergence in Veblen's account has a complexity not found in Weber's.

It will be clear from this brief statement of his position that Veblen's account of the historical origins of capitalism and the emergence of the ethos or social psychology of modern capitalism is based on institutional factors and not on religious doctrine and its social consequences. In the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber provides little discussion of capitalistic institutions – there is some brief treatment of the textile industry and Italian banks, for instance – because his account is focused instead on the antecedents and constitution or composition of capitalistic motivation. In subsequent work, however, most notably *Economy and Society* (1921), in which he refers to 'order' and 'organizations', and more importantly in *General Economic History* (1927), Weber does set out what he sees as the institutional characteristics of modern capitalism. It is of particular interest that Veblen's treatment of the institutional basis of modern capitalism shares much with Weber's treatment, especially in *General Economic History*, of the defining institutional qualities of modern capitalism. It might be noted parenthetically that the writing and delivery of the lecture course in 1919–20 that makes up *General Economic History* coincided with the preparation for publication of what was effectively a second edition of the *Protestant Ethic*.

Capitalist institutions

It was mentioned above that the historically innovative features of handicraft identified by Veblen are pre-capitalistic. The economic orientation of the crafts worker and his social psychology are quite unlike analogous characteristic features of a capitalistic entrepreneur. In the early modern period, the handicraft system, Veblen says, employed a principle of 'work for a livelihood' rather than for a profit (Veblen 1914: 232). This orientation was a consequence of the predominance of the notion of a 'just price' in which the market cost of a product was set by the living needs of the producer rather than by an endeavour to extract from an exchange what the market might bear by way of profit (Veblen 1914: 233). A further characteristic of handicraft he refers to is a style of thinking based upon 'the production of things serviceable for human use' (Veblen 1914: 243). As crafts work is creative, manually dexterous and efficient in terms of serviceability rather than pecuniary intent (Veblen 1914: 243), its practitioners tend to 'construe the facts of experience' in the manner 'of an

anthropomorphic interpretation' (Veblen 1914: 242). Veblen contrasts the anthropomorphic thinking of handicraft with the impersonal thinking of trade. He makes the point that at the time that handicraft came out of the guild system, though, petty trade was itself also dominated by these same characteristic features of handicraft, especially of work for livelihood rather than for profit (Veblen 1914: 232).

For Veblen, the origin of modern capitalism is in the expansion of the volume of trade in sixteenth-century Europe. With the growth of trade, he says, the 'price system comes into the foreground' (Veblen 1914: 244). As 'larger holdings of property came to be employed in the itinerant trade ... investment for profit found its way into this trade and also into the handicraft system proper' (Veblen 1914: 232). This orientation to profit came about through the interaction of a number of factors. First, the commanding role of profit in exchange required the predominance of trade over craft. For while handicrafts promoted a sense of serviceability, engagement in trade led to 'the habit of rating things in terms of price' rather than usefulness, 'and the price concept gains ground throughout the period' (Veblen 1914: 244). Second, handicraft production expanded and as it did so its technological basis changed. Again, the expansion of handicraft production arose from a combination of factors, including population movements to urban centres and political developments in the formation and requirements of states. These shall be considered below. But a direct consequence of growth of and technological change in handicrafts was that the unit capital costs of production exceeded the ownership capacity of crafts workers (Veblen 1914: 277) and from a situation in which 'the petty trade ... handled the output of that industry' it gradually came into a 'position of discretionary management, and even dominating the industry of the craftsman' (Veblen 1914: 133; see also 279). Third, and in concert with these developments, 'the daily life of the community', Veblen says, 'comes to centre about the market and take on the character given by market relations' (Veblen 1914: 244). All of this adds up to a transformation and reconceptualization of the animus of productive and commercial activity from serviceability and satisfaction of the needs of livelihood to profit seeking in market exchanges.

In *General Economic History* Weber, like Veblen, sees the origins of capitalism in the growth of trade, and the development of technology is explained in terms of expansion of the market. 'The decisive

impetus toward capitalism', Weber claims, 'could come only from one source, namely a mass market demand ... [a] phenomenon characterized by price competition' (Weber 1927: 310). The reason that this is the decisive impetus towards capitalism is that it permits and encourages profit seeking as a motivation for market involvement. 'The great price revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', Weber wrote, 'provided a powerful lever for the specifically capitalistic tendencies of seeking profit through cheapening production and lowering the price' (Weber 1927: 311). The accompanying impetus to reduce prices in relation to costs led to a 'tendency towards rationalizing technology', Weber continues, that 'generated in the seventeenth century a feverish pursuit of invention' (Weber 1927: 311). In summary, the profit seeking that came with the price revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries led to capitalism and to developments in technology. We shall return to the issue of technology below. At this point it can be noted that for both Veblen (1914) and Weber (1927) profit seeking and therefore the spirit of modern capitalism emerge from structural relations of markets. Veblen's idea, echoed by Weber in *General Economic History*, that incentives for capitalist development are in the expansion of the price system, is commensurate with more recent scholarship (Emigh 2003; North and Thomas 1973; Polanyi 1944). These processes are summarized in figure 5.1.

Veblen introduced another issue that has since come to be associated with Weber's characterization of modern capitalism, namely that of double-entry bookkeeping. Veblen notes that with the growth of commerce, the use of bookkeeping arises among merchants (Veblen 1914: 244). The importance of bookkeeping for Veblen is in its interactive relations with other components of modern capitalism. He says, for instance, that as the price concept is an 'objective, impersonal, quantitative apprehension of things' and as the price system sponsors bookkeeping, so the 'logic and concepts of accountancy are wholly impersonal and dispassionate' (Veblen 1914: 245, 244). For these reasons, he continues, the price system is associated with the rise of machine technology:

> not only in that the accountancy of price offered a practical form and method of statistical computation, such as is indispensable to anything that may fairly be classed as engineering, but also and immediately and

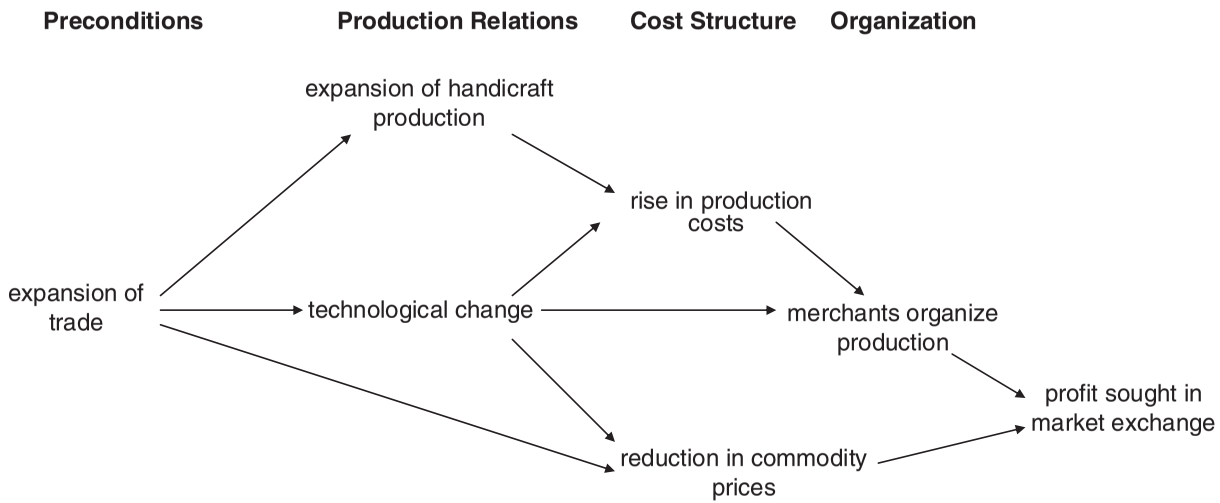

Figure 5.1 Institutional origins of capitalism
Comment: Simplified model of process outlined by both Veblen (1914) and Weber (1927).

substantially in that its discipline has greatly conduced to the apprehension of mechanical facts in terms not coloured by an imputed anthropomorphic bent. (Veblen 1914: 245).

Bookkeeping is important to Veblen's argument, not because it is a defining feature of capitalism but because it is associated with those defining features, namely the price system and machine technology, and stands as an intermediary factor between them.

For Weber, the capitalistic form of profit seeking is necessarily tied to practices of rational accounting, which is 'calculation according to the methods of modern bookkeeping and the striking of a balance' (Weber 1927: 275). Like Veblen, Weber associates this practice with the development of technology. In different statements he claims that technology is the basis of rational accounting and also that rational accounting is prior to rational technology. In *Economy and Society*, for instance, Weber says '[h]ad not rational calculation formed the basis of economic activity, had there not been certain very particular conditions in its economic background, rational technology could never have come into existence' (Weber 1921: 67). In *General Economic History*, though, the causal relation runs in the other direction, from technology to rational accounting, when Weber says, for instance, that '[e]conomically, the significance of the machines lay in the introduction of systematic calculation' (Weber 1927: 174). Similarly, when specifying the general suppositions of modern capitalism, Weber mentions that 'capitalistic accounting presupposes rational technology' (Weber 1927: 277).

It is likely that both Weber and Veblen overstate the importance of bookkeeping in the formation of modern capitalism. Weber especially makes an untenable claim in holding that the 'most general presupposition for the existence of this present-day capitalism is that of rational capital accounting as the norm for all large industrial undertakings which are concerned with provision for everyday wants' (Weber 1927: 276). In this, as in a number of related matters to be indicated in the next chapter, Weber faithfully follows Werner Sombart, *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* (1902) (see Robertson 1933: 53–6; Schumpeter 1943: 123 note 4). Indeed, Weber holds rational accounting so absolutely necessary to modern capitalism that the requirement of free labour, for instance, to its existence is on the condition that '[r]ational capitalistic calculation is possible only on

the basis of free labour' (Weber 1927: 277), so that it is the calculation of labour output and not its substance that Weber sees as necessary for capitalism. Scholarship since Weber and Veblen, however, now accepts that rational accounting, and double-entry bookkeeping in particular, served purposes other than the calculation of profitability. A pioneering student of capitalist accounting observed that in early modern capitalist bookkeeping there 'is little evidence of a careful calculation and analysis of profits, and even less attention to the separation of business from domestic affairs' (Yamey 1949: 109). Indeed, merchants were sufficiently involved with their engagements that they had no need of accounting techniques to inform them of the size of their holdings or the results of their business activities (Yamey 1949: 111).

It has been demonstrated that the technical advantage of double-entry bookkeeping to capitalist enterprise, in guiding the management of resources to profit making, that is assumed by Weber (1921: 91, 93) to underwrite the initial development of capitalism, was not available to industrial capitalists until long after the advent and further development of capitalism as a system (Pollard 1968: 285, 288). There are a number of reasons for this, but a fundamental one was the confusion of industrialists and industrial accountants until the end of the nineteenth century concerning the source of profit and the difference between capital and revenue (Pollard 1968: 271–4). Profits were thought to be a return on entrepreneurship, of which capital was held to be a mere tool to be paid for at the market rate and that is adequately rewarded by interest. On these assumptions fixed capital, its earnings and depreciation, could not be properly integrated into accounts, and what accounts there were could not be the basis of rational management and investment decisions.

The technical problems of industrial accounting, that became especially clear from the second half of the eighteenth century (Pollard 1968: 264), did not obtain for merchants' capital, in whose service double-entry bookkeeping was originally developed (Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 45; Pollard 1968: 249; Yamey 1949: 100–3). But even in the case of merchant capitalists, the technical potential of bookkeeping was subordinate to what might be described as its rhetorical and legal functions. In particular, the keeping of accounts at the time of early modern capitalism became a 'religious duty' because through it there was documentation and demonstration that a person's or

more properly a family's manner of living was 'suited to their fortune' and accounts therefore guarded against 'extravagance' and 'intemperance' (Yamey 1949: 104–5). More impersonally, the demonstration of the 'legitimacy and justness of the business' in satisfaction of Christian precepts was exemplified by the keeping of accounts as 'double-entry bookkeeping explicitly documented the balanced nature of the transactions of a firm' (Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 39). This religious-rhetorical function of bookkeeping merges with the legal function through accounting as a means to preserve reputation and creditworthiness because double-entry accounts not only documented the personal qualities of frugality and industry (Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 51–2), but explicitly recorded debt and borrowing as well as formation of partnerships (Yamey 1949: 103–4). Such recording was important in the settlement of legal disputations and bookkeeping became a legal requirement of conduct of business early in the development of capitalism (Yamey 1949: 103).

There is another aspect of double-entry bookkeeping neglected by Weber but crucial to his argument, namely a signal cognitive consequence of double-entry bookkeeping. As late as the last decades of the seventeenth century, for instance, merchants typically regarded business activities as a 'series of discrete ventures' (Van Egmond 1976: 40–1, quoted in Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 58 note 43). At the conclusion of each business episode, profits and losses were calculated on the basis of costs and returns of individual journeys or voyages and commodities transactions. Double-entry bookkeeping disrupted this episodic cycle of business activity and subjected the periodization of business to the more general flow of bookkeeping records, thus 'facilitating a conceptual shift among merchants' (Van Egmond 1976: 40–1, quoted in Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 58 note 43). Whereas prior to the application of accounting, 'business had been understood as a series of discrete events, it came to be perceived as a continuous, abstract enterprise' (Van Egmond 1976: 40–1, quoted in Carruthers and Espeland 1991: 58 note 43). While the activities of business are unchanged by bookkeeping, a new intellectual apprehension of the enterprise is possible when particular commercial events are aggregated in consolidated accounts. Whereas trading consisted of 'a variety of apparently unrelated activities' double-column bookkeeping shows that 'the economic activities of the firm are more or less continuous and specialized to a limited range' (Yamey 1949: 113). Here is

a non-religious source to the continuity of purpose and action that is at the core of capitalistic calling. It is an entirely Veblenian notion that this cognitive faculty both arises from an aspect of the expansion of commerce and in turn reinforces capitalistic orientation and activity.

The state and capitalism

While the 'Weber thesis' posits a clear relationship between Protestant religion and the origins of modern capitalism, the essential backdrop of a political and legal framework is an additional ingredient of Weber's later full account of the rise and operations of capitalistic economies. Weber's political sociology, as set out in chapter 3 of *Economy and Society*, for instance, concerning legal authority and domination, in chapter 8, concerning the sociology of law, and indeed in discussion throughout the book, provides general treatments that are premised on and supplement the discussion in chapter 2 on economic forms and relations, including those of money, trade, markets and taxation. The brief account of the background and origins of capitalism in *General Economic History* (Weber 1927: 338–51) is also conducted within a framework of political and legal structures.

Veblen similarly shows that the factors mentioned above, especially market expansion and technological change, are not sufficient to explain the development of capitalism, and he is therefore led to place capitalism in the framework of a political and legal structure in order to properly understand it. Where he differs from Weber, however, is in demonstrating that state making has a variable relationship with the development of capitalism. Indeed, Veblen's discussion of unsuccessful national capitalisms further depreciates the role of religion favoured by Weber in explaining the origins of capitalism. Before dealing with the issue of comparative theoretical evaluation of Weber and Veblen concerning these matters, however, it is necessary to outline Veblen's fuller discussion of the necessary bases of capitalist origins and development in state making.

Veblen observed that the same early modern historical period is designated differently by economic and political historians; what is known to one as the 'era of handicraft' is known to the other as the 'era of statemaking' (Veblen 1914: 268). This is no mere coincidence, he adds, but arises from the fact that the 'growth of handicraft had much to do with making the large states practicable and with

supplying the material means of large scale warfare' (Veblen 1914: 269). Veblen points to the interaction of a number of factors through which economic developments promoted changes in political organization and state building. He begins by indicating that industrial towns and commercial centres formed through the expansion of the handicraft industry (see also Smith 1776: 411–27; Holton 1986). These urban centres were also the loci of activity of itinerant traders. As a direct consequence of the extension of manufacture and commerce, methods of communication were improved through both the instruments of communication, notably shipping, and also through the routes of communication. As these developments proceeded they sponsored and were supported by further changes.

Veblen says that the urban centres and their activities encouraged population growth and demographic concentration within them. All these activities, he continues, encouraged an expansion of economic wealth that was also drawn to the urban centres. This new aggregation and concentration of productive and commercial activities, of people and of wealth, had consequences for a political rule that was now able to intensify its grip and more tightly coordinate its activities than it could have done prior to these developments. The emergent economic and technological efficiency not only enhanced and encouraged political organization, but the new technologies provided improved arms and armour, and other engines of war that consolidated and enhanced the power of princes and states (Veblen 1914: 269–70). These developments and especially the interaction between military, political and commercial actors are more fully discussed in a recent literature (see Ertman 1997; Glete 2002; Tilly 1985).

While the nexus of economic expansion and political strengthening occurred under conditions of the formation of modern capitalism, the consequences for the development of this economic system were interestingly contradictory, according to Veblen, especially in certain cases. The issue of warfare is pivotal in his account: first, the price system itself made the conduct of warfare easier and easier to conduct at greater distances 'than was feasible under the earlier rule of contributions in kind', because now princes could purchase stores and munitions where they were needed (Veblen 1914: 272). The military advantages to princes derived from the price system, though, made princes dependent on merchants and manufacturers for loans. Veblen explains that the relationship between princes pursuant of war and

their capitalistic creditors was both mutually advantageous but also potentially destructive of the participants. Princely borrowing from merchant capitalists gave royal patronage to the merchant that 'brought monopolistic advantage ... and so contributed to their further gain and to the concentration of wealth in fewer hands' (Veblen 1914: 273). The relationship of mutual advantage could sour, though, if princely power wished to extract funds beyond its capacity to repay. Such an outcome ultimately inhibited rather than encouraged the further development of capitalism. Additionally, as the proceeds of princely borrowing were used in warfare, the net result for certain regions of Europe of such fiscal appropriations was the 'destruction of property, population, industrial plant and international commerce' (Veblen 1914: 273).

This outcome for the local development of capitalism was clearly negative, either because of the impact on the capacity to repay loans for a prince whose territory was so affected, or because war destruction directly affected the lending capitalist. In these ways, military losses and defeat translated to disruptions of capitalistic development. Veblen says that the military and financial collapse of a prince had the consequence of the collapse of 'the business community at large with whose funds they had operated and by the industrial community, whose stock of goods and appliances was exhausted, whose trade connections were broken and whose working population had been debauched, scattered and reduced to poverty and subjection by the wars, revenue collections and forced contributions' (Veblen 1914: 273).

The general model, of interruptions in capitalist development, outlined here and summarized in figure 5.2, has a number of applications for Veblen. In particular, this argument concerning the consequences of princely activity and proto-state building for the development of capitalism accounts for the failure of capitalism in the Italian commercial republics of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, for instance (see Cohen 1980; Emigh 2003; Holton 1983; Lachmann 2000: 72–89). For Veblen, the incipient development and subsequent decline of capitalistic commerce on the Mediterranean seaboard has nothing to do with the Catholicism of the Italian republics and therefore the absence of the Protestant ethic within them, as Weber holds (Weber 1920: 74–5). Rather 'the higher interests of church and state came to the front, and science, industry, and

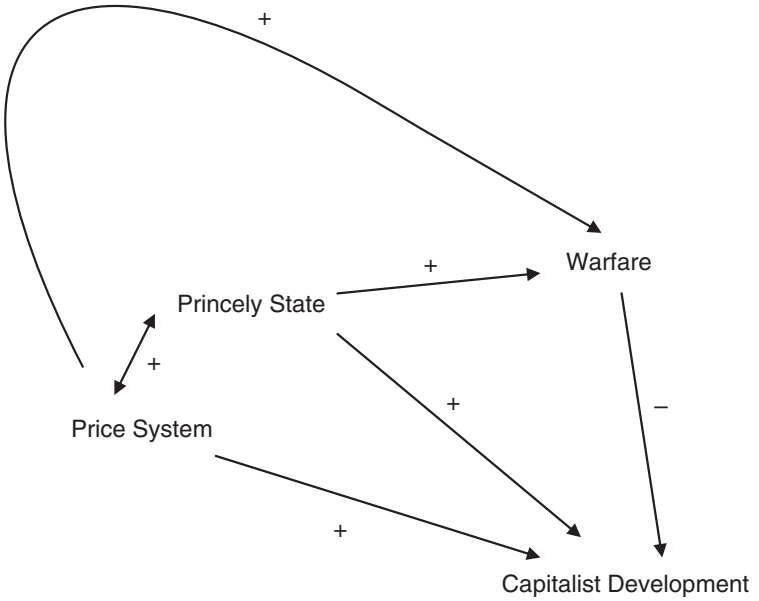

Figure 5.2 State and capitalist development

presently commerce dwindled and decayed in the land that had promised so handsomely to lead Western civilization out of the underbrush of piety and princely intrigue' (Veblen 1914: 246–7). Curiously, in *General Economic History* Weber makes a claim about developments in Catholic Spain that both parallels Veblen's argument here concerning Italy and runs counter to his insistence that capitalism has a necessary Protestant background. Weber says:

> The gold and silver from America, after the discovery, flowed in the first place to Spain; but in that country a recession of capitalistic development took place parallel with the importation. There followed, on the one hand, the suppression of the *communeros* and the destruction of the commercial interests of the Spanish grandees, and on the other, the employment of money for military ends. (Weber 1927: 353)

The commercial interests referred to here are presumably associated by Weber with traditional, not modern, capitalism. But the point to notice is that the discussion is about an interruption of original

capitalistic development through extrinsic or external factors, not an absence of capitalism through religious default.

The variable incidence of capitalism

An even more important and impressive application of Veblen's model of interruptions in capitalist development is its use in explanation of the relative decline of capitalist development in Protestant regions in Europe by the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, compared with the rise and predominance of English capitalism from the late seventeenth century. It might be argued that the shifting geographic centre of capitalist dynamism is beyond the scope of Weber's argument, and therefore that Veblen's treatment of this matter is no measure against which Weber can be judged. It is true that in the *Protestant Ethic* Weber is concerned with the Protestant origins of the capitalist ethos only, and not the economic geography of capitalist development. But in his second reply to Karl Fischer, for instance, in which he clarifies aspects of his argument, Weber acknowledges that not all Protestant societies would be capitalist, but that the capitalist spirit was to be located in 'New England, German diaspora, southern France, Holland, England' (Weber 1908: 234). It could be reasonably asked of Weber, then, why there was an absence of capitalism and its spirit in Calvin's Geneva, for instance. It is not so far from this question to another, namely: why was capitalist development in Holland eclipsed by England by the end of the seventeenth century? In fact such a question might arise from Weber's own observations in the *Protestant Ethic*: 'The most complex causes, into which we cannot go here, were responsible for the relatively smaller extent to which the Calvinistic ethic penetrated practical life [in Holland]. The ascetic spirit began to weaken in Holland as early as the beginning of the seventeenth century ... Moreover, Dutch Puritanism had in general much less expansive power than English' (Weber 1920: 273 note 67). Veblen, of course, has no need of recourse to the strength of the Protestant ethic to account for the strength of capitalism.

It is particularly relevant to mention Holland in discussion of Veblen's account because in its war for independence against Spain from the late sixteenth century, Holland and Dutch capitalism were strengthened, not weakened. This was because Dutch Amsterdam's commercial rival, Antwerp, was undermined by the struggle. Antwerp

was in the Spanish Netherlands. Also, Catholics were purged in resistance to Spanish oppression and Spanish terror led to the migration of Protestants and Protestant capital to the Dutch north, thus generating a religiously homogenous elite in Holland, so that from the 1570s religious divisions ceased to undermine political and commercial developments. Finally, the Spanish embargo against the Dutch led to the development of a Dutch colonial empire, with the East India Company being formed in 1602, centring luxury trade with the East on Amsterdam. By the eighteenth century, however, Dutch capitalism showed none of the promise it had earlier possessed and was quite overtaken by English capitalism that during the middle of the seventeenth century had looked to Holland for economic inspiration and guidance (Appleby 1978: 73–98; Lachmann 2000: 162–7).

As we have seen, Veblen accounts for the shifting centre of gravity of capitalist development in terms of the inhibitions that distinct economies faced. Veblen reports that the European centre of commercial activity moved from Italy to 'the Low countries, with the south German industrial centres, where again industry of the handicraft order grew great, gave rise to trade on a rapidly increasing scale, and presently to an era of business enterprise of unprecedented spirit and scope' (Veblen 1914: 247). And yet a promising beginning faltered. Veblen explained: 'the age of Fuggers closed in bankruptcy and industrial collapse when the princely wrangles of the era of statemaking had used up the resources of the industrial community and exhausted the credit of that generation of captains of industry. Here too religious contention came in for its share in the set-back of industry and commerce' (Veblen 1914: 247). Veblen's thesis, then, is that 'princely politics, with the attendant war, exactions and insecurity, followed presently by religious controversies and persecutions ... put an end to the advance of industry and business' (Veblen 1914: 247–8). From this can be deduced the hypothesis that the subsequent development of capitalism in England, where industry and commerce stuck and prospered, was the result of an absence of such princely politics and its consequences. This is exactly what Veblen demonstrates.

Because England is an island nation, Veblen's argument continues, 'her princes [were unable] to draw a reluctant industrial community into the traffic of dynastic intrigue that filled the continent' (Veblen 1914: 273). As Veblen says, 'England is never for long or primarily

engaged in international war, nor except for the destructive war of the Commonwealth period, in destructive war of any kind' (Veblen 1914: 251). For this reason, he continues, the course of development in England is quite different than it had been elsewhere: the 'close of the handicraft system in England comes by way of a technological revolution, not by collapse' (Veblen 1914: 251). But Veblen's argument is not simply that war-making inhibits (or promotes) capitalist development. In his discussion concerning English progress towards a consolidated capitalist economy and the relative absence of inhibiting forces, Veblen refers to the 'advantage of backwardness' as a contributing factor.

The geographic isolation of England from the Continent, and also the difficulty of sending any army it might raise to an enemy territory (which ultimately saved it from collapse through princely intrigue), was additionally the source of its technological and commercial backwardness at the time that the Italian commercial republics and later Holland and south Germany experienced commercial and technological development. Veblen, in fact, counts this English backwardness along with its insularity or island form as a basis of the success of subsequent English capitalist development. As Veblen says: 'This late start of the English, coupled with their peculiar advantage in being able to borrow [technologies that] their neighbours had worked out, conducted to a more rapid rate and shorter run of industrial advance and expansion in the Island' (Veblen 1914: 250). Curiously, this same argument appears in *General Economic History* when Weber mentions technological transfer and its importance for the development of capitalism. In discussing the development of industrial technique, in which the 'triumph of the mechanization and rationalization of work' in seventeenth-century English cotton manufacture was 'decisive', according to Weber (1927: 303), he notes that the 'industry was transplanted from the continent to England' (1927: 303). Writing in an even more Veblenian vein Weber goes on to say that but for the technological developments involved, 'this revolution in the means of work', the advance of capitalism 'might have stopped and modern capitalism in its most characteristic form never have appeared' (Weber 1927: 304).

Veblen's argument concerning technological transfer and the advantages of backwardness is further developed in a book published in 1915, *Imperial Germany and the Industrial Revolution*. This book

had the distinction of being banned in the United States by the Post Office under the Espionage Act, because its discussion of Britain and America was thought to be unpatriotic, while at the same time being promoted by the Committee on Public Information as good war propaganda, because it was thought to be damaging to Germany (Dorfman 1934: 382). In it Veblen's account of the peculiarities of English capitalist development, which were rehearsed in *The Instinct of Workmanship* (1914), enumerates factors that are elaborated and applied to the course of development of the German economy and state. Whereas Weber, for instance, explained German subservience in terms of Lutheranism (Weber 1920: 82–5, 126), Veblen regarded it as a consequence of war or preparation for war, which in turn resulted from the dynastic nature of German imperialism (Veblen 1915: 69, 80–1). Weber, on the other hand, was committed to the idea of national economy, of building state power through economic policies (Mommsen 1974; Veblen 1915: 174–5; Weber 1895a).

The configuration of German economic power and technological advance, adopted to prosecute dynastic interests, is supported by technological borrowing, according to Veblen (1915: 151–2). This ensures the absence of obsolescent equipment and resistant labour practices in encouraging economic development. In acquiring advanced techniques developed by others, Veblen says, Germany at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century is in that sense like Elizabethan England. In prosecution of German development, Weber desired an 'English' future for Germany, to be achieved by a German adaptation of an English-like, Calvinist-based calling over the more traditional calling of a Lutheran cast that held back German aspirations (Weber 1920: 119, 127–8, 155, 283 note 115; see Barbalet 2002). Veblen, on the other hand, argued that English and English-style development has not a religious but a geopolitical and technological source. Indeed, Veblen (1915) argued that German national economy and imperial aspirations could not ultimately realize German economic and political development, and that the absence of analogous forces was crucial to England's success. Indeed, Germany attained a sure footing for capitalistic development only after its defeat in two world wars, which removed it from further military involvement. Veblen's account and its closeness to the historical outcome both indicate against Weber's attachments and expectations in this regard.

The religious factor, again

It is clear from the above discussion that on a number of significant points the account of the rise of modern capitalism in Weber's *General Economic History* agrees with Veblen's institutional theory. Given Veblen's distance from and negative appraisal of Weber's account of the religious source of capitalist motivation and personality in the *Protestant Ethic*, it is appropriate to ask whether Weber continues to adhere in *General Economic History* to the arguments first propounded by him in 1905 concerning the Calvinist sources of the capitalistic ethos that remain extant and unadjusted in the 1920 edition of the *Protestant Ethic*. Certainly, it is the opinion of one leading commentator that while religion continues to have a role in Weber's later (1927) argument, it is a role for religious organization that is salient, not doctrine (Collins 1990a: 21, 33). This perspective is consistent with institutional theory concerning the rise of modern capitalism insofar as the Reformation can be described as part of a process through which organizational obstacles were removed from the path of rationalist capitalist development. There is evidence for this assessment in Weber's text. Yet this aspect of the treatment of religion does not exhaust or accurately reflect Weber's endeavours in *General Economic History*.

In discussing scientific progress and Protestantism, for instance, Weber mentions that not only has the Catholic Church 'occasionally obstructed scientific progress', but also that 'the ascetic sects of Protestantism have also been disposed to have nothing to do with science' (Weber 1927: 368). Weber's understanding in the *General Economic History* of the aversion to science of Protestant sects is historically supported (Merton 1938: 100–101), although his earlier assessment in the *Protestant Ethic* left room for a fuller range of possibilities (Weber 1920: 136, 168, 249). Also, his measured qualification regarding the attitude of the Catholic Church is fortunate in light of current scholarship, in which it is understood that 'there is no longer any sustainable and interesting sense in which it can be said that the Catholic Church was "antiscientific" or even unambiguously opposed to "the new science"' (Shapin 1996: 198). And yet Weber's immediately following unsupported assertion that it is Protestantism's 'specific contribution to have placed science in the service of

technology and economics' (Weber 1927: 368) is unfortunate in ignoring, for instance, the discoveries of fifteenth-century science and their application to technology and economics, especially through their contribution to navigation and engineering (Boas 1970: 13–44), and indeed the earlier discoveries that occupied the period from the previous four hundred years (Crombie 1959; White 1962). Closer to Weber's own day, Catholic sponsorship of science in the service of economy can be located in the monastery that served 'as a research establishment for vine breeding' in which a German-speaking Moravian monk, Gregor Mendel, undertook foundational research in genetics in the 1860s (Orel 1984: 12). In any event, Weber's claim is a special plea for the efficacy of Protestant orientation, not organization or institution, as we saw Collins suggest above.

More directly related to the argument of the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber specifies in the *General Economic History* that, in addition to the institutional factors that have produced capitalism, the '[n]ecessary complementary factors were the rational spirit, the rationalization of the conduct of life in general, and a rationalistic economic ethic' (Weber 1927: 354). These are orientational and motivational forces that Weber summarizes as 'a rational ethic for the conduct of life' (Weber 1927: 313–14). The issue is not the fact of such an ethic, but its source. Veblen, as we have seen, argued that the ethos of capitalism arose out of and interactively supported changes in handicraft production and the development of the price system through the expansion of trade. Thus he accounted for motivational factors in terms of institutional developments. Ethics and religion, for Veblen, are dependent, not independent, variables. Weber, on the other hand, not only insists that the ethical and motivational factor must be treated as an independent variable in the historical formation or origin of capitalism, but also that it has a unique historical basis in Protestant religion: 'a religious basis for the ordering of life which consistently followed out must lead to explicit rationalism is again peculiar to western civilization alone' (Weber 1927: 314). It is true that Weber does not mention the doctrine of predestination in his discussion in the *General Economic History*, so central to his explanation of the Calvinist basis of the capitalistic ethos in the *Protestant Ethic*, as Collins says (Collins 1990a: 21). But he may as well have mentioned it because it is implicit in what he does say.

Having insisted in *General Economic History* on the religious basis for the capitalistic rational ethic, Weber discounts the possibility of a Catholic, or Lutheran ethic as its source because they had 'antipathy ... to every capitalistic tendency, rest[ing] essentially on the repugnance of the impersonality of relations within a capitalist economy' (Weber 1927: 357). Weber goes on to cite Calvinism as providing a solution to the problem that Catholicism and Lutheranism could not assail. Calvinism, Weber says, offered 'the idea that man was only an administrator of what God had given him; it condemned enjoyment, yet permitted no flight from the world but rather regarded working together, with its rational discipline, as the religious task of the individual' (Weber 1927: 367). He goes on to mention the word 'calling' and its restriction to Protestant translations of the Bible, in the way he had first done in the *Protestant Ethic* (Weber 1920: 79–83, 204–6), and claims that the concept 'expresses the value placed upon rational activity carried on according to the rational capitalistic principle, as the fulfilment of a God-given task' (Weber 1927: 367). The Calvinist shared with the English Puritan this expression of capitalist rationality through the concept of calling, Weber says. He concludes by explaining that: 'This development of the concept of the calling quickly gave to the modern entrepreneur a fabulously clear conscience – and also industrious workers; he gave to his employees as the wages of their ascetic devotion to the calling and of co-operation in his ruthless exploitation of them through capitalism the prospect of eternal salvation' (Weber 1927: 367).

Here, then, in *General Economic History* is the full statement of the Protestant ethic argument, even though in summary form. Some words may be absent and the detail of the mechanism abridged or truncated, but the original argument of the *Protestant Ethic* has not been abandoned in Weber's later institutional account of the origins of modern capitalism. Another exponent of the institutional approach, Thorstein Veblen, believes that the religious argument is redundant. As we have seen, Veblen (1914) and Weber (1927), up until the point of the religious argument, advance parallel and overlapping institutional treatments of the origins of modern capitalism. A leading interpreter of Weber's institutional theory who has attempted to systematize his discussion in *General Economic History*, can only justify a role for religious organization, not the doctrine of predestination and its concomitants (Collins 1990a: 21, 33), that have just

been shown to be stated in Weber's (1927) argument, even though redundant if the institutional form is taken to be complete in *General Economic History*.

Ideal-type method

Whereas Veblen had no need for it, Weber was unable to abandon the Protestant ethic argument in *General Economic History*, as we have just seen, even though it is logically unnecessary from the perspective of its institutional analysis. A possible explanation for Weber's persistent adherence to the religious argument, even though redundant within the context of the institutional account of *General Economic History*, has been offered by a one-time colleague and consistent supporter of Weber, Joseph Schumpeter. Schumpeter holds that the problem of the capitalist spirit, which is core to Weber's analysis, is entirely spurious. It arises, he says, from the analyst's 'own method of procedure' rather than from the historical material on which Weber's study of the origins of modern capitalism is based (Schumpeter 1954: 80 note). In particular, Schumpeter claims that: 'Unfortunately, Max Weber lent the weight of his great authority to a way of thinking that has no other basis than a misuse of the method of Ideal Types. Accordingly, he set out to find an explanation for a process which sufficient attention to historical detail renders self-explanatory' (Schumpeter 1954: 80 note). In the immediately following discussion Veblen shall be momentarily left aside in order to consider Schumpeter's treatment of the methodological basis on which Weber's Protestant ethic argument rests. The trajectory of Schumpeter's account implicitly leads back to a consideration of Veblen's institutionalism, so much of which Weber endorses in *General Economic History* even though it has no place in the *Protestant Ethic*.

According to Schumpeter, capitalism grew out of a qualitatively distinct earlier economic formation through historically incremental processes. Schumpeter says that there was 'no sharp break anywhere, but only slow and continuous transformation' (Schumpeter 1946: 184), and that the 'society of the feudal ages contained all the germs of the society of the capitalist age' that 'developed by slow degrees, each step teaching its lesson and producing another increment of capitalist methods and of capitalist "spirit"' (Schumpeter 1954: 80–1). Such a conclusion might be drawn from *General Economic History*, at least

up until the last chapter on the capitalist spirit. The need 'of explaining the rise of capitalism by means of a special theory', Schumpeter says, arises from the problem created by postulating ideal types of feudalism and capitalism 'which then raises the question of what it was that turned the tradition-bound individual of the one into the alert profit hunter of the other' (Schumpeter 1946: 186; see also 1954: 80). Instead of ideal-type analysis, '[n]othing but proper attention to the details of the social and economic structure of the middle ages and of the economic history from the eighth to the sixteenth century is necessary in order to understand that transformation' (Schumpeter 1946: 186). This problem generates another: this is Weber's problem of providing a theory of the origins of capitalism that 'needs to be supplemented', as Collins observes, 'by a [second] theory of the operation of mature capitalism, and of its possible demise' (Collins 1990a: 44). The institutional account of the *General Economic History* and more completely in Veblen's writing, engages a single explanation of both the origins and functioning of modern capitalism, as we shall see below.

When Schumpeter remarks that the 'first thing to notice about the capitalistic process is its evolutionary character' (Schumpeter 1946: 193), he suggests a possible contrast with and alternative to the ideal-type approach. It is appropriate, therefore, to compare Weber's ideal-type method with Veblen's evolutionary method of understanding the institutional development of capitalism. Before turning to evolutionary method, it is necessary to say more about the ideal type, although a fuller treatment will be provided in the following chapter.

It is important to appreciate that in a meaningful sense Weber is perversely aware of the problem to which Schumpeter refers, namely the distortion of historical representation through the method of ideal-type analysis. Schumpeter is not alone in raising this concern. Talcott Parsons, for instance, refers to Weber's 'hypostatization of ideal types', in which 'the organic unity both of concrete historical individuals and of the historic process' is broken up (Parsons 1937: 607). Indeed, in the *Protestant Ethic*, for example, Weber moves from illustration to explanation without a flutter, through the ideal type. He says, in particular, when referring to the Continental textile industry (Weber 1920: 66), presented 'for purposes of illustration' as an ideal type drawn from different branches of the industry in different places, that it is therefore 'of course of no consequence that the process has not in any one of the examples we have in mind taken place in

precisely the manner we have described' (Weber 1920: 200 note 25). Without the excuse of the ideal type it would not be possible for illustration of this sort to support the methodological device of the study at the expense of a valid and correct explanation of the material under consideration. Weber acknowledges the same problem, of method exaggerating 'characteristic differences' that does 'violence to historical reality', in order to make an argument against the evidence, namely to make relative differences between Catholic and Protestant doctrine appear absolute (Weber 1920: 233–4 note 68). The suggestion here is not that Weber's ideal-type method is intended to engender 'the habit of painting unrealistic pictures', as Schumpeter puts it (1946: 186), but that this latter prospect is a possible – even likely – consequence of the ideal-type approach as a result of another aspect of Weber's methodology, to which we must briefly turn.

The function of ideal-type representation, Weber says, is to offer 'guidance to the construction of hypotheses', and to 'give unambiguous means of expression' to descriptions of reality, and 'to make clearly explicit ... the unique individual character of cultural phenomena' (Weber 1904: 90, 101). The necessity for ideal-type construction ultimately derives, then, from the nature of culture itself and the radical distinction, disjuncture even, in Weber's thought between nature and culture and *pari passu*, the natural and cultural sciences (Eliaeson 2002: 16–19; Ringer 1997: 52–62). Culture, says Weber, 'is a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process, a segment on which *human beings* confer meaning and significance' (Weber 1904: 81; emphasis in original). Knowledge of cultural reality, Weber goes on to say, is necessarily 'from *particular points of view*' (Weber 1904: 81; emphasis in original). It follows that social scientific knowledge must begin with the ideal-type construction. Weber insists that in formulating the ideal-type approach he is only pointing to what is necessary and unavoidable in the social and cultural sciences (Weber 1904: 95–7, 103). And yet other approaches, entertaining quite different suppositions, can be located. This suggests not that ideal-type analysis is necessary for or implicit in all social analysis, as Weber claims (Weber 1904: 103), but that it is one possible method that if not engaged would therefore avoid the problems Schumpeter, and Parsons, have indicated derive from it.

One such alternative approach that contrasts with Weber's ideal-type conceptualization and its attendant problems is the evolutionary

method advanced by Veblen. Veblen developed a social science method on naturalistic as opposed to Weber's culturalistic foundations which is entirely consistent with the institutional analysis of the origins and operations of capitalism that Weber largely endorsed in the *General Economic History* and that has no need for the religious argument of the *Protestant Ethic*.

Evolutionary method

In the introductory chapter of *The Instinct of Workmanship*, Veblen draws on and summarizes aspects of the natural sciences of his day, including work by the Chicago biologist Jacques Loeb, the Harvard physiological psychologists William James and William McDougall, the Johns Hopkins zoologist Herbert Spencer Jennings, as well as a number of European scientific luminaries, including Gregor Mendel. These sources contribute to Veblen's outline of a historical social science founded on his version of Darwinian naturalism, a methodological commitment that goes back to Veblen's first writings, including *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899):

> The life of man in society, just like the life of other species, is a struggle for existence, and therefore it is a process of selective adaptation. The evolution of social structure has been a process of natural selection of institutions. The progress which has been and is being made in human institutions and in human character may be set down, broadly, to a natural selection of the fittest habits of thought and to a process of enforced adaptation of individuals to an environment which has progressively changed with the growth of the community and with the changing institutions under which men have lived. (Veblen 1899: 131)

Nearly all Veblen's basic explanatory categories can be found in this passage: 'evolution', 'selective adaptation', 'institution' and 'habit'. What is missing are 'instinct' and 'emulation', categories also elucidated in *The Theory of the Leisure Class*. The fundamental concept is instinct: 'As a matter of elective necessity, man is an agent. He is, in his own apprehension, a center of unfolding impulsive activity – "teleological" activity. He is an agent seeking in every act the accomplishment of some concrete, objective, impersonal end' (Veblen 1899: 29). The instincts – 'unfolding impulsive activity' – that Veblen regards as crucial in this context are those of workmanship and predation. Like all instincts, these are ever present in all humans, but

which predominates will depend on the institutional environment. The interactive relationship between instinct and environment functions through what Veblen calls the motive of emulation (Veblen 1899: 35).

From the perspective of much recent social theory, including most post-empiricist social theory such as postmodernism and post-structuralism, which denies the idea of social evolution, Veblen's evolutionist vocabulary may seem primitive and possibly foolish. At the same time it has to be acknowledged, however, that an explicitly evolutionary or selectionist orientation is currently represented in a variety of forms in sociology (Maryanski and Turner 1992; Runciman 1998, 2001; Turner 2000), so that Veblen's approach in effect is enjoying renewed interest not only for its substantive theory but also because of its evolutionary method (Dugger and Sherman 2000). The purpose here, though, is neither to review the different sociological uses, positive or negative, of evolutionary thought but to indicate the evolutionary basis of Veblen's institutional analysis of capitalism by more clearly presenting a contrast with Weber's approach to an understanding of the origins of capitalism and the method he adopts to achieve his purpose. It is frequently noted that for Weber history is inherently meaningless and therefore that he is opposed to evolutionary accounts of the development of capitalism. Certainly Weber opposes a narrative of capitalist progress predicated on an unfolding process along a set path towards a predetermined end. But such accounts are teleological, not evolutionary. The latter assumes, rather, only that social processes continue through mechanisms of adaptive selection.

While the contrast between Weber's culturalistic ideal-type method and Veblen's naturalistic evolutionary method can reasonably be anticipated to be large, the difference between them on the crucial question of selection is not so far as might be imagined. Veblen's commitment to selection, for instance, is qualified in a manner shared by Weber. We shall first consider Weber's position before moving on to Veblen's. In the *Protestant Ethic*, for instance, Weber says that present-day capitalism 'educates and selects the economic subjects which it needs through a process of economic survival of the fittest' (Weber 1920: 55). Weber's caveat, however, is that the concept of selection is limited as a means of historical explanation because what is selected has an origin prior to its being selected that the principle of

selection itself cannot explain. While this is true, it is beside the point, as the principle of selection accounts for what survives in society (or nature), not how it came about in the first place, a fact Weber better appreciated when he discussed social selection in *Economy and Society* (Weber 1921: 38–9). It has to be noted, however, that while Weber may entertain the concept of selection in a limited manner, he is hostile to its Darwinian form (Weber 1895a: 10–1 note; 1917a: 25–6).

Neither should we assume that Weber could not entertain the notion of human instinct, at least as Veblen understood it. The most general types of rationality, Weber says, are systemic arrangements and also logical coherence or consistency. In the *Protestant Ethic*, for instance, Weber indicates that a key feature of rationalization in Calvinism is the systematization of life and works (Weber 1920: 117), a feature of all rationalization processes in religion (Weber 1915a: 280; 1915b: 327) and also economics (Weber 1921: 71, 348). The form and consequences of systematization are loosely equivalent to 'rationality in the sense of logical or teleological "consistency"' (Weber 1915b: 324). Systematization relates elements to the unit of which they are a part, thus enhancing attainment of purpose of the unit. So it is with logical coherence: an actor's purpose, and their achievement of it, attain clarity when logical coherence gives sense to what would otherwise be disparate parts of an unconnected series. So important is this form of rationality to achieving purpose or intention that Weber refers to the '*imperative* of consistency' and describes logical consistency as 'an intellectual-theoretical or practical-ethical attitude [that] *has and always has had power over man*' (Weber 1915b: 324; emphasis added). Weber fails to explore the implications of this characterization, but he is clearly describing an enduring and compelling aspect of social strategy so intimately bound up with survival that it forms a ubiquitous feature of human association. There is no need to argue that the 'imperative to consistency' is genetically sustained for this to be an instinctual impulse or inclination, only that its absence will diminish chances of survival (see Harré 1979: 36).

If the term 'instinct' were to be used in current explanations of social phenomena, it is likely that it would attract derision and certainly controversy. And yet, as we have seen, it is not inconsistent to say that Weber arguably has a place for such a concept, even though he

explicitly rejects any tolerance of natural and pre-social phenomena in his cultural ontology of social action, interaction and relationships. Veblen's understanding of instinct also bears closer examination and it is important to understand what he means by the term. For Veblen instincts are not invariant biological impulses, without amenability to the influence of social process and cultural form. In his critique of economics, for instance, Veblen complains against the idea that human organisms can be activated by stimuli to follow a predetermined direction and that they would remain unchanged by the experience (Veblen 1898a: 73). In place of such a conceptualization, he proposes that agents purposefully seek 'realisation and expression in an unfolding activity', driven by 'hereditary traits and past experience' that 'afford the point of departure for the next step in the process' and, he proposes, that within this process 'both the agent and his environment' change (Veblen 1898a: 74–5). What is true of the individual, Veblen immediately adds, is also true of the group.

The difference between human instinct on the one hand, and instinct in non-human animals on the other is central to Veblen's account. Human instinct alone 'denotes the conscious pursuit of an objective end which the instinct in question makes worth while' (Veblen 1914: 5). Thus '"instinct", as contra-distinguished from tropismatic action [in humans], involves consciousness and adaptation to an end aimed at' (Veblen 1914: 4). As tropismatic action is action exhaustively described in terms of an external stimulus, it is invariant and fixed in its course. For Veblen, though, human instinct avoids such predetermined fixity as it contains purposiveness – 'adaptation to an end aimed at' – and coordinated object-awareness and self-awareness – 'consciousness'. Veblen's proximate source for this account of instinct, then, is William James rather than Charles Darwin. Both of these thinkers insist on the importance of instinct for human action, but it is James alone who insists that the unique quality of human instinct is in the faculty of consciousness. James says that because of 'memory, power of reflection, and power of inference', the experience of instinctive impulses is always 'in connection with a foresight of th[eir] results' (James 1890b: 390). Here, as in Veblen, the purposefulness and consciousness of action is not displaced by the category of instinct.

Veblen's account of the function of instinct can be further illuminated and made sense of by considering Parsons' criticism of it. Parsons

dismissively says that Veblen 'disposes of the problem of the role of ultimate ends by assuming them to be given as constant factors in the form of ... basic instincts' (Parsons 1935: 198). But this is a misstatement. Veblenian instincts are not 'ends of action' in the sense that Parsons himself postulates in his conceptualization of the unit act (Parsons 1937: 44). We shall see that the instinct of workmanship and the predatory instinct, for instance, lead to quite different ends of action in Parsons' sense within different social and historical contexts. Indeed, Veblenian instincts are arguably analogous to Parsons' 'normative orientation to action' (Parsons 1937: 44–5). Parsons identifies the 'normative elements' of action with 'the agency of the actor' in order to distinguish them from 'features of the situation in which he acts' (Parsons 1937: 49). Yet, at the same time, normative elements have an existence independent of the actor and stand at least parallel with the 'situation' as external to the actor and directive of their action: 'As a process, action is, in fact, the process of alteration of the conditional elements in the direction of conformity with norms' (Parsons 1937: 732). This confusion derives from Parsons' assumption that norms both designate particular ends as desirable for actors and also motivate actors to achieve those ends. The problem is solved when these two functions occupy separate domains in Parsons' later works, *Toward a General Theory of Action* (1951) and *The Social System* (1951), but this separation is achieved by substituting system-driven behaviour for action (Homans 1964: 419). Within the voluntaristic theory of action, the normative elements unavoidably operate as factors external to the actor that have a determinate influence over action. Thus Veblenian instincts, on the other hand, perform the function that culture is supposed to perform in Parsons' action theory, but more coherently. This is because they are not external to the actor and are not confused with the situation.

Instincts and institutions

The continuity between instinct and economic society that is the basis of Veblen's method allows him to account for both the origins and the development of capitalism through the elaboration of a single theory. This is achieved through the role of institutions in selection and the dynamism of institutions through technological and other developments.

The instincts necessary for Veblen's account of the development of capitalism are workmanship and predation. The human animal, according to Veblen, is 'an agent that acts in response to stimuli afforded by the environment in which he lives' (Veblen 1898b: 80). Unlike other animals, though, humans form a sense of their habits and proclivities developed through interaction with their environment, which makes humankind 'an intelligent agent', so that by 'selective necessity he is endowed with a proclivity for purposeful action' (Veblen 1898b: 80). The generic human purposes that persist through selection relate to the social nature of human existence (Veblen 1898b: 85). Original human survival, according to Veblen, required subordination of individual self-interest to collective purpose:

> By selection and by training, the life of man, before a predacious life became possible, would act to develop and to conserve in him an instinct of workmanship ... [A]rchaic man was necessarily a member of a group, and during this early stage, when industrial efficiency was still inconsiderable, no group could have survived except on the basis of a sense of solidarity strong enough to throw self-interest into the background. (Veblen 1898b: 87)

The instinct of workmanship is a propensity to shape 'things and situations for human use' that therefore abhors waste and is orientated to group or communal satisfactions (Veblen 1898b: 87). Self-interest is not nullified by workmanship, but overreached by it.

The instinct of predation, according to Veblen, gives fuller encouragement to self-interest: 'Self-interest, as an accepted guide of action, is possible only as the concomitant of a predatory life, and a predatory life is possible only after the use of tools had developed so far as to leave a large surplus of product over what is required for the sustenance of the producers. Subsistence by predation implies something substantial to prey upon' (Veblen 1898b: 87). The employments of predation, Veblen continues, 'involve exploit' (Veblen 1898b: 93). When predatory activities are predominant in a community or society, then self-interest and the conflict that inevitably comes out of it are not only more likely but encouraged by positive evaluation. The 'accepted basis of repute' under these conditions, Veblen says, is 'the strong hand, successful aggression' and therefore 'exploit becomes the conventional ground for invidious comparison between individuals, and repute comes to rest on prowess' (Veblen 1898b: 93).

In this sense the use of instinct in Veblen's approach is not to displace the category of culture from social explanation but enhance it by supplementing it with reference to underpinning needs.

While the instincts of workmanship and predation are both present in humankind, it is the social environment which determines which one of them will predominate. Veblen holds that 'instinctive behaviour is subject to development and hence to modification by habit' (Veblen 1914: 38). In human populations habit 'takes on more of a cumulative character' and is transmittable inter-generationally as culture (Veblen 1914: 38–9). This latter exists as 'a scheme of institutions – institutional fabric and institutional growth' (Veblen 1909: 243). These different levels of analysis – instinct, habit, and institution – are to Veblen also interactive components in a process of social change:

> Social evolution is a process of selective adaptation of temperament and habits of thought under the stress of the circumstances of associated life. The adaptation of habits of thought is the growth of institutions. But along with the growth of institutions has gone a change of more substantial character. Not only have the habits of men changed with the changing exigencies of the situation, but these changing exigencies have also brought about a correlative change in human nature. (Veblen 1899: 145–6)

Veblen maintains, then, that instincts are the ultimate basis of institutions, and institutions select and indeed shape instincts. The interaction is not circular because of dynamic force at the institutional level, through the technology–institution relationship that has been discussed above.

There is simply no need here for a special theory of the origins of capitalism, similar to Weber's Protestant ethic argument concerning the special predominant role of religion in the formation of modern capitalism in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The predatory instinct is dormant under conditions of handicraft production that promotes instead, and reflects, the instinct of workmanship. With the expansion of trade and technological changes in handicraft, a price system emerges that favours the predatory instinct which in turn encourages further the development of capitalistic practices, reinforced by social emulation under competitive conditions of market exchange directed to profit.

A link between Weber and Veblen has been proposed by Parsons when he attempts to recruit Veblen's 'instinct of workmanship' to

support Weber's notion of 'calling' in the doctrine of the Protestant ethic and the practice of the capitalist ethos, insofar as there is a functional equivalence in each of 'a specific attitude toward the task' (Parsons 1937: 529). Diggins is correct to reject this suggestion, but his grounds are insufficient: 'In Weber, work is an exercise in repressive moral duty; in Veblen, it is an expressive "unfolding activity", a totally secularized concept innocent of the psychological and spiritual anguish supposedly associated with the "Protestant ethic"' (Diggins 1978: 70). This statement is correct as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It is not just the notion of work that has different connotations for each; the ontology of calling and of instinct of workmanship are quite different, as is the role of each category in the historical and institutional contexts Weber and Veblen respectively postulate, as demonstrated above.

Conclusion

In *General Economic History*, when discussing the origin or presuppositions of modern capitalism, Weber enumerates six necessary conditions that have to be met for capitalism to be present. These are, first, 'rational capital accounting as the norm for all large industrial undertakings which are concerned with provision for everyday wants'; second, 'freedom of the market, that is, the absence of irrational limitations on trading in the market'; third, 'rational technology'; fourth, 'calculable law'; fifth, 'free labour'; and finally, 'the commercialization of economic life ... the general use of commercial instruments to represent share rights in enterprise, and also in property ownerships' (Weber 1927: 276–8). The emphasis on rationality as calculation in these conditions is shown in Weber's prior discussion to be a function of what Veblen calls the price system in profit-oriented market exchanges and institutions. Indeed, Weber and Veblen agree that capitalism in Europe originates in the growth of trade from the sixteenth century, in which mass-market demand was characterized by price competition in which profit making became institutionalized as the motive force for production and exchange.

Weber's important emphasis in his later theory on the role of the political state in the development and operations of market capitalism is also shared with Veblen. Discussion of the state in Veblen, though, provides greater explanatory purchase than Weber's account by

indicating not only the role of the state in encouraging capitalism but also clearly articulating the circumstances in which activities of the state might be responsible for disruptions in the development of capitalism. The distinction between necessity and sufficiency in the state's contribution to capitalism and the possibility that state action could undermine as well as promote market capitalism are considerations that are quite undeveloped in Weber's discussion, while explicit in Veblen's account and entailed in his evolutionary approach.

Associated with the question of the place of the political state in the origin and extension of national capitalisms is the issue of the geographic distribution of capitalist activity and therefore its changing intensity and the movement of its leading manifestation over historical time. Weber is able to offer an account of the historical geography of economic forms in terms of the religious affiliations of national populations. Thus he explains the origins of capitalism in Europe and its absence in China and India, for example, in terms of western Christianity's support for market commitment and rationality, and inhibitions on the development of the required ethical preconditions in Confucianism and Hinduism. Within Europe, capitalism's success in Holland and England, for example, and the failure of modern capitalism in Italy and Spain, is explained by Weber in terms of the influence of Calvinism in the former and the continued dominance of Catholicism in the latter countries. But an institutional account of capitalism, found in *General Economic History*, if not in the *Protestant Ethic*, could reasonably be expected to explain not only the advent of capitalism, but also the changing fortunes of national capitalisms and especially the decline of Dutch and German capitalism, for instance, and the rise to supremacy of English capitalism, which a solely religious account cannot achieve. Indeed, this would be one test of an institutional account of capitalism. It is Veblen's achievement that he can provide such an account that cannot be found in Weber.

The importance of explanation of the relative fortunes of national capitalisms is primarily in the provision of a model that identifies key variables in a theory of capitalism. It has been mentioned that market expansion and the price system as well as the political state are key variables that Weber and Veblen each focus on. An additional factor, fundamental in explaining differences in rates or intensity of capitalist development is productive technology and especially its cultural

setting. Veblen in particular gives attention to technology and particularly technological transfer in explaining the rise of English capitalism in the seventeenth century and the changing circumstances of German capitalism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. While Weber agrees that rational technology is crucial to the definition of modern capitalism, his account of it does not have the reach of Veblen's. There is no analogous argument in Weber that matches Veblen's discussion of the advantages of backwardness and technological transfer, an exemplary instance of institutional explanation, although there is evidence, indicated above, that Weber (1927) endorses such a treatment.

That the ambiguous contribution of state formation to prospects of capitalist advancement, and also differential or phased institutional and developmental outcomes of productive technology, are better grasped by Veblen than Weber can arguably be explained in terms of the different methodologies each engages. The ideal-type method, for instance, as it relies on intellectual constructions drawn from disparate sources designed to represent a unique aspect of cultural phenomena, is inclined to provide an image of abstracted social experience in which the dynamic and contradictory dimensions are minimized or eliminated from view. This may be appropriate in representing a world outlook or ethical orientation in which complicating extraneous possibilities must be removed in order to clarify what in practice is never as clear-cut and focused as needs to be shown in explanatory typologies. But when considering not cultural or mentalistic frames but real organizations and institutions, then any glossing over of their contradictory relations with other institutions and historical processes becomes inadequate and misleading. Such a problem is less likely to occur through engagement of an evolutionary methodology that is inherently prepared to entertain prospects of alternative possible outcomes through expectation of chance, inconclusive and ambiguous events in the unfolding of social processes.

In discussion above Weber's method was shown to be implicated in his continuing adherence to the Protestant ethic argument in *General Economic History*, even though religious belief and its supposed ethical support of the capitalist ethos are extraneous to institutional explanation of the origins of modern capitalism. Indeed, the orientations of profit seeking and the rational apprehension and execution of market opportunities, including psychological commitment to

relevant values and expectations, can be explained in terms of the forces at work in the emergent institutions of capitalism themselves, including the need for profit seeking under conditions of a market price system and conceptualization of market activity as enduring beyond discrete market exchanges or episodes and occupying instead a working life's commitment under tutorship of bookkeeping methods. Such propositions as these are only at best ambiguously and incompletely absorbed by Weber (1927), who reverts to emphasizing the primary role of religious orientation and not merely religious organization even while outlining an institutional analysis of the origins of capitalism. Veblen, on the other hand, is unambiguously committed to consistent institutional explanation in his evolutionary analysis of the origin of modern capitalism.

Although Veblen's standing in sociology today is depreciated and his theory of capitalist development seldom accorded the serious treatment offered to other writers, it has been shown here that not only is Veblen worthy of closer attention, his account of the origins of capitalism, its development and disruptions, is in many ways advanced to a degree not found in comparable treatments, including Weber's. Veblen's substantive discussion of capitalism cannot be separated from his evolutionary method. This latter has been not only underappreciated in the relevant literature but misrepresented and misunderstood. However, in unifying aspects of natural science discussion in his historical sociology of institutional development, Veblen provides a consistent and expansive approach that not only anticipates some current developments in sociology but implicitly cautions against reductive excesses. Veblen's is not a biological explanation of social processes, but a social institutional account of historical developments that integrates biological categories and proclivities. The evolutionary account of economic institutions provided by Veblen functions as a unified theory of capitalist development in which a special theory of origins is redundant and unnecessary.

6 *The Jewish question: religious doctrine and sociological method*

When Weber first wrote *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* at the beginning of the twentieth century he had the benefit of – and drew upon – two recently published works by Werner Sombart, namely *Modern Capitalism* [*Der Moderne Kapitalismus*] (1902) and *The German Economy in the Nineteenth Century* [*Die deutsche Volkswirtschaft im Neunzehnten Jahrhundert*] (1903). Weber agreed with the importance given in these books to the idea of the 'spirit of capitalism', but he disagreed with Sombart about where this 'spirit' is to be socially and historically located. Weber argued, for instance, in disagreement with Sombart, that the German national character, because it is religiously Lutheran and therefore traditional (as we saw in chapter 2), is not linked to the spirit of capitalism. The spirit of capitalism is modern, not traditional. The British and American national characters, Weber went on to argue, through their exposure to Puritanism and Calvinism, are connected with the spirit of capitalism. At the same time Weber accommodates Sombart's view of the Jews as a religious group associated with trade, not entrepreneurship, and in that sense implicated in the emergence and history of capitalism in an entirely subordinate and ancillary position.

The intellectual borrowing between Weber and Sombart was not one way, however. Weber's treatment of Protestantism in the *Protestant Ethic* led Sombart to reflect further on the question of the role of the Jews in the history of western economic development. In a book first published in 1911, *The Jews and Modern Capitalism* [*Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben*], Sombart accepts that a group's religious beliefs 'can have far-reaching influences on its economic life', as demonstrated by Weber's discussion of Puritanism and Capitalism. Indeed, he continues: 'Weber's researches are responsible for this book [*The Jews and Modern Capitalism*]. For anyone who followed

them could not but ask himself whether all that Weber ascribes to Puritans might not with equal justice be referred to Judaism, and probably in a greater degree' (Sombart 1911: 191–2). So, while Weber's account of the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism owes an intellectual debt to Sombart, it in turn led Sombart to new formulations concerning the strategic role of religious groups in the development of capitalism that fundamentally challenged Weber's position. Sombart's continuing reformulation was in turn a stimulus to Weber's further researches after the publication of the *Protestant Ethic* in 1905.

The increased prominence that Sombart (1911) gave to the role of the Jews in the development of capitalism was cause for Weber to consolidate his original differences with Sombart on the religious sources of modern capitalism, and it led Weber to conduct an extensive investigation and interpretation of Judaism and the basis of its inability, as Weber saw it, to contribute to the formation of modern capitalism. These investigations were conducted during the period 1911–13 and incorporated in what became *Economy and Society* and also from 1916, the results of which were published as *Ancient Judaism*. The conclusions of this research are summarized in the second edition of the *Protestant Ethic*, completed just months before Weber's death in 1920.

In what follows, the relevant parts of Weber's discussion of the Jews will be outlined. The purpose will be to show that Weber's account of the Jews demonstrates crucial aspects of the form of his argument concerning the Protestants. In coming to this position it will also be shown that Weber's characterization of the Jews and his subsequent account of their economic situation and social standing are conceptually limited and factually in need of correction. The issue is not Weber's dispute with Sombart as to whether the Jews or Protestants founded the spirit of modern capitalism – a question of insignificant value sociologically even though it fails to provoke incredulity through habituation – but rather his understanding of the social and economic processes in which the Jews participated and to which they were subjected. From this focus on Weber's argument concerning the Jews much of the Protestant ethic thesis, including key historical assumptions and its methodology, will necessarily be subject to critical evaluation.

Jewish rationalism, Protestant rationalism

In the *Protestant Ethic* Weber argues that the ascetic rationalism of the Puritans and Calvinists has Old Testament sources. This is because these Protestant groups selectively emphasized 'those parts of the *Old Testament* which praise formal legality as a sign of conduct pleasing to God' (Weber 1920: 165). Weber goes on to say that such an appropriation of Jewish themes gave 'a powerful impetus to that spirit of self-righteous and sober legality which was so characteristic of the worldly asceticism of this form of Protestantism' (Weber 1921: 165). Indeed, the 'rational suppression of the mystical', so typical of Puritanism and Calvinism, was a feature 'of the God-fearing but perfectly unemotional wisdom of the Hebrews', according to Weber (Weber 1920: 123; see also 222 note 19 and Weber 1927: 360–1). While he presents this overlap between Judaism and Protestantism, Weber is careful to indicate that the relationship is not continuous, through historical or cultural causation, but primarily reflective of religious doctrines of the Protestants themselves, although not the Jews. He says that 'in the last analysis [it was] the peculiar, fundamentally ascetic, character of Calvinism itself which made it select and assimilate those elements of *Old Testament* religion which suited it best' (Weber 1920: 123). Indeed, while Protestant rationalism was able to carry the ethos of rational organization from religious belief to the mundane practices of everyday life and especially those associated with modern capitalist production and labour, Jewish rationalism, Weber says, could lead no further than 'the politically and speculatively oriented adventurous capitalism; their ethos was, in a word, that of pariah-capitalism' (Weber 1920: 166).

Weber's judgement, then, is that because of the nature of their religious beliefs, the Jews could not be responsible for modern capitalism and could only be associated with a primitive and limited form of capitalism, what he calls 'pariah capitalism'. A detailed exposition of his argument is developed in a section of *Economy and Society*, 'Judaism and Capitalism' (Weber 1921: 611–15), in which the concept of pariah capitalism is more fully outlined.

The '*distinctive* economic achievements of Judaism in the Middle Ages and in modern times' are listed by Weber as 'moneylending from pawnbroking to the financing of great states; certain types of

commodity business, particularly retailing, peddling, and produce trade of a distinctively rural type; certain branches of wholesale business; and trading in securities, above all the brokerage of stocks' (Weber 1921: 612; emphasis in original). Weber goes on to extend this list, providing greater impact to his concluding assessment that 'of all these businesses only a few, though some very important ones, display the forms, both legal and economic, characteristic of modern Occidental capitalism (as contrasted to the capitalism of ancient times, the Middle Ages, and the earlier period in Eastern Asia). The distinctively modern legal forms include securities and capitalist associations' (Weber 1921: 613). While a portion only of Jewish economic activity might be called modern capitalist, according to this account, Weber immediately continues that these latter 'are not of specifically Jewish provenience'. Indeed: '[T]he characteristically modern principles of satisfying public and private credit needs first arose *in nuce* on the soil of the medieval city. These medieval legal forms of finance, which were quite un-Jewish in certain respects, were later adapted to the economic needs of modern states and other modern recipients of credit' (Weber 1921: 613). Weber's assessment here is in clear contrast to Sombart's argument concerning the importance of the Jews to the development of modern capitalism, and a direct rebuttal of it (Weber 1921: 612; Sombart 1911: 61–108).

Not only are the economic activities of Jews predominantly associated with non-modern forms of capitalism, according to Weber, those that are within the orbit of modern economic and legal forms are not particularly Jewish. Weber goes further still: 'Above all, one element particularly characteristic of modern capitalism was strikingly – though not completely – missing from the extensive list of Jewish economic activities. This was the organization of industrial production in domestic industry and in the factory system' (Weber 1921: 613). According to Weber, then, 'the Jews were relatively or altogether absent from the new and distinctive forms of modern capitalism, the rational organization of labour, especially production in an industrial enterprise of the factory type' (Weber 1921: 614). The issue of concern here is not with Weber's argument that the Jews did not found modern capitalism. There is no doubt that Sombart's study, as he in fact acknowledges, creates an impression that the 'Jewish *influence* may appear larger than it actually was' and that 'there were undoubtedly a thousand and one other causes that helped make the

economic system of our time what it is' (Sombart 1911: 6; emphasis added). It is Weber's particular characterization of the Jews and his subsequent account of their economic situation that requires further assessment.

The reason that the Jews, unlike the Protestants, were quite alien to the development and operations of modern capitalism, according to Weber, is to be located in the fact that 'they retained the double standard of morals which is characteristic of primordial economic practice in all communities: what is prohibited in relation to one's brothers is permitted in relation to strangers' (Weber 1921: 614). In a nutshell, '*the religious law* prohibited taking usury from fellow Jews but permitted it in transactions with non-Jews' (Weber 1921: 615; emphasis added). Whereas the Protestants were able to maintain a religiously based ethical commitment in all of their activities, including acquisitive behaviour in the market place and in production for the market, according to Weber's argument, the Jews maintained ethical commitments only within their religious community but had simply pragmatic and therefore unrationalizable economic relations with non-Jews. Thus the 'ultimate theoretical reasons ... that the distinctive elements of modern capitalism originated and developed quite apart from the Jews are to be found in the peculiar character of the Jews as a pariah people and in *the idiosyncracy of their religion*' (Weber 1921: 614; emphasis added).

Weber does consider a non-religious explanation of the Jewish situation, but only to dismiss it. He says in the *Protestant Ethic*, for instance, that '[n]ational or religious minorities which are in a position of subordination to a group of rulers are likely, through their voluntary or involuntary exclusion from positions of political influence, to be driven with peculiar force into economic activity' (Weber 1920: 39). Thus migrant and minority status account for the economic and occupational configurations of 'Poles in Russia and Eastern Europe ... Huguenots in France under Louis XIV, the Nonconformists and Quakers in England, and, last but not least, the Jew for two thousand years' (Weber 1920: 39). Weber says that consideration can be given to the way in which traditional relationships tend to break down under the influence of exile, for instance (Weber 1920: 43). But against this reasoning is the caution that minority status through exile 'has been a universal occurrence and has nothing to do with our problem [for it] ... is not peculiar to modern capitalism' (Weber

1920: 190 note 13). The curiosity of this statement lies not only in its requirement that broad historical trends be excluded from consideration of particular historical phenomena but also in its rejection of multicausal for monocausal explanations. In considering the different economic situations of distinct minority groups, Weber bluntly insists: 'the principal explanation of this difference must be sought in the permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs, and not only in their temporary external historico-political situations' (Weber 1920: 40). The notion that religious beliefs have a 'permanent intrinsic character' is one to which we shall return.

The Jews as a 'pariah people'

The religious basis of Jewish pariah standing, according to Weber, which explains both the Jews' moral double standards and the limited nature of their economic activity, is in their covenant with God as a chosen people through which the pious voluntarily segregate themselves from the surrounding or host society. Weber refers to the 'segregation from the outer world as a result of taboos, hereditary religious obligations in the conduct of life, and the association of salvation hopes with their pariah status' (Weber 1921: 493). For Weber, then, the category of 'pariah people' 'denotes a distinctive hereditary social group lacking autonomous political organization and characterized by internal prohibitions against commensality and intermarriage ... [as well as] political and social disprivilege and a far-reaching distinctiveness in economic functioning' (Weber 1921: 493).

As with many of his formulations, Weber presents the concept of 'pariah people' as an ideal-type construction, which in this case he applies to both Judaism and Hinduism. Hindu castes and Jewish communities show the same characteristic effects of a pariah religion, according to Weber: 'the more depressed the position in which the members of the pariah people found themselves, the more closely did the religion *cause* them to cling to one another and to their pariah position and the more powerful became the salvation hopes which were connected with the divinely ordained fulfilment of their religious obligations' (Weber 1921: 493; emphasis added). The difference between Judaism and Hindu caste religion, according to this argument, 'is based on the type of salvation hopes' that each group entertained (Weber 1921: 493). In particular, the salvation hopes of

the Jews but not caste Hindus take a form coloured by resentment, as described by Nietzsche, whom Weber refers to in this context (Weber 1921: 494). Weber gives some importance to Jewish resentment and its place in Jewish religion, for he devotes six pages to it (Weber 1921: 494–9).

Weber's characterization of the Jews as a 'pariah people' has stimulated a largely negative critical literature. There is not sufficient space here to review this body of writing (see Abraham 1992: 8–20) but it is possible to indicate some of the complaints against Weber contained in it:

- The Jews never accepted an inferior status in the framework of an alien belief system, and the loss of political independence did not entail the renunciation of self-government (Momigliano 1980).
- The comparison of the Jews and the Hindu castes is entirely forced, yet Weber attributes the utmost importance to it (Taubes 1971).
- As Weber uses the term, the Jews are not a pariah people: socially, the Diasporic Jews were limited neither in their occupational choice, nor in their class membership; psychologically, there is a great difference between the pariah's acquiescence in and the Jews rejection of their degradation (Maier 1971).
- Weber's characterization of the Jews, consistent with his conception of historical social science methodology, is self-consciously grounded in contemporary value ideas, which makes him impervious to factual criticisms (Abraham 1992).
- The particularism of pariah peoples and the fundamental opposition between pariah and privileged, upon which Weber insists, ignores their mutual interdependence and coterminous formation (Dumont 1980).

One aspect of Weber's treatment of the Jews as a pariah people to be focused on here is that in his account the social circumstances of the Jews are an unintended consequence of their religious beliefs. In that sense, Weber holds that the Jews are actively acquiescent in their own degradation. Such a statement would avoid being ethically and politically questionable only if it were sociologically unavoidable.

It has been shown that Weber argues that the pariah status of the Jews derives from their religious beliefs. The claim is not that the Jews are persecuted for their beliefs, according to this argument, but that adherence to these religious beliefs leads Jews to social separation and

marginalization. Indeed, Weber says 'no proof is required to establish that the pariah condition of the Jews, which we have seen resulted from the promises of Yahweh, and the resulting incessant humiliation of the Jews by Gentiles necessarily led to the Jewish people's retaining a different economic morality for its relations with strangers than with fellow Jews' (Weber 1921: 615). Thus while Weber agrees that the Jews suffer persecution, he holds, at the same time, that this persecution is a consequence of pariah status rather than a primary factor in the separation, marginalization and ghettoization of the Jews. To the extent that Weber's account of the Jews as a pariah people is a sociology of the Jews, there is in it no meaningful role for anti-Semitism, for instance, or some similar interactive phenomenon in explaining the historical experience of Jewish degradation.

Anti-Semitism and Jewish marginalization

When considering the economic activities of the Jews, Weber asks rhetorically why 'no pious Jew thought of establishing an industry employing pious Jewish workers of the ghetto ... when ... areas of industrial activity uncontrolled by guild monopoly were open' (Weber 1921: 613–14). Before considering how this question might be answered, Weber's implicit acknowledgement in this statement, that guilds were simply not open to Jews, can be considered. Weber holds that the circumstances of the Jews have to be explained in terms of Jewish religious doctrine and practices. Thus he says that 'Jewish law ... prohibited the participation of Jews in the banquets of the guilds' (Weber 1921: 618). The implication here is that Jewish exclusion from guilds arose through incommensurability arising from Jewish religious dietary prohibitions. But this is to ignore the constitution and operations of the guilds themselves and their discriminatory exclusion of Jews irrespective of the latter's dietary preferences.

Guilds have a long history that is not confined to European occupational development (Burgess 1928; Morse 1909; Weisberg 1967). In Europe, however, craft guilds were formed in the ninth century, although one commentator claims that they 'were of little account before the thirteenth century' (Thrupp 1963: 230), and merchant guilds were established in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, in order to exclude strangers from local activities and restrict foreign competition conducted by Syrian and Jewish traders that had been growing

throughout Europe since the ninth century. The guilds forbade relations with strangers so that a 'gildsman could not enter into partnership with a non-gildsman to trade with his money or sell his goods for part-profits' (Lipson 1915: 242–3; see also Weber 1927: 141). Not only did the guilds operate as a closure mechanism against strangers through control of technique or trade, but also 'served other functions which exhibit in a strong light the core of fraternalism inherent in the gild system' (Lipson 1915: 246; see also Thrupp 1963: 238). These included not only town administration but also religious functions. Lipson says: 'Many craft gilds seem to have originated as religious fraternities whose members were drawn together by ties of common devotion, and the religious duty of the gild is often placed foremost among its functions' (Lipson 1915: 303). Thrupp similarly insists that guilds had a tradition of piety that attests to their 'religious character transcending mere economic interest and struggle for power', and that their organization 'as a fraternity under the auspices of patron saints ... was the source of their deepest solidarity' (Thrupp 1963: 230, 238). Weber, on the other hand, insists against the tendency of historical evidence that 'the guilds were secular in origin', and immediately adds that they 'laid claim to religious functions only in the late middle ages' (Weber 1927: 146). This latter proposition is true with regard to responsibility for the mystery or passion plays, which went 'out of the hands of the clergy in their naves and choirs ... [into] those of the laity in their market-places and guild-halls' (Chambers quoted in Lipson 1915: 303–4), but it is not true of the function of observance, for instance, including the guild's maintenance 'of lights upon the altars of its patron saint' (Lipson 1915: 303), which is original to the formation of European guilds. One index of the weakening of the guild system was indeed the failure of guild members to support the costs of the Christian pageant, an 'outward symbol of the religious and social life of the fraternity' (Lipson 1915: 365). The Christian character of guilds is more positively indicated, though, in the common stipulation that members take an oath to adhere to guild ordinances so that 'disobedience would thus expose the offender to penalties in spiritual courts' (Lipson 1915: 314).

Thus it is not self-exclusion of Jews through inability to partake in the compulsory feasts of guilds that prevented Jewish participation. Guild feasts, incidentally, are important only toward the end of

the guild system in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries (Lipson 1915: 367–8). Rather, it is the exclusory and Christian nature of the guilds themselves that forcefully prevented Jewish participation at all. Indeed, Benjamin Nelson writes that 'almost all occupations of any consequence in the Middle Ages were so thoroughly connected with the Christian religion, that the entire guild structure was so completely religious through and through that it is totally inconceivable ... that any occupation was open to [Jews]' (Stammer 1971: 197). The inference to draw from this statement is that Jews were excluded from guild membership by the religio-cultural structure of the guilds themselves. Rather than explain Jewish conditions in terms of the tenets of Jewish religion, it is necessary to consider the interactions between the Jews and the communities with which they related.

This latter point can be reinforced by consideration of Weber's suggestion that Jewish religious prohibitions on intermarriage (Weber 1921: 493), mentioned above in connection with his characterization of pariah status, were responsible for the segregation of Jews from non-Jews. Yet the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, convened by Pope Innocent III, promulgated the requirement, in Canon 68, that Jews be distinguished from Christians by 'the character of their dress', a practice enforced at least until the sixteenth century and infamously reintroduced in Germany in 1933 under Nazi authority. The maintenance of outward Jewish distinction by dress or badge imposed by the Lateran Council was designed to prevent sexual relations between Christians and Jews that occurred even in the face of clerical anxieties and religious prohibitions. Segregation of Jews from non-Jews can not simply be explained by pariah religious proscription, as Weber suggests, when non-Jewish organizations and practices were also directed toward the purpose of segregation.

Let us return to Weber's curiously phrased claim that 'one element particularly characteristic of modern capitalism was strikingly – *though not completely* – missing from the extensive list of Jewish economic activities ... [namely] the organization of industrial production in domestic industry and in the factory system' (Weber 1921: 613; emphasis added). Weber goes on to say that relevant resources and opportunities were available to Jews but not taken up by them (Weber 1921: 613–14). 'The ultimate theoretical reasons for this fact', he explains, 'are to be found in the peculiar character of the

Jews as a pariah people and in the idiosyncracy of their religion' (Weber 1921: 614). In particular, the ethical consequences of their religion and the pariah status it imbued meant 'what is prohibited in relation to one's brothers is permitted in relation to strangers' (Weber 1921: 614). In particular, Weber holds that Jewish religious precepts prevented Jewish capitalists employing Jewish labour and lending for interest to fellow Jews. Such an explanation, however, makes it difficult to account for those cases – acknowledged by Weber – in which there did in fact occur 'industrial production in domestic industry and in the factory system' that was organized by Jews.

One example not referred to by Weber in which appropriate facilitating political and economic conditions permitted Jewish industrial production and employment is the textile industry in sixteenth-century Safed, a town in what is now northern Israel. At the time Safed was within the Ottoman Empire but subject to claims from neither Islam nor Christianity and it thus became a congenial place of settlement for Jewish craftsmen and traders expelled from Spain. Economic relations with Syria to the north and the local rural hinterland encouraged the community to construct a broad economic and social base on which developed, among other things, a successful textile industry. Jewish workers were employed in the large Jewish-owned textile workshops and Jews gave credit for interest to Jews (Ben-Sasson 1976: 634–5). The decline of Safed, from the beginning of the seventeenth century, was not the result of sanctions against co-religious employment or against profit-generating credit from the town's Jewish religious communities, which were large, regionally significant and integrated with its economic prosperity, but from oppressive Ottoman taxation, Druse and Bedouin attacks and natural disturbances including major earthquakes (Baron 1983: 231).

When the type of development exemplified by sixteenth-century Safed fails, therefore, or simply does not occur, then social, political and economic rather than religious factors might best be considered in explanation of it. Indeed, in this vein Weber did acknowledge that the 'legally and factually precarious position of the Jews hardly permitted continuous and rationalized industrial enterprise with fixed capital' (Weber 1921: 614). Such a consideration must weigh significantly in explaining the limited incidence of Jewish industrial capitalists. As Weber in fact suggests, then, the history of expulsion,

confiscation and destructive persecution produced a cultural legacy of inhibition and insecurity dissuading Jews from holding their assets or investing in fixed capital. But even if these dispositions were overcome, additional political, organizational and material constraints operated.

By the eighteenth century in central and western Europe, for instance, Jewish financiers contributed to the development of industrial enterprise but were not direct participants within it. Even at this time Jews did not attain importance in industry because of the restrictions of guilds and government policy (Ettinger 1976: 738). At this time the condition of the Jews in England, for instance, compared most favourably with those in the rest of Europe, but they nevertheless suffered frequent 'administrative and even judicial annoyance' (Roth 1964: 204). The 'most burdensome disability' which had 'consequent impediments in all branches of economic life' was prohibition on being Freemen of the City of London, a bar extended from observant to baptized Jews (Roth 1964: 205). Jews in England, as aliens, 'were precluded from purchasing real estate and shipping vessels' and were 'able to become freely naturalized only after the annulment in 1826 of the Christian oaths and ceremonies surrounding the naturalization procedure' (Ettinger 1976: 759; Roth 1964: 247).

Thus added to cultural factors deriving from historical experience of forced movement and confiscation that inhibited investment in fixed capital, political interference also inhibited Jewish industrial capitalist development. Added to this is an economic organizational factor, namely that when conditions constraining Jewish industrial activity abated, industrial production had already proceeded and opportunities for newcomers were simply not available. In those economies in which industrial expansion occurred after Jewish capitalists had achieved economic influence, Jews did play a part in developing capitalist industrialization, including in southern Germany and the Rhine region in the 1830s and 1840s and in Germany, England, and the United States at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries (Ettinger 1976: 798, 865–6).

Whether Jewish capitalists employed Jewish workers is also a matter that requires empirical investigation and cannot be answered simply on the basis of religious principle. Jewish industrialists in Russia during the 1890s, for instance, employed over 93 per cent of the Jewish working population engaged in industry and manufacturing, and

incidentally, were a key source of credit for Jewish merchants (Kahan 1986: 22). Most industrial employment for European Jewish immigrants in the United States during the period from 1890 to 1914 was provided by Jewish industrial entrepreneurs (Kahan 1986: 105–6). Contrary to Weber's suppositions, then, whether Jewish industrialists engaged a Jewish workforce was not determined by their religious considerations but by social and economic conditions. It was more likely to occur in industries in which small workforces predominated rather than large and was affected by wage competition between Jewish and non-Jewish workers and the respective levels of industrial organization of Jewish and non-Jewish workers. Employers of any faith typically prefer cheap to expensive labour and a non-unionized to a unionized workforce (Ettinger 1976: 868; Kahan 1986: 41–3). An additional but related consideration is the instability of the Jewish working class rather than the religion of employer or employee. With changing economic and educational opportunities and continuous migratory movements, the composition of the Jewish working class in western Europe and the United States from the middle of the nineteenth century has been in more or less constant flux with the predominant trend being one of shrinkage toward a state of effective disappearance.

The foregoing discussion raises again the question of whether it is possible to provide a sociological account of Diasporic Judaism without consideration of not the intrinsic religious qualities of the Jewish population, but the nature of the relationship between the Jews and the host society in which they lived, including the question of anti-Semitism? In answering Weber's question referred to above, namely why Jewish-owned factories do not employ Jewish workers (Weber 1921: 613), it has been shown that it is not the essential characteristics of the Jewish religion but the nature of the relationship between Jewish communities and the host societies of settlement that is responsible for the opportunity structure in which Jewish economic activity occurs. It is difficult to avoid the fact that antipathy to Jews or anti-Semitism is a perennial element in the constraints that limit Jewish options for economic and social action, and that opportunities in these spheres expand in proportion as discrimination and anti-Semitism diminish. Any endeavour to explain the social outcomes for a group in terms of their religious beliefs, as Weber has attempted through his account of the Jews as a pariah people, is a bone that makes very thin sociological soup.

Exclusion of Jews through incommensurability, as Weber suggests in the case of the guilds, does not in itself amount to anti-Semitism, although even that case does imply that Jewish exclusion or marginalization is not merely an unintended consequence of Jewish religious belief alone. No doubt exclusion through incommensurability may account for aspects of Jewish segregation, but the responsibility of active anti-Semitism in limiting the social and economic horizons of the Jews is much more significant than simply religious differences between Jews and a Christian host society.

Weber's failure to contribute to a sociology of anti-Semitism is a significant omission. Significant because he was aware of anti-Semitism and opposed to it when it touched him, and also because he did concern himself sociologically with current issues of the day, even if not this one. Indeed, a historically important episode of anti-Semitism occurred in Berlin in the 1880s during the period of Weber's attendance at Berlin University. One of Weber's teachers at the University, Heinrich Treitschke, led a campaign for the legislative exclusion of Jews from prominent positions in social life in defence of the Christian character of German state and society. Student fraternities, cultural associations, political parties and state bureaucracies all engaged in exclusionary practices against Jews; Jews were assaulted on the streets of Berlin and other cities with impunity and Jewish property was vandalized (see Pulzer 1964).

Weber was aware of anti-Semitism as a social and political force in the Germany of his day. He was aware of its consequences on Jewish opportunities and aspirations. However, in his sociological treatment of the Jews he regards the pariah concept and its corollaries as not only necessary, but sufficient in explaining Jewish economic marginalization. That is to say, in Weber's view, the conditions of the Jews are to be explained only by reference to the particulars and peculiarities of their religious beliefs.

Talmud or social relations

Weber's account of the Jews as a pariah people capable of contributing only to pariah capitalism functions in terms of an argument claiming that adherence to religious principles of distinctiveness were responsible for Jewish social segregation. It has been shown above that the conditions of the Jews can be explained not in terms of

endogenous religious belief but in terms of the relationship between Jews and the social groups that enforced separation from or persecuted them. The exemplary sociological statement of this approach is Louis Wirth, *The Ghetto*, first published in 1928.

Wirth (1928: 11–39) accounts for the separation of the Jews, physically or spatially manifest in the form of the Jewish ghetto, in terms of a narrative of conflictual relationships leading to institutionalization of social distance. He shows, for instance, that church councils, from the very beginning of Jewish dispersion in the fourth century, officially expressed Christian suspicion of the Jews as anti-Christ (Wirth 1928: 12–13). The persistence, organization and level of persecution reached unprecedented heights, however, during the first crusade in 1096 (Wirth 1928: 15). In the aftermath of these events, political rulers provided protection to the Jews in exchange for a monetary tribute, collected from the community as a whole rather than from individuals (Wirth 1928: 15–17). This arrangement, of protection in return for payment, which could be rescinded at any time, had a dual consequence. First, it was the basis of new persecution as any disagreement between Christian religious and political authorities allowed the former in particular, but not exclusively, to incite local populations against the Jews as a tactical device. Second, the protection-for-payment arrangement reinforced the commercial and financial activities of the Jews, as it effectively made them imperial tax collectors (Wirth 1928: 17). Indeed, it has been argued that the position of the Jews declined with the growth of capitalism because their value to the nobility diminished with the rise of a Christian merchant class (Sharot 1976: 29). Finally, Wirth notes that the dual factors of persecution and communal payment of tribute shaped the political and social structure of the Jewish community for they consolidated Jewish separation and solidarity, completed by the fifteenth century, in the form of a compulsory ghetto (Wirth 1928: 29).

Weber does not reject the type of account later developed by Wirth and summarized above. Indeed, he does provide a statement of religious anti-Semitism and its effects on the Jews in *General Economic History* (Weber 1927: 217, 270, 359) and in the last chapter of *Ancient Judaism*, chapter 16, 'Judaism and Early Christianity' (Weber 1917–19: 405–24). Nevertheless, Weber continues to give priority to Jewish religiously based ritualistic segregation and holds that the 'social isolation of the Jews, this "ghetto" in the intimate sense of the

word, was, indeed, primarily self-chosen and self-willed and this to a constantly increasing extent' (Weber 1917–19: 417). Weber's account of Jewish isolation is underpinned by his references to biblical and therefore religious proscription on the Jews taking interest from their compatriots and the corresponding permissibility of their taking interest from foreigners (Weber 1927: 267–8, 359–60; see also Weber 1921: 615). It is appropriate, then, to consider this claim further.

Weber was aware that biblical prohibitions did not prevent loans on interest between Jews. Indeed, these practices were responsible for encouraging, within Jewish communities, reinterpretations of Talmudic law at least from the twelfth century because of internal economic necessity (Ben-Sasson 1976: 390). While Jewish writers of the period maintained an outward loyalty to scripture, the practices of monetary transactions and the 'efforts to find a legal method for authorizing loans' testify to the absence of a dual attitude among Jews to loans for interest (Ben-Sasson 1976: 391; see 400, 471–5, 643–4). Again, Weber acknowledges the pressures and practices that compromised biblical requirements, which had already been discussed by Sombart. Nevertheless, Weber dismisses the factual situation as 'amount[ing] merely to concessions to laxity, whereby those who took advantage of them remained far behind the highest standards of Jewish business ethics. In any case, it is certain that such behaviour was not the realm in which a Jew could demonstrate his religious merit' (Weber 1921: 615). Weber's claim here might be true only if ethics, including business ethics, were necessarily drawn from theological principles.

In order to understand the sustaining intellectual force of Weber's insistence that scripture is a sufficient basis for understanding historical economic practices and meanings, and particularly the empirical circumstances of the Jews, it is necessary to turn to the methodological principles that he employed in adducing scripture to the condition of the Jews, including his account of values and value spheres and the ideal-type conceptualization.

Values and practices

Weber held that experience in the world, including the social world of relations between persons, has no intrinsic meaning or significance except that which is ascribed to it by the valuation of agents. It is

through 'value-orientation' that empirical or concrete reality acquires significance for persons and through such values that they are able to develop and maintain an interest in that reality (Weber 1904: 76–7). In doing so, Weber continues, persons thereby turn 'a finite segment of the meaningless infinity of the world process' into a segment of culture in which meaning and significance can be located (Weber 1904: 81). Because of the necessarily cultural nature of the social world, according to Weber, events and things cannot be known except in terms of a particular point of view. He says that social phenomena cannot be understood 'independent of special "one-sided" viewpoints according to which ... they are selected, analysed and organized for expository purposes' (Weber 1904: 72). In any culture there will be a number of different viewpoints, with an inevitable clash between them. Indeed, Weber says that the 'store of possible meanings is inexhaustible ... [and] the concrete form in which value-relevance occurs remains perpetually in flux' (Weber 1904: 111).

While meaninglessness may be dispelled through the application of values in the formation of culture, Weber did not believe that the generation of culture dispelled conflict from social life. Nevertheless, the conflict of values is regularized, according to him, although not concluded, through the operation of value spheres. Similarly, the understanding of culture is possible, in Weber's account, by advancing beyond subjective meaning to 'objective' cultural interpretation in the formation of ideal types. Each of these notions shall be considered in terms of Weber's treatment of the Jews as a pariah people, a particular cultural formation engaging distinct economic moralities, one for internal relations with fellow Jews and another for relations with non-Jews, on the basis of religious belief.

Different types of values inhabit or adhere to different types of practices or institutions, according to Weber. Although not all 'value spheres', as he calls them, are strictly institutionalized, sets of internally meaningful values possessing their own distinctiveness tend towards value consistency and therefore are subject to rationalizing tendencies. Contained within each value sphere, then, is a capacity for subverting other value spheres. Weber says, for instance, that 'the various value spheres ... stand in irreconcilable conflict with each other' (Weber 1917b: 147), at least in part because each 'life-sphere ... is governed by different laws' (Weber 1919: 123). In his pivotal essay, 'Religious Rejections of the World and their

Directions', which of all Weber's statements about value spheres is the most complete, he distinguishes the religious, economic, political, aesthetic, erotic and intellectual spheres. A rationale for his characterization of the Jews as capable of only pariah capitalism can be found in this distinction and its broader treatment of value spheres. Weber says that the 'tension between brotherly religion and the world has been most obvious in the economic sphere' and that the 'more the world of the modern capitalist economy follows its own immanent laws, the less accessible it is to any imaginable relationship with a religious ethic of brotherliness' (Weber 1915b: 331). The only possibilities that Weber identifies for escaping this tension between the religious value sphere and the economic value sphere are the 'Puritan ethic of "vocation"' and also 'mysticism' (Weber 1915b: 332–3). Neither of these are available to adherents of the Jewish religion, and therefore the Jewish religious value sphere – according to Weber's analysis – must be seen to undermine Jewish adherence to values commensurate with the values inherent in capitalist economic practices.

In order to understand the argument concerning value spheres, it is necessary to appreciate that the methodological basis of Weber's sociology is drawn from late nineteenth-century German neo-Kantianism, the attendant difficulties of which are not unknown (see Turner and Factor 1984). It will be shown here that the distortions that attend Weber's argument concerning Jewish derogation to pariah capitalism can be accounted for in terms of his treatment of value rationality and value spheres that are briefly mentioned above. The idea that different values may be in conflict with each other is not at issue here. But Weber insists that different values occupying distinct value spheres must necessarily be in conflict as a result of the logic of value spheres. Weber says, for instance, that a genuine appreciation of the reliance of meaning on values 'could not ... overlook the fact that ... alternatives between values ... [constitute] an irreconcilable death-struggle, like that between "God" and the "Devil"' (Weber 1917a: 17). He goes on to say in a more or less tragic vein that while value compromises occur at 'every point' in the course of a life, nevertheless 'value spheres cross and interpenetrate' so that 'every single important activity and ultimately life as whole' will require an 'ultimate decision' between 'irreconcilably antagonistic values' (Weber 1917a: 18). Any alternative to the position Weber sets out he

describes as 'relativistic' and insists that such a position requires 'a very special type of ("organic") metaphysics' (Weber 1917a: 18). But what Weber's own position depends upon is not explicitly stated by him, and when the question arises he refers readers to the work of Heinrich Rickert, a neo-Kantian philosopher who would be forgotten were it not for Weber's reliance on his theory of value (see Weber 1903 and 1906: passim; 1917a: 21–2; 1905b: 135, 141, 149–50). It is not possible to demonstrate here that while Weber's methodology is logically dependent on Rickert's value philosophy, Rickert himself was unable to solve the problem of the objectivity of values that Weber relied upon (see Oakes 1988; 2003). It is sufficient to show that an alternative reliable approach to values leads to a very different conclusion than the one Weber advances regarding Jewish business ethics.

To reiterate: Weber holds that human actions are either a manifestation of a value position or an unintelligible element in an indeterminate flow (Weber 1904: 84–5). It is for this reason that he believes that merely pragmatic actions, namely those that are not a consequence of a value position, cannot be rationalized. Thus Weber claims that the economic relations Jews have with non-Jews, that are non-ethical from the standpoint of biblical sources, cannot be rationalized. The Calvinists, on the other hand, according to Weber and as we have seen in previous chapters, were uniquely able to rationalize their economic relations with non-Calvinists because the Calvinist contribution to those relations arose out of a religiously based and consistent ethical value position inherent in their notion of vocation. But this is not the only approach to the relationship between actions and values.

There are a number of issues raised by Weber's account of the relationship between religious affiliation and adherence on the one hand, and economic orientation on the other, in the formation of modern capitalism and therefore the different circumstances of not only the Protestant sects but also the Jews. There are two obvious questions that have been the concern of preceding discussion. First is the issue of the religious source of the values accepted by a social group, and second the relation between religious or communal values and instrumental or economic values, or as Weber has it the relation between the religious and economic value spheres. Rather than unravel these issues further, the Gordian knot they constitute can be

simply cut by rejecting the idea that pragmatic or practical action bears the relationship with values that Weber insists upon, namely, that pragmatic commitments are necessarily without ethical content or value and therefore unrationalizable. Indeed, the reverse is more likely.

Any set of practices that are more or less voluntary, that include non-participation as an option and that are repeated over a period of time, will tend to generate dispositional commitments or values for the participants that will render those practices or actions not only meaningful but will also generate sanctions which will operate in the event of disruption of those meanings. The position outlined in the preceding sentence is more or less convention in current sociology (see, for example, Garfinkel 1967: 35–75; Joas 2000; Parsons 1951: 36–45). The idea, then, that pragmatic or expedient economic relations between Jews and non-Jews cannot be rationalized because they are unethical or without value content, can be rethought. The practical requirements of economic exchanges characteristic of trade, for example, generate their own normative demands that lead to particular standards of conduct that must be maintained if trust in the participants and confidence in the objects of exchange and the exchange relationship itself are to continue. The idea that Jews did not ethically rationalize their relations with outsiders and that Jewish religious beliefs necessarily countermand the possibility of ethical business dealings between Jews and non-Jews is an artefact of Weber's philosophical presuppositions and not a coherent analytical or empirical statement concerning economic relationships.

The ideal type and universal values

Weber's account of the Jews as a pariah people is not merely constructed out of his peculiar methodology of value spheres, however. It is methodologically overdetermined by his ideal-type approach, which is associated with another aspect of Weber's treatment of value positions, namely that of value relevance. While Weber would accept that lived experience may be a source of immediate understanding, he denies that such experience can furnish its own meaningfulness because the latter necessarily requires, he says, cultural interpretation (Weber 1906: 151–4). The implicit distinction in this statement, between subjective meaning and cultural meaning, leads Weber to

justify the basis on which some subjectively meaningful experiences can be included within and others excluded from a characterization of a particular cultural phenomenon in the conceptualization of it as an ideal type. Having established to his own satisfaction that all 'knowledge of cultural reality ... is always knowledge from *particular points of view*', the question arises for Weber of what 'point of view' can 'distinguish the important from the trivial' event or experience (Weber 1904: 81; emphasis in original). The answer which Weber immediately provides is that the historian or social researcher 'must understand how to relate the events of the real world ... to *universal cultural values* and to select out those relationships which are significant for us' (Weber 1904: 81–2; emphasis added).

Weber's application of the idea of 'universal cultural values' is designed to remove arbitrariness from the personal or subjective element of the ascription of value relevance in a researcher's claim of significance for a phenomenon's cultural meaning. In his 'Objectivity' essay of 1904, Weber warns that this is not achieved by attempting to locate permanency in values. He says that universal cultural values are not supportive of '*permanently* and *universally* valid classification' because the 'cultural problems which move men form themselves anew and in different colours, and the boundaries of that area in the infinite stream of concrete events which acquire meaning and significance for us ... are constantly subject to change' (Weber 1904: 84; emphasis in original). Thus it is not ontological durability but the cultural significance of an event that would lead to its appropriate selection by a researcher. As Weber says in an essay published in the following year, it 'is our *interest* which is orientated towards "values" and not the objective causal relationship between our culture and Hellenic culture which determines the range of the cultural values which are controlling for a history of Hellenic culture' (Weber 1905b: 156; emphasis in original). He goes on to say that it is the concerns or 'value-interests of the *present*' and not a 'regressive causal chain' of mechanical historical continuity that 'turns into historical "individuals" cultural components that are entirely of the past' (Weber 1905b: 157; emphasis in original). And yet he continues to endorse the notion of universal cultural values and the 'universal' element therefore needs to be more clearly specified.

Weber does show what he means by universal cultural values, and incidentally on what basis his ideal-type conception of the Jews

is formed, by referring to a remote historical event that he says exemplifies the universality of certain cultural values. In particular, he raises the question of 'the world historical "significance" of the Persian Wars for the development of western culture' (Weber 1905b: 171). It can not be because we are Athenians that these wars, spanning fifty years from 500 BC, have cultural significance for us, Weber says. Rather it is because of 'an appraisal' we make regarding what was decided by these events, and of 'the irreplaceable cultural values' that we take to have come out of them (Weber 1905b: 172). That appraisal derives from the fact that the Persian Wars settled a course of history between two possible developments:

> The first of these 'possibilities' was the development of a theocratic-religious culture, the beginnings of which lay in the mysteries and oracles, under the aegis of the Persian protectorate, which wherever possible utilized, as for example, among the Jews, the national religion as an instrument of domination. The other possibility was represented by the triumph of the free Hellenic circle of ideas, oriented towards this world, which gave us those cultural values from which we still draw our sustenance. (Weber 1905b: 171)

The historical interest that Weber locates in these events, therefore, is in their significance or relevance for the cultural values that predominate at the present for those who articulate what Weber calls a 'general standpoint' (Weber 1905b: 170). 'Without this appraisal', he continues, there would be no reason why the Persian wars 'should not rate ... equally with a scuffle between two tribes of Kaffirs or Indians' (Weber 1905b: 172).

Weber does not deny that another appraisal of the Persian Wars, quite different from the one that he indicates corresponds with a hypothesized 'general standpoint', is not possible. Indeed, 'some future age', he says, may become 'as capable of attaining a direct "value-rapport" ... in relation to the "songs" and "world view" of a central African tribe' as his own had done with 'those cultural "creations" of antiquity' (Weber 1905b: 157). In any event, the interests that select for attention instances of cultural products have what Weber calls 'value-rapport' or 'value-relevance'. The point to take from all of this is that any meaning ascribed to a thing, according to Weber, inheres in the interests of the agents who find or ascribe the meaning, not in the properties of the events themselves (Weber 1906: 108–17).

It is through operations of value relevance, then, that Weber selects certain particular historical events or objects and discounts others in his construction of ideal-type conceptualizations. A case in point is his construction of the ideal-type concept of Christianity. He begins by acknowledging the impossibility of a positivistic expectation that facts may speak for themselves: 'Those elements of the spiritual life of the individuals living in a certain epoch of the Middle Ages, for example, which we may designate as the "Christianity" of those individuals, would, if they could be completely portrayed, naturally constitute a chaos of infinitely differentiated and highly contradictory complexes of ideas and feelings' (Weber 1904: 96). In deciding 'what in this chaos was the "Christianity" of the Middle Ages', Weber continues, 'we are applying a purely analytical construct created by ourselves' (Weber 1904: 96). This is because an ideal-type concept, as Weber famously put it, 'is formed by the *one-sided* accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more-or-less present and *occasionally absent* concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those *one-sidedly* emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct' (Weber 1904: 90; emphasis added). Weber tellingly goes on to say that the relationship between the ideal-type concept and the given empirical reality from which its elements are drawn 'naturally varies considerably' (Weber 1904: 96) and that ideal types 'necessarily' enjoy a 'relative and problematic validity when they are intended to be regarded as the historical portrayal of empirically existing facts' (Weber 1904: 97). We have seen Weber explain this apparent disjuncture in terms of the chaos of empirical reality and therefore the need to distil elements of that reality into a coherent, or as he says, stable concept, an ideal type, in order to better explore reality (Weber 1904: 96–7).

It has been shown in earlier chapters that in his ideal-type constructions of Calvinism and Lutheranism, for example, the selection of elements provides a characterization that may be more a possible distortion than a simple summary of empirical reality. It has been shown in the discussion of the present chapter that the ideal-type conceptualization of the Jews that Weber presents is also not sustainable, not only as a historical portrayal of empirical facts, but as a tool for exploring the empirical reality of the relations between Jews and significant groups in the host society they inhabited and the social

and economic outcomes of those relations for the Jews. Two obvious questions arise. First: are the elements of the constitution of post-dispersion Judaism so chaotic that Weber's characterization is as empirically justifiable as any other 'model' of the Jews? Second: what are the values that underpin Weber's ideal-type concept of the Jews as a pariah people?

In consideration of the first question above, it must be said that it is doubtful that the empirical reality of Diasporic Judaism was the 'chaos' Weber attributes to the Christianity of the Middle Ages. Such a claim as this does not suppose a special unity of belief and practices in a geographically disperse religious or social group, for instance, but it does acknowledge that the constraints imposed on Jewish communities in Europe during the early modern period were similar though widespread and both rigorous and direct in their effects. Of course, to take issue with Weber's characterization of the Jews is to acknowledge that different world-historical values may operate in the construction of an historical narrative and the ideal-type conceptions that might be formed out of it. But the alternative possibilities are rather fewer than the choices that chaos might provide. For instance, whether the Jews' exclusion from guilds was a contingent consequence of Jewish religious practices, such as adherence to dietary laws, or a consequence of a strategy of exclusion inherent in the Christian constitution of the guilds themselves, can be answered without recourse to self-conscious reflection on the investigator's values but to the factual record of conduct and structure of guilds at the time. Another issue that might be considered is whether particular sets of practices that historically occurred, such as intra-Jewish lending on interest, can be reconciled with Weber's ideal-type concept that defines the Jews in terms of the biblical prohibition on such practices, even in the face of his acknowledgement that historical Jews reconciled or negotiated religious meanings with economic practices. Weber's exclusion of such developmental tendencies and his inclusion of scriptural exhortations is a matter of selection on the basis of values that requires more detailed examination and justification.

The world-historical values that Weber drew upon in his construction of the ideal-type concept of the Jews as a pariah people has been treated in a recent article as continuous with a Christian antipathy towards the Jew as being anti-Christ (Nirenberg 2003). Another possibility, though, is to locate the relevant values in the more local culture

of nineteenth-century Germanic nationalism (Abraham 1992). But rather than pursue such broad aspects of the question here, which really concern the cultural iconography of the Jew in European history and would therefore take the discussion away from Weber's particular treatment, there is another dimension of the values implicit in the concept of the Jews as a pariah people that can be considered in the present narrative.

When treating the world-historical value of the Persian Wars, noted above, Weber described the 'possibility' that was historically denied by the Greek victories as the development of 'a theocratic-religious culture ... under the aegis of the Persian protectorate, which wherever possible utilized, as for example, among the Jews, the national religion as an instrument of domination' (Weber 1905b: 171). At the time of their wars with Athens and Sparta, the Persians controlled almost the entire known world, including Asia Minor, Lydia, Judah, Mesopotamia and Egypt. It might be regarded as curious, therefore, that Weber refers only to the Jews in this context. That he did so no doubt lies in the fact that among these nations it is the Jews alone who possess, for Weber, 'world-historical importance' in the way that the inhabitants of Asia Minor, Lydia, Mesopotamia and Egypt did not. But the importance of the Jews to Weber is not intrinsic but a consequence of their endowment to Christianity. In that relationship there is a dialectic of negativity, for Weber, in which the Christian transcendence of Judaism preserves in the latter its pariah status.

In the opening pages of *Ancient Judaism*, for instance, Weber explains: 'The world-historical importance of Jewish religious development rests above all in the creation of the *Old Testament*' (Weber 1917–19: 4). But whereas the value relevance to western culture of the Athenian victory in the Persian Wars is a positive quantum, the value relevance of ancient Judaism is negative. This is because, as Weber continues to say, 'one of the most significant intellectual achievements of the Pauline mission was that it preserved and transferred this sacred book of the Jews to Christianity ... [and] in so doing it eliminated all those aspects of the ethic enjoined by the *Old Testament* which ritually characterize the special position of Jewry as a pariah people' (Weber 1917–19: 4). It is by virtue of the Pauline Christian 'emancipation from the ritual prescriptions of the Torah, founding the caste-like segregation of the Jews' and therefore 'emancipation from the self-created ghetto' (Weber 1917–19: 5), that the Christian church and

ethic are consequent upon Jewish religion, the latter then becomes a force with 'world-historical consequences' and Jewry necessarily a 'pariah people' (Weber 1917–19: 5). By defining the Jews in terms of the Christian transcendence of Judaism, the religious and ritual features of Judaism rejected in the Pauline invention of Christianity become reified by Weber into an ideal-type conceptualization of the Jews as a social category.

It was shown above that the Jews must be characterized as a pariah people, according to Weber, because of their 'hereditary religious obligations in the conduct of life' and 'in the idiosyncracy of their religion' (Weber 1921: 493, 614). Any endeavours undertaken by the Jews to renegotiate the biblical prohibition on 'taking usury from fellow Jews', which at the same time was licence to take usury 'in transactions with non-Jews' (Weber 1921: 614), in Weber's estimation, was a departure from Judaism. His ideal-type conception of the Jew assumed Old Testament fundamentalism as an intrinsic characteristic of the Jews. While methodological selection regarding what is relevant in a culture, according to Weber, ultimately derives from 'valuing it entirely subjectively', the thing selected will therefore come to have 'an "intrinsic value"' (Weber 1905b: 156). The context of these remarks is western appreciation of Hellenic culture, but the point made by them has wider application.

Earlier in the essay from which the above quotations are extracted, 'The Logic of the Cultural Sciences', Weber contrasts alternative 'interpret[ations of] the "development" of Judaism' (Weber 1905b: 128). One possibility is that Judaism 'had occurred essentially "from the inside outwards"', while another is that it 'had been conditioned by certain concrete historical forces entering from the "outside", in particular, the imposition of "laws" by the Persian kings out of considerations deriving from Persian politics and which are not related to the *intrinsic characteristics of the Jews*' (Weber 1905b: 128; emphasis added). This account is part of a discussion of Eduard Meyer's distrust of the concept of development. Its relevance for the present account is Weber's acceptance of the idea that a social or cultural group in fact has intrinsic characteristics, for these would be ones that can be neither ignored nor abrogated. If religious beliefs are selected for methodological attention because of their cultural meaningfulness and therefore value relevance, then the ideal-type conceptualization of the group bearing those beliefs will lead to explanations of their

social and economic circumstance, as Weber says, in terms of the 'permanent intrinsic character of their religious beliefs' rather than 'their temporary external historico-political situations' (Weber 1920: 40). Weber is committed to the view, then, that it is possible to treat a social group's historical experiences and proclivities in terms of its religious beliefs because he assumes that the religious precepts and principles of social groups are culturally enduring and consequently effective in defining its meaningful qualities. But to do so is simply to beg the question.

Religious belief as a social cause

The significance of Weber's argument concerning the Jews as a pariah people, which holds that the social circumstances of and economic outcome for the Jews are to be explained in terms of their religious beliefs rather than the group's relations with others, is that it complements his larger argument concerning the links between Protestant religious beliefs and the ethos of modern capitalism. Sombart's claim, that Jewish social marginalization is the source of Jewish economic progress, is rebutted by Weber's argument that Jewish religious beliefs are responsible for moral double standards that in turn lead the Jews to a cul-de-sac of pre-modern capitalism. Puritan and Calvinist beliefs, on the other hand, Weber insists, lead to ethical conduct in market exchanges that in turn ensures vocational commitment to money-making, the *sine qua non* of modern capitalism.

The formal structure of Weber's arguments concerning the Jews is identical with that concerning the Protestants:

RELIGIOUS BELIEF → ETHICAL ORIENTATION → ECONOMIC OUTCOME

Sociologists have become so familiar with Weber's argument concerning Protestantism that the limitations of its structure have gone unnoticed, even though so apparent when its form is applied to the Jews. As we have seen, the issue is not the philosophical concern of whether (religious) ideas can be causes. Rather, it is whether it is possible to draw sociological conclusions from the state of an individual's soul, as Weber supposes. A requirement for such a prospect is a statement of mechanism that translates religious belief to social outcome. This Weber notoriously fails to provide in the

case of Protestant religious beliefs (Hamilton 1996; Marshall 1982; Samuelsson 1957). There is an additional but connected problem, namely the effective content of religious belief. Weber seems to be alert to this issue to the extent that he refers not to statements of religious faith in general but to the 'permanent intrinsic character' (Weber 1920: 40) of religious beliefs. It is much more reasonable, however, to accept that religious beliefs are necessarily without 'permanent intrinsic' content because, like all beliefs, they are subject to tensions and transformations resulting from such things as imperatives for consistency, necessity of social exigency, and reformative inspiration. All of this Weber accepts at some level, but there is a stronger imperative in his thinking, namely his methodological position which insists definitively upon the sociological determinativeness of religious conviction.

At different times under different conditions the same scriptural statement takes on quite different meanings. It has to be accepted that the meaning of any text cannot be intrinsic as the sense and significance of a proposition is necessarily context-dependent (see Scheff 1997: 19–68; Steiner 1976). The 'permanent intrinsic' character of a religious belief is therefore likely to be no more than a rhetorical resource in struggles over contested interpretation. This is clear in the case of Islamic suicide terrorism, for instance. The prescription against suicide in the Qur'an is unequivocally accepted by all authoritative interpretations. Similarly, there is no disagreement regarding the religious status of a *shaheed* – one who testifies to their Islamic faith, including through their own death. In the context of perceived western despoliation of Muslim lands there is very widespread clerical authorization, however, of suicide terrorism as a legitimate and faithful practice (see Farkash 2004; Khosrokhavar 2004; Reuter 2004). The Islamic insistence that the death of a terrorist bomber by their own hand is not suicide but martyrdom conforms to the letter of the Qur'an but leaves in doubt what is the permanent intrinsic character of the religious beliefs of its faithful.

A quite different example is the current debate in the Anglican Church, for instance, concerning the correct religious understanding of homosexual practices. The scriptural text that castigates homosexuality as an abomination is in the *Old Testament* rather than the *New*, and the book in which it is located, *Leviticus*, also contains

dietary proscriptions. That the dietary requirements of these scriptures have no purchase on those seeking support for their beliefs concerning homosexuality raises the question of social selection of one religious tenet for continued faithful adherence and the declassification of another. The only point to take from these and similar examples is that the contents of religious beliefs are not so much defining of the social groups who accept them but are themselves dependent on the broader context in which the groups in question find themselves. Specification of a 'permanent intrinsic character' of religious belief is so necessarily subject to contestable interpretation that any explanatory capacity ascribed to it is at the outset compromised.

While it is not possible to disprove Weber's assumption that there is a permanent intrinsic character of religious belief with counter-examples, his claim that Jewish – or Protestant – religious beliefs can adequately explain the social outcomes and economic dispositions and activities of the group in question must be regarded as inherently unsatisfactory.

Conclusion

Weber's discussion of the Jews developed as his account of the Protestant ethic was refined and consolidated. In his differences with and responses to Sombart's various publications on the social sources of capitalism, Weber grew more confident about his own account of the vocational basis of the capitalist spirit in Protestant religious calling. His treatment of the Jews, as a pariah people capable of only pariah capitalism, was also extended and supported with additional research and writing in the process. Weber's treatments of these two religious groups, Protestants and Jews, complement each other entirely. The Protestant creed as a historically contingent precondition of the spirit of capitalism derives, for Weber, from the fact that the commitment of Protestant believers to all their activities, including economic, was religiously informed. As such their economic commitments were ethical and therefore, for Weber, rationalizable. The Jews, on the other hand, are regarded by Weber as a pariah people who could not contribute to nor expound the spirit of capitalism because their religious beliefs generated a double moral standard: what is prohibited in relation to their co-religious is permitted in relation to strangers. Religiously informed ethical conduct among Jews prevented profit-making within

the community, but permitted profit taking from non-Jews. Weber believes, therefore, that Jewish economic behaviour is not subject to rationalizing practices. Throughout his treatment of both Protestant and Jew is the common motif that the religious beliefs that identify a group determine its social and economic circumstances and chances. This chapter, therefore, has considered the veracity of the Protestant ethic thesis by examining Weber's treatment of the Jews as a pariah people capable of only pariah capitalism.

In examining Weber's conceptualization of the Jews as a pariah people, in which their social and economic conditions are understood as unintended consequences of their religious beliefs, a number of Weber's empirical claims regarding Jewish circumstances are considered. First, against Weber's claim that Jews failed to participate in guilds because their dietary prohibitions excluded them from compulsory guild banquets, it was shown that the fraternal organization of guilds under the auspices of a patron saint – required for enforcement of guild discipline – necessarily excluded non-Christians from involvement in guild activities. Second, it was shown that Weber's claim that religious precepts would prevent Jewish capitalists from employing Jewish workers is historically unfounded. While specific social, political and economic conditions have dissuaded or prevented such employments, at other times when appropriate conditions obtained, industrial production amongst Jews has occurred. Third, during the early modern period, against Weber's contrary claims, it was shown that observant Jews gave and took loans for interest from fellow Jews.

The chapter then went on to consider the methodological basis of Weber's characterization of the Jews as a pariah people. In this regard his treatment of value orientation and value spheres was considered. Weber supposes that value conflict is regularized through the operation of what he calls value spheres. The values that operate in the religious sphere, for instance, and the economic sphere, typically undermine each other. Whereas values pertaining to the religious sphere tend to emphasize 'brotherliness', those of the economic sphere emphasize competitive advantage against scarcity. These value spheres are harmonized, however, in Protestant practices through the ethic of vocation, according to Weber, that has its origin in the religious value sphere and its application in the economic value sphere. For the Jews, however, only the religious value sphere has ethical

content and the economic value sphere is governed by pragmatic or merely practical action that is necessarily without a long-term commitment or purpose and therefore not rationalizable. It was shown in the discussion above, however, that Weber's value analysis ignores the fact that voluntary and repeated practices generate dispositional commitments or values that provide participants with a sense of the meaning of their activities and the normative sanctions that enforce them. Weber's statement of the absence of ethical conduct in the economic relations of Jews towards non-Jews reflects his philosophical suppositions only and is not a coherent analytical or empirical statement concerning those economic relations.

The ideal-type conceptualization of the Jews as a pariah people was next considered by examining the basis on which this ideal type is constructed by Weber. It was shown that through Weber's promotion of what he calls 'world-historical values' his ideal-type model of the Jews derives from the historical transcendence of Judaism in the Pauline invention of Christianity. Where Paul defined Christianity in terms of its emancipation from specific religious and ritual features of Judaism, so Weber's ideal-type conception of the Jews as a social category reifies those aspects of *Old Testament* Judaism that is the obverse of Pauline Christianity. This permits Weber to claim that religious beliefs have a discernible 'permanent intrinsic character' (Weber 1920: 40), which is the final aspect of his argument that is treated in the present chapter.

The singular conclusion of this chapter is that because the social and economic conditions of the Jews must be understood in terms of their relations with non-Jews in the societies in which they lived and not as unintended consequences of their religious beliefs, it is simply erroneous to hold that economic outcome derives from religious belief. It is true that Weber's claims are not to be summarized merely in the terms rejected in the previous sentence. The details of his claims in the *Protestant Ethic* and related texts and their nuanced arguments, however, have been closely examined in the discussion above and our findings with regard to them are set out against Weber's well-known position on the role of religious beliefs in economic action.

Conclusion

While a number of problems regarding *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* have been discussed in the preceding chapters, some of them can be identified by considering Weber's own later assessment of the ideas set out in that brief and enduring book. Placing the *Protestant Ethic* in the context of Weber's treatment of its themes in his later writing, therefore, provides a useful framework through which aspects of the argument concerning the religiously founded ethical basis of a capitalistic vocation can be understood. In particular, it was shown in chapter 2, for example, that although the *Protestant Ethic* articulates only a suppressive approach to emotions, in subsequent writing Weber incrementally revises his account of the relations between vocation and emotions so that by the time he comes to deliver the vocation lectures he accepts a role for emotions in rational actions that is the reverse of the position he set out in the *Protestant Ethic*. Similarly, it was shown in chapter 3 that while in the *Protestant Ethic* there is a failure to distinguish the cultural apparatus necessary for pursuance of money-making as an end in itself on the one hand, and the motivational force that directs a person to such capitalistic drives for profit and keeps them at it, on the other, there is some resolution of such a conflation of factors in, for instance, *Economy and Society* and also *General Economic History*. But many of the limitations of the *Protestant Ethic* are not overcome through the course of Weber's intellectual career and remain intractable in his work. Among the leading candidates for such unfortunate qualification identified in the discussion above are the ideal-type methodology, the value theory Weber continued to draw upon throughout his working life and the substantive proposition that derives from these, namely the contention that the origins of capitalist orientation and motivation can be located in religiously sourced ethical adherence. For some readers these will be contentious conclusions indeed, but the judgements on which they are based have been argued sufficiently in the chapters above to permit here only such brief reiteration.

In a certain sense, the fault with the *Protestant Ethic* is not entirely Weber's, however. If the *Protestant Ethic* has been misunderstood and misapplied, then responsibility for these latter things must lie with Weber's readers and the way the book has been used by subsequent members of the sociological and allied communities. A good deal of sociological respect for the work rests upon a defence of Weber's historical vision and sensibility. Indeed, much of the appeal of the *Protestant Ethic* is the depiction in it of a familiar and easily recognized social type, in which Protestant piety and business hard-headedness cohabit in a strident, ambitious and self-willed personality. It was suggested in the Introduction that this aspect of the book was behind the broad acceptance and enormous influence of Parsons' translation of the *Protestant Ethic* in the United States and beyond. Indeed, Weber's representation of this social type is possibly as compelling as it is because it was for him a pen portrait of his relatives in the Westphalian linen industry (Roth 1995: 97–121). But a family picture is not a history of the persons shown in it. The issue of Weber's intentions in the *Protestant Ethic* was addressed in the first chapter of the present book. It was shown that Weber's historical explanation of the vocation of capitalism in the *Protestant Ethic* is possibly best regarded as an allegory serving a programmatic purpose of political education. The ideal-type method of the *Protestant Ethic*, shown in most of the chapters above to have serious limitations, may be permissibly helpful in outlining an account of calling that is to encourage a politically instrumental orientation, but which must draw appropriate critical censure when it can be shown to distort historical understanding. This is not a comment on Weber's propriety or sincerity, but a caution to all of us who read Weber and a warning against simply accepting his argument and conclusions on the basis, say, of his conviction regarding the power of vocation, for example, without independent examination of or critical reflection upon what he claims for it.

Sensitivity to historical veracity encourages the conclusion that if there is any significance in the religious factor for the origins of capitalism and its subsequent development, it is precisely an aspect of religion that Weber's ideal-type representation suppresses. It was shown in chapter 1, for instance, that Weber's ideal-type account of Calvinist individualism is seriously overdrawn and distorting of the strong communal nature of Calvinism. A historically important

feature of the Protestant groups associated with early capitalist enterprise, which has been demonstrated to be crucial for their commercial successes, is the social aspect of their religion that is found in the communal structure of their devotional congregations and the opportunities provided by membership of a close-knit but trans-local fellowship of not only national but international proportions.

Weber's emphasis on individualism in both the ethic of Protestantism and the capitalist spirit is understandably important for his attempt to encourage a politically inexperienced German middle class, culturally predisposed to romantic collectivism, to strive for self-assertive and self-directed commitment to nation-state building and political leadership. But it is simply misleading and historically inaccurate to treat the self-reliance and self-interest of early modern capitalists as something that arises out of a retreat from communal affiliations and that is not coterminous with new forms of communal incorporation. It was shown in chapter 4, for instance, that in Adam Smith's account of the capitalist spirit, the enforceable standards of righteousness and rectitude in business that encouraged commercial success are promoted by communal approval, and that any individual lapse that might occur can be subject to communal censure and negative sanction. Weber's historically unsustainable emphasis on ethical individualism against Protestant religious communalism, which, while commensurate with an image of the legal structure of ownership in capitalism, as devolving on individual persons, misunderstands the actual social structure of capitalist ownership and enterprise that cannot be characterized in terms of the isolated and anxious individual from which Weber's politically useful but historically erroneous reading of the implications of Calvinist and Puritan theology is drawn. In particular, in addition to communal resources for capitalist undertakings that explain its success is its familial and not merely its individual character. These are factors amply documented for Quaker business, for instance, from the beginning of the eighteenth century (Prior and Kirby 1993). Again, Weber's idea in the *Protestant Ethic*, that calling generates emotional detachment and depersonalizes family relations and that the collective form of the family inhibits individual initiative, fails to understand a further element of organization significant in the capitalistic successes of individuals.

Following Weber, then, although not only Weber of course, is the idea that individuals freed from the traditional constraints of family and community were for the first time, historically, at liberty to engage the capitalist ethos of profit making for its own sake. This is a position, concerning the capacity of the family to restrict individual initiative, not merely implicit in the *Protestant Ethic*, but developed by Weber more broadly (see Collins 1990b: 267–9). In fact, however, rather than self-possessed acquisitiveness of socially isolated individuals, it was familial capitalism that had been the motor of economic growth in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The unit of enterprise and the major proximate sources of commercial and business attainment in western Europe from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century was not the individual entrepreneur free of family responsibility and commitment, but rather individuals who were economically enriched by kinship and marital alliances and networks who thereby had immediate access to reputation, credit and uniquely reliable associates (see Grassby 2000).

In terms of the structure of the seventeenth-century economy discussed in chapter 3, this conclusion may not be surprising. But the pattern of familial capitalism persists into the nineteenth century (Farrell 1993; Scranton 1983), even though by this time a national market for long-term investment was functioning (Postan 1935: 5–6), rendering family credit less important, and continues even into the twentieth century. Writing in the early 1970s, Maurice Zeitlin indicated that, in spite of the widespread belief concerning managerial control, the majority of firms in the United States continued at that time to be subject to family control and that a large number of the financial institutions that controlled firms which were not directly owned by families were themselves family owned and controlled (Zeitlin 1974). A more recent study suggests that the incidence of family ownership in the United States may be as high as 80 per cent and possibly rising (La Porta, Lopez-de-Silanes and Shleifer 1999; see also Church 1993). The resources of family and community, which provide in addition to direct cultural and financial inputs the facilitating relations necessary for trade and the valorization of products in markets, were not denied to the early capitalists by virtue of a Protestant calling, as Weber's account suggests, but are rather the more meaningful consequences for profit making of membership in a devotional community, rather than the religious belief itself on

which Weber focused. Of course, family and communal support for entrepreneurship is not confined to Protestant capitalists, but can be noticed also among Catholic, Jewish and overseas-Chinese capitalists, for example, a fact from which Weber may have drawn the wrong conclusions.

The familial basis of modern capitalism has been mentioned here not only because Weber's account directly denies the possibility of such a foundation for capitalist accumulation and enterprise, even though the evidence for it was readily available to him in his own family experience (Marianne Weber 1926: 24–5). It is also an indication of a persisting sociological blind-spot that continues to be at least legitimated if not partly inspired by the legacy and influence of the *Protestant Ethic*. If we think of the content of the ethic of Protestantism that Weber describes as underlying a normatively programmed desire for profit for its own sake, then the Protestant devotional communities can be seen as one set of social means to realize such a desire. This is because they provided facilitating networks of relationships through which testament to trustworthiness and good standing could be enunciated, from which lines of financial credit could be drawn and business information and know-how could be acquired, and which could provide introductions and linkages to backers for and partners in enterprise. In addition to a desire for profit and means to realize that desire there is also required in modern capitalist economies opportunities for profit-making. Weber does not address the question of opportunities in the *Protestant Ethic* except elliptically to note that the capitalist spirit has an existence distinct from modern capitalist organization (Weber 1920: 64–9). Desire, means and opportunities are distinct elements which are all necessary in any situation if achievement of some purpose is to occur. The question concerning what particular opportunities obtained for the original development of modern capitalism was discussed in chapter 5 in terms of Weber's argument set out largely in *General Economic History* and also in Thorstein Veblen's historical economic sociology. The means to profit-making include not only those connected with communal and familial associations, mentioned above, but also the cultural means discussed in chapter 3 that consisted of particular emotional practices and the literary apparatus that encouraged them. Weber's treatment of the capitalistic desire for profit is understood in terms of what he calls a 'peculiar ethic' (Weber 1920: 51). Weber is

able to maintain that the desire or motive for money-making as an end in itself has no 'necessary interdependence' with the 'capitalistic form of an enterprise' (Weber 1920: 64) in a manner that is reminiscent of his argument that values are underdetermined by facts, discussed in chapter 1. To draw such a parallel in Weber's account is appropriate because the values that Weber holds are constitutive of the spirit of capitalism are seen by him as necessarily exogenous to the material opportunities that, when taken, advance the development of a capitalist economy. As Weber says: 'The question of the motive forces in the expansion of modern capitalism is not in the first instance a question of the origin of the capital sums which were available for capitalistic uses, but, above all, of the development of the spirit of capitalism' (Weber 1920: 68). Here is an implicit theory of action that gives priority to intention and neglects opportunities and outcomes in understanding the behaviour of economic actors and the forces underlying their actions.

If economic action is treated in terms of the values of the actors, namely whether they are possessed of the spirit of capitalism, then the organizational form in which the action is carried out can not be regarded as determinative of the type of action in question (Weber 1920: 67–8). Indeed Weber immediately continues with the claim that without any change occurring in the form of organization the spirit which animated the entrepreneur may be 'suddenly destroyed' to be replaced with another (Weber 1920: 67). He goes on to say: 'The idyllic state collapsed under the pressure of a bitter competitive struggle, respectable fortunes were made, and not lent out at interest, but always reinvested in the business. The old leisurely and comfortable attitude towards life gave way to a hard frugality in which some participated and came to the top, because they did not wish to consume but to earn' (Weber 1920: 68).

The issue to be pursued here is not principally the changing opportunity structure that might give rise to 'a bitter competitive struggle' and effected by forces promoting the early development of capitalism, discussed in chapters 4 and 5, but rather questions concerning the theory of action in which outcomes or consequences of opportunities taken can be seen as tending to shape the actor's meanings, intentions and values. Weber holds a contrary position, namely that values are necessarily prior to opportunities and outcomes. Indeed, Weber's implicit theory of action in the *Protestant*

Ethic is one in which actor's values are indifferent to any actual outcome of the actions they take. Nevertheless, the quotation suggests, even if somewhat ambiguously, that actions are productive of outcomes and those outcomes may include the values that the actor goes on to accept. Any account of action that operates only in terms of antecedents, as Weber's does, must be regarded as limited insofar as such an account has nothing to say about means or opportunities that are implicated in production of the prospective or intended action in question and which contribute to the outcomes of actions. Those outcomes can include values the actors may come to accept. Weber characterizes his study of the *Protestant Ethic* as an endeavour to discover 'whose intellectual child' is the idea of profit seeking as an 'ethical obligation' (Weber 1920: 78, 75). He correctly says that ideas or values cannot be a mere 'reflection of material conditions in the material superstructure' (Weber 1920: 75), but Weber wants his readers to accept that 'certain expressions of ... modern capitalist culture' can be found in the 'purely religious characteristics' of Protestantism (Weber 1920: 45). The issue here is not the elective affinity of the Protestant ethic to the spirit of capitalism, dealt with throughout the discussion above, but the theory of action that is implicit in Weber's argument, namely that antecedent values are signal in explanation of the actions they prefigure rather than entertaining the idea that an actor's values may be among the consequences of the action they undertake.

A commonsense assumption of many theories of action, including Weber's, is that prior intentions lead to or animate actions. The intentions themselves are variously summarized as motives, goals, preferences, tastes or values. But most actions occur without the benefit of such preconditions and are instead the result of forces that could not be described in these terms. Many actions arise, for instance, as a result of prior learning episodes through which there is generated a patterned sequence of successive steps that determine action. These sequenced actions may be described as 'habits' (Hodgson 2003, 2004; James 1890a: 104–28) or 'skills' (Nelson and Winter 1982: 72–85). Another possibility is that actions occur because there are no feasible or practical courses available except those that present themselves as externally given options that are the only alternative to not acting. In this case actors are 'locked in' to a course of action as a result of some prior action taken either by the

actor concerned or some other actor (Liebowitz and Margolis 1995). None of this touches Weber's implicit theory of action because to say that prior intentions or values are not necessary for action does not undermine a claim, such as Weber's, that some actions may be predicated on prior values, including those inherent in a spirit of capitalism. Nor does it deny that Weber later went on to offer a schema of action types that included habitual and charismatic forms. The point of this discussion moves closer to Weber's position in the *Protestant Ethic*, however, when it is noted that while many actions may not arise as a result of prior intentions or values, it is nevertheless the case that intentions and values are frequently if not routinely consequences of such actions. After any action is undertaken and its consequences are experienced, then the actor in question is always in a position to interpret the action they have engaged, find some meaning in it and take some value from it.

The possibilities indicated in the last sentence above become crucial in considering Weber's theory of action in the *Protestant Ethic*. Alfred Schutz, for instance, offers an incisive discussion in his complex and insightful internal critique of Weber's approach to social action, in which is considered questions concerning, first, how the social context of action must be characterized, second, how the phases of action – where and when a given action begins and ends – can be understood, and third, what is the constitution of meaningful lived experience in and through action (Schutz 1932). The conclusions Schutz draws are in many ways similar to those reached here and his questions are close to those that are answered by indicating that a postulation of the content of socially meaningful desires, intentions or values without reference to prevailing patterns or structures of opportunities must lead to artificial and misleading inferences about the actual values that are held by social and economic actors. Schutz also agrees that the source of the values that are implicated in social and economic action will ultimately be located in the processes through which values and therefore continuing motives are selected, refined and reinforced by the actor's experiences of the actions in which they are engaged. This leads to an understanding of the place of values in action that is the reverse of the one Weber's theory of action points to and is outlined in the *Protestant Ethic* but close to approaches to action theory in Adam Smith and Thorstein Veblen, for instance, indicated in chapters 4 and 5. This is the pragmatic theory of action which argues

that the meaningful preferences or values of an actor cannot be pre-given and unaffected by experience over time but are achieved through social engagement, discovered in the meanings that actions acquire in terms of their consequences, and constructed through the acquisition of various competences. Through interaction and engagement with others and through practical affairs individuals discover and construct their values. This understanding of values was briefly indicated in chapter 6. Its importance for sociological theory is in the conception of values as principally consequences of action and not prior to, outside of or exogenous to the practices that may draw upon them. Appreciation of the interactive relationship between values and practices both permits sociological accounts of values rather than seeing values as merely given (in doctrine or scripture, say) and reduces the explanatory burden on values by providing space for inclusion of means of and opportunities for action in the formation of a theory of action.

Given that it is possible to pass a harsh judgement on the *Protestant Ethic* and its various constructions, it is reasonable to ask why it should be read at all. Indeed, there is nothing original in pointing to the considerable weaknesses of the *Protestant Ethic* and some of the publications that have done so have themselves achieved something of classic or near classic status (for example, Fanfani 1935; Hamilton 1996; Samuelsson 1957; Tawney 1926). It appears, then, that the limitations of the work are as significant as any other of its features in drawing the attention of scholars. An obvious reason for the continuing interest in the *Protestant Ethic*, however, in spite of the weakness of its argument and method, is that its author has great significance beyond this single publication. Max Weber's writing on world religions, in particular his discussion of Confucianism and Taoism (Weber 1915c), Hinduism and Buddhism (Weber 1916–17), and Ancient Judaism (Weber 1917–19), constitute a monumental achievement that has rightly earned him a reputation for scholarship of the highest order. Additionally, the encyclopedic *Economy and Society* would no doubt have been itself sufficient to earn Weber a leading place in the history of sociology, for it touches and indeed has shaped discussion in all the important domains of the discipline including the sociology of law, political sociology, economic sociology, organizational sociology, historical sociology, urban sociology, sociology of religion, the theory of social stratification, and so on

(Weber 1921). Reference to only these sources is by no means exhaustive of Weber's written work and neither is he only regarded as a towering figure in comparative religious scholarship and sociology. Political theorists, philosophers, cultural theorists and diverse other specialists in the social sciences and humanities find relevance in different aspects of Weber's thought and appreciate the significance of his contribution to their disciplines. The *Protestant Ethic*, whatever its intrinsic value, and whatever else might be said of it, as the work of a major scholar and thinker, has to be regarded as important simply because it was written by Weber.

The issue, though, is not that the *Protestant Ethic* draws the attention it does because of who wrote it. It is a work that can be readily characterized in terms of its major features, which include the following qualities: it is a fragment, it is a polemic, and it is a personal manifesto. In the 'Introduction', written just before he died in 1920, to a series of his previously published works on the sociology of religion, Weber describes the *Protestant Ethic* as '[t]wo older essays' when he notes that whereas the other titles in the series survey 'the relations of the most important religions to economic life and to the social stratification of their environment', the two essays on the rational ethics of ascetic Protestantism 'treat ... only one side of the causal chain' (Weber 1920: 27). Certainly in comparison with his major studies of world religions the *Protestant Ethic* is not only one-sided but a tiny particle or fragment. Why it treats only one side of the causal chain is not discussed by Weber. The reason suggested in chapter 1 is that the *Protestant Ethic* was written as an instrument of political education in which the rationality of a vocation for German middle-class state building is implicitly constructed. It is interesting to observe that Weber's much more scholarly work on world religions is undertaken a full decade after the *Protestant Ethic* is written and that the studies of Chinese, Indian and Jewish religions occupy a more or less continuous period of concentration. If the *Protestant Ethic* is a political allegory, then its relationship with the later comparative religious studies is much more interesting than its mere one-sidedness relative to their two-sidedness. In developing his politically pointed argument concerning Calvinist vocation and ethically rationalized worldly practices Weber set in motion a train of thought concerning the relationship between religiously sponsored cultural forms and social structural and economic processes. The intellectual utility of the

Protestant Ethic argument, then, for the later and fuller studies of world religions and oriental socio-economic rationalities and practices, which enlarged, transformed and expanded its competence, was an unintended consequence of Weber's polemic utilization of Sombart's concept of the 'spirit of capitalism' as a rallying cry to wake and encourage the proto-political class of the then backward German people to stand up. This perspective alters entirely the simplistic account of a more or less direct and linear relationship between the *Protestant Ethic* and the later studies of world religions which Weber himself presented in the 1920 'Introduction' and practically all commentators have accepted (Schmidt-Glintzer 1995). These issues are beyond the concerns of discussion in chapter 6, in which Weber's account of Judaism is treated. But the relationship between the *Protestant Ethic* and the later comparative religious studies is an important question which deserves to be studied in its own right.

As a polemic, in which Weber 'takes on' not only the religious forces underpinning German traditionalism as he saw it, namely Lutheranism and Catholicism, but also the insufficiently politically engaged liberal intelligentsia, the *Protestant Ethic* has both the cold and steely passion of Weber's own intense convictions and also the hot passions of his advocacy, clever and sharp rhetoric, and table-thumping arguments. There is a frisson of suppressed excitement throughout the *Protestant Ethic*. In spite of the ostensibly dry and remote themes of the thought of early-modern reform religions and their secular ethical concomitants, the *Protestant Ethic* can hold the attention of its readers – and continues still to do so.

As with all polemics, there is more of the author in the text than with typically academic writing. It was noted earlier that Weber effectively drew upon family history in writing the *Protestant Ethic*. But the work is personal in a more direct and deeper sense insofar as it is a statement of Weber's convictions not only about the recent past of the German politics of his day and especially its nationalist complexion, but also what Weber hopes for its future including his aspirations concerning a powerful Germany whose influence is not confined to Europe, and, connectedly and paradoxically, his affections for and loyalty to the image of a world-conquering Anglo-American culture founded on economic power and the clarity of vision and single-minded purposefulness of its peoples and especially their leaders. Here is a book, then, even if only 'two essays', that

engages its readers intensely. Being a polemic, the intensity of engagement with it does not require the reader's agreement with its line of argument; indeed, the intensity of engagement may even be increased by the reader's failure to share Weber's vision. Some books may be read because they only reinforce the reader's own prior convictions. No doubt this experience is sought and achieved by some readers of the *Protestant Ethic*. But the greatness of this work is not a function of its offer of confirmation of its reader's unchallenged thoughts. The real importance of the *Protestant Ethic* is in its propensity to force disagreement, to raise questions concerning its intention, to engender further enquiry, and to seek alternative accounts. The *Protestant Ethic* is a deeply ironic book and perhaps the most appropriate compliment that can be paid to this best known but least worthy of Weber's works is, ironically, to treat it with the most respectful disbelief that has been demonstrated in the chapters above.

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