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# THE RATIONALIZATION OF ACTION IN MAX WEBER'S SOCIOLOGY OF RELIGION\*

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*An analysis of the manner in which believers' "relations to the supernatural" influence and even rationalize their action is central to Weber's sociology as a whole as well as his analysis of the development of modern capitalism and to his sociology of religion. Yet Weber never systematically presents the highly differentiated analytic course followed by the "rationalization of action" in the life-sphere of religion to the "methodical rational way of life." This study reconstructs this meandering route. In doing so, it emphasizes the ways in which action, according to Weber, is altered as believers alter their mode of interacting with the supernatural. A sharp distinction between the merely cognitive and ideational influence upon action of "world views" and the influence of "salvation paths" is held to throughout. Because they place "psychological premiums" upon action, the latter are seen to be of far greater importance for the rationalization of action. Most salvation paths, however, and despite the explanations they offer for injustice, fail to introduce the enduring "religious mood" and to rationalize action radically. Those few salvation paths that do so articulate an acute tension between the world view and human suffering, yet "virtuoso religious qualifications" must also be present if the methodical rational way of life is to arise. Throughout, the analyses by Tenbruck, Schluchter, and Habermas are critiqued as incomplete and misleading.*

The question of the extent to which religion influences and rationalizes action arises continuously throughout Max Weber's *The Religion of China* (1951), *The Religion of India* (1958), and *Ancient Judaism* (1952), as well as *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1930). It is central also in the more theoretical treatments of religion in *Economy and Society* (1968, pp. 399–634/245–381),<sup>1</sup> "Author's Introduction" (1930, pp. 13–31/1–16), "The Social Psychology of the World Religions" (1964d, pp. 267–301/ 237–275), and "Religious Rejections of the World" (1946c, pp. 323–359/536–573). Indeed, the assumption that transcendental forces, religious doctrines, and questions of salvation influence action decisively and significantly stands as a central pillar in Weber's sociology as a whole. Yet he fails to articulate systematically the degree to which and manner in which an orientation to the supernatural influences and even rationalizes action.

"Religious rationalization" has been at

the very center of a continuing debate in West German sociology that began in the mid-seventies with articles by Tenbruck (english translation: 1980) and Schluchter (english translation: 1979, 1981, 1987, 1989) 1984; see Kalberg (1979). The critics have included Riesebrodt (1980), Winckelmann (1980), and Döbert (1989). Habermas (1985, pp. 157–243), remarkably, has sided intimately with Tenbruck. Departing from questions raised in this debate, this study undertakes to reconstruct the ways in which, in Weber's discussion of religion, the orientation of action to religion *loci*—religious world views, salvation religions, salvation goals, and salvation paths—may endow action with continuity and even rationalize action. Religion-oriented action is particularly pivotal to Weber for three reasons. He understands it as a) capable of *confronting* fragmented, random action and introducing a patterned character and clear direction to action; b) empowered in principle to stand firm even against action oriented to the domains of the economy, law, and domination; and c)

\* I would like to thank Robert J. Antonio for very helpful comments and encouragement.

<sup>1</sup> All references to Weber's texts give the English translation first, then the page numbers of the original

German. Bibliographic information regarding the latter appears in the list of references.

as potentially calling forth the *radical* rationalization of action that characterizes the *methodical rational way of life*.<sup>2</sup> Just this way of life, Weber argues repeatedly, was significant, when embodied in the Calvinist, for the development of the modern West. It proved also central for the appearance of the "type of person" (*Menschentyp*) whose action is guided by a sustained *ethical* dimension.

Neither the critics nor Tenbruck or Schluchter have focussed their arguments systematically upon the issue taken to be central in this reconstruction: the purely religious sources of a) the methodical rational way of life and b) its course of development. The analyses of Tenbruck and Schluchter, moreover, as will be noted throughout, are incomplete and flawed in a number of ways: they fail to distinguish systematically between the influence upon action of world views and salvation goals and paths, to provide an analysis of the various ways in which the diverse salvation paths discussed by Weber influence action, to insert rigorously both Weber's four types of action and his four types of rationality into their analyses, and to distinguish—and draw the consequences in respect to each salvation path and the influence of religion upon action—between virtuoso and lay "religious qualifications."<sup>3</sup>

The precise "direction" of religion-oriented action becomes visible if scrutinized from the perspective of Weber's four types of action (means-end rational, value-rational, affectual, and traditional; see 1968, pp. 24–26/12–13) and four types of rationality: practical, theoretical, formal, and substantive (see Kalberg 1980, pp. 1151–1159; Levine 1985, pp. 157–158). By "inserting" *action-orientations* into his discussion of religion in a manner more comprehensively and systematically than Weber himself ever did, this study reconstructs his analysis of the manner in which religion influences action. It scrutinizes the

ways in which action is shaped and even rationalized by the *constraints and opportunities indigenous* to this domain's historically significant loci. These constraints and opportunities involve the believer's relations to the supernatural realm and, in many cases, the question of action appropriate to insure salvation. In what ways do they tend, with a certain analytic likelihood, to call forth directed, patterned, and even rationalized action? The *analytic* course taken by the rationalization of action in this central life-sphere in Weber's sociology must be reconstructed.<sup>4</sup>

Because the methodical rational way of life stands as a pivotal point of reference throughout Weber's discussion of the manner in which religious belief influences action, it has proven ideally suited to serve as a central organizing concept for this reconstruction: action influenced by religion becomes visible to us more clearly if scrutinized from the perspective of the *degree to which* a methodical rational way of life is approximated. How, in reference to purely religious questions, did this way of life arise? How did it acquire a degree of permanency? The ways of life of certain prophets were, in Weber's analysis, methodical rational, yet these charismatic figures faded quickly. According to him, the route to methodical ethical action is a meandering and even bewildering one. Since unsystematic in respect to this theme, his analysis must be fully reconstructed. Before turning to the "problem" and set of questions Weber identifies as indigenous to this domain and its significant *loci* for action, the major features of this way of life must be briefly examined.

## THE METHODICAL RATIONAL WAY OF LIFE

Weber's argument in *The Protestant Ethic* (1930) does not concern simply the introduction of a new type of *means-end* (*zweckrationales*) rational action with Calvinism, as frequently argued. The awarding of religious premiums to economic action by this religion constitutes only one part of

<sup>2</sup> Weber uses the expressions *methodisch rationale Lebensführung* and *rationale Lebensmethodik* (see e.g., 1968, pp. 497–498/303, 562/340, 630/379). I will employ "methodical ethical action" synonymously.

<sup>3</sup> Rather than disrupt repeatedly the flow of this reconstruction, the critique of these authors will for the most part take place in a running commentary in the footnotes.

<sup>4</sup> In part, this analysis can be seen as complementing my analysis of economic action (see Kalberg 1983).

his finely woven analysis. The fact that the orientation of the Calvinist to the economic realm required—of necessity given his search for *signs* of his “election”—a *methodical rational way of life* was just as decisive. The *combination* of a designation of the economic realm as the arena for proof of the state of grace *plus* the methodical character of the Calvinist’s way of life accounted, in Weber’s argument, for this religion’s singular power to shatter the “traditional economic ethic” and its “world mastery.”<sup>5</sup>

The methodical rational way of life implies either a formal or a substantive rationalization of action in reference to a comprehensive constellation of ethical values. A total “organization of life from within” takes place. Although the methodical rational way of life implies ethical action of a systematic character, it is characterized by greater flexibility than action oriented consistently to sacred norms, laws, ritual practices, magical customs, conventions, or, for Weber, all *stereotyped* action imprinted “from without.” This external determination of religion-oriented action requires merely an unquestioning conformity by believers; any other behavior threatens to violate the interests of multifarious spirits and gods and thus to incur their animosity. The monopolization of action by orientations to an *inward* religious mood and to a “sacred inner state” on the other hand, “sanctions different maxims of conduct in different situations . . . and is . . . elastic and susceptible of accommodation” (1968, p. 578/349). Such a consciously possessed, enduring, and “meaningful, total relationship of the pattern of life” unified in its purpose and values can be arrived at only through a systematic rationalization of all psychic and physical capacities to facilitate the continuous concentration upon inward

religious goals (1968, pp. 540/328, 533–534/324, 575/348). The scriptural prophet of ancient Judaism, the exemplary prophet of India, the other-worldly ascetic monk of medieval Catholicism, and the inner-worldly ascetic Calvinist all led, according to Weber, methodical rational ways of life.

This way of life stands in a relationship of unequivocal antagonism not only to affectual action, but also, because of their fragmented character, to all means-end rational and discrete value-rational action. The ethical component of this way of life, and particularly its internally consistent and comprehensive aspect, places it also in the strictest opposition to the “practical rational” way of life and all traditional action (see Kalberg 1980, pp. 1159–1176).

In addition, precisely the systematic character of the methodical rational way of life sets it in a relationship of unalterable antagonism to magic, regardless of whether it became manifest in the form of ritual, sacred norms, orgiasticism, the manipulations of sorcerers, or the worship forms and sacraments of priests. Indeed, due to its *ethical* component as well as its internally consistent character, this way of life can arise *only* if magic is devalued.<sup>6</sup> The continuous mood of reverence and devotion that characterizes methodical ethical action and provides believers with a lasting and unified foundation for religiously-based ways of life, the patterning of action through systematic formal and substantive rationalization processes to attain the secure and continuous state of grace—all this diametrically opposes the situation-specific and external regulation “from without” of magic-oriented action. Whether it involves the manipulation in ceremonies of gods or demons by sorcerers, the execution of sacrifices or sacraments by priests, or a

<sup>5</sup> Indeed, perhaps it was this realization—that the Calvinist’s action could not be understood merely as means-end rational action—that initially induced Weber to ponder the possible *types of social action*. In general, perhaps the study of Calvinism led Weber to conclude that the distinctions at the level of social action indispensable for an understanding of this religion could be broadened in scope and then serve as the basis for an *action-based verstehende sociology*.

<sup>6</sup> It should be clarified that the *religions as a whole* in which the carriers of methodical rational ways of life appeared did not generally abolish magic. Various forms of magic remained in Judaism, Buddhism, and medieval Catholicism, and even played quite prominent roles. Yet, as will be discussed, the *salvation-striving* of scriptural prophets, exemplary prophets, and monks respectively stood opposed to all magical means; *in respect to their own salvation-striving*, magic was replaced with various forms of *ethical* action. See below, pp. 76–81.

search through orgiasticism for the euphoric feeling of ecstasy, no internalized sense of obligation can be cultivated by this form of interaction with the supernatural. To Weber, methodical ethical action stood as the most effective force within the religious realm antagonistic to magic.

What is the nature of the historically significant sociological *loci* in this domain around which action becomes oriented, patterned, and even rationalized? An answer to this question must first address the problem and set of questions specific, according to Weber, to the domain of religion. These issues delineate the domain boundaries within which all action oriented to religion takes place.

### THE RELIGION PROBLEM

Weber's main interest relates to the *influence* of religion upon the action of believers—its “economic ethic”—rather than its “essence” (1968, p. 399/245).

“Economic ethic” does not bring into focus the ethical theories of theological compendia . . . [rather,] it points to the *practical impulses for action* which are founded in the psychological and pragmatic contexts of religions (1946d, p. 267/238; *emph. orig.*).<sup>7</sup>

Given this focus, he foregoes all attempts to define religion. Weber states only that the realm of religion involves the ordering of the relations of supernatural forces to men (1946d, pp. 279/250, 294/266–67; 1968, pp. 403/247, 399/245, 424/259, 528/320–321).

Despite his reluctance to define the problem indigenous to this domain, Weber's analysis of the influence of religion upon action allocates a central role to a domain-specific set of issues. As believers' relations to the supernatural change, the manner in which they interact with it becomes transformed, as does, concurrently, the general influence of the supernatural upon action. Thus, in effect, believers' *definition* of the major character-

istics of the supernatural serves, in the realm of religion, as itself a *locus* for action. This is clear from Weber's discussion of world views. Yet these ethical universes<sup>8</sup> influence action in a global fashion only. Far more precise is the influence emanating from salvation religions, especially their *salvation goals* and *salvation paths*. Each delineates for the devout an array of more specific and more powerful constraints and opportunities that define action appropriate for the believer's salvation quest, as well as other action to be avoided. An examination of the ways in which world views and salvation religions serve as *loci* for patterned and even rationalized action in the domain of religion constitutes our main concern here.

### THE RELIGION LOCI

World views provide a supernatural justification for the methodical rational way of life. The purely ideational thrust they thereby set in motion toward a radical rationalization of action must be, however, complemented by further *loci* for action that exercise a more immediate influence upon action. Salvation paths and salvation goals possess the power to facilitate or curtail these thrusts. In some salvation religions, the ethical order's thrust toward methodical rational ways of life is obstructed so effectively that fragmented ritual and magic prevail in the daily lives of the faithful. Nonetheless, salvation religions, as well as world views, prove indispensable for the shattering of magic and the rise of methodical rational ways of life.

Weber's concept of “religious qualifications” is also fundamental for an understanding of the manner in which the rationalization of action in the domain of religion occurs, as will be emphasized throughout the analysis to follow. According to him, *virtuoso* and *lay* believers orient their action to world views and the various salvation goals and paths in decidedly different ways.

<sup>7</sup> Since his writings concern the *effect* of religion upon action, Weber refers to them as purely empirical (1968, p. 551/334).

<sup>8</sup> I will be using the terms “world view,” “ethical universe,” and “ethical order” synonymously.

*World Views: the Dualistic Relationship and the Supernatural Justification for Methodical Rational Ways of Life*

In some religions, the *dualistic* relationship between the supernatural sphere and the world<sup>9</sup> develops into a pronounced one in which the religious realm becomes visible as a discrete constellation of internally consistent ethical, universal, and permanent values that express a systematic view of the universe. Despite their diverse values, world views always establish clear boundaries for the believer's relations to the transcendent realm and for the pondering of one's fate and suffering.

From the point of view of such rationally ordered "meaningful totalities," the primitive notion of the supernatural as comprised of miscellaneous spirits, demons, and souls, as well as gods in competition with one another, can be understood only as fragmented and "irrational." To Weber, the critical issue in distinguishing the primitive conception of the supernatural realm from that prevalent in world views relates to the question of action: the function-specific, competing inhabitants of the transcendent sphere in primitive religions fail to offer believers a supernatural point of reference for their action characterized by an internally unified configuration of values. They thus fail to provide a *transcendent legitimation* for a way of life unified in its purpose and organized into a consistent pattern.

The first step toward the creation of world views takes place with the rise of *ethical* gods (1968, pp. 429-431/262-263, 437/267, 518/314-315, 590/355). Yet ethical deities become acknowledged as central for the constitution of world views only when they acquire *permanent and universal*

<sup>9</sup> The previous stage—one in which sorcerers manipulated supernatural entities not viewed as radically separate from terrestrial inhabitants—can be described as "monistic" (1968, pp. 401-407/246-250; see also Bellah 1964; Schluchter 1979, pp. 22-23). Because methodical rational ways of life arose only in relation to dualistic world views, monism, as well as "primitive" religions in general, can be treated here only to the extent that they, by contrast, illuminate the nature of world views (on "primitive" religions, see 1968, pp. 399-439/245-268). Weber's occasional use of the term "magical world view" to refer to primitive religions is altogether misleading and will be avoided.

*features*. In comprehensively surveying the cosmos, ethical, permanent, and universal deities endow the "meaningful totality" with its internal metaphysical unity and coherent purposefulness. The "coherent whole" now created is believed to control all lesser divinities and to make, at times, ethical demands upon all terrestrial inhabitants.<sup>10</sup>

How do world views serve as *loci* for religion-oriented action and its rationalization? With the crystallization of such ethical universes, the entire realm of religion becomes established as an enduring substantive rationality that stands not only in contrast to all primitive religions, but also to the "things of the world" (1968, pp. 415-420/255-257, 495/301). In testifying to the ordered "meaningfulness" and eternal character of the universe as a whole, world views distinguish in a stable fashion the integrated demands made upon human beings by the transcendent sphere from the demands of nature, which remain tied to fragmented occurrences. Thus, to the extent that specialized, evanescent, and local gods are replaced by a view of the supernatural realm as a unified ethical order, the possibility arises for religiously-inclined persons to orient their actions systematically and in an internally consistent manner. In other words, in postulating coherent views of the universe as well as comprehensive explanations for the "meaning" of life, ethical orders offer the possibility to the devout of rejecting heterogeneous mundane values and of focussing

<sup>10</sup> World views have assumed various forms in different civilizations. In ancient Greece, they became manifest as simply irrational "fate," while in Confucianism and Taoism they appeared as an "impersonal, providential force that guarantees the regularity and felicitous order of world history" (1968, p. 431/263). In India, on the other hand, they took the form of the Hindu *rita* at first, an "impersonal power of the fixed order of religious ceremony and the fixed order of the cosmos," and later became manifest as "a supradivine and cosmic all-unity, superordinate to the god and alone independent of the senseless change and transitoriness of the entire phenomenal world" (1968, p. 431/263, 553/335). In ancient Judaism they assumed the form of an anthropomorphic, omnipotent and fully monotheistic Deity. The Christian God retained the Judaic God's omnipotence and anthropomorphism, but, with the Trinity, lost the strictly monotheistic character of this earlier God (1946c, p. 325/538).

their action and thought *in a comprehensive manner* upon the supernatural realm. World views, by permanently articulating the discrete realms of "world" and "religion," always provide a transcendent legitimation for *consistent and systematic* action. It is in this manner that they constitute *loci* for religion-oriented action.

For the devout, the discrepancy alone between the supernatural domain viewed as an "ordered totality" and "irrational" earthly events sets, according to Weber, an *ideal, autonomous thrust* in motion that in principle opposes the randomness and heterogeneity of empirical events. Among religious persons, all of whom now have the possibility *cognitively* to evaluate the degree to which action logically conforms to their perception of the "meaningful totality's" universal, ethical, and permanent features, this thrust itself has the effect of calling forth consistent action. In Weber's analysis, the sheer existence of the holistic and ethically rational order superior to earthly inhabitants offers a supernatural justification for the *integration and unification* of disparate action. This is one sense in which a central statement in Weber's sociology as a whole can be understood:

... the rationality, in the sense of the logical or teleological "consistency" of a . . . position has and always has had power over man, however limited and unstable this power is and always has been in the face of other forces of historical life (1946c, p. 324/537; see further 1946d, pp. 270/240-241, 286/259, 268-269/238-240).<sup>11</sup>

Thus, in Weber's analysis, world views constitute the *most general locus* toward which action in the religious realm can be oriented, patterned, and even rationalized. Because they articulate an array of constraints and opportunities, they are capable of focussing the thought and action of the devout in an all-encompassing fashion upon the supernatural sphere: the universalism of deities legitimates internally unified and comprehensively organized action; the ethical aspect of gods offers a transcendent

foundation for internally binding—or obligatory—action "from within" (see 1968, p. 36/19); and the permanence of deities provides a supernatural framework for regular and consistent action. If the ideal thrusts of world views become translated into the action of the faithful, *methodical rational* ways of life arise. In the process, affectual, traditional, and means-end rational, as well as practical rational ways of life, mundane values, and all forms of magic, become viewed as "irrational" and devalued.

Nonetheless, world views remain extremely fragile influences upon action. Their *cognitive* thrusts can never, *of their own accord*, in Weber's analysis of religion-oriented action, call forth methodical rational ways of life. Although indispensable as foundational loci if methodical ethical action is to crystallize, Weber sees no direct correlation between the *ideational impulses* set in motion by ethical universes and the action of the devout. Instead, a securely established world view constitutes, for Weber, the necessary *precondition* in the religious realm for the rationalization of action and the methodical rational way of life, rather than an absolute determinant (1946d, pp. 268-269/239-240, 280/252; 1946c, p. 324/537). Indeed, the cognitive thrust set in motion by ethical universes may be, Weber emphasizes, effectively hindered by wordly configurations as well as an entire host of purely religious intermediary factors, as can even the visibility to believers of the ethical universe itself.

The second major *locus* for religion-oriented action, salvation religions, constitutes a necessary element if the rationalization of action in this domain is to proceed. Indeed, these religions, by introducing *psychological premiums*, delineate constraints and opportunities that influence the action of believers in a far more effective fashion than do world views.

#### *Salvation Religions: Psychological Premiums and the Methodical Rational Way of Life*

The effect of salvation religions upon the action of the devout differs distinctly *in intensity* from the influence of the ideal

<sup>11</sup> Thus, terms such as "cognitive consistency" and "theological consistency" will refer here to autonomous ideal thrusts.

thrusts of world views, all of which involve merely cognitive assessments of whether action stands in a relationship of teleological consistency with the ideal thrusts. An entirely new dimension comes into play with salvation religions: namely, *psychological premiums*.<sup>12</sup> As mediated generally by salvation doctrines that are themselves often oriented to ethical universes, these incentives are placed directly upon the action that, if properly executed, promises salvation to the believer. In Weber's analysis, just the capacity of psychological premiums to convince believers of their redemption from this-worldly suffering and evil endows them with a far greater capacity to create viable constraints and opportunities, and thus with a far greater potential to effect action than does a cognitive pondering of the consistency between action and a world view.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> On the critical distinction between the influence of cognitive consistency as opposed to the effect of psychological premiums (*Prämien*) on action, see 1930, pp. 224 (n. 30)/p. 99 (n. 1), 265 (n. 31)/p. 173 (n. 1), 97/86; 1946d, p. 267/238; 1946c, p. 338/552 (Weber employs the terms "psychological impulse" [*Antrieb*] and "psychological strength" [*Kraft*] synonymously). The translation by Parsons ("sanction"; e.g., 1930, pp. 97/86, p. 265 [n. 31]8p. 173 [n. 1]) is clearly incorrect (see Bendix 1971a, p. 191). I will be using the terms "psychological incentive" and psychological premium" synonymously. See also Bendix's comments in Stammer (1971b, pp. 157-58).

<sup>13</sup> Weber focusses his argument neither upon the influence of world views upon action nor upon the logical implications of theological doctrines and official teachings. For example:

We are of course not concerned with the theoretical and official teaching of ethics—whatever its practical importance for the influence of the church in sermons and parochial welfare—but with something quite different: its spread through psychological incentives concerned with religious belief and practice, pointing out a way of life and sustaining the individual in his way. To a great extent these premiums originated in the unique character of religious conceptions (1930, p. 97/86; tr. alt., emph. orig.).

If one wishes to study at all the influence of a religion on life, one must distinguish between its official teachings and this sort of actual procedure upon which in reality, perhaps against its own will, it places a premium, in this world or the next (1927, p. 364/310).

Tenbruck's (1980) exclusive focus upon an "inner logic" of world views and Schluchter's (1979,

What are the main features of ethical salvation religions?<sup>14</sup> The *idea* of salvation is not, of course, dependent upon the existence of an ethical universe. It arose as the search for relief from need, hunger, drought, sickness, and death even in primitive religions. It acquires, however, a "specific significance" to Weber where it "expressed a systematic and rationalized world view" (1946d, p. 280/252, 278/250). With the clear exception of Confucianism, Weber notes that all the world religions are ethical salvation religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity (1968, p. 564/341).<sup>15</sup>

pp. 11-59) nearly exclusive stress upon these ethical universes as such both tend to overemphasize the significance of ideal thrusts and teleological consistency to the detriment of numerous—also *purely religious*—mediating factors. The omission of Weber's distinction between the psychological premiums of salvation religions and intellectual consistency especially flaws their arguments (see e.g., Schluchter 1979, p. 18, where he discusses world views in reference to their "psychological and pragmatic connections" and as "components of human motives"). As will be noted, *some* of the mediating factors transferred the ideal thrusts of world views into the religious action of the devout, while others effectively opposed them.

<sup>14</sup> I am using the terms "salvation religion" and "ethical salvation religion" synonymously (see n. 17 below).

<sup>15</sup> Fully contradictory statements are to be found in *Economy and Society* regarding the status of Islam (p. 625/375, 1166/694). Schluchter (1979, p. 23) errs in equating "religious ethics" as such with the advent of the salvation religions of interest to Weber, namely, those intimately bound together with a world view. Religious ethics arose in the stage of dualistic theocentrism in primitive religions characterized by the appearance of priests and worship forms (see 1968, pp. 422-37/257-267). Even though these ethics introduced the notions of sin and conscience and, in doing so, served as precursor's for ethical salvation religions, they did not imply world views. (The translation of the relevant passage [1968, p. 437/267] fails to include "salvation" in quotation marks, as occurs in the original. Just these quotation marks indicate that the stage of dualistic theocentrism in primitive religions remained Weber's point of reference for this term rather than those religions where the notion of salvation acquired a "specific significance": the world religions.) Schluchter's entire schema is also inadequately differentiated in that it equates the rise of theocentric dualism with the appearance of ethical salvation religions (1979, pp. 22-23, 27-28, 30). These religions, as noted, awaited the appearance of world views. On the other hand, as will be seen in the case of Confucianism, the advent of world views did not alone imply the introduction of salvation religions. Schluchter's treatment of Confucianism, which for him involves nothing more



All salvation religions involve, as a means of specifying their promises of a release from suffering and responding to the discrepancy between the "rational" supernatural realm and a terrestrial sphere saturated by unexplained and random misery and injustice, at least a minimum of religious doctrine (1968, p. 563/341). As "rational religious systems of thought," doctrines generally originate from theoretical rationalization processes undertaken by priests in reference to the problem of theodicy. Rooted in a stable body of related teachings that are accepted as "revealed" knowledge, they constitute, according to Weber, constellations of values and ethical claims, or, like the world views they articulate and also alter, ethical substantive rationalities. They refer, moreover, to the nature of a salvation religion's goals, promises, revelations, sacred values, and salvation paths, or, in general, its teachings. As constellations of values, prescriptions, laws, and norms internally consistent with one another to a greater or lesser extent, doctrines endow all thinking regarding God and sin with a "rational element" (1968, p. 426/260). In doing so, they fulfill the demand that Weber sees as the "core of religious rationalism:"

Many . . . varieties of doctrine have . . . existed. Behind them always lies a stand towards something in the actual world which is experienced as specifically "senseless." Thus, the demand has been implied: that the world view in its totality is, could, and should somehow be a meaningful "cosmos." This quest [is] the core of genuine *religious rationalism* . . . The avenues, the results, and the efficacy of this metaphysical need for a "meaningful" cosmos have varied widely (1946d, p. 281/253; see also 1946c, pp. 325/538, 564/351; 1968, pp. 450-451/275, 563/341, 458/279, 540/328, 427/260).

The extent to which doctrines focus the believer's actions away from the fragmented happenings and values of terrestrial life and bestow psychological incentives upon action oriented to internally consistent constellations of purely religious values

than monism and magic (pp. 27/28; 1981, pp. 100-105; 1990), reveals the incompleteness of his analysis.

varies widely. Furthermore, depending upon a doctrine's answers to the questions of "from what" and "for what" the devout can be saved,<sup>16</sup> a non-linear relationship might exist between a religion's ideal and practical evaluation of worldly activity: even while ideally denigrating earthly life, some doctrines place clear psychological premiums upon mundane action (see e.g., 1951, pp. 227/513-514). In addition, many salvation doctrines, despite their articulation of world views endowed with ethical, universal, and permanent features that *ideally* stand in opposition to the fragmented character of magic and ritual, not only fail to reward ethical action in such a manner that magic and ritual are effectively suppressed,<sup>17</sup> but also incorporate magical practices.<sup>18</sup> Finally, some doctrines enunciate, especially for the laity, purely this-worldly goals that diverge little from those found in primitive religions (1968, pp. 319-20/526-527). Other doctrines reward purely religious values and "other-worldly" salvation, and the promises and sacred values of this redemption also vary (1968, p. 528/320; 1946d, pp. 280-281/252).

Thus, divergent salvation doctrines, all of which place psychological premiums upon action, may be called forth within each world view. These doctrines serve, in effect, as filters for world views. Depending upon the incentives they place upon action, doctrines can strengthen or weaken the ideal thrusts of world views as well as, once these

<sup>16</sup> Weber lists some of the possibilities; see 1946d, pp. 280-281/252-253; 1968, p. 526/319; and below, pp. 67-68, 76).

<sup>17</sup> In Judaism, for example:

The entire system of outward piety (*Werkheiligkeit*) [of Judaism] had a ritualistic foundation. . . ; moreover, it was frequently interfused with the distinctive emotional mood typical of religions that emphasize faith (1968, p. 498/303; tr. alt.).

Thus, the term "ethical" in the expression "ethical salvation religion" refers to a *feature of the supernatural realm* indigenous to these religions rather than to a type of action these religions *always* called forth. Some ethical salvation religions succeeded in introducing ethical action; only a few transferred the ethical, universal, and permanent features of the world views into methodical rational ways of life.

<sup>18</sup> As did, for example, Catholicism, in the form of the sacraments.

thrusts become clear, transfer them into the action-orientations of believers or block them (1946d, pp. 258–259/286). Indeed, world views and conceptions of God may be altered to such an extent by doctrines that they lose their capacity to set guidelines for salvation-striving.<sup>19</sup> Thus, salvation doctrines reward and punish a wide spectrum of action.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, depending upon whether virtuoso or lay religious qualifications predominate, diverging assessments arise regarding the severity of the gulf and the tension between the world view's "meaningful totality" and terrestrial imperfections (see e.g., 1951 [n. 22], p. 227/513; 1946c, p. 541/328). The manner in which doctrines respond to the tension between supernatural "meaningfulness" and earthly injustice is of interest to us here, for just such responses further directly affect the content and intensity of the psychological premiums salvation doctrines place upon action. These premiums are themselves in turn influenced by the believer's particular religious qualifications. Only two salvation paths—the most effective link to action in Weber's analysis and thus the most immediate sociological locus for action in this sphere of life—place premiums upon methodical rational ways of life. Only virtuoso believers prove capable of fulfilling the ethically rigorous demands imposed by these paths.

Thus, as a consequence of salvation doctrines and the multiple ways in which they endow action with psychological premiums, Weber's repeated stress upon

the precarious influence of the ideal thrusts of world views upon the religious action of the devout must be taken seriously (1946c, p. 324/537; 1946d, pp. 291–292/264, 280/252). Even the world view anchored by monotheism did not succeed in banishing all local spirits and demons, *despite the ideal* antagonism of the permanent, universal, and ethical God to these fragmented supernatural forces.

The path to monotheism has been traversed with varying degrees of consistency, but nowhere—not even during the Reformation—was the existence of spirits and demons permanently eliminated; rather, they were simply subordinated unconditionally to the one God, at least in theory. The decisive consideration was and remains: who is deemed to exert the stronger influence on the interest of the individual in his everyday life, the theoretically supreme God or the lower spirits and demons? If the spirits, then the religion of everyday life was decisively determined by them, regardless of the official God-concept of the ostensibly rationalized religion (1968, pp. 415–416/255).

The crystallization of developed conceptions of supernatural forces as gods, even as a single transcendent God, by no means automatically eliminated the ancient magical notions, not even in Christianity (1968, p. 419/257).

Salvation doctrines are central in Weber's analysis of religion-oriented action. In spite of their variation, only salvation religions, due to their capacity to bestow psychological incentives upon action, are endowed with the *potential* to transfer, *on a continuous basis*, the comprehensive ideal thrusts of world views into the daily action of the devout. The following two sections delineate the ways in which juxtapositions of *certain* salvation goals and paths with religious qualifications succeed in transforming the ethical, universal, and permanent ideal thrusts of world views into psychological premiums upon action. As a result, religion-oriented action is rationalized and, in a few cases, even methodical rational ways of life congeal. Special attention will be given to the character of the Indian and Judaeo-Christian ethical universes as well as to the extent to which ideal thrusts toward mystical experiences

<sup>19</sup> As occurred, for example, in India with Restoration Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism. In these religions, the search for salvation no longer followed an intellectual-theoretical direction (see 1958, pp. 233–256/291–328). Conceptions of God were also altered considerably by the various Christian doctrines. This occurred, for example, in the development from the strictly supramundane God of ancient Judaism to the Christian Trinity, which, "... with its incarnate Savior and the saints, represented a conception of God which fundamentally was rather less suramundane than was the God of Jewry..." (1946c, p. 325/538; see also 1968, pp. 570–571/345). Tenbruck (1980) is able to postulate an "inner logic" of religious rationalization only by neglecting such aspects of Weber's analysis. See also below, pp. 78–79, 82.

<sup>20</sup> In a few cases, psychological incentives become placed even upon action that is, from the point of view of official doctrine, fully "irrational."

and worldly ethical action respectively were transformed into psychological premiums upon action by particular salvation goals and paths. As will become clear, no "inner logic," as Tenbruck (1980, pp. 334-340) and Habermas (1985, pp. 143-242) argue, or "consistency-relativization" axis rooted in world views, as Schluchter contends (1979, pp. 11-59; 1990), adequately captures the analytic course followed by the rationalization of action in respect to the salvation religions (1946d, p. 291/264).<sup>21</sup>

*Salvation Goals: the Virtuosi and the Lait*

Believers in all salvation religions confront the query: "Am I among the saved?" In answer to this question, the offering of a subjective *certitudo salutis*<sup>22</sup> feeling becomes the goal of these religions. Yet enormous differences characterize the search for salvation. For example:

"From what" and "for what" one wished to be redeemed and, let us not forget, "could be" redeemed, depended upon one's image of the world. There have been very different possibilities in this connection: one could wish to be saved from political and social servitude and lifted into a Messianic realm in the future of this world . . . One could wish to be saved from radical evil and the servitude of sin and hope for the eternal and free benevolence in the lap of a fatherly God . . . One could wish to be redeemed from the barriers to the finite, which express themselves in suffering, misery and death, and the threatening punishment of hell, and hope for an eternal bliss in an earthly or paradisaical future existence. One could wish to be saved from the cycle of rebirths with their inexorable compensations for the deeds of the times past and hope for eternal rest (1946d, pp. 280-281/252).

These differences, according to Weber, can be basically traced back to variations in the perception of the nature of the world

<sup>21</sup> The doctrines of many of these religions worked back upon their world views and altered them. Because Tenbruck (though, to a lesser extent, also Schluchter and Habermas) too closely links world views to doctrines as such, he systematically neglects this consideration.

<sup>22</sup> I.e. the subjective certainty of salvation. I am using the expressions *perseverantia gratiae* and "certainty of grace" synonymously, as does Weber.

view as well as in the acuity of the tension experienced by the devout between the "ordered totality" and the earthly domain of haphazard suffering. This perception and tension varies not only in respect to salvation paths, as we will see, but also in respect to *religious qualifications*, indeed to such an extent that, in Weber's analysis, discussion of the "certainty of grace" salvation goal is best divided into two sections: one that examines the manner in which the search for the *certitudo salutis* feeling influences the action of virtuoso believers, and one that discusses ways in which the action of the lay devout is influenced by this salvation goal. The *capacity* of the goal of salvation to *transfer* the manifold ideal thrusts of world views and the psychological premiums of salvation doctrines into religion-oriented action will be emphasized throughout.

*The Ethic of Conviction: the Virtuoso's Certitudo Salutis.* Wherever the ideal claims of the Indian and Judaeo-Christian ethical universes are forced upon the consciousness of believers in a particularly urgent fashion, as is the case with the virtuosi devout, the salvation goal—the certainty of salvation—can be acquired only by a radical orientation to purely religious values. In these cases, the faithful acquire the *perseverantia gratiae* only when they feel permanently and thoroughly suffused by an "ethic of conviction" (*Gesinnungsethik*). Such a radical orientation to the supernatural realm alone and a concomitant suffusion by this ethic enables a full detachment from the random fluctuations of daily life. Such detachment serves as a necessary ingredient, in Weber's analysis, for the origin of methodical rational ways of life.

To Weber, a small group in every salvation religion perceives the arena of religion as unequivocally divorced from all this-worldly events and values. Just the "meaningfulness" of the transcendent sphere to these charismatic devout reveals earthly existence as random and as the locus of misery. For them, purely religious values assume an enhanced status in their daily lives and both terrestrial existence and the adaptation to given realities are, because viewed as standing in opposition to religious

postulates, devalued (1968, pp. 576–634/348–381; 1946c, p. 328/541). Only a radical and comprehensive concentration of all psychic and physical energies upon the religious realm can eradicate the tension felt by the virtuosi between supernatural perfection and unmerited suffering.<sup>23</sup> In essence, the charismatic faithful seek to escape the senselessness of existence through acquisition of a state of consciousness that permanently and exclusively focusses their thought and action upon the transcendent. To Weber, wherever such a “religious mood” (*Dauerhabitus*, *Gesinnung*) and the permanent possession of *inner* religious values become understood as the goal of salvation, the ethic of conviction arises (1946c, p. 328/541; 1968, pp. 576–577/348).<sup>24</sup> What are the main features of this ethic?

However qualitatively different in content depending upon a particular religion’s sacred aims, promises, and salvation paths, the constellation of values internally consistent with one another in every ethic of conviction is fully accepted on faith. Moreover, an unwavering commitment to it reigns. Adherence to this ethic, as an internally binding absolute beyond all compromise, involves not simply *external* compliance, but, more importantly, an *ethical* conviction that implies unlimited trust in its correctness and an unconditional reliance upon God (1968, p. 567/343; 1952, p. 216/231).

Just the believer’s quest for the inner

<sup>23</sup> Perception of this tension as an extreme one occurs more often wherever prophecy appears as a carrier of the religious tradition. In Hinduism, for example, prophets failed to appear and a radical tension between the world view and earthly distress was scarcely articulated.

<sup>24</sup> The terms “religious mood” and “ethic of conviction” are used synonymously. The ethic of conviction cannot be limited to the taking of an absolute position in regard to political issues and a renunciation of responsibility for its consequences. This interpretation, which derives largely from Weber’s well-known discussion in “Politics as a Vocation” (1946a), fails to acknowledge the broader usage of this notion as found, largely though not exclusively, in the “Sociology of Religion” chapter in 1968 (pp. 399–634/245–381). Unfortunately, because a variety of English expressions have been employed as translations of *Gesinnungsethik*, those without access to the German texts will find it impossible to trace Weber’s usage of this concept in this chapter.

“religious mood” reveals another characteristic of the ethic of conviction: this ethic involves a strict imperative for a *continuous* attitude of reverence and devotion. Since permanent ethical Gods reward and punish depending upon whether ethical values are consistently internalized and complied with in all action and thought, winning of the favor of these deities takes place only if perpetual obedience exists. The *sine qua non* for salvation—a lasting and unified foundation for a religiously-based way of life—requires an uncompromising abandonment of all irregular suffusion of the consciousness and a fully alert, voluntary and anti-instinctual regulation of life. A strict suppression of all human desires and emotions is required as well if the ethic of conviction’s comprehensive values are to be upheld.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, not a transitory or extraordinary holy state is awarded with psychological premiums here, such as the ecstasy sought in orgiastic and magical ceremonies. Affectual and erotic frenzies and euphoric states as well become subordinate to the search for a milder but more secure and continuous state of grace. Given perpetual worldly evil and the understanding of the religious realm as *alone* “meaningful,” only this continuous, “chronically heightened and idiosyncratic” state convinces believers of their salvation and renders them inwardly safe against earthly distress, for “this ‘religious mood’ is the truly redemptory quality” (1968, p. 530/322, 534–41/324–328). A constant mood of piety, above all, induces the state of holiness that insures protection against divinely appointed inflictions. In doing so, it not only alleviates the subjective tension that results from an awareness of the acute discrepancy between the ethical universe and the “meaningless” character of everyday life, but also frees the devout from the “irrationality” of worldly reality and its incessant suffering:

This is more likely to be the case the more sublimated, the more inward, and the more principled the essence of suffering is

<sup>25</sup> On the manner in which the ethic of conviction overcomes all natural desires and drives, see e.g., 1968, p. 540/328; 1930, pp. 117–128/115–128; 1951, p. 214/531.

conceived. For then it is important to put the follower into a *permanent* state which makes him inwardly safe against suffering. Formulated abstractly, the rational aim of salvation religion has been to secure for the saved a holy state, and thereby a "mood" that assures salvation (1946c, p. 327/540; see also 1968, pp. 530/322, 536/325).

Ways of life, accordingly, became methodical and oriented comprehensively to the unified ethical order.

Only the life guided by firm principles emanating from a unitary center can be considered a God-pleasing way of life (1951, p. 240/526 [tr. alt.]; see also e.g. 1968, pp. 450-451/275, 465-466/284).

Indeed, the charismatic state that infuses virtuosi believers once they have acquired the religious mood penetrates their entire being in such a comprehensive fashion that it abolishes the normal "contradiction" between the demands of everyday life and those of religious doctrines (1968, pp. 536/325, 538/326). Such a thorough suffusion by the religious dimension in turn strengthens the lasting orientation to the supernatural. To the same degree, action can no longer be guided by the haphazard nature of earthly events or the random character of human relationships. Nor can these believers even entertain the idea, for example, of placing their loyalty to family and sib over that to their God (1946c, p. 329/542). Even the aspiration by the virtuosi toward teleological consistency with the world view and the power of cognitive thought is no longer decisive in guiding action.

Once the religion becomes predominantly an ethical rational religion, it possesses an intellectual character only to an incidental extent. This is the case simply because intellectual propositions fulfill the presuppositions of an ethic of conviction at most only at the lowest stage of faith (1968, p. 566/342; tr. alt.).

Only a clear definition of and conscientious orientation of action to specifically religious values, such as charity, brotherly love, and compassion, can now provide a coherent "meaning" and guarantee the

promise of a rescue from terrestrial distress. This deep penetration by the Godly and an experiencing by believers of the "psychological state" signifies a veritable "unification" of God and the devout, as well as the virtuoso's attainment of the certainty of grace.<sup>26</sup>

*The Laity's Certitudo Salutis*: Even though they pose the same question as their virtuoso counterparts—"How can I be certain of my salvation?"—the lay devout, as a result of their lesser religious qualifications, perceive the cleft between the metaphysical purposefulness articulated in world views and salvation doctrines on the one hand and the imperfections and suffering of terrestrial life on the other as far less acute. Accordingly, no *radical* subjective tension crystallizes, according to Weber, in the consciousness of lay believers and no *consistent* devaluation of earthly life takes place. Furthermore, unlike the unequivocal urgency it assumes in the minds

<sup>26</sup> In one of the crucial passages in his sociology of religion, Weber succinctly describes the "irrationalization" of religious goals away from a pragmatic and utilitarian (*do ut des*) posture as well as this-worldly values and toward the lasting religious mood that convinces virtuoso believers of their salvation:

The pervasive and central theme is: *do ut des*. This aspect clings to the routine and the mass religiosity of all peoples at all times and in all religions. The normal situation is that the burden of all prayers, even in the most other-worldly religions, is the aversion of the external evils "of this world" and the inducement of the external advantages "of this world." Every characteristic of a religion that leads beyond evils and advantages in this world is the work of a special developmental process (*Entwicklungsprozess*), one characterized by distinctively dual aspects. On the one hand, there is an ever-broadening rational systematization of the god concept and of the *thinking* (*Denkens*) concerning the possible relationships of man to the divine. Yet on the other hand, and as a result, there ensues a characteristic recession of the original, *practical* and calculating rationalism. As this occurs, the "meaning" of distinctively religious behavior is sought less and less—and parallel with each rationalization of thought—in the purely external advantages of everyday economic success. To the same extent, the goal of religious behavior is successively "irrationalized" until finally "other-worldly"—that is, above all non-economic—goals come to be viewed as constituting the distinctively religious (1968, pp. 424/258-259 [tr. alt., emph. orig.]; see also 1922, p. 433).

of those endowed with extraordinary qualifications, the centrality of the *certitudo salutis* question for the "masses" varies across a broad spectrum. This depends largely upon whether the particular salvation religion in question assumes the form of a sacramental or a nonsacramental religion (1930, pp. 227-228, n.49/103, n. 2), whether doctrines directly address the theodicy conundrum, and whether they alter the given view of God in a manner that exacerbates or alleviates the tension between the religious postulate and terrestrial "irrationality."

As a rule, lay believers can acquire a subjective certainty of salvation without orienting their action *continuously* to the religious sphere. In some cases correctly executed ritual, for example, alone enables believers to acquire, and reacquire, this subjective feeling. The purely this-worldly and *do ut des* character of primitive religions resurfaces often in the everyday religious action of the laity in ethical salvation religions (1968, pp. 424/258-259; 1946d, p. 277/249). A few doctrines promise the devout eternal life in an other-worldly paradise. Most important here, although only a few salvation goals permit the lay devout simply to adapt to given realities, none aim to uproot these believers in a radical and permanent fashion, in behalf of purely religious values, from the practical rational way of life.

The perception of the relationship between worldly evil and the purposeful ethical universe—whether one of greater tension or less—itself poses the religious issue—the theodicy dilemma—that not only leads to the formation of salvation goals, but also calls forth a diversity of salvation paths. Because all paths place psychological premiums *directly* upon the specific action capable of facilitating attainment of the subjective certainty of salvation, they exist, in Weber's sociology, as the *locus* endowed with the greatest power to influence religion-oriented action. Only a limited number of discrete salvation paths were significant historically. Three paths combine with virtuoso qualifications to award premiums to the ethic of conviction and religious mood that unifies the believer with the supernatural realm. Two of these

rationalize action to such an extent that methodical rational ways of life arise.

### *Salvation Paths*

As the most effective *locus* for religion-oriented action, salvation paths (*Erlösungswege*) constitute, to Weber, the crucial link between the ideal thrusts of world views and the daily action of the faithful. The *perseverantia gratiae* goal of salvation religions fails to offer the concrete instructions for action that allows believers, through the successful execution of such action, to acquire certainty of their state of grace. Only salvation paths place direct psychological premiums upon the "correct" action that promises redemption. However, they consistently transfer the comprehensive ideal thrusts of a world view only rarely. More frequently, they alter these thrusts or block them, as particularly occurs when lay believers experience them as too demanding. Just the repeated attempts by religion-oriented persons to *overcome the tension* between the purposefulness of the supernatural cosmos and the fragmentation and randomness of earthly reality not only creates, in Weber's analysis, the impulse that calls forth salvation paths, but also a "strongly dynamic, development aspect" in man's relationship to the religious realm (1968, pp. 578-579/349-350, 520/321).<sup>27</sup>

Each path, by articulating clear constraints and opportunities, demarcates a specific way for the devout to convince themselves of their salvation. Those that crystallize largely as a result of the perception by virtuosi of the cleft between the ethical universe and daily suffering *as acute*—salvation through faith and through the "methodologies of sanctification" (asceticism and mysticism)—designate an emotional attitude or a mode of action that *facilitates* the radical concentration of these charismatic figures upon an ethical universe. These paths do so in such a manner that the focus of the devout upon

<sup>27</sup> The *Economy and Society* translation incorrectly (here as well as elsewhere; e.g., as in the passage retranslated in the note above) renders *Entwicklung* as "evolution."

this universe can become a permanent one characterized by a comprehensive suffusion by a "religious mood." They crystallize only where the virtuosi devout appear in delineated groups, and these paths alone succeed in continuously "reactivating" virtuosi qualifications on a regular basis and in a concentrated fashion. On the other hand, those paths that arise in response to the *lay* believer's perception of the gulf—as far less acute—between the rational religious postulate and earthly injustice offer less strenuous means for redemption. These paths—through ritual, good works, a savior, and an institution—can convince lay believers of their salvation without demanding a lasting focus upon the "ordered totality" and its specifically religious values.<sup>28</sup>

Yet neither the acquisition of the *perseverantia gratiae* nor the experiencing of it as a "religious mood" stands in a linear relationship to the rationalization of action. Rather, the suffusion by the religious dimension that uproots the devout from practical rational ways of life must be viewed as a necessary but not sufficient condition for this rationalization and for the introduction of methodical ethical action. Indeed, salvation through faith, in combination with virtuoso qualifications, calls forth an ethic of conviction that places premiums upon fully "irrational" action. On the other hand, since most believers are not endowed with charismatic qualities, the salvation paths most frequently favored are those that offer a certainty of salvation without demanding a thorough penetration by the devout with religious values; that is, all those requiring less stringent efforts and which allow repeated acquisition of the assurance of grace feeling. These paths, none of which place psychological pre-

miums upon a *consistent* rationalization of action, nonetheless very often reward sporadic ethical action as well as means-end rational action and suppress affectual and traditional action. Salvation paths constitute the last—and crucial—step in Weber's analysis of the manner in which the rationalization of action proceeds in the religious arena.<sup>29</sup>

#### *Salvation Paths that Fail to Rationalize Action*

All of these paths convey the subjective feeling of certainty of grace *without* demanding a comprehensive rationalization of action. They differ, nonetheless, in the degree to which they facilitate the virtuoso's quest for attainment of a religious mood.

#### *The Lack of an Ethic of Conviction: Salvation Through a Savior, an Institution, Ritual, and Good Works*

In readily alleviating any tension between the "ordered totality" and worldly imperfection, these salvation paths provide a hope for redemption to believers lacking virtuoso qualifications. In fact, these paths in part arise as doctrinal responses to the search of lay believers for a means to acquire the *certitudo salutis* without rigorously organizing their entire ways of

<sup>28</sup> It should be stressed that the extraordinary powers of virtuoso believers *always* allow them to experience the religious mood; i.e. regardless of the salvation path followed by these possessors of charisma. This is evident from Weber's discussion of the various paths (see 1968, pp. 529–576/321–348). Some paths, however, as a result of their unique psychological premiums, tend to *awaken* virtuoso qualifications far more effectively and to facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of this mood. These paths call forth the ethic of conviction much more frequently.

<sup>29</sup> There is no unequivocal relation between specific paths and specific religions. The same path is found in a variety of religions, and a single religion very often requires a) the same believer to follow several salvation paths and b) believers in possession of different religious qualifications to follow different paths. Furthermore, no one to one relationship can be established between salvation paths and the two world views that anchor salvation religions: the Indian and the Occidental (see 1968, pp. 529–576/321–348). Tenbruck's (1980) near total omission of the "Sociology of Religion" chapter in *Economy and Society* allows him, in the formulation of his "inner logic" thesis, to neglect such complications. A clear relationship also fails to crystallize, in Weber's analysis, between ethics of conviction, those salvation paths that stress the believer's *own efforts* (ritual, good works, asceticism, mysticism; 1968, pp. 529–534/321–324, 541–551/328–334), and those that define salvation as emanating from forces fully external to and independent of the actions of the devout (the savior, the institution, and faith; 1968, pp. 557–563/337–340). The methodical rational way of life can emanate only where salvation results from the believer's efforts, but not all of these paths can lead to this way of life.

life. Indeed, most of the faithful never view the tension between the ethical universe and the injustices of daily life as an acute one. Consequently, for them, acquisition of the subjective certainty of salvation can take place without a permanent orientation to religious values and a concomitant radical devaluation of terrestrial existence. The salvation paths that congeal within this context naturally fail to require, for attainment of the state of grace, a suffusion of the believer's entire way of life with a "religious mood," a perpetual uprooting from given realities, or a consistent rationalization of action. Instead, all offer less rigorous means for the devout to convince themselves of their redemption; they also offer the possibility repeatedly to acquire assurance of salvation after it has been lost. They do so by thwarting the ideal thrusts of world views and by casting the salvation search much more in the direction of an "adaptation to the world." Action, consequently, is influenced by the domain of religion only partially.

Salvation through a savior proclaims the power of a great hero—whether a prophet, a guru, or a god incarnated as a divine savior—to act as an intermediary between the human and the divine and to dispense grace. Instead of knowledge of ritual laws or sacred texts, the central basis of the power of Jesus, the Buddhist *Bodhisattva*, and the Dalai Lama, for example, stem from their knowledge that the "way of God" leads through them (1968, p. 631/379). Thus, in this case, the actions of the believer are not decisive. Instead, those of the hero or savior prove more important for salvation: as a consequence of his extraordinary achievements he has accumulated an "excess" of grace, and this can be distributed to others. Since the savior alone liberates persons from dragons or evil demons, from the world's crass hypocrisy, from the oppressive consciousness of sin, and even from the sinful nature of the human creature as such, all depends upon the strength of his charismatic endowment. Because the believer's own efforts are rejected as inadequate for the attainment of salvation, no pattern of action can arise among the devout that consistently emanates from a comprehensive core of

ethical values. On the contrary, all religion-oriented action remains merely a response to the unlimited authority of the savior, and his dictates vary depending upon situational factors as well as for reasons incomprehensible to the faithful. Instead of introducing methodical rational ways of life, this salvation path, whether it appears in India or the Occident, generally places psychological premiums upon ritual obedience and, occasionally, single and unrelated ethical acts (1968, pp. 557–558/ 337–338).

Weber notes a clear similarity in the manner in which salvation through a savior and institutional grace affect action: both generally weaken the influence of ethical demands:

Every type of actual dispensation of grace by a person, regardless of whether this dispensation is legitimated from personal charisma or from an office within an institution, has the net effect of weakening the ethical demands upon the individual. The vouchsafing of grace always entails an inner release of the person in need of salvation; it consequently facilitates his capacity to bear guilt. Since the sinner knows that he may always receive absolution if he performs some occasional religious action, he is, other things being equal, largely spared the necessity of developing his own ethically systematized pattern of life (1968, p. 561/339; tr. alt.).

The very fact that the institution always possesses an oversupply of religious grace to be distributed anew curtails the need for a continuous, internal monitoring of action. Through the granting of dispensations, the tension that arises from the believer's awareness of his failure to fully conform to his God's ethical demands can be relieved. In this sense, the Catholic Confessional, for example, in offering the devout a "... means for the periodic 'abreaction' of an affect-laden sense of guilt," releases them from the burden of their sins (1930, p. 106/97; tr. alt.; see also 1930, p. 234/113; 1946b, p. 320/234; 1968, pp. 1191/712, 562/339–340).

The *manner* in which divine blessing is dispensed in institutions also leads to a fragmentation of religious action: since discrete deeds are understood to be the correct compensation or penance for particular



sins, value adheres to atomized acts rather than to an internally united personality pattern. A piecemeal resolution of tension results. Not the consistent efforts of the believer himself are decisive, as occurs in the rigorous self-control practiced by the ascetic or the mystic; rather, action is perpetually referred to an authority outside the self in possession of unlimited religious powers. For this very reason, ethical obligation as the specific arena of religious action is suppressed in behalf of an attitude of formal humility, pure obedience, and a "general readiness to subject one's own convictions to religious authority" (1968, p. 562/340; tr. alt.). For Weber, wherever institutional grace is consistently applied, this attitude integrates the way of life rather than methodical ethical action. Only traditionalism and a means-end rational adaptation to given situations can result from this salvation path (1968, pp. 561-563/339-340, 566/342).

On the other hand, ritual practices in some ethical salvation religions can occasionally exert an ethical effect upon action. This occurs, for example, in Catholicism: ethical action in this religion results from the sacraments as a result of their linkage with the belief that only those free from sin—or the ethically pure in the sight of God—will be saved. Since the institution of the Confession, however, provides the possibility for repentance from sin, the lay believer is not psychologically coerced internally and continually to monitor his action in behalf of ethical demands. Consequently, no premiums reward methodical rational ways of life (1968, pp. 531-532/322-323, 560/339). The abolition of the Confession, as occurred with Calvinism, enhances the power of sacraments of an entirely different character to introduce ethical action. This took place, for example, as a result of the frequent administration of the Lord's Supper in all Protestant sects: participation in this ritual could occur—due to the motto "whoever does not believe and yet eats, eats and drinks himself to judgment"—only by those who had, in daily life, strictly upheld the tenets of their religious doctrine. Such obedience became an unconditional necessity in most of these sects due to the

lack of any possibility for absolution (1968, pp. 531-532/332-333). Nonetheless, whether this ethical action develops into methodical rational ways of life depends upon a whole host of further factors.

Nor can the performance of good works generally lead to the placing of psychological premiums upon a systematic penetration of the devout by the specifically religious dimension and to the methodical rational ways of life. To Weber, the "book-keeping" feature of this salvation path means that particular actions, depending upon their virtuousness or wickedness, add to or subtract from the "account" of the person in search of redemption. Since the major concern of the faithful here involves an external "balancing" of all accounts by the time of death, good works can be viewed at any given point in time in relation to the difficulty of their realization. Thus, ethical standards remain of a labile nature and the way of life an ethically unmethodical succession of single, unrelated actions (1968, p. 533/323-324).<sup>30</sup>

In sum, salvation through a savior, an institution, ritual and good works generally offers redemption without awarding psychological premiums to the cultivation of a "religious mood" that focusses the energies of the devout upon the ethical, universal, and permanent aspects of world views; nor do these salvation paths call forth a comprehensive, ethical rationalization of action. Instead, the feeling of grace can be attained through less rigorous means, ones that never require a radical shattering of traditional action or suppression of the practical rational way of life. Wherever believers in possession of virtuoso qualifications view the tension between "religion" and "world" as an acute one, however, different salvation paths crystallize, all of which place intensive demands upon the faithful. These paths—three in all—facilitate the quest of the charismatic devout to overcome the "contradiction" between the "rational" religious postulate and senseless, haphazard terrestrial life by consis-

<sup>30</sup> Weber notes that these accounting procedures typical of the good works path to salvation appear in Catholicism, Zoroastrianism, the Hindu *Karma* doctrine, and popular Judaism (1968, pp. 532-533/323-324).

tently assisting their attempts to become radically penetrated by the religious dimension.<sup>31</sup> Yet they differ distinctly in regard to the degree to which they mediate the ideal thrusts of world views toward methodical ethical action: unlike the "self-perfection" paths of asceticism and mysticism, salvation through faith regularly places psychological premiums upon an ethic of conviction that fails to introduce rational action of any sort, let alone a methodical rational way of life.

*The Presence of an Ethic of Conviction: the Irrational Suffusion by Faith*

This attitude of unconditional inner reliance<sup>32</sup> upon God permeated the mystical sects in Western Europe in the seventeenth century and in Eastern Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as the attitude of Jesus and Paul in ancient Christianity (1968, pp. 567/434, 563-564/341). It also appeared in Lutheranism as an emotional quality of utter trust that sought refuge in God's goodness and grace.<sup>33</sup> Tinged by passion or a latent or manifest eroticism, it arose as faith in either a God or a savior in Suffism, the Pietist movement led by Zinzendorf, and the Hindu Vishnu sects (1968, pp. 571-572/345/346).<sup>34</sup>

If believers possess charisma, the path to

salvation through faith proves quite capable of convincing them of their redemption by suffusing them with the "religious mood." An abandonment by the devout of confidence in their own powers to insure their salvation is common, according to Weber, wherever faith appears. No attempt is undertaken here to decipher the desires of the God through a cultivation of knowledge if only because, measured against the grandeur of, in particular, the transcendent, personal God, all humanly intellectual powers pale in significance. Simply because the God's nature cannot be fully known through cognitive processes, salvation through faith demands a complete trust in the Divinity's goodness. The continuous trust of the Christian in his God, for example, constitutes, to Weber, a charisma that can be maintained only by an exercise of the will (1968, pp. 571-572/345-346).

The relationship to God based upon unconditional faith never places psychological premiums upon efforts to systematize consistently ethical action. On the contrary, the attitude of unshakeable inner reliance tends to locate the religious essence in subjective emotional—or anti-rational—states. Not action, but a cultivation of an attitude of complete trust in the promises of a god or a savior, an unconditional religious surrender, and a spiritual and intellectual humility is most important here for acquisition of the "religious mood" (1968, pp. 567-568/343-344). All consequences of action, furthermore, are understood as fully attributed to God, and no additional attention need be paid to the cares of tomorrow. Indeed, faith in God's providence occasionally tends to lead to an acosmic indifference toward all practical considerations.<sup>35</sup> Thus, even though the ethic of conviction based upon faith transfers the thrust of world views in the

<sup>31</sup> In essence, the introduction of paths embedded in doctrines that facilitate the rise of the "religious mood" give a character of *permanency* to the achievement originally carried out, in a non-systematic manner, by prophets: the abolition, for believers, of "the contradiction between daily life and the exceptional (*ausseralltaglich*) 'religious mood'" (1968, p. 538/326).

<sup>32</sup> In *Economy and Society*, Weber's term *Glauben* is translated randomly as "belief" or "faith" (see e.g., pp. 563-572/340-346). I will use "inner reliance," "faith," and "trust" here synonymously.

<sup>33</sup> This took place even though this religion's "justification by faith" placed strong psychological premiums upon vocational activity in the world (see 1968, pp. 571-572/345-346).

<sup>34</sup> The salvation path based upon faith appears also on several occasions in a manner such that psychological premiums are not placed upon a "religious mood." Perhaps the lay Catholic's *fides implicita* in his institution may be the most prominent example. This involves a "general readiness to subject one's own convictions to religious authority" (1968, p. 566/342).

<sup>35</sup> The "religious mood" called forth by faith wholly rejects the view of asceticism—that the devout are merely instruments of God—as a "wicked preoccupation with purely human powers" (1968, p. 569/344). To Weber:

Salvation through faith, wherever an increasing emphasis is placed upon it in everyday religion, normally does not easily lead to an ethical and active rationalization of the believer's way of life (1968, p. 569/344).

sense that it intensively devalues terrestrial existence and, in calling forth the "religious mood," innerly uproots the virtuoso devout from all practical rational orientations, it fails to mediate this thrust in respect to its action content: it never conveys the ethical or universal aspects of world views and thus fails to bestow psychological premiums upon either methodical rational ways of life or action that shatters traditions while rationally dominating the world (1968, pp. 569-570/344-345).

*Salvation Paths that Rationalize Action:  
the Presence of an Ethic of Conviction*

Salvation through faith reveals that amelioration of the acute subjective tension that results from a perceived radical disjunction between the "meaningful" ethical universe and worldly injustice does not *itself* imply a rationalization of action. In this case, an emotional attitude comprehensively focusses the energies of the virtuoso devout upon religious values and, as such, constitutes the appropriate means to reach the *certitudo salutis* goal. Yet this "religious mood" never introduces methodical rational ways of life. Basically, the ethic of conviction, in emancipating individuals from the fragmented values and occurrences of daily life, can be best understood as a necessary but not sufficient precondition for a comprehensive rationalization of action. Whereas the faith salvation path only severs the virtuoso faithful from the random flux of terrestrial events, the *methodologies of sanctification (Heilsmethodiken)*—mysticism and asceticism—place unequivocal psychological premiums upon methodical rational ways of life.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>36</sup> It is not at all clear why Weber includes the belief in predestination in his discussion of salvation paths (1968, pp. 572-576/346-348). It is true that he notes predestination as not only calling forth a "religious mood" in the form of an "inner relationship to God" (1968, p. 573/346) and as an "instrument for the greatest possible systematization and centralization of the ethic of conviction" (1968, p. 575/348), but also as involving a "demonstration of the capacity to serve as one of God's instruments in fulfilling his injunctions in a continuous and methodical fashion" (1968, p. 573/346). Nonetheless, in order to serve as a salvation path at all, the manner in which the belief in predestination *accomplishes* all this must be detailed.

*Salvation Through the Methodologies of Sanctification: the Directed Salvation-Striving of Methodical Rational Ways of Life*

Mysticism and asceticism, just as the faith salvation path, arise largely from the attempts of virtuoso believers to overcome a tension perceived as acute between the ethical universe and the random suffering of daily life. These radical paths of "self-perfection"<sup>37</sup> facilitate, just as the faith path, the striving of the devout to become detached from given realities, to focus their energies upon the supernatural, and to become suffused with a "religious mood." Only this mood eliminates the believer's uncertainty regarding his state of grace.

Yet a distinction of pivotal importance separates these methodologies of sanctification from salvation through faith: whereas the charismatic faithful who follow the latter path become convinced of their state of grace simply by an exercise of the will, the ascetic and the mystic can acquire the *certitudo salutis* feeling only through systematic and comprehensive procedures that methodically rationalize their action. As self-perfection methodologies that unrelentingly monitor action as well as subordinate everyday routine to orientations to the supernatural realm, mysticism and asceticism rationalize action in a more systematic fashion than all other redemption paths. In the process, they call forth ethics of convictions of great continuity that eliminate all "irrational methods."<sup>38</sup>

Yet Weber fails to enlighten us in this respect: he designates no mechanisms, psychological premiums, or standardized instructions that regularly call forth either the "central and constant quality of the personality" (1968, p. 573/346) or methodical action, such as do the methodologies of sanctification (see below). Moreover, since the influence upon the faithful of the belief in predestination is regularly routinized or dependent upon supplementary salvation paths, it will not be treated here as a separate salvation path.

<sup>37</sup> These paths are described as "radical" because they consistently and methodically direct salvation-striving.

<sup>38</sup> The "acute" form of salvation through self-perfection, which aims to produce ecstatic states of mental aberration (*Entrücktheit*) or possession through the breaking down of all natural inhibitions, leaves scarcely a trace upon everyday action. Therefore, it will not be considered further here (see 1968, p. 535/325).

The particular character of the certification of salvation (*Heilsbewährung*) and thus of the associated practical conduct is fundamentally different according to, above all, the character of the promised salvation, the possession of which implies blessedness. Salvation may be viewed as the distinctive gift of active ethical *action* performed in the awareness that god directs this action, i.e., that the actor is an instrument of god. We shall designate this type of attitude toward salvation, which is characterized by a methodical procedure for achieving religious salvation, as "ascetic". . . . But the distinctive content of salvation may not be an *active* quality of action, that is, an awareness of having executed the divine will; it may instead be a *subjective condition* of a distinctive kind, the most notable form of which is "mystic illumination." This too is . . . only to be achieved as the end product of a systematic execution of a distinctive type of activity (*Tätigkeit*), namely "contemplation." Contemplation requires, if to succeed in achieving its goal of mystic illumination, the extrusion of all everyday mundane interests. (1968, pp. 541/328, 544/330; emph. orig: tr. alt.).

Unlike the faith salvation path or the paths that introduce neither an ethic of conviction nor methodical rational ways of life, the self-perfection paths transfer the universal, permanent, and ethical ideal thrusts of their respective world views in a consistent fashion into the salvation-striving process. They, and they alone, in Weber's terminology, "direct" the search for salvation in a permanent and intensive manner that places psychological incentives upon methodical rational ways of life.<sup>39</sup>

*Mysticism: Meditational Techniques as Formally Rationalizing Action Directed Toward a "Flight from the World."* The mystic, just as the exemplary prophet, escapes earthly senselessness and attains a "religious mood" by immersing himself into his immanent, impersonal God.<sup>40</sup> Only

<sup>39</sup> See below, p. 78.

<sup>40</sup> That mysticism is a path to salvation rather than a goal is clear from the table of contents of the "Sociology of Religion" chapter in the German edition (*Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*) as well from *Economy and Society*, pp. 545-546/331 and 529/321. Paragraph 10 in this chapter (*Die Erlösungswege und ihr Einfluss auf die Lebensführung*) discusses all the salvation paths, both radical and non-radical. The

the extraordinary subjective condition in which the devout seek to become "One" with this acosmic Force can convince them of their salvation (1946d, pp. 289/261-262; 1968, pp. 548-550/332-333).

Accordingly, this virtuoso attains "gnostic knowledge" only when he minimizes activity by withdrawing from everyday mundane interests, practical routines, satisfactions, and temptations:

The mystic . . . minimizes activity just because it can never give him certainty of his state of grace, and what is more, because it may divert him from union with the divine (1968, p. 547/332).

Action in the world must . . . appear as endangering the absolutely irrational and other-worldly religious state (1946c, p. 325/539; see also p. 342/556).

Consequently, no psychological premiums reward practical action in the workaday world, all types of which—including economic action—are considered to be "meaningless."<sup>41</sup> Furthermore, because the mystic views terrestrial success as devoid of all significance for his redemption and as distracting him from his goal of serving as a "vessel" of the ethical Being, he remains fully resigned and indifferent to the institutions of the world.

Thus, for this charismatic figure, the attempt to experience the "quietness and inwardness of God" through a perfection of self always requires, in accord with his world view's ideal thrusts, a radical devaluation of the "irrational," fragmented events of daily life, a rejection of this-worldly values, and a "fleeing from the world." Yet how is such a thoroughgoing break from everyday life to be achieved? To Weber it takes place through *formal* rationalization processes of a comprehensive nature that facilitate an "energetic concentration" upon meditational techniques

*Economy and Society* table of contents confuses this issue by dividing the discussion of these paths into three subsections (ix-xi).

<sup>41</sup> Thus, viewed strictly, not a rationalization of action is here involved, but a withdrawal from all action. Nonetheless, a methodical rationalization of all *energies* is apparent. Weber employs the term *Tätigkeit* (activity).

and certain "truths," an elimination of the mind's continuous chatter, and an evacuation of the consciousness. The mystic can thoroughly defend himself against all intrusions from nature and his social environment only through utilizing such techniques. They, in turn, allow a suffusion by the cosmic Oneness as well as an experiencing of the deep holy peacefulness buried within every individual (1968, p. 546/331).

This salvation-striving through formal rationalization processes, even though characterized by an *intellectual-theoretical direction*,<sup>42</sup> still calls forth an ethical systematization and methodical rational way of life based upon an ethic of conviction. Only such a rationalization enables the mystic to feel himself as penetrated fully by the Divine immanent Being and, thus, as certain of his state of grace (1946c pp. 325-26/538-539; 1968, pp. 545-46/330-31; 1958, p. 332/366). The ascetic also attains the *perseverantia gratiae* through a *unification* with his God, yet his methodical rational way of life diverges sharply from that of the mystic.<sup>43</sup>

*Asceticism: the Substantive Rationalization of Action Directed Toward "Domination of the World."* If methodical, Weber designates as asceticism the search for salvation through "active ethical behavior performed in the awareness that God directs this behavior" (1968, p. 541/328; my emph.). Attainment of the "religious mood" involves for the ascetic a perfection of himself as an *instrument* of his God capable of systematically introducing ethical values into his own life and into his religious milieu, whether a cloister (other-worldly asceticism) or society as a whole (inner-worldly asceticism). As the earthly

<sup>42</sup> Occasionally, Weber describes this formal rationalization as a "negative" rationalization of action. This is the only case when formal rationalization processes fail to take *mundane* action as their point of reference. "Intellectual-theoretical" refers here, as usual, to a *direction* for the pursuit of salvation: flight from the world. It must be kept distinct from theoretical rationalization processes, a concept with a more general centrality in Weber's sociology (see Kalberg 1980, pp. 1159-1177).

<sup>43</sup> Although certain aspects of asceticism can be clearly found in mysticism (see 1968, pp. 544-551/330-334).

executors of an omnipotent Deity's Commandments, all ascetics feel obliged to pattern their lives in a systematic and orderly fashion: they can convince themselves of their salvation only if they demonstrate a capacity to integrate their actions rationally in regard to "meaning," means, and end. These actions, all of which are endowed with psychological premiums, must be governed by principles and rules unconditionally consistent with the ethical norms of religious virtue (1968, pp. 541/328, 549/333).

For the ascetic . . . the sensing (*Erfassung*) of the divine through emotion or consciousness is of central significance. In his case, however, and when he does so through emotion, the experiencing of the divine is, so to speak, of a "motor" type. This "feeling" exists when he is conscious that he has succeeded in becoming, through rational ethical action completely oriented to God and an instrument of his God (1968, p. 546/331; tr. alt.).

Above all, all natural drives, sexual ties, affectual expressions, elements of passion, spontaneous enjoyments, and other symptoms of man's inconstant, irrational nature become viewed by the ascetic as diabolical threats to a continuous concentration upon the aim of salvation.

Every "rational" asceticism worked at assisting persons to assert and render viable, in opposition to the "emotions," their "constant motives," especially those which they had, through drill, "exercised" upon themselves. . . . This was important because asceticism aimed to assist the believer to be able to lead an alert, conscious, and intelligent life. This was the goal of asceticism: to place order into the way of life of believers and to destroy the spontaneous and impulsive enjoyment of life. This was the most urgent task (1930, p. 119/117 [tr. alt.]; see also pp. 118-119/116).

Yet how can a taming of all natural drives and a renunciation of all worldly pleasures in behalf of a strict adherence to ethical commandments take place? Such a thorough penetration by their God's ethical demands can occur only when the devout succeed, as is the case with mysticism, in substituting a dependence upon the world

and nature by conscious, methodical orienting of their ways of life exclusively to the "meaningful" ethical universe and the attainment of the *perseverantia gratiae* state. Work, above all, when performed in a systematic manner such that it regulates all emotions and desires, is viewed by the ascetic as an invaluable means for self-control and a focussing of the consciousness upon the purely religious goal. More generally, acquisition of the inner feeling of grace by this religious actor usually entails a methodical rationalization of terrestrial action in behalf of the constellation of ethical values implied in his salvation doctrine. No formal rationalization processes directed toward a quieting of the self, a minimizing of mundane activity, and an intellectual-theoretical "flight from the world" characterizes the ascetic's way of life, as is the case with the mystic. Instead, this virtuoso's search for redemption necessarily assumes a *practical-ethical* direction that involves a "domination of the world": a comprehensive substantive rationalization of mundane action prevails here if only because this action alone convinces the ascetic that he serves as the earthly instrument of his demanding God. Thus, psychological premiums are awarded to methodical rational ways of life that confront the random character of everyday life and rationally order it to conform<sup>44</sup> to

<sup>44</sup> This point should not be misinterpreted. The fact that the psychological premiums asceticism and mysticism place upon action mediate *completely* the ideal thrusts of their respective world views toward methodical rational ways of life should not be construed to imply that cognitive consistency and ideal thrusts *causally* call forth these salvation paths. Again, *various* paths may arise; some are empowered to block (partially or completely) various ideal thrusts; others transfer them (partially or completely). An entire host of factors always contributes to the formation of each path. Above all, to draw such a causal implication would indicate a confusion of cognitive orientations, which relate to ethical universes, with psychological premiums, which are intimately bound up with the search for salvation as manifest in paths, goals, promises, and other aspects of salvation doctrines. World views alone, as Tenbruck argues, are never, in Weber's analysis, endowed with the power to place psychological premiums upon action. Due to the intervening role played by doctrines, no *necessary* causal relationship exists at all between ideal thrusts and psychological incentives. The asceticism of the Catholic monk, for example, arose *even though* the

the mighty Deity's ethical prescriptions.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the differences in the character and direction of salvation-striving introduced by the self-perfection paths, both mysticism and asceticism, as *methodologies* of sanctification, require believers to rationalize their ways of life in the most rigorous fashion if the religious mood is to be acquired and maintained. Just this radical penetration by and focussing upon the religious dimension, regardless of whether it takes the form of a withdrawal from everyday reality or a mastery of it, makes for a radical devaluation of the fragmented character or everyday life and daily interests. All non-divine, "ordinary things of life" as well as the symptoms of man's *status naturae* creatureliness, since "meaningless" for the pursuit of redemption, are viewed as belonging to the realm of the "ethically irrational." They are therefore understood as threats to the conscious possession of the *certitudo salutis*. In sum, both mysticism and asceticism place psy-

God that anchored this religion's world view was fundamentally less monotheistic than Yahwe (see 1946c, pp. 324-325/538) in ancient Judaism, a religion that never introduced asceticism (see e.g., 1968, p. 498/303). Moreover, as noted, psychological premiums are often placed upon action inconsistent even with a religion's official teachings; for example, Calvinist asceticism arose as a fundamentally "irrational" by-product of the Calvinist doctrine of predestination (1930, pp. 78/62). Likewise, mysticism congealed for a variety of purely religious reasons unrelated to the Indian world view (e.g., the quietistic character of its carrier stratum of intellectuals). This remains the case even though its ideal thrusts, given the highly cognitive orientations of the mystic virtuoso, were undoubtedly causally more important than in the rise of asceticism. Furthermore, salvation doctrines never crystallized in Confucianism. As a consequence, the ethical, permanent, and universal features of this religion's world view were never either transferred into action or mysticism, nor were they transformed (see p. 83). These issues simply cannot be grasped by the conceptual frameworks employed by Schluchter (1979, 1981, 1989) or Tenbruck (1980)/Habermas (1984).

<sup>45</sup> The sacred promises and salvation routes of each sanctification methodology appear wholly "irrational" when viewed from the perspective of the other (see e.g., 1930, pp. 26/11-12; 1946c, pp. 325-326/538-539). To the ascetic, mysticism's indifference to the world simply demonstrates a religiously sterile "indolent enjoyment of self" and a reprehensible deification of the creaturely. The mystic, for his part, views the rationalization of worldly action as endangering his religious state and as an "entanglement in the godless ways of the world [and] a

chological premiums upon action that severs the faithful from mundane life and human desires.<sup>46</sup> In doing so, these paths, just as salvation through faith, ameliorate the acute subjective tension that results from the virtuoso's perception of a severe "contradiction" between the comprehensive purposefulness of world views and earthly misery and random injustice. Indeed, the penetration by sacred values is so complete that all physical and psychological capacities become tightly bound within the specifically religious component. Even though acting within the "irrational" terrestrial environment, the longing of these believers for the inner charismatic states of euphoria that convince them of their salvation precludes an acknowledgement of daily tasks as divorced from religious goals.<sup>47</sup>

Mysticism and asceticism, just as does salvation through faith, facilitate attainment of the ethic of conviction in which

complacent self-righteousness" (1946c pp. 325-326/539). To the mystic, involvement within the realm of human creations, because it subjects the individual to the insoluble tensions and contradictions that inherently burden terrestrial existence, invariably distracts him from his search for a unity with his God. The mystic's aim to "empty" his consciousness of all worldly experience and interests and to make himself "equal to ether" absolutely indicts the asceticist ideal of rationally ordering a religious milieu as a barbaric greed for life (1958, pp. 332/367, 338-339/372-373; 1951, pp. 179/464-465; 1968, p. 546/331). To the ascetic, on the other hand, "the contemplative mystic appears not to be thinking of God, the enhancement of his kingdom and glory, or the fulfillment of his will, but rather to be thinking exclusively about himself" (1968, p. 547/331). Weber contrasts the effect on conduct of asceticism and mysticism on several occasions (1968, pp. 544-551/330-334, 627-629/377-378; 1946c, pp. 325-326/538-540, 338-340/552-553; and 1946d, pp. 289-291/261-263).

<sup>46</sup> "When they attain the level of an ethic of conviction, the methodologies of sanctification imply practically an overcoming of particular desires or emotions of raw human nature that had not hitherto been controlled by religion. Whether this involved cowardice, brutality, selfishness, sensuality or some other natural drive as the one most capable of diverting the believer from his charismatic religious mood must be assessed for each particular religion" (1968, p. 540/328).

<sup>47</sup> The methodical procedures of mystics and ascetics also stand in a relationship of antagonism to the sporadic ecstatic states sought through orgy and sorcery in all primitive religions as well as in opposition to the regular worship forms conducted by ritual priests (see 1968, pp. 541-563/328-340 *passim*).

sacred values penetrate the devout fully. They diverge distinctly, however, in the extent to which they confront magic.

*Mysticism and Asceticism: Magic and the Rationalization of Action.* Even though mystics and ascetics act in strict conformity with the ideal thrusts of their respective ethical universes and rationalize their action into methodical rational ways of life based upon ethics of conviction, only the ethical action of the ascetic takes place *in the world*. The capacity of the salvation path of asceticism to transfer systematically the ethical dimension of the world view anchored by the anthropomorphic God into the arena of daily action proves decisive in this respect. Since manifest as ethical Commandments, this dimension undertakes to revolutionize terrestrial milieu in behalf of the Divine Will. Whereas the intellectual-theoretical direction of the mystic's salvation-striving implies a radical disjunction between his passive ethical action—contemplation—and "the world," no such division can arise wherever a *practical-ethical direction* characterizes the pursuit of salvation: for the ascetic, attainment of the certainty of grace occurs *only* through *mundane* ethical action of a methodical character. This ethical action radically opposes magic, above all due to the latter's fragmented character and its irrelevance for attainment of the religious mood. Although the systematic character of mysticism also stands in an antagonistic relationship to magic, it tolerates the "irrationality" of earthly existence because this entire realm, in light of this virtuoso's aim to flee the world and immerse himself in his immanent God, remains one of indifference to him.

Ironically, the extraordinary strength of the ascetic's power to uproot magic can be traced back in part to his fundamentally "Janus-faced" (*Doppelgesicht*) posture toward terrestrial action: on the one hand, a turning away from the world (*Weltabwendung*) and even rejection of it (*Weltablehnung*) and, on the other hand, a mastery of it (see 1946c, p. 327/540).<sup>48</sup> As

<sup>48</sup> Weber notes also in this passage that the ascetic obtains "magical powers." These result from the turning away from the world itself and the acquisition

noted, he understands the world as a *massa perditionis* and earthly existence as merely provisional. To the ascetic, "the world's empirical character and ethical irrationality . . . its ethical temptations to sensual indulgence, to epicurean satisfaction, and to reliance upon natural joys and gifts" (1968, p. 548/332), as well as the worldly values of "dignity and beauty, of the beautiful frenzy and the dream, purely secular power, and the purely worldly pride of the hero" (1946d, p. 291/263), become not only competitors of God's kingdom, but also, in view of his focus upon purely religious values, "meaningless."<sup>49</sup> Yet the ascetic's devaluation and even ethical rejection of terrestrial life fails to lead to a withdrawal from the worldly "natural vessel of sin" into mystical contemplation.

Such a withdrawal never presents itself as a viable option to the practitioners of asceticism; for them, a renunciation of their God's decree that the world conform to His ethical commandments would be tantamount to a renunciation of all chances for salvation. The world, as a creation of God and as the realm where His powers become effective, continues to offer the *only* arena within which the devout may acquire and retain a certainty of their state of grace. In essence, since the mighty personal God continues to exist as a transcendent Being who demands the fulfillment of His decrees *on earth*, the extent of the ascetic's *ideal* devaluation and even ethical rejection of terrestrial action cannot conform to the degree to which

religion-oriented action in the world is *practically* rejected. Mundane ethical action of a systematic character remains the most effective means for ascetics to acquire a certainty of their redemption (1968, pp. 543-545/329-330, 548/332; 1951, p. 227/ 513).

For this reason, the ascetic's "domination of the world" and the *practical-ethical* direction of this salvation-striving involve not simply a "naive 'affirmation of the world' of unbroken humanity, as in Antiquity and lay Catholicism" (1946d, p. 291/263), but an *intensified continuity* of action. If fidelity to the demands of the Creator God can be proven only *within* a "meaningless" realm saturated by wicked temptations, an extreme concentration of all energies upon the purely religious sphere becomes necessary. The world, as a consequence of its ethically "irrational" character, becomes a "task" and a challenge for ascetics that enables them, amidst their struggles against terrestrial pleasures and their attempts to rationalize action to conform to their God's commandments, to prove the depth of their conviction in service to their God (1951, p. 238/525; 1968, p. 534/329; 1946d, p. 291/263). In this manner, psychological premiums upon the ascetic's methodical rational way of life are intensified. To the same degree "irrational" and fragmented magic become all the more thoroughly suppressed.

#### THE RATIONALIZATION OF ACTION IN THE RELIGIOUS SPHERE

This reconstruction of Weber's analysis of the rationalization of action in the domain of religion must be completed by a summary overview. The ideal thrusts of world views and the capacity of religious qualifications as well as particular salvation goals and paths to either *convey or thwart* these ideal thrusts will remain central. As has been stressed throughout, Weber, unlike many sociological theorists of religion, retains as his focus, through his notion of a sociological locus for action, the meaningful action of individuals. The constraints and opportunities that surround each *locus* are constituted from, in this domain, the

of the "religious mood." Weber refers often to this charismatic feeling state as "magical". The *means* employed in order to acquire this *certitudo salutis* state—methodical ethical action—are, however, as noted, strictly opposed to all magic.

<sup>49</sup> "Not only do the simple 'natural' values within the world not guarantee salvation, but they actually place salvation in jeopardy by producing illusions as to that which alone is indispensable . . . The 'world' in the religious sense, i.e., the domain of social relationships, is therefore a realm of temptations. The world is full of temptations, not only because it is the site of sensual pleasures which are ethically irrational and completely diverting from things divine, but even more because it fosters in the religiously average person complacent self-sufficiency and self-righteousness in the fulfillment of common obligations, at the expense of the uniquely necessary concentration on the active achievements leading to salvation" (1968, pp. 542/328-329).



believer's *awareness* that certain action-orientations improve relations to the supernatural realm. In the case of salvation religions—the main concern here—these constraints and opportunities clearly punish and reward, thereby defining action that assists and even insures the salvation of the devout, and other action to be avoided. Moreover, they place *psychological premiums* upon appropriate action.

World views constitute the substantive rationalities that provide the most fundamental *loci* for religion-oriented action. In articulating the coherent purposefulness of the universe and in addressing “the ultimate question of all metaphysics” (1968, p. 451/275) by explaining earthly suffering, they offer to the devout the opportunity to orient their action systematically and in an internally consistent manner to the supernatural. In essence, these ethical universes “take a stand in the face of the world” and *challenge* the faithful to focus their action away from the random nature of terrestrial life and upon the religious realm. As opposed to the primitive conception of the supernatural, which divides the religious sphere into discrete arenas ruled over by evanescent and specialized spirits, local demons, or functional gods and thus offers a supernatural justification only for fragmented action, world views are characterized by ethical, universal, and permanent features. For the devout, just the *discrepancy* between the rational transcendent domain viewed as a “meaningful totality” and random earthly occurrences and injustices sets in motion, according to Weber, an autonomous thrust. This *cognitive* thrust not only unequivocally opposes the heterogeneity of empirical events, orientations to pragmatic interests, and all primitive religions, but also provides the transcendent point of reference that offers a comprehensive “meaning” to life and legitimates religion-oriented methodical ways of life. In Weber's analysis, the hegemony of dualistic world views over monism exists as the *most general* precondition for the systematic rationalization of religion-oriented action. Yet the sheer power of cognitive thrusts to motivate action is far less than that of psychological premiums.

Despite his acknowledgement of the importance of world views as *loci* and his recognition of their necessity as supernatural frameworks if methodical rational ways of life are to develop (1946c, p. 324/537; 1946d, p. 280/252), Weber admonishes his readers repeatedly to avoid equating the comprehensive ideal and merely cognitive thrusts that these ethical orders set in motion with the rationalization of action as such. As we have seen, this relationship holds only under certain circumstances (see e.g., 1946d, p. 280/252). For him, an understanding of how a world view's ideal thrusts are transferred into everyday action cannot result from an examination of these religious postulates and their content alone, as Tenbruck implies. This relationship is far more complicated and the value configuration articulated by world views requires more than a cognitive element if to be effectively “transferred” into the action of believers; this transference takes place only after a variety of purely religious mediating factors have crystallized. The presence of an ethical universe provides merely the *potential* for a radical rationalization of action. Whether the ideal thrusts of world views indeed call forth methodical rational ways of life depends upon the presence of salvation religions, virtuoso religious qualifications, the presence of the enduring “religious mood” as the salvation goal, and the existence of either of the methodologies of sanctification—asceticism or mysticism—as the salvation path.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>50</sup> Although this reconstruction can be correctly understood as opposing the interpretations by Tenbruck (1980)/Habermas (1984, pp. 143–216) and Schluchter (1979, pp. 11–64; 1981, pp. 39–69; 1990), all of which emphasize world views at the expense of purely religious (as well as non-religious) intermediating factors, it does not call into question one of Weber's most well-known statements:

Not ideas, but material and ideal interests, directly govern man's action. Yet the “world images” that have been created by “ideas” have, like switchmen, very often determined the tracks within which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interests (1946d, p. 280/252; tr. alt.; see Kalberg 1985).

It does, however, argue that a focus upon this postulate as a means of explaining religion-oriented action omits too much and, in the end, distorts the Weberian

Very frequently, salvation goals and paths thwart the ideal thrusts of world views. Most paths do so by failing to place psychological premiums upon the ethically rigorous action that severs believers from given realities, the prerequisite for a transmission of the "meaningful totality's" ethical, permanent, and universal features. Just such a concentration upon the supernatural realm and a casting of the salvation search away from an "adaptation to the world" becomes necessary only when the devout seek to attain the "religious mood." Yet even acquisition of this mood does not itself imply either a direct transference of the world view's ideal thrusts or the rationalization of action, as the faith salvation path illustrates. For this to occur, salvation-striving has to acquire the intellectual-theoretical or practical-ethical *directed* character introduced respectively by the radical salvation paths: mysticism and asceticism. Only these *methodologies of sanctification* are, in effect, "infiltrated"

analysis by implying a priority to world views over other purely religious variables in particular and to the religious sphere over worldly spheres in general (Kalberg 1979; Riesebrodt 1980; Winckelmann 1980). In effect, it fails to understand world views as mere cognitive ideal thrusts not only distant from the religious concerns of most believers, but also as quite capable of being upset and even changed by a host of intermediary factors. The skewed emphasis of Tenbruck, Schluchter and Habermas derives in part from the attempt to discuss the rationalization theme without either focussing their analyses squarely upon the issue of the *rationalization of action* or distinguishing unequivocally between the level of world views on the one hand and action on the other. Had they done so, the crucial distinction Weber makes between cognitive consistency as it relates to the dynamically autonomous ideal thrusts of world views and psychological premiums upon action—all of which directly involve the critical *certitudo salutis* question—would have become apparent, as well as the far greater strength of the latter to influence action. The abolition of magic in Calvinist asceticism, for example, resulted much more from the psychological premiums this religion placed upon methodical ethical action *in the world* than from either theoretical rationalization processes carried out in reference to the problem of theodicy or an "internal logic of religious rationalization," as Tenbruck asserts (1980, pp. 334-342). Indeed, not primarily a cognitive pondering of this dilemma directly made for religious development in the sense of an *alteration* of world views, salvation goals, and salvation paths, but believers' more immediate question of what type of action might enable them to acquire a *certainty* of salvation.

consistently and comprehensively by world views and above all by the respective conceptions of God and the sacred values they imply. Only they, in introducing corresponding psychological premiums, succeed in transferring the ideal thrusts of salvation religions effectively (1968, pp. 553/335, 541/328; 1927, p. 310/364).<sup>51</sup>

All the remaining paths—through a savior, an institution, ritual, and good works—because they generally appear in combination with entirely different salvation goals and lay religious qualifications, effectively block the ideal thrusts of both the Indian and the Judaeo-Christian world views. They do so by offering redemption for the performance of action not strictly in conformity with these autonomous thrusts. None of these paths articulate psychological premiums that require, for attainment of the certainty of salvation, a *continuous* orientation to purely religious values or a *systematic* patterning of action into methodical rational ways of life based upon ethics of conviction. Confucianism, on the other hand, represents in this respect the extreme polar case: although this world religion distinguishes itself clearly from primitive religions by articulating a world view, it never became a salvation religion. Consequently, no purely religious means existed for a transference of the Confucian world view's ethical, universal, and permanent ideal thrusts into daily action. Weber calls attention to the complexity of the manner in which world views influence action by noting, for example, that a whole series of intervening factors need to fall into place if the Judaeo-Christian ethical universe anchored by the transcendental God is to lead to asceticism:

<sup>51</sup> Again, this transference itself implies nothing regarding the *causal* relationship between the ideal thrust and these radical salvation paths. These paths arose for a *variety* of purely religious reasons. This is the context for an important passage:

Neither religions nor men are open books. They have been historical rather than logical or even psychological constructions without contradiction. Often they have borne within themselves a series of motives, each of which, if separately and consistently followed through, would have stood in the way of the others or run against them head-on. In religious matters, "consistency" has been the exception and not the rule (1946d, p. 291/264).

The conception of the supramundane God . . . has been especially important for the active and the asceticist direction of the quest for salvation . . . However, this intimate connection . . . is not absolute . . . Jewry developed mysticism, but it developed hardly any asceticism of the Occidental type. And early Islamism directly repudiated asceticism . . . Important though it was, the conception of a supra-mundane God, in spite of its affinity to emissary prophecy and active asceticism, obviously did not operate alone but always in conjunction with other circumstances. The nature of religious promises and the paths of salvation which they determined were paramount among these circumstances (1946c, pp. 324/538; see also 1968, p. 622/374).

Religion, to Weber, in articulating an array of constraints and opportunities that shape action, is unequivocally endowed with the power to uproot meaningful action from its amorphous flow, to provide it with continuity and regularity and even, at times, to rationalize it, indeed to such an extent that it acquires a methodical and ethical character. This detailed reconstruction of Weber's sociology of religion explicitly from the point of view of the influence of the supernatural upon action has sought to indicate—in a more systematic and succinct fashion than Weber ever did—the manner in which the relations of believers to the transcendent realm may call forth patterned and even rationalized action.<sup>52</sup> Salvation paths have been pivotal in this analysis: in directly bestowing psychological premiums upon action, they provide the most immediate and effective loci for religion-oriented action. Of course, as is the case for action-orientations indigenous to each domain, whether action influenced by the life-sphere of religion effectively opposes action-orientations originating, for example, in the economy, law, or domination domains remains, for Weber, an open and empirical question to be investigated on a case-by-case basis.

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