

MAX WEBER

THE RELIGION OF
CHINA

CONFUCIANISM AND TAOISM

TRANSLATED AND EDITED BY HANS H. GERTH

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY C. K. YANG



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CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS:

CONFUCIANISM AND PURITANISM

IN THIS context we may best gain perspective on the foregoing by clarifying the relationship between Confucian rationalism—for the name is appropriate—and what is geographically and historically closest to us, namely, Protestant rationalism.

To judge the level of rationalization a religion represents we may use two primary yardsticks which are in many ways inter-related. One is the degree to which the religion has divested itself of magic; the other is the degree to which it has systematically unified the relation between God and the world and therewith its own ethical relationship to the world. In the former respect the varying expressions of ascetic Protestantism represent a last phase. The most characteristic forms of Protestantism have liquidated magic most completely. In principle, magic was eradicated even in the sublimated form of sacraments and symbols, so much so that the strict Puritan had the corpses of his loved ones dug under without any formality in order to assure the complete elimination of superstition. That meant, in this context, cutting off all trust in magical manipulations. Nowhere has the complete disenchantment of the world been carried through with greater consistency, but that did not mean freedom from what we nowadays customarily regard as "superstition." Witch trials also flourished in New England. Still while Confucianism left untouched the sig-

nificance of magic for redemption, Puritanism came to consider all magic as devilish. Only ethical rationalism was defined as religiously valuable, i.e., conduct according to God's commandment and at that, proceeding from a God-fearing attitude. Finally, from our presentation it should be perfectly clear that in the magic garden of heterodox doctrine (Taoism) a rational economy and technology of modern occidental character was simply out of the question. For all natural scientific knowledge was lacking, partly as a cause and partly as an effect of these elemental forces: the power of chronomancers, geomancers, hydromancers, meteoromancers; and a crude, abstruse, universist conception of the unity of the world. Furthermore, Taoism was interested in the income opportunities of prebendal office, the bulwark of magical tradition.

The preservation of this magic garden, however, was one of the tendencies intimate to Confucian ethics. To this, internal reasons were added which prevented any shattering of Confucian power.

In strong contrast to the naïve stand of Confucianism toward things of this world, Puritan ethics construed them as a tremendous and grandiose tension toward the "world." As we shall see further in detail, every religion which opposes the world with rational, ethical imperatives finds itself at some point in a state of tension with the irrationalities of the world. These tensions with individual religions set in at very different points, and the nature and intensity of the tension varies accordingly. With the individual religions this depends largely on the path of salvation as defined by metaphysical promises. We must note that the degree of religious devaluation of the world is not identical with the degree of its rejection in actual practice.

Confucianism, we have seen was (in intent) a rational ethic which reduced tension with the world to an absolute minimum. This was true of its religious depreciation as well as its practical rejection. The world was the best of all possible worlds; human nature was disposed to the ethically good. Men, in this as in all things, differed in degree but being of the same nature

and capable of unlimited perfection, they were in principle adequate for fulfilling the moral law. Philosophical-literary education based upon the old classics was the universal means of self-perfection, and insufficient education along with its main cause, insufficient economic provision, were the only sources of shortcoming. Such faults, however, and especially the faults of government, were the essential reason for all misfortunes since they caused the unrest of the purely magically-conceived spirits. The right path to salvation consisted in adjustment to the eternal and supra-divine orders of the world, Tao, and hence to the requirements of social life, which followed from cosmic harmony. Pious conformism with the fixed order of secular powers reigned supreme. The corresponding individual ideal was the elaboration of the self as a universal and harmoniously balanced personality, in this sense a microcosm. For the Confucian ideal man, the gentleman, "grace and dignity" were expressed in fulfilling traditional obligations. Hence, the cardinal virtue and goal in self-perfection meant ceremonial and ritualist propriety in all circumstances of life. The appropriate means to this goal were watchful and rational self-control and the repression of whatever irrational passions might cause poise to be shaken.

The Confucian desired "salvation" only from the barbaric lack of education. As the reward of virtue he expected only long life, health, and wealth in this world and beyond death the retention of his good name. Like for truly Hellenic man all transcendental anchorage of ethics, all tension between the imperatives of a supra-mundane God and a creatural world, all orientation toward a goal in the beyond, and all conception of radical evil were absent. He who complied with the commandments, fashioned for the man of average ability, was free of sin. In vain Christian missionaries tried to awaken a feeling of sin where such presuppositions were taken for granted. Then, too, an educated Chinese would simply refuse to be continually burdened with "sin." Incidentally, the concept of "sin" is usually felt as rather shocking and lacking in dignity by genteel intellectuals everywhere. Usually it is replaced by conventional, or feudal, or aestheti-

cally formulated variants such as "indecent" or "not in good taste." There were sins, certainly, but in the field of ethics these consisted of offenses against traditional authorities, parents, ancestors, and superiors in the hierarchy of office. For the rest they were magically precarious infringements of inherited customs, of the traditional ceremonial, and, finally, of the stable social conventions. All these were of equal standing. "I have sinned" corresponded to our "I beg your pardon" in violating a convention. Asceticism and contemplation, mortification and escape from the world were not only unknown in Confucianism but were despised as parasitism. All forms of congregational and redemptory religiosity were either directly persecuted and eradicated, or were considered a private affair and little esteemed, as were the orphic priests by the noble Hellenic men of classic time. This ethic of unconditional affirmation of and adjustment to the world presupposed the unbroken and continued existence of purely magical religion. It applied to the position of the emperor who, by personal qualification, was responsible for the good conduct of the spirits and the occurrence of rain and good harvest weather; it applied to ancestor worship which was equally fundamental for official and popular religiosity; and it applied to unofficial (Taoist) magical therapy and the other survival forms of animist compulsion of spirits (i.e., anthropo- and herolatric belief in functional deities).

Like the educated Hellene, the educated Confucian adhered to magical conceptions with a mixture of skepticism while occasionally submitting to demonology. But the mass of the Chinese, whose way of life was influenced by Confucianism, lived in these conceptions with unbroken faith. With regard to the beyond the Confucian might say with old Faust, "Fool who turns his eyes blinking in that direction"; but like Faust he would have to make the reservation, "If only I could remove magic from my path . . ." Also the high Chinese officials, educated in the old Chinese way, did not hesitate to be edified by the stupidest miracle. Tension toward the "world" had never arisen because, as far as known, there had never been an ethical prophecy of

a supramundane God who raised ethical demands. Nor was there a substitute for this in the "spirits" who raised demands and insisted upon faithful fulfillment of contract. For it was always a matter of specific duty placed under the spirits' guardianship, oath, or whatever it happened to be; never did it involve inner formation of the personality *per se* nor the person's conduct of life. The leading intellectual stratum, officials and candidates for office, had consistently supported the retention of ancestor worship as absolutely necessary for the undisturbed preservation of bureaucratic authority. They suppressed all upheavals arising from religions of redemption. Besides Taoist divination and sacramental grace, the only religion of salvation permitted was that of the Buddhist monks for, being pacifist, it was not dangerous. In China, its practical effect was to enrich the scope of psychic experience by certain nuances of moody inwardness as we shall see. For the rest, it was a further source of magical-sacramental grace and tradition-strengthening ceremony.

This means that such an ethic of intellectuals was necessarily limited in its significance for the broad masses. First, local and, above all, social differences in education were enormous. The traditionalist and, until modern times, strongly subsistence-oriented pattern of consumption among the poorer strata of the people was maintained by an almost incredible virtuosity in thrift (in consumption matters), which has nowhere been surpassed and which precluded any intimate relation to the gentleman ideals of Confucianism.

As usual, only the gestures and forms of external conduct among the master stratum became the object of general diffusion. In all probability the educated stratum has decisively influenced the way of life of the masses. This influence seems to have been consummated especially through negative effects: on the one hand, completely blocking the emergence of any prophetic religiosity, and on the other hand, eradicating almost all orgiastic elements in the animist religion. It is possible that at least part of the traits which some authors are occasionally wont to refer to as the racial qualities of the Chinese are co-determined by

these factors. Nowadays, here as elsewhere, even experienced and knowing men can say nothing definite about the extent to which biological heredity is influential. For us, however, there is an important observation which can easily be made and is confirmed by eminent sinologists. In the traits relevant for us, the further back one goes in history the more similar the Chinese and Chinese culture appear to what is found in the Occident. The old popular beliefs, the old anchorites, the oldest songs of the *Shih Ching*, the old warrior kings, the antagonisms of the philosophical schools, feudalism, the beginnings of capitalist developments in the Period of the Warring States—all of which are considered characteristic—are more closely related to occidental phenomena than are the traits of Confucian China. Hence, one has to reckon with the possibility that many of the Chinese traits which are considered innate may be the products of purely historical and cultural influences.

Regarding such traits, the sociologist essentially depends upon the literature of missionaries. This certainly varies in value but in the last analysis remains relatively the most authentic. Always emphasized are such observations as these: the striking lack of "nerves" in the specifically modern European meaning of the word; the unlimited patience and controlled politeness; the strong attachment to the habitual; the absolute insensitivity to monotony; the capacity for uninterrupted work and the slowness in reacting to unusual stimuli, especially in the intellectual sphere. All this seems to constitute a coherent and plausible unit but other seemingly sharp contrasts appear. There is an extraordinary and unusual horror of all unknown and not immediately apparent things which finds expression in ineradicable distrust. There is the rejection or lack of intellectual curiosity about things not close at hand and immediately useful. These traits stand in contrast to an unlimited and good-natured credulity in any magical swindle, no matter how fantastic it may be. In the same way the strong lack of genuine sympathy and warmth, often even among people who are personally close, stands in apparent contrast to the great and close-knit cohesion of social organizations. The

absolute docility and ceremonial piety of the adult toward his parents hardly seems compatible with the alleged lack of love and respect for authority in small children. Likewise what is repeatedly maintained as the incomparable dishonesty of the Chinese, even toward their own defense attorneys, could scarcely be reconciled with the obviously remarkable reliability of merchants in big business—compared to countries with a feudal past such as Japan, for example. Retail trade, to be sure, seems to know little of such honesty; the “fixed” prices appear to be fictitious even among native Chinese. The typical distrust of the Chinese for one another is confirmed by all observers. It stands in sharp contrast to the trust and honesty of the faithful brethren in the Puritan sects, a trust shared by outsiders as well. Finally, the unity and unshakability of the general psychophysical bearing contrasts sharply with the often reported instability of all those features of the Chinese way of life which are not regulated from without by fixed norms. Most traits, however, are so fixed. More sharply formulated, the bondage of the Chinese, which is produced by their innumerable conventions, contrasts basically with the absence of an inward core, of a unified way of life flowing from some central and autonomous value position. How can all this be explained?

The absence of hysteria-producing, asceticist religious practices and the rather thorough elimination of toxic cults could not fail to influence the nervous and psychic constitution of a human group. As regards the use of toxics the Chinese belong to the relatively “sober” peoples. This has been since the pacification as compared to the former carousing in the old long house and at princely courts. Frenzy and orgiastic “obsession” were divested of the charismatic value attaching to sacredness and were only considered symptomatic of demonic rule. Confucianism rejected the use of alcohol except for rudimentary use at sacrifices. That the alcoholic orgy was not rare among the lower strata of the people in China, as elsewhere, does not change the *relative* significance of the difference. Opium, the toxic considered specifically Chinese, has been imported only in modern times. As is well

known, it was imposed by war from without, despite the sharpest resistance of the ruling strata. Its effects, moreover, lie in the direction of apathetic ecstasy, a straight continuation of the line of "*wu wei*," and not in the direction of heroic frenzy or the unchaining of active passions. The Hellenic *sophrosyne* did not prevent Plato in "*Phaidros*" from considering beautiful ecstasy as the source of everything great. In this the rationalist Roman nobility of office—who translated "*ekstasis*" as "*superstitio*"—and the educated stratum of China were of different mind. The "naïveté," as well as what is felt to be indolence, is perhaps partly connected with this complete lack of Dionysian element in Chinese religion, a lack which resulted from the deliberate sobering of the cult by the bureaucracy. In the bureaucracy nothing existed and nothing was allowed that might bring the psyche out of its equilibrium. Every inordinate passion, especially wrath, *ch'i*, produced evil charms; thus, on feeling any pain, the first question to ask was to what *ch'i* it might be ascribed. Animistic magic, as the only remaining form of popular religion, determined the traditionalist fear of any innovation which might bring evil charms or stir up the spirits. To be sure, this magic was despised by the educated Chinese; but it was the form of religion supported because of the character of the official cults. The preservation of this animistic magic explains the great credulity of the Chinese. Thus, magical also is the belief that disease and misfortune are symptoms of divine wrath which the individual has brought upon himself. In turn this belief facilitated a certain inhibition of those sympathetic emotions which, in the face of suffering, usually originate from the we-feeling of salvation religions. These emotions have always strongly governed popular ethics in India.

From the retention of magic in China there also resulted the specifically cool temper of Chinese humanity and formal kindness toward one's fellow man. Even in intra-familial relationships there was a ceremonious punctilio and a selfish fear of the spirits.

Immeasurable ceremonial fetters surround the life of the Chi-

nese, from the stage of the embryo to the cult of the dead. In their unexampled elaborateness and inviolability of detail they constitute a treasure house for folklorist research. W. Grube's works have especially exploited this material. Part of this ceremonial is evidently magical, especially apotropaic in origin. Part is to be attributed to Taoism and popular Buddhism, to be discussed elsewhere. Both Taoism and popular Buddhism have left profound traces in the workaday life of the masses. But there remains a very considerable residue of the purely conventional and ceremonial. Ceremonial prescription regulated questions and answers, indispensable offers as well as the exact manner of grateful decline, also visits, presents, expressions of respect, condolence, and joyful sympathy. This surpassed anything preserved from ancient peasant tradition, such as is found in Spain where that tradition was influenced by feudalism and probably also by Islamism. In the field of gesture and of "face" one may assume Confucian origins to be predominant even where the origin cannot be traced.

While the Confucian ideal of propriety did not always exert its influence in the form of prevailing customs it revealed itself in the "spirit" in which they were practiced. The aesthetically cool temper caused all duties bequeathed from feudal times, especially duties of charity, to be frozen into a symbolic ceremonial. On the other hand, the belief in spirits bound the sib members more closely together. Undoubtedly, as in Egypt, the much bewailed dishonesty was partly a direct product of that patrimonial fiscalism which everywhere proved a training ground for dishonesty. For both in Egypt and China the process of tax collection involved raids, flogging, assistance of sib members, howlings of the oppressed, fear of the oppressors, and compromise. To this must certainly be added the exclusive cult of ceremonial and conventional propriety in Confucianism. Still there were lacking the feudal instincts which branded all trade with the adage "*Qui trompe t'on?*" Among the monopolistically secure and cultured status group of wealthy oversea traders of the *Ko Hang* guild, a much vaunted business integrity could

develop out of the exigencies of their interest-situation. This honesty, if it existed, seems to have been a factor of acculturation rather than an internal development like the Puritan ethic. This, however, applies to all ethical traits of the Chinese.

A true prophecy creates and systematically orients conduct toward one internal measure of value. In the face of this the "world" is viewed as material to be fashioned ethically according to the norm. Confucianism in contrast meant adjustment to the outside, to the conditions of the "world." A well-adjusted man, rationalizing his conduct only to the degree requisite for adjustment, does not constitute a systematic unity but rather a complex of useful and particular traits. In Chinese popular religion the animistic ideas which perpetuate the belief in plural souls of the individual could almost stand as a symbol of this fact. Not reaching beyond this world, the individual necessarily lacked an autonomous counterweight in confronting this world. Confucianism facilitated the taming of the masses as well as the dignified bearing of the gentleman, but the style of life thus achieved must necessarily be characterized by essentially negative traits. Such a way of life could not allow man an inward aspiration toward a "unified personality," a striving which we associate with the idea of personality. Life remained a series of occurrences. It did not become a whole placed methodically under a transcendental goal.

The contrast between this socio-ethical position and the whole religious ethic of the Occident was unbridgeable. Outwardly some patriarchal aspects of the Thomist and the Lutheran ethic might appear to resemble Confucianism, but this is merely an external impression. The Confucian system of radical world-optimism succeeded in removing the basic pessimistic tension between the world and the supra-mundane destination of the individual. But no Christian ethic, however entangled in mundane compromises, could attain this.

Completely absent in Confucian ethic was any tension between nature and deity, between ethical demand and human short-coming, consciousness of sin and need for salvation, conduct on

earth and compensation in the beyond, religious duty and sociopolitical reality. Hence, there was no leverage for influencing conduct through inner forces freed of tradition and convention. Family piety, resting on the belief in spirits, was by far the strongest influence on man's conduct. Ultimately family piety facilitated and controlled, as we have seen, the strong cohesion of the sib associations. This was likewise true of the above-mentioned cooperative associations which may be considered as enlarged family enterprises with specialization of labor. This firm cohesion was in its way religiously motivated and the strength of the truly Chinese economic organization was roughly co-extensive with these personal associations controlled by piety. Chinese ethic developed its strongest motives in the circle of naturally grown, personalist associations or associations affiliated with or modeled after them. This contrasts sharply with the Puritan ethic which amounts to an objectification of man's duties as a creature of God. The religious duty toward the hidden and supra-mundane God caused the Puritan to appraise all human relations—including those naturally nearest in life—as mere means and expression of a mentality reaching beyond the organic relations of life. The religious duty of the pious Chinese, in contrast, enjoined him to develop himself within the organically given, personal relations. Mencius rejected the universal "love of man" with the comment that it would extinguish piety and justice and that it is the way of animals to have neither father nor brother. In substance, the duties of a Chinese Confucian always consisted of piety toward concrete people whether living or dead, and toward those who were close to him through their position in life. The Confucian owed nothing to a supra-mundane God; therefore, he was never bound to a sacred "cause" or an "idea." For Tao was neither; it was simply the embodiment of the binding, traditional ritual, and its command was not "action" but "emptiness." For the economic mentality, the personalist principle was undoubtedly as great a barrier to impersonal rationalization as it was generally to impersonal matter of factness. It tended to tie the individual ever anew to his sib members and

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to bind him to the manner of the sib, in any case to "pe-
stead of functional tasks ("enterprises"). This barrier was in-
mately connected with the nature of Chinese religion, as our
whole presentation has shown. For it was an obstacle to rational-
izing the religious ethic, an obstacle which the ruling and edu-
cated stratum maintained in the interest of their position. It is
of considerable economic consequence whether or not confidence,
which is basic to business, rests upon purely personal, familial,
or semi-familial relationships as was largely the case in China.

The great achievement of ethical religions, above all of the
ethical and asceticist sects of Protestantism, was to shatter the
fetters of the sib. These religions established the superior com-
munity of faith and a common ethical way of life in opposition
to the community of blood, even to a large extent in opposition to
the family. From the economic viewpoint it meant basing busi-
ness confidence upon the ethical qualities of the individual proven
in his impersonal, vocational work. The economic ramifications
of universal and mutual distrust must probably be rated high,
though we have no yardstick for this. Thus, universal distrust
resulted from the official and exclusive sway of conventional dis-
honesty and from the Confucian emphasis on keeping face.

Confucianism and Confucian mentality, deifying "wealth,"
could facilitate political-economic measures of a sort comparable
to the worldliness of the Renaissance in the Occident. At this
point, however, one can observe the limited significance of eco-
nomic policy as compared to economic mentality. In no other
civilized country has material welfare ever been so exalted as
the supreme good.¹ The politico-economic views of Confucianism
were comparable to those of our Cameralists. The oldest docu-
ment of Chinese political economy² is a tract by the Confucian
Ssu-ma Ch'ien on the "balance of trade" in which the usefulness
of wealth, including commercial profit, is emphasized. Economic
policy alternated between fiscal and *laissez-faire* measures; in
any case it was not deliberately anti-chrematistic. The merchants
of the occidental Middle Ages were and are "despised" by Ger-
man literati just as in China. Still economic policy did not create

the economic mentality of capitalism. The money profits of the traders in the Period of the Warring States were political profits of commissioners to the state. The great mining *corvées* were used to search gold. Still no intermediate link led from Confucianism and its ethic—as firmly rooted as Christianity—to a civic and methodical way of life. This was all-important. Puritanism did create it, and unintentionally at that. This strange reversion of the “natural,” which is strange only on first, superficial glance, instructs us in the paradox of unintended consequences: i.e., the relation of man and fate, of what he intended by his acts and what actually came of them.

Puritanism represents the polar opposite type of rational dealing with the world, a somewhat ambiguous concept as we have shown elsewhere. The “*ecclesia pura*,” in practice and in true meaning, represented the Christian communion at the Lord’s Supper in honor of God and purged of all morally rejected participants. This honor might have a Calvinist or Baptist foundation, its church constitution might be more synodical or more congregationalist. Broadly understood, Puritanism may refer to the morally rigorous and Christian asceticist lay communities in general. This includes the Baptist, Mennonite, Quaker, ascetic Pietist, and Methodist communities which had spiritual mystical beginnings.

As against the Confucian type, it was peculiar to these types that they should oppose the flight from the world in order to rationalize it, despite or indeed because of their asceticist rejection of the world. Men are equally wicked and fail ethically; the world is a vessel of sin; and there can be no differences in creatural wickedness in the face of the Lord. Adjustment to vanity fair would be a sign of rejection; self-perfection in the sense of Confucianism would be idolatrous blasphemy. Wealth and surrender to its enjoyment would be the specific temptation, reliance on philosophy and literary education would be sinful and creatural pride; all trust in magical coercion of spirits and deities would be not only despicable superstition but impudent blasphemy. All things reminiscent of magic, all vestigial ritualism and priestly powers were eradicated. The Quakers, in theory, did not even

have an appointed preacher; the majority of the Protestant sects had no paid professional preacher. In the small and light meeting halls of the Quakers the last traces of religious emblems are gone. Men were held to be equally sinful by nature even though their religious opportunities were not equal but highly unequal, temporarily and for all time. Either this was the result of arbitrary predestination as with the Calvinists, the particularist Baptists, the Whitefield Methodists, and the reformed Pietists; or it was the result of differing disposition for spiritual endowment. Finally, inequality of religious opportunity was due to the varying intensity and success of the endeavor to attain "conversion" (decisive with the old Pietists), "penitance," "winning through," or whatever the nature of rebirth might be. However, besides the unreasoning, unmerited, "free" grace of a supra-mundane God, Providence was always instrumental in these differences. Thus the belief in predestination was but one, though by far the most consistent, dogmatic form of this religion of virtuosi.

Only a few of the *massa perditionis* were called to attain the holy whether they alone were destined for it by virtue of a predestination of yore, or whether all—according to the Quakers this included non-Christians—had received the offer but only a small company, capable of seizing it, could reach the goal. According to some Pietist doctrines, salvation was offered only once in a lifetime; according to others, the so-called Terminists, it was offered once and for all. Men always had to prove himself capable of grasping the holy. Hence, everything was directed toward God's free grace and the destiny in the beyond; life in the here and now was either a vale of tears or a mere transition. Therefore, a tremendous emphasis was placed upon this tiny span of time and upon what happened during it. This was perhaps encompassed by Carlyle's words: "Millennia had to pass ere thou camest to life and millennia wait in silence for what thou shalt do with this thy life." It was not that it was possible to attain eternal grace by one's own achievement. The latter was impossible. The individual could receive and above all recognize his call to salvation only through consciousness of a central

and unitary relation of this short life toward the supra-mundane God and His will in "sanctification." Sanctification in turn could prove itself only through God-ordained activities, and as in all active asceticism, through an ethical conduct blessed by God. Thus, the individual could gain certainty of salvation only in being God's tool. The strongest premium imaginable was thereby placed upon a rational and moral way of life. Only life conduct abided by firm principles and controlled at a unitary center could be considered a God-pleasing way of life. Though naïve surrender to the world unconditionally led away from salvation, nevertheless the creatural world and creatural man were God's creation and to them He addressed certain demands. According to Calvinist conception God had created the world "in His honor." Therefore, however creaturally wicked men might be, He wished to see His honor realized by subduing sin, possibly also sufferance and wished to subject them to ethical discipline through rational order. To "work the works of him that sent me, while it is day" here became a duty and the works posited were not ritual but rational-ethical in nature.

The contrast to Confucianism is clear: both ethics had their irrational anchorages, the one in magic, the other in the ultimately inscrutable resolves of a supra-mundane God. But from magic there followed the inviolability of tradition as the proven magical means and ultimately all bequeathed forms of life-conduct were unchangeable if the wrath of the spirits were to be avoided. From the relation between the supra-mundane God and the creaturally wicked, ethically irrational world there resulted, however, the absolute unholiness of tradition and the truly endless task of ethically and rationally subduing and mastering the given world, i.e., rational, objective "progress." Here, the task of the rational transformation of the world stood opposed to the Confucian adjustment to the world. Confucianism demanded constant and vigilant self-control in order to maintain the dignity of the universally accomplished man of the world; Puritan ethics demanded this self-control in order methodically to concentrate man's attitudes on God's will. The Confucian ethic intentionally left people

in their personal relations as naturally grown or given by relations of social super- and subordination. Confucianism hallowed alone those human obligations of piety created by inter-human relations, such as prince and servant, higher and lower official, father and son, brother and brother, teacher and pupil, friend and friend. Puritan ethic, however, rather suspected these purely personal relationships as pertaining to the creatural; but Puritanism, of course, did allow for their existence and ethically controlled them so far as they were not against God. The relation to God had precedence in all circumstances. Overly intensive idolatrous relations of men *per se* were by all means to be avoided. Trust in men, and precisely in those closest to one by nature, would endanger the soul. Thus, the Calvinist Duchess Renate d'Este might curse her next of kin if she knew them rejected by God through arbitrary predestination. From this, very important practical differences of the two ethical conceptions resulted even though we shall designate both of them as rationalist in their practical turn of mind and although both of them reached "utilitarian" conclusions. These differences did not alone result from the autonomy of the laws of political structures. In part the cohesion of the sibs was an essential result of forms of political and economic organization which were themselves tied to personal relations. To a striking degree they lacked rational matter-of-factness, impersonal rationalism, and the nature of an abstract, impersonal, purposive association. True "communities" were absent, especially in the cities, because there were no economic and managerial forms of association or enterprise which were purely purposive. Almost none of these originated³ from purely Chinese roots. All communal action there remained engulfed and conditioned by purely personal, above all, by kinship relations. This applied also to occupational associations. Whereas Puritanism objectified everything and transformed it into rational enterprise, dissolved everything into the pure business relation, and substituted rational law and agreement for tradition, in China, the pervasive factors were tradition, local custom, and the concrete personal favor of the official. Another

factor seems still more important. In conjunction with the tremendous density of population in China, a calculating mentality and self-sufficient frugality of unexampled intensity developed under the influence of worldly-minded utilitarianism and belief in the value of wealth as a universal means of moral perfection. The Chinese shopkeeper haggled for and reckoned with every penny, and he daily counted over his cash receipts. Reliable travelers reported that the conversation of the native Chinese was about money and money affairs, apparently to an extent seldom found elsewhere. But it is very striking that out of this unceasing and intensive economic ado and the much bewailed crass "materialism" of the Chinese, there failed to originate on the economic plane those great and methodical business conceptions which are rational in nature and are presupposed by modern capitalism. Such conceptions have remained alien to China, except, for instance, in Canton where past or present foreign influence and the incessant advance of occidental capitalism have taught them to the Chinese.

In the past, especially in times of political division, political capitalism arose independently in the form of usury connected with office, emergency loans, wholesale trade and industrial *ergasteria*. This Chinese political capitalism was comparable to the capitalism of late Antiquity, Egypt, and Islam. Recently there has also been the usual dependency upon the merchant and buyer. In general, however, the Chinese lacked the strict organization of the *sistema domestico*, such as existed even during the late Middle Ages in the Occident. But in spite of the rather intensive internal and, for a time at least, considerable foreign trade, there existed no bourgeois capitalism of the modern or even late Medieval type. There were no rational forms of late Medieval and scientific European capitalist enterprise in industry, and no formation of capital in the European manner. Chinese capital, which took part in exploiting modern opportunities, was predominantly the capital of mandarins; hence, it was capital accumulated through extortionist practices in office. There was no rational method of organized enterprise in the European

fashion, no truly rational organization of commercial news services, no rational money system—the development of the money economy did not even equal that of Ptolemean Egypt. There were only beginnings of legal institutions and these compare with our law of firms, of commercial companies, of checks, bonds, shares. (These beginnings were characterized essentially by their technical imperfection.) The numerous technical inventions were little used for economic purposes.⁴ Finally, there was no genuine, technically valuable system of commercial correspondence, accounting, or bookkeeping.

Thus, we meet with conditions very similar to those of Mediterranean Antiquity, though in consequence of the pacification of the empire slavery was insignificant. In some respects, however, these conditions were even more remote from the "spirit" of modern capitalism and its institutions than those of Antiquity. In spite of all the heresy trials, there was extensive religious tolerance, at least compared to the intolerance of Calvinist Puritanism. Peace existed and there was a far reaching freedom of commodity trade, freedom of mobility, freedom of occupational choice and methods of production. There was no tabooing whatsoever of the shopkeeper spirit. All of this has not favored the rise of modern capitalism in China. In this typical land of profiteering, one may well see that by themselves neither "acquisitiveness," nor high and even exclusive esteem for wealth, nor utilitarian "rationalism" have any connection as yet with modern capitalism. The Chinese petty and middle class business man, as well as the big business man who adhered to the old tradition, ascribed success and failure, like the Puritan, to divine powers. The Chinese, however, ascribed them to the Taoistic god of wealth. For him success and failure in business were not symptomatic of a state of grace but of magically and ceremonially significant merit or offense, and compensation was sought in terms of ritually "good" works. The Chinese lacked the central, religiously determined, and rational method of life which came from within and which was characteristic of the classical Puritan. For the latter, economic success was not an ultimate goal or end in itself

but a means of proving one's self. The Chinese did not deliberately cut himself off from the impressions and influences of the "world"—a world which the Puritan sought to control, just as he did himself, by means of a definite and one-sided rational effort of will. The Puritan was taught to suppress the petty acquisitiveness which destroys all rational, methodical enterprise—an acquisitiveness which distinguishes the conduct of the Chinese shopkeeper. Alien to the Confucian was the peculiar confinement and repression of natural impulse⁵ which was brought about by strictly volitional and ethical rationalization and ingrained in the Puritan.

For the Confucian the pruning of freely expressed and original impulse was of a different nature. The watchful self-control of the Confucian was to maintain the dignity of external gesture and manner, to keep "face." This self-control was of an aesthetic and essentially negative nature. Dignified deportment, in itself devoid of definite content, was esteemed and desired. The equally vigilant self-control of the Puritan had as its positive aim a definitely qualified conduct and, beyond this, it had as an inward aim the systematic control of one's own nature which was regarded as wicked and sinful. The consistent Pietist would take inventory, a sort of bookkeeping practiced daily even by such an *Epigonus* as Benjamin Franklin, for the supra-mundane, omniscient God saw the central internal attitude. However, the world to which the Confucian adjusted merely observed the graceful gesture. The Confucian gentleman, striving simply for dignified bearing, distrusted others as generally as he believed others distrusted him. This distrust handicapped all credit and business operations and contrasted with the Puritan's trust, especially his economic trust in the absolutely unshakable and religiously determined righteousness of his brother in faith. Faced with the creatural wickedness of the world and of man, especially of those in high places, this confidence just sufficed to prevent his profoundly realistic and thoroughly unrespecting pessimism from becoming a blockage to the credit indispensable for capitalist commerce. It merely caused him to assess soberly the objective

external and internal ability of the partner, to take stock of the constancy of motives indispensable for business according to the adage "honesty is the best policy."

The Confucian's word was a beautiful and polite gesture as an end in itself; the Puritan's word was an impersonal and businesslike communication, short and absolutely reliable: "Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."

The thriftiness of the Confucian was narrowly circumscribed by the status proprieties of the gentleman. The excessive thrift found in the mystically determined humility of Lao-tzu and some other Taoists was fought by the Confucian school. Thrift, for the Chinese petty bourgeois classes, meant hoarding. This was fundamentally comparable to the peasant's way of hoarding wealth in his stocking. It served to safeguard burial rites and good name, honor and enjoyment of possession *per se*, as is usual where asceticism has not yet broken the enjoyment of wealth.

For the Puritan, however, possessions were as great a temptation as they were for the monk. Like the income of monasteries, his income was a secondary result and symptom of successful asceticism. John Wesley said: "We have no choice but to recommend that men be pious, and that means," as an unavoidable effect, "getting rich." But obviously the dangerous nature of riches for the pious individual was the same as it had been for the monasteries. Wesley expressly focused upon the observed and apparent paradox between the rejection of the world and acquisitive virtuosity.

For the Confucian, as a statement handed down by the Master expressly teaches, wealth was the most important means for a virtuous, i.e., dignified life and for the ability to dedicate oneself to self-perfection. Hence inquiry as to means of improving men was answered by, "enrich them," for only a rich man could live according to rank and station. However, for the Puritan, income was an unintended result, an important symptom of virtue. The expenditure of wealth for purposes of personal consumption easily constituted idolatrous surrender to the world. Confucius might not disdain the acquisition of riches but wealth

seemed insecure and could upset the equilibrium of the genteel soul. Thus, all truly economic and vocational work was the Philistine activity of expert professionals. For the Confucian, the specialistic expert could not be raised to truly positive dignity, no matter what his social usefulness. The decisive factor was that the "cultured man" (gentleman) was "not a tool"; that is, in his adjustment to the world and in his self-perfection he was an end unto himself, not a means for any functional end. This core of Confucian ethics rejected professional specialization, modern expert bureaucracy, and special training; above all, it rejected training in economics for the pursuit of profit.

To this "idolatrous" maxim Puritanism contrasts the task of proving oneself in vocational life and in the special functions of the world. The Confucian was the man of literary education, more precisely the man of bookish education, a man of scripture in the highest form. Confucianism was as foreign to the Hellenic valuation and development of speech and conversation as it was to the energy of rational action in military or economic affairs. Though they did so with differential intensity most Puritan denominations opposed philosophic literary education since it conflicted with an indispensable grounding in the Bible. The Bible was cherished as a sort of book of statutes and a managerial doctrine. Thus, philosophical literary education, the highest ornament of the Confucian, was, for the Puritan, an idle waste of time and a danger to religion. Scholasticism and dialectics, Aristotle and his derivatives, were a horror and a menace to the Puritan; thus Spenser, for instance, preferred mathematically-founded Cartesian rational philosophy. Useful and naturalist knowledge, especially empirical knowledge of natural sciences, geographical orientation as well as the sober clarity of a realist mind and specialized expert knowledge were first cultivated as planned educational ends by Puritans—in Germany particularly by Pietist circles.

Such knowledge was the only avenue to knowledge of God's glory and the providence embodied in His creation. On the other hand, such knowledge served as a means of rationally mastering

the world in one's vocation and it enabled one to do one's duty in honor of God. Hellenism and, essentially also, the Renaissance at its height were equally distant from both Confucianism and Puritanism. The indispensable ethical qualities of the modern capitalist entrepreneur were: radical concentration on God-ordained purposes; the relentless and practical rationalism of the asceticist ethic; a methodical conception of matter-of-factness in business management; a horror of illegal, political, colonial, booty, and monopoly types of capitalism which depended on the favor of princes and men as against the sober, strict legality and the harnessed rational energy of routine enterprise; the rational calculation of the technically best way, of practical solidity and expediency instead of the traditionalist enjoyment of transmitted skill or the beauty of product characteristic of the old artisan craftsman. This must be added to the pious worker's special will for work. The relentlessly and religiously systematized utilitarianism peculiar to rational asceticism, to live "in" the world and yet not be "of" it, has helped to produce superior rational aptitudes and therewith the spirit of the vocational man which, in the last analysis, was denied to Confucianism. That is to say, the Confucian way of life was rational but was determined, unlike Puritanism, from without rather than from within. The contrast can teach us that mere sobriety and thriftiness combined with acquisitiveness and regard for wealth were far from representing and far from releasing the "capitalist spirit" in the sense that this is found in the vocational man of the modern economy.

The typical Confucian used his own and his family's savings in order to acquire a literary education and to have himself trained for the examinations. Thus he gained the basis for a cultured status position. The typical Puritan earned plenty, spent little, and reinvested his income as capital in rational capitalist enterprise out of an asceticist compulsion to save. "Rationalism"—and this is our second lesson—was embodied in the spirit of both ethics. But only the Puritan rational ethic with its supramundane orientation brought economic rationalism to its con-

sistent conclusion. This happened merely because nothing was further from the conscious Puritan intention. It happened because inner-worldly work was simply expressive of the striving for a transcendental goal. The world, as promised, fell to Puritanism because the Puritans alone "had striven for God and his justice." In this is vested the basic difference between the two kinds of rationalism. Confucian rationalism meant rational adjustment to the world; Puritan rationalism meant rational mastery of the world. Both the Puritan and the Confucian were "sober men." But the rational sobriety of the Puritan was founded in a mighty enthusiasm which the Confucian lacked completely; it was the same enthusiasm which inspired the monk of the Occident. The rejection of the world by occidental asceticism was insolubly linked to its opposite, namely, its eagerness to dominate the world. In the name of a supra-mundane God the imperatives of asceticism were issued to the monk and, in variant and softened form, to the world. Nothing conflicted more with the Confucian ideal of gentility than the idea of a "vocation." The "princely" man was an aesthetic value; he was not a tool of a god. But the true Christian, the other-worldly and inner-worldly asceticist, wished to be nothing more than a tool of his God; in this he sought his dignity. Since this is what he wished to be he was a useful instrument for rationally transforming and mastering the world.

The Chinese in all probability would be quite capable, probably more capable than the Japanese, of assimilating capitalism which has technically and economically been fully developed in the modern culture area. It is obviously not a question of deeming the Chinese "naturally ungifted" for the demands of capitalism. But compared to the Occident, the varied conditions which externally favored the origin of capitalism in China did not suffice to create it. Likewise capitalism did not originate in occidental or oriental Antiquity, or in India, or where Islamism held sway. Yet in each of these areas different and favorable circumstances seemed to facilitate its rise. Many of the circumstances which could or had to hinder capitalism in China

similarly existed in the Occident and assumed definite shape in the period of modern capitalism. Thus, there were the patrimonial traits of occidental rulers, their bureaucracy, and the fact that the money economy was unsettled and undeveloped. The money economy of Ptolemaic Egypt was carried through much more thoroughly than it was in fifteenth or sixteenth century Europe. Circumstances which are usually considered to have been obstacles to capitalist development in the Occident had not existed for thousands of years in China. Such circumstances as the fetters of feudalism, landlordism and, in part also, the guild system were lacking there. Besides, a considerable part of the various trade-restricting monopolies which were characteristic of the Occident did not apparently exist in China. Also, in the past, China knew time and again the political conditions arising out of preparation for war and warfare between competing states. In ancient Babylon and in Antiquity, there were conditions conducive to the rise of political capitalism which the modern period also shares with the past. It might be thought that modern capitalism, interested in free trading opportunity, could have gained ground once the accumulation of wealth and profit from political sources became impossible. This is perhaps comparable to the way in which, in recent times, North America has offered the freest space for the development of high capitalism in the almost complete absence of organization for war.

Political capitalism was common to occidental Antiquity until the time of the Roman emperors, to the Middle Ages, and to the Orient. The pacification of the Empire explains, at least indirectly, the non-existence of political capitalism but it does not explain the non-existence of modern capitalism in China. To be sure the basic characteristics of the "mentality," in this case the practical attitudes toward the world, were deeply co-determined by political and economic destinies. Yet, in view of their autonomous laws, one can hardly fail to ascribe to these attitudes effects strongly counteractive to capitalist development.

63. *Trimetrical Canon*, *loc. cit.*

64. Cultivation and exports of silk decreased only during the last year of the war. Previously they had increased considerably.

65. At the last moment Palmerston gave orders to support the "Manchu" no longer because of sharp attacks in the House; also because he did not wish to let the Manchus get out of their awkward situation.

66. The T'ien Wang personally and his officers practiced polygamy in the Chinese sense (concubinage).

67. *Peking Gazette*, 2 October, 1874.

68. The T'ien Wang's tent was called "the little Heaven." His rejection of attributes of holiness might very well have been disregarded by possible successors. The ceremonial prescriptions, including titularies of rank, were completely Chinese in character. There was, e.g., among others, a title of "Your Chastity" (!) for high female officials.

69. This holds unless one wishes to classify the festival days, avoidance of ornaments, etc., as asceticism. These, however, remained individual postulates.

70. This sect (*I ho ch'üan*) had emerged even at the beginning of the nineteenth century. De Groot, *Sectarianism*, p. 425.

71. This sect, indeed, believed in this invulnerability. The accessible and examined materials do not suffice for a presentation of the sect. It was constituted as an order, an "ecclesia militans," only against the foreign Barbarians. Concerning the sect see the previously cited memorial to the Empress Tz'u Hsi who, like the princes, believed in the sect's magical charisma. In the same way they believed in the magical qualities of the Krupp cannon. cf. *Peking Gazette*, 13 June, 1878. In view of these Chinese documents one is hardly permitted, in this case, to share de Groot's doubt that heretics such as the "Boxers" had been protected by a "Confucian" government. Cf. *Sectarianism*, p. 430, footnote.

VIII. Conclusions: Confucianism and Puritanism

1. In addition to the aforesaid, compare de Groot, *The Religion of the Chinese* (New York, 1910), p. 130.

2. Reprinted in Chavannes' edition, *op. cit.* vol. III, Chapter XXX.

3. See the earlier discussion of "credit associations" as weak beginnings.

4. It is crystal-clear that defects of technical and inventive genius cannot be attributed to the Chinese. The backwardness of mining (a cause of currency crises), the failure to use coal for the production of

iron (despite the alleged knowledge of the coking process), and the increasing restriction of shipping to river traffic in traditional forms and along traditional routes were not due to lack of inventiveness. *Fêng shui* (magicians) of all sorts, prebend interests—products of magic and the form of state—were the decisive factors.

5. Very good remarks about this are to be found in Ludwig Klages' writings.