

ABSTRACT

GUILFORD, JEFFERSON EVANS. Weber and Troeltsch: Friendship, Cooperation, Conflict. (Under the direction of Noah Strote.)

Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch were two of the leading intellectuals at the time of the outbreak of the First World War. For most of their adult lives, these two remained close friends, working in close cooperation at the University of Heidelberg and helping one another in the development of their innovative ideas concerning the relationship between religion and society. However, the two scholars also represented opposite ends of the German middle class political spectrum. Troeltsch opposed the modern forces of democracy and socialism that were reshaping German society, while Weber partially accepted them and believed that they could be integrated into a strong German nation state. This paper studies the works of Weber and Troeltsch and shows how, in spite of their cooperation, each scholar used their studies to support their opposing political ideals. Further, this paper explains the end of the friendship, showing how personal conflict resulted from Weber and Troeltsch's contrasting interpretations of the First World War.

© Copyright 2013 by Jefferson E. Guilford

All Rights Reserved

Weber and Troeltsch: Friendship, Cooperation and Conflict

by
Jefferson Evans Guilford

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

History

Raleigh, North Carolina

2014

APPROVED BY:

Noah Strote

K. Steven Vincent

Mi Gyung Kim

DEDICATION

To my teachers.

BIOGRAPHY

Jefferson Guilford is a native of Raleigh, North Carolina. He was interested in history from a young age, especially in ancient and medieval military history. As an undergraduate at North Carolina State University, he studied philosophy, focusing on nineteenth and twentieth century German thought. The work of Friedrich Nietzsche stood at the heart of his studies. When he returned as a graduate student in NC State's Department of History, he continued to study German thought, focusing on philosophy, sociology, theology, and the interconnections between these fields.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter One: Intellectual and Political Orientations	20
Chapter Two: Ideological Tensions, Scholarly Cooperation	48
Chapter Three: Deepening Friendship, Divergent Perspectives	89
Chapter Four: Conflict: Global and Personal	124
Conclusion	159
REFERENCES	167

Introduction

During the fifty years that preceded the outbreak of World War I, modernity washed over Germany like a great flood, reshaping in unpredictable ways its political, economic, and cultural landscape. This flood coincided, more or less, with the existence of the Second German Empire (1871-1918), a political entity born out of Bismarck's calculated warfare and destined to die amidst the incalculable violence of the First World War. Within this brief span of time, the modern forces of industrialization and urbanization transformed life for German subjects. The Empire, which came into existence with a primarily rural population of less than forty-five million, had, by 1914, become an urbanized society of more than sixty-eight million with the greatest industrial output of any European nation.¹ Such rapid social transformation resulted in the sharpening of class, ethnic, and religious tensions. It also shifted the balance of power within the Empire away from the rural aristocracy and the university-educated bourgeoisie, groups which had traditionally dominated Germany's military and bureaucratic hierarchies, and toward new groups, such as mass political parties and industrialists. These changes provoked two contrasting responses among the German educated elite. The more common response was a conservative rejection of modernity rooted in pre-modern ideals and a narrow conception of the German nation. Opposing this view, a much smaller group, whose leading members were professors in the social sciences, stoically accepted the economic and social conditions of the modern age and sought to address the

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 342.

most problematic aspects of these conditions through realistic analysis and pragmatic reform.²

The current study seeks a deeper understanding of these two conflicting attitudes toward modernity, which dominated the cultural discourse of the Second German Empire. The investigation will focus on the scholarly and political works of two of the leading intellectuals of the period, Ernst Troeltsch and Max Weber, who represented the opposing sides of this cultural and political debate. Troeltsch maintained a thoroughly conservative attitude toward modernity and sought, in his historical, theological, and political works, to oppose the modern forces of democracy, socialism, and secularism and to defend and revitalize the pre-modern values of the German educated elite. In contrast, Weber began his work as a political economist with the assumption that the forces of modernity could not be reversed. Instead of opposing modern processes, which he viewed as inevitable, he devoted himself to understanding them and to offering pragmatic solutions to the problems they presented. Each thinker provides a well-articulated example of their respective stances toward modernity. An examination of these two examples will shed light on the general relationship between the contrasting attitudes of nostalgic conservatism and pragmatic progressivism, attitudes which not only shaped the political discourse of Wilhelmine Germany, but which remain central in contemporary political discourse.

In addition, the comparative investigation of Weber and Troeltsch will provide insight into the intellectual development of these thinkers, both of whom remain influential in their

² Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Harvard University Press, 1969), 42-61, 128-142.

respective fields. These two thinkers were close friends for the majority of their adult lives and exerted significant influence on one another's scholarly output, cooperating to form an original understanding of the historical impact of Protestantism that holds a central position in both of their works.

Finally, the current study shows how each thinker, in spite of their cooperation and friendship, continued to use their shared ideas to support their conflicting political goals. By incorporating similar concepts into fundamentally divergent ideological orientations, Weber and Troeltsch produced works that agreed with and supported one another on matters of detail but that conflicted with one another on the most fundamental levels. This conflict, which the current work explores in detail, not only serves to demonstrate the way in which historical concepts can be implemented in the service of contradictory political interests, but it also helps to explain the end of Weber and Troeltsch's friendship by connecting the immediate causes of their break with their deeper ideological disagreements.

The debate surrounding German modernization, in which Troeltsch and Weber played leading roles, took place in a context of rapid and profound economic and social change. In less than fifty years, the profile of German society had been fundamentally altered. Industrial production dominated the economy, cities and factory towns expanded unchecked, and diverse populations crowded together in slums. Such economic and demographic transformation led to increasing prosperity for a great number of Germans, but it also tore millions from their ancestral rural homes and threw them into cramped, unsanitary, disorienting urban centers. This new environment made growing disparities in

wealth painfully obvious and helped to sharpen existing cultural tensions by crowding together mutually suspicious populations of Protestants, Catholics, and Jews. Alongside this sharpening of religious and cultural tensions came a general decrease in religious devotion among the Protestant lower classes. Religious organizations rarely maintained sufficient infrastructure in the expanding cities. As a result, many who left the countryside for the cities left their faith behind as well, becoming either indifferent or antagonistic toward their old beliefs.³

Related to this decline of religion among the urban masses was the rise of the Social Democratic Party, which grew steadily over the course of the Empire's existence by appealing to the ever-swelling ranks of the urban working class with its Marxian critique of the stark inequality of the emerging social order. Along with its condemnation of the economic exploitation of German workers and its opposition to the legal and political structures that legitimized this exploitation, the Social Democratic Party also criticized the state-funded German Evangelical Church, which they viewed as merely another pillar supporting the unjust status quo. As such, they demanded equal rights for all religious groups and a complete separation of church and state. They believed that such changes would bring an end to the perverse alliance between the Protestant Church and an exploitative social order, and allow the original "communalistic" ethic of the Gospels to reemerge.⁴ Naturally,

³ Helmut W. Smith, *German Nationalism and Religious Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1870-1914* (Princeton University Press, 1995), 79-85. Secularization among urban Catholics was much less marked, as Protestant persecution led to a resurgence of group feeling among German Catholics. The decline of religiosity among poor urban populations seems to have been a Europe-wide trend. See Eric Hobsbawn, *The Age of Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 219-222.

⁴ Constance Benson, *God and Caesar* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999), 52, 72, 144, 145.

The German political, economic, and religious elite viewed the seemingly unstoppable growth of this opposition party with increasing alarm and sought to oppose it through legal restrictions, cultural and religious polemics, and even through moderate socio-economic appeasement. Yet none of these measures could stem the growth of the socialist movement, which, by 1912, had grown to become the largest delegation in the German Parliament.

This clash between the Social Democratic Party and German elites represented only one of the many internal conflicts that characterized life in the German empire. Just as class conflict was sharpened by the rapid economic changes of the late nineteenth century, so too were long-smoldering ethnic and religious tensions stoked by the demographic mixing brought about by rapid urbanization. When Protestant and German Catholics left their rural villages for the city, they exchanged settings of relative religious homogeneity or long-established peaceful segregation for ones of disquieting uncertainty, in which they found themselves confronted by individuals from alien religious traditions.⁵ In the big cities, the tangible expansion of commerce and finance, activities popularly associated with Jews, along with the conspicuous success of a small number of Jews within these sectors, fostered feelings of resentment among significant portions of urban Christian populations.⁶ In the countryside, where Polish agricultural laborers immigrated to work the land left underpopulated by the German exodus to the cities, the growth of this primarily Catholic, Slavic-speaking minority fed xenophobic fears of a slow invasion from the east.⁷

⁵ Smith, *Religious Conflict*, 80-85.

⁶ Peter G.J. Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964), 26.

⁷ Smith, *Religious Conflict*, 173-178.

Religious and ethnic tensions were further heightened by the German elite's narrow conception of the German nation. The Hohenzollern Kaisers and the conservative Protestants who advised them viewed the Empire as an essentially German Protestant entity. As such, they took steps to marginalize Jews, Catholics and national minorities, especially the Poles, in the hope of cementing the Empire's identity as a German Protestant nation. De facto discrimination against Jews remained the norm in state institutions. The *Kulturkampf*, initiated by Bismarck, sought to eliminate Catholicism as a political force within the Empire, and a governmental program of "Germanization" sought to counteract the effect of a growing Polish population in the eastern provinces.⁸ In general, these attempts at repression failed utterly. Rather than establishing a unified German Protestant cultural milieu, they succeeded only in sharpening the divisions between religious and ethnic groups and stimulating the organized opposition of Catholics and Poles to the Imperial government.⁹

The rise of mass party politics helped to make these increasing tensions all the more obvious to imperial subjects. Though the power of the Reichstag was severely limited, and though privileged and conservative classes practiced a disproportionate degree of influence because of preferential suffrage laws, the imperial parliament nevertheless occupied the center of the ongoing struggle between Germany's conflicting interest groups. It was through this limited but genuinely democratic institution that the empire's discontents could make themselves heard, and it was here that oppositional parties, such as the Catholic Center Party and the Social Democratic Party, could speak out for the groups that the aristocratic and

⁸ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 135-139; Smith, *Religious Conflict*, 37-42, 170-178.

⁹ Smith, *Religious Conflict*, 42-50.

bourgeois Protestant elements of the Empire sought to marginalize. These electoral struggles were not merely symbolic, for the Reichstag did possess some real power, and it could work as a serious obstacle to imperial designs if controlled by a coalition of oppositional parties, as it frequently was.

All of these changes – rapid urbanization and industrialization, sharpening of class, religious, and ethnic tensions, the rise of mass party politics – were lumped together in the minds of many Germans under a single heading, “modernity.” In general, the subjects of Imperial Germany were conscious that they were living in a new and still rapidly changing era. Certainly, many Germans had interpreted the birth of the German Empire as the beginning of a new historical period and had celebrated it as the ultimate triumph of “German culture.”¹⁰ As time went on, however, the fractious reality of life in the Empire left not only Germany’s oppressed and marginalized populations dissatisfied, but her most privileged and patriotic members as well. Indeed, after the first flush of euphoria over unification was past, more and more educated and nationalistic members of the Germans bourgeoisie began to worry about the cultural price that Germany was paying for its political and economic ascendance.¹¹

This was due to the fact that the economic and social transformations required for Germany’s emergence as a powerful, modern nation-state conflicted with the dominant

¹⁰ See Nietzsche’s 1873 essay, “David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer,” for an incisive, if somewhat exaggerated, critique of this initial burst of cultural self-satisfaction. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Mediations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 3-15.

¹¹ At first, such skeptical voices were faint and infrequent, but as time went on they grew louder and acquired an enormous audience. For an outline of the growth of Germany’s anti-modern discourse, see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1961).

political attitude of the educated Protestant middle class. Their attitude emphasized the importance of inwardly directed spirituality, which implied indifference to ‘external’ political developments, obedience to governmental authority, and acceptance of hierarchical social structures.¹² This attitude had long been embodied in Germany’s universities, which for most of the 19th century had been the primary means of attaining a middle class status. The universities were themselves state institutions, and it was by attending them that one could become qualified to serve as a member of the state bureaucracy. Beyond providing mere technical training in a variety of subjects, the university also strove to impart to its students the above described attitude of obedience, spirituality, and acceptance of the hierarchical and authoritarian status quo.¹³ Given that the institutions that espoused this attitude had long been funded by the German princes, it is not surprising that this attitude was essentially conservative and anti-democratic.

Germany’s educated elites were thus primed to interpret their country’s emergence into modernity as a lamentable development. They saw the growth of mass democracy and the rise of opposition parties as a sign of Germany’s decline from a society of obedient, unified, and pious subjects, to one of short-sighted and self-serving interest groups, whose members strove for material well-being rather than spiritual contentment. Likewise, they viewed with suspicion the rise of industrial capitalism and the concomitant growth of a class

¹² The “apolitical” attitude of the educated German elite, was frequently nothing more than a rhetorical pose. In fact, the advocates of this attitude often harbored strongly conservative political opinions. However, by labeling their own political perspectives as apolitical, they were able to present them as if they were superior to the perspectives of other political groups. Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 120-123. For a specific example of such a rhetorical implementation of an “apolitical” perspective, see Benson, *God and Caesar*, 122-126.

¹³ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 83-90. 120-123

of non-university-educated, industrial elites, seeing in this the abandonment of inward spirituality for shallow materialism. Additionally, the social changes that came along with modernity threatened to undermine the status of the humanistically trained middle class by diminishing its social utility. The rise of mass political parties and vast industrial concerns seemed to ensure a gradually diminishing role for university-trained bureaucrats in German society, which naturally increased the educated elite's disdain for these modern forces.¹⁴

It was common for members of the educated elite to oppose certain emerging aspects of the German Reich by taking up an anti-modern ideological position of romantic conservatism. At the center of this perspective was a narrow, cultural conception of the German nation, which supposedly embodied certain eternally valid German values: Protestant piety, authoritarianism, and rigid social hierarchy.¹⁵ Those who adhered to this view generally approved of Bismarck's work of uniting Germany politically under the Protestant Hohenzollerns, but they believed that the Reich still lacked spiritual unification. They denounced the religious diversity, the democratic institutions, and the social unrest that characterized life in the German Reich as signs of spiritual disunity. Through opposing these forces, they sought to finish the task of unification which Bismarck had left only half finished.¹⁶

¹⁴ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 44-47.

¹⁵ Pulzer, *Rise of Political Anti-Semitism*, 33-36.

¹⁶ Both radical and moderate elements of the German middle classes called out for repressive measures for the sake of ensuring the continued dominance of "German" values within the Reich. For a discussion of the more radical expressions, see Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, xi-94. For more moderate expressions, see Smith, *Religious Conflict*, 19-37.

Members of the educated elite undertook various courses of action to oppose the forces of modernity and to achieve their goal of cultural unification. Some sought to undermine the claims of minority religious and ethnic groups to membership in the nation through pro-Protestant, pro-Prussian interpretations of German history, while others spoke out against the dangers of democracy and materialism.¹⁷ Still others viewed the sphere of religion as the key to rescuing the German spirit. Some called for a refinement of Christianity into a “Germanic” religion, and to assimilate Catholics and Jews into a single Protestant-inspired form of the Christian faith, while others hoped to lure working class Protestants away from socialism through a combination of Evangelical Christianity with minimal social reform and antisemitic rhetoric.¹⁸ None of these courses of action brought about the hoped-for results, and social unrest and political activism proceeded to grow apace. Naturally, failures resulted in increasing anxiety among romantic conservatives as time went on.

One factor that contributed to the romantic conservatives’ inability to effectively oppose “modernity” was their unwillingness to address the key source of discontent within the Reich: the massive inequality that industrial capitalism caused. In spite of their misgivings regarding the changes effected by industrialization and urbanization, only a few of the most extreme reactionaries directly opposed these processes and called for a return to an idealized agrarian past.¹⁹ The reason was that the German Protestant elite generally identified with the German Empire, gloried in its status as a global power, and recognized that this status was dependent upon the continued growth of Germany’s industrial

¹⁷ Smith, *Religious Conflict*, 50-79; Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 128-130, 135.

¹⁸ Stern, *Political Despair*, 35-52; Pulzer, *Political Anti-Semitism*, 88-101.

¹⁹ Fritz Stern, *Political Despair*, 66-70.

capabilities. Thus, romantic conservatives were stuck in an ideological dilemma. They were obliged to support industrial capitalism, but they also felt compelled to condemn its social and cultural results. Though they despised the class warfare that resulted from the inequalities of the industrial economy, their patriotic and elitist instincts prevented most of them from calling for a mitigation of this inequality. Thus, because they could not offer any genuine socio-economic solution to the problem, they sought to offer pseudo-solutions by means of cultural, intellectual, and religious innovation. Unsurprisingly, their work in this direction did little to alter the situation.²⁰

There were, of course, some among the German elite who more completely accepted the modern aspects of the German Empire. Two groups who did so were industrialists and social scientists. The industrialists, who, in general, had little contact with the universities and who were thus less likely to share the anti-modern cultural values of the educated middle class, took pride in their service to the Reich through economic and technological innovation and harbored no nostalgia for Germany's pre-industrial past.²¹ The social scientists represented the most progressive wing of the German academy and were more or less alone in their attempts to grapple with the emerging demands of mass politics and industrial capitalism in a systematic and realistic fashion. Though most members of these groups did maintain attachments to certain "unmodern" aspects of the Reich (e.g. the *Kulturkampf*, the

²⁰ This paradoxical stance toward modern industrial capitalism appears a forerunner to the reactionary modernism which became a powerful ideological force in the Weimar Republic. Like the reactionary modernists, the romantic conservatives of the German Empire held an ambiguous stance toward the modern world, embracing economic growth through industrial expansion and technological advancement, but demanding a return to pre-modern cultural values and social relations. See Jeffrey Herf, *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1-17.

²¹ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 60-61.

authority of the Kaiser), their general acceptance of industrial capitalism and their desire to directly address its problematic aspects made them into an ideological counterweight to the more numerous middle class skeptics of modernity.²²

The two objects of the current study, Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, represented the opposite sides of the educated elite's debate regarding modernity. Weber stood out as one of the members of the educated elite most committed to pragmatic adaptation to the modern situation. Troeltsch, in contrast, strove against the forces of modernity in the name of traditional middle class Protestant values. Through an examination of Weber and Troeltsch's personal friendship, scholarly cooperation, and ideological conflict, I hope to shed new light both on the educated elite's reaction to modernity and, more specifically, on the way in which this reaction manifested academic and political activities of these two influential scholars.

A number of historians have already written about Weber and Troeltsch's relationship. The fruits of these works have appeared either as small segments of larger biographical works or as brief articles that seek to summarize the essence of the Weber-Troeltsch relationship. While both of these kinds of publications serve to reveal certain aspects of the relationship, they are limited in important ways, which the current study seeks to overcome.

The biographical works that discuss Weber and Troeltsch's relationship tend to focus primarily on the personal aspects of the relationship, either omitting or underrepresenting the intellectual cooperation of the two scholars. In Marianne Weber's biography of her husband,

²² Ringer, 169-180.

she focused almost exclusively on Weber's personal relationship with Troeltsch, detailing meetings, shared trips, and visits but never discussing the intellectual exchange that the two undertook.²³ Marianne was clearly motivated by the desire to monumentalize her husband, and, thus, she attempted to present Weber as an independent and morally irreproachable figure whenever possible.²⁴ In light of this fact, it stands to reason that Marianne had a personal interest in concealing the large extent to which Weber's conception of Christianity had been influenced by Troeltsch. Marianne also sought to conceal her husband's abrupt break with Troeltsch in 1915, briefly outlining an argument that Weber had with a certain disobedient hospital administrator regarding the treatment of wounded French captives but failing to mention that this hospital administrator happened to be Troeltsch.²⁵ Troeltsch was a highly respected intellectual figure; by hiding both Weber's intellectual debt to Troeltsch and his violent break with him, Marianne probably believed that she was helping to ensure her husband's reputation for future generations. Thus, Marianne's biography gives the reader a skewed sense of the Weber-Troeltsch relationship, portraying it as an uncomplicated friendship, rather than as the complex and at times antagonistic relationship that it was. A number of other biographical works, such as Paul Honigsheim's *On Max Weber*, suffer from

²³ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 227-8, 257, 260, 452. All of these references to Troeltsch concern purely personal matters. The only mention of their similar fields of reference occurs on page 331, when Marianne states that Weber turned to study eastern religion because his and Troeltsch's investigations into Christianity were "too close to each other." She mentions this similarity as a bare fact, and says nothing of the intense cooperation of Weber and Troeltsch on precisely this subject.

²⁴ For Example, Marianne excludes discussion of Weber's extramarital affairs with the young pianist Mina Tobler and with his colleague's wife, Else Jaffe. See Radkau, *A Biography*, 380-381, 518-522 for a discussion of these relationships.

²⁵ *Ibid.* 524

similar problems.²⁶ These works were clearly inspired by the personal admiration that the authors felt for their subjects, and, as such, they either omitted or minimized the complicating and sometimes unflattering aspects of Weber and Troeltsch's friendship. Perhaps the most objective early biographical account of the subject can be found in Wilhelm Pauck's brief study of Troeltsch, in which he discussed both Weber's influence on Troeltsch's study of Protestantism and the 1915 argument that brought about the end of the friendship.²⁷ Even this work, however, which sought only to give a brief sketch of Troeltsch's life and work, did not give an in-depth analysis either of the nature of the cooperation or of the break. Later biographies, such as Joachim Radkau's *Max Weber: A Biography* and Hans-George Drescher's, *Ernst Troeltsch: Life and Work*, afford a more objective view of Weber and Troeltsch's relationship, but these views remain little more than glimpses. Both Radkau and Drescher touched on Weber and Troeltsch's cooperation during their early Heidelberg years, mentioned a few important differences that existed between the two, and then summarized the argument that ended the friendship in 1915.²⁸ In both cases, however, these accounts remained disjointed, and neither author explained how the various stages of the Weber-Troeltsch narrative related to one another.

The scholar who has published most extensively on the Weber-Troeltsch relationship is Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, a theologian at the University of Munich. In his earliest article on the subject, "Max Weber and the Protestant Theology of his Time," Graf considered both the

²⁶ Paul Honigsheim, *On Max Weber*, trans. Joan Rytina, (New York: The Free Press, 1968).

²⁷ Wilhelm Pauck, *Harnack and Troeltsch: Two Historical Theologians* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1968), 69-72, 73-75.

²⁸ Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 122-126, Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. Peter Camiller (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 203.

ways in which Weber and Troeltsch cooperated and the divergent aspects of their thought.²⁹ On the subject of their cooperation, Graf focused primarily on the closely related themes explored in their early works on the history of the Protestant reformation, showing that a number of key ideas that Weber included in his famous essays, *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, had already been advanced in Troeltsch's earlier work. Among these points was Troeltsch's claim, put forward in the 1903 essay "English Moralists," that the "highest energy for business emanated from the doctrine of predestination."³⁰ Besides these similarities in content, Graf argued that a "critical philological comparison" revealed that Weber owed to Troeltsch "the greatest portion of his knowledge of the theological literature on which he based his presentation of ascetic Protestantism."³¹ In another article, "Friendship among Experts: Notes of Weber and Troeltsch," Graf elaborated on this claim, pointing out that Weber, in the *Protestant Ethic*, not only referred to the same works that Troeltsch did, but to the same key passages from the same editions of the works.³² Both of Graf's articles investigated Weber's dependence on Troeltsch, rather than Troeltsch's dependence on Weber. Graf seemed to consider Troeltsch's dependence upon Weber to be obvious, referring to Troeltsch's admission that he had undergone a "spiritual revolution" through his contact with

²⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Max Weber und die protestantische Theologie seiner Zeit," in *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*, 39:2 (1987): 122-147.

³⁰ Graf, "Die Protestantische Theologie," 135.

³¹ *Ibid.* 136.

³² Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Friendship among Experts: Notes on Weber and Troeltsch" in *Max Weber and His Contemporaries* eds. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1987), 215-233.

Weber.³³ Yet the exact nature of this “spiritual revolution” is not obvious, and Graf’s work does little to clarify it for us.

In his consideration of the differences in Weber and Troeltsch’s outlooks, Graf referred primarily to two scholars’ later, political works, leaving the long, middle portion of the Weber-Troeltsch relationship unconsidered. According to Graf, the key difference between Weber and Troeltsch’s perspectives was located in their differing beliefs regarding religion’s possible social potential in modern society. Graf argued that Troeltsch’s later works were motivated by his view of religion as an integrating force within an otherwise fragmented society, which was a view that conflicted with Weber’s later stance on the issue, in which he rejected religion as a modern social force, and embraced tension and conflict between secular powers as the only possible reality in the modern world.³⁴ In general, this characterization is accurate, but Graf did not explain the origin of the stark division, nor the way it manifested itself within the authors’ scholarly works.

One important limitation that has determined the course of all of previous work on the Weber-Troeltsch relationship, and which will constrain the current work as well, is the fact that not a single known letter from Weber and Troeltsch’s correspondence exists. This is extremely odd, given the long friendship shared by these two men, who both maintained healthy correspondences with their other friends. In a more recent article, Graf argued that this lack of correspondence between the two scholars was most likely the result of a deliberate destruction of the correspondence by the two scholars’ widows. He noted that

³³ Graf, “Die Protestantische Theologie,” 133.

³⁴ Ibid. 142-146.

Marianne remained close with Troeltsch's wife after Weber's break with Troeltsch, and speculated that the "highly complicated, possibly traumatic" content of the Weber-Troeltsch correspondence could have interfered with Marianne's "calculated manufacture" of her husband's image.³⁵ Such a situation fits with the previously noted fact that Marianne deliberately excluded mention of Weber's friendship-ending conflict with Troeltsch. Graf did not provide an explanation as to why Troeltsch's widow would have agreed to allow a portion of her recently deceased husband's correspondence to be destroyed, but it is possible that she was also motivated by the desire to conceal certain unflattering aspects of her husband's life.

Regardless of its cause, however, the effect of this absence of personal letters between Weber and Troeltsch is that the true nature of their personal and intellectual relationship must be inferred from the content of their scholarly and political works, their references to one another in these works, and their remarks on one another in personal letters addressed to third parties. These sources of information have served as the primary sources for all the previously mentioned works on Weber and Troeltsch and will serve as the primary sources for the current work as well. However, the current work uses these sources not only to investigate the beginning and the end of the Weber and Troeltsch's Friendship, but also to understand its important middle period, in which the two scholars cooperated with each other intellectually and grew closer to one another personally. An extended investigation into this middle period will reveal certain persisting ideological divisions between the two scholars

³⁵ Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Wertkonflikt oder Kultursynthese?" in *Asketischer Protestantismus und der „Geist“ des modernen Kapitalismus*, eds. Wolfgang Schluchter and Friedrich Wilhelm Graf (Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 259-260.

and help to explain the friendship's unhappy end. This investigation provides a concrete illustration of a wider ideological conflict between two different conceptions of the German nation and its future.

The current study will also offer a more nuanced view of Troeltsch than those put forward by other scholars. In contrast to Fritz Ringer's view of Troeltsch as a progressive, democratic reformer, and opposed to Constance Benson's portrayal of Troeltsch as a self-serving, class-conscious conservative, my analysis offers a more dynamic picture of Troeltsch as a man oscillating between anti-modern ideals and practical political commitment.³⁶ For most of his life, Troeltsch rejected the modern world and attempted to abolish it by imposing his conservative ideals upon it. But around the time of the end of the war, when a terrible reality broke through the idealistic rhetoric of Troeltsch and his ideological allies, something changed in Troeltsch, and he adopted a pragmatic and politically moderate attitude toward a world, which, earlier, he would have merely wished away.

Ringer and Benson both err in their depictions of Troeltsch because they attempt to deduce the man's total character from restricted sets of texts. Ringer's view of Troeltsch is drawn almost exclusively from texts dating from the Weimar period. He is correct in asserting that these texts articulate a progressive point of view, but his work leaves the reader with the false impression that Troeltsch represented one of the most steadfast proponents of this perspective. The fact, which the following chapters will demonstrate, that Troeltsch converted from romantic conservatism to progressive modernism suddenly and only at the

³⁶ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 206-207, 210, 345-346. Benson, *God and Caesar*, 1-10.

end of his life, suggests that the boundary between the educated elite's two political camps was more permeable than Ringer suggested. Likewise Benson's critical portrayal of Troeltsch seems to stem from her desire to illustrate the class biases present in Troeltsch's major work, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. Benson's demonstration of the anti-socialist motivation of this and other texts from Troeltsch's pre-war, conservative period are convincing, but her failure to give due consideration to Troeltsch's later, more progressive period prevents her from grasping Troeltsch's character in its full complexity.

Of course, any work of history will be subject to such errors. Our inferences about the past are always limited by our study of the documents. But the documents are numberless, and our studies are always limited by our faulty memories, our weak wills, and our brief lives. Obviously, the present work is no exception, but I hope that through its holistic, narrative approach to understanding the intersecting lives and conflicting values of two of Germany's most influential thinkers, it has at least touched on some small corner of the truth.

Chapter One

Intellectual and Political Orientations

Ernst Troeltsch (1865-1923) and Max Weber (1864-1920) were two of the leading intellectuals of late-Wilhelmine and early-Weimar Germany. Their broad-ranging works enjoyed immediate success and continue to attract considerable scholarly attention today, both in Germany and internationally. Weber and Troeltsch enjoy this preeminent position because their works are at once academically brilliant and morally controversial. Their major works, Weber's *Economy and Society* and Troeltsch's *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, provided groundbreaking insights in the fields of sociology and theology, respectively, and are now widely regarded as canonical texts. And yet, in spite of such monumental achievements, contemporary opinion on these two thinkers remains divided. In the case of Weber, some scholars, such as Fritz Ringer, have lauded the sociologist as a critical non-conformist, who challenged the antiquated structures and ideologies that undergirded the conservative German Reich. Others, like Wolfgang Mommsen, have suggested that some of Weber's central ideas, such as the importance of charismatic leadership for overcoming the sterility of modern bureaucracy, provided intellectual legitimation for Nazi rule.³⁷ In the case of Troeltsch, some scholars, such as Reinhard Niebuhr and, more recently, Hans-Georg Drescher have portrayed the theologian as a broadminded, forward-looking challenger to the conservative Lutheran orthodoxy of his day, while others, such as Constance L. Benson, have portrayed Troeltsch as a bigoted

³⁷ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 355-357; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, (University of Chicago Press, 1984), 423-424.

reactionary, who pursued theological innovation only in order to undermine the progressive elements of Wilhelmine society.³⁸

These two monumental yet controversial academic figures lived and worked for the majority of their careers in the idyllic university town of Heidelberg in southwest Germany. Here they became close friends, engaging mutually in discussion circles, introducing one another to the key sources of their respective fields, and even, from 1910 to 1915, sharing a grand, old house on the north bank of the Neckar River.³⁹ It was during this period of friendship that each scholar produced the works for which they are best known today.

However, this friendship was not destined to last. The two scholars held fundamentally conflicting political attitudes, which would exert a constant strain on their relationship, and ultimately bring it to an end. Weber's wife, Marianne, reported that even at the beginning of their acquaintanceship, Troeltsch and Weber found themselves at odds on political issues.⁴⁰ Reflecting back on his friendship with Weber toward the end of his life, Troeltsch acknowledged the existence of certain "ultimate points of disagreement" of which they "practically never spoke, probably both with the sense of the irresolvable inner difference."⁴¹ It was not until the outbreak of the First World War, however, that these conflicting beliefs came to the fore, resulting in a friendship-ending argument. From that point on, the two scholars went their separate ways, each offering his intellectual and

³⁸ Reinhard Niebuhr, "Introduction," in *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* (The University of Chicago Press, 1981); Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, trans. John Bowden (London: SCM Press LTD., 1992); Constance Benson, *God and Caesar*.

³⁹ Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 449-454.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 227-228.

⁴¹ Troeltsch, in a letter of condolence to Marianne Weber, after her husband's death, cited in Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Max Weber und die protestantische Theologie seiner Zeit," 145, *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte* 39:2 (January 1987): 122-147.

rhetorical services to his respective political cause: Weber to a hardline, realist view of the global conflict, Troeltsch to a romantic and aggressively nationalistic perspective.

Clearly, this was a complex relationship between complex individuals. Weber and Troeltsch assisted one another in the production of their defining scholarly works and enjoyed one another's company, while at the same time remaining independent regarding their ultimate political and ethical commitments. A reconstruction of the course of this relationship promises to shed light on the intellectual origins of Weber and Troeltsch's landmark works and on the contrasting ideological motivations that lay behind these works.

When Weber and Troeltsch became colleagues at the University of Heidelberg in 1896, filling chairs in political economy and theology, respectively, they were both in their early thirties. Both were promising scholars who had attained the prestigious rank of full professor at a remarkably young age. In spite of their youth, they carried into their new positions firmly established intellectual and ideological predispositions that would influence their academic and political pursuits for the duration of their careers. The young Troeltsch was a staunch conservative, and his studies were informed by a deep, emotional commitment both to German Protestantism and to the Hohenzollern crown. Weber, on the other hand, had already adopted an iconoclastic position, openly opposing certain feudal elements of German society and taking a keen interest in the condition of the German proletariat.⁴²

⁴² While Weber never fully accepted socialism, he shared the socialists' concerns for the condition of workers and he maintained close friendships with men of strong Christian-social leanings, including Paul Göhre, Otto Baumgarten, and Friedrich Naumann, and sometimes joined them in their criticism of the German status quo. For example, he, along with Göhre, carried out a survey of rural pastors to assess the condition of rural laborers. He later attended a dockworker's strike along with Baumgarten and Naumann. He differed with Marxists and Christian Socialists primarily over their utilitarian definition of "well-being." For Weber, the chief concern was not the material comfort of the working classes, but their "quality" as human beings (i.e. their possession of

Yet, in spite of these fundamental differences, Weber and Troeltsch's worldviews were also similar in an important way. Specifically, both men looked back to the nineteenth century as a period of German cultural greatness, and looked forward upon the twentieth century, and the new political and economic forces that seemed poised to dominate it, with deep apprehension and pessimism. This similar assessment of modernity, as a looming threat to the greatness of Germany, can largely be explained by the fact that both Weber and Troeltsch were members of Germany's exclusive educated elite, a status group famously dubbed mandarins by Fritz Ringer in his work *The Decline of the German Mandarins*. Though neither Troeltsch nor Weber were typical representatives of the mandarin group, their instinctive, negative reactions to the modern world were characteristically mandarin. Eventually, both Weber and Troeltsch distanced themselves from the prejudices of this group, but they did so at different times and to different extents. An understanding of the typical values of the mandarin group will help us to perceive the differing degrees to which Weber and Troeltsch conformed to mandarin prejudices and will thus help us to understand their changing reactions to modernity and their relationship to one another.

Ringer defined a mandarin as a member of "a social and cultural elite which owes its status primarily to educational qualifications rather than to hereditary rights or wealth."⁴³ This group consisted not just of professors, but also of doctors, lawyers, bureaucrats, judges, and

certain desirable personality traits). See Radkau, *A Biography*, 564-565; Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 125. Weber, "The Nation State and Economic Policy," in *Political Writings*, trans. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speers (New York: Cambridge University Press 1994), 20.

⁴³ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 5. One should not think that this is a Weberian ideal type that is directly inspired by Weber's description of the Confucian Mandarins. See Max Weber, *The Religion of China: Confucianism and Taoism*, trans. Hans H. Gerth, (The Free Press or Glencoe, 1962), 107-136.

all other groups whose status depended upon the certification and education that they obtained via the universities. According to Ringer, however, university professors represented a sort of mandarin high-priesthood because they controlled the educational institutions which legitimated the mandarin's elite status and acted as the "spokesmen" for their group "in cultural questions."⁴⁴ Ringer believed that such a group of educated and cultured elites could dominate a society as it transitioned from a pre-modern, feudal state to a modern, democratic state. During this transition, Ringer held, a centralizing ruler would have to depend upon educated bureaucrats to carry out the expanding and rationalizing functions of the state, and, in return, these bureaucrats would be granted a status that corresponded to their increasing social significance. Ringer suggested that, because such a transitional period had lasted longer in Germany than it had in France or England, the German mandarins had been capable of consolidating their elite position more completely. However, by the turn of the twentieth century, industrial and democratic forces had begun to fundamentally restructure German society and, thereby, had begun to jeopardize the German Mandarin's privileged position. Wealth began to become a sign of status in its own right, and democrats began to question the function of the elitist university system. Industrialists, labor unions, popular political parties, and journalism all began to challenge the bureaucratic hierarchy that had long ensured the mandarin's preeminent status. Democratic ideas of equality and inclusion opposed the elitist values of cultural and spiritual cultivation that the Mandarins

⁴⁴ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 6.

had used to justify their high status. In short, modernity threatened the privileged position that the mandarins had attained.⁴⁵

As such, the typical mandarin response was to condemn modernity and oppose it by whatever means possible. Ringer called the mandarins who engaged in this total opposition to modernity “orthodox mandarins.” These typical representatives of the mandarin type adopted a completely antagonistic stance toward the forces of “progress,” and hurled the diminishing but still substantial authority of scholarly opinion against these changes. They advocated for the preservation and reassertion of the old spiritual values upon which Germany’s greatness was ostensibly based. These Orthodox mandarins refused to consider any reforms of the educational system, either to make it more practical or more progressive. Rather than accepting that they needed to make the university compatible to contemporary society, they demanded that society make itself more compatible to the old university system, and called, with increasing shrillness, for a “spiritual revolution,” which would quash the materialistic and plebian aspects of modern society and revive an appreciation for the spiritual and cultural values of the classical German tradition. Amusingly, most orthodox mandarins under took little practical action to bring about this spiritual revolution. In general, their efforts were limited to scathing written and verbal attacks on the existing order, nostalgic descriptions of Germany’s former glory, and attempts to bring about a vaguely defined “cultural synthesis,” which would reinvigorate traditional mandarin values as active social forces, by publishing laboriously constructed philosophical treatises.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 6-13.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 384-494

In opposition to this group, stood the “modernist” mandarins. This group consisted of the small minority of the mandarin population that accepted that the forces of industrialism and democracy were unstoppable and that “only a partial accommodation to modern needs and conditions would enable the mandarins and their values to retain a certain influence even in the twentieth century.”⁴⁷ This is not to say that modernist mandarins embraced technical and democratic “progress.” In fact, they usually found it as abhorrent as their orthodox peers did, but they were aware that German society might entirely abandon mandarin values and institutions, if these were not made relevant to the changing situation of the German nation. Thus, the modernists attempted to compromise with modern forces in order to preserve their cherished traditions (along with their privileged position within German society).

Ringer believed that both Weber and Troeltsch represented this modernist type. Drawing primarily on the late speeches and political writings of these two prominent scholars, he portrayed them as courageous rebels who opposed the self-serving prejudices of their orthodox peers.⁴⁸ Ringer was right to identify Weber as a leading modernist, but his inclusion of Troeltsch in the modernist group is highly questionable. Weber began his career by criticizing antiquated German social structures and by demanding pragmatic reform in response to modern conditions. He considered the emergence of modernity to be an inevitable process and insisted that only the ability to realistically assess and adapt to these changes could ensure the continued success of the German nation. Troeltsch, on the other hand, remained solidly orthodox for the majority of career and only began to embrace certain

⁴⁷ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 130.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* 341-348, 353-366.

modernist perspectives after the end of World War I, but only to a limited extent. The fact that Weber and Troeltsch found themselves at vastly different points on the “orthodox-modernist spectrum” during the war years, when the stakes were high and passions were ablaze, helps to explain why the two men broke with each other at precisely that time.

Weber and Troeltsch began their careers from vastly different starting points. Whereas the young Troeltsch represented a typically conservative member of the educated elite, faithfully reverent of crown and cross, the young Weber already held a number of strikingly unorthodox beliefs when he entered the ranks of the German professoriate. Although he shared with his mandarin colleagues a disdain for the leveling aspects of modernity and a vague longing for the reversal of modern trends, Weber did not believe that mandarins could accomplish anything through a nostalgic rejection of these forces. By the time of his inaugural lecture, the Weber recognized the inevitable ascendance of modern forces. He was prepared to compromise with them and to denounce those who were not.⁴⁹

Max Weber was born an eldest son in Erfurt, Saxony in 1864. His father was a rising figure in the center-right National Liberal Party, whose career soon carried the family to Berlin. His mother, who stemmed from a wealthy industrialist family of Huguenot origin, was a pious but undogmatic Protestant who conducted herself with unflinching ethical rigor.⁵⁰ As a child, Weber was sickly and bookish. His extreme precociousness seemed to destine him for an academic career. By the age of twelve he was reading the classic works of

⁴⁹ Max Weber, “The Nation State and Economic Policy,” *Political Writings*, trans. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speers (New York: Cambridge University Press 1994), 1-28. In this speech, Weber specifically condemned the German nobility, which was simultaneously seeking to retain its antiquated political privileges and to profit from the modern economic changes as agricultural capitalists, 23.

⁵⁰ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 18-20, 33.

political theory, taking special notice of Machiavelli. By the age of fourteen he had begun composing treatises on the “philosophy of history”, in which he sought to describe “the ‘nature’ and cultural level of the most important nations” by examining exemplary works of art and literature from each nation.⁵¹

The young Weber demonstrated a marked aversion toward orthodox German Protestantism, but he also revealed a capacity for spiritual inspiration. He once described church attendance as “the most awful military service there is,” and rejected aspects of orthodox doctrine such as Original Sin. His one positive remark regarding a church service was in regard to a Whitsun sermon that he attended while visiting relatives in Strasbourg, in which the preacher used the “the awakening of nature” to illustrate the “awakening of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of the young.” Weber noted with pleasure that the pantheistic overtones of this sermon would have caused a “scandal” if delivered among the rigidly orthodox northern Germans.⁵² This non-dogmatic attitude was encouraged by his mother, who introduced the young Weber to the writings of unorthodox Christian thinkers such as the American Unitarian William Channing, who rejected the idea of the Trinity, viewed nature as “a revelation of divine wisdom” and advocated total pacifism.⁵³ Weber seems to have followed Channing on many points, retaining a non-dogmatic respect for the depths of the spiritual realm, as reflected in his enduring appreciation for the mystical poetry of Goethe, George and Rilke, but, on the topic of pacifism, Weber revealed an early sensitivity to what

⁵¹ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 45-47.

⁵² Radkau, *A Biography*, 14.

⁵³ *Ibid.* 15.

he would later call “irreconcilable spheres of value,” denouncing Channing’s disgust for warfare as unrealistic and unhelpful.⁵⁴

When the cerebral youth enrolled in the University of Heidelberg, he chose to pursue a degree in law, though this did not prevent him from also gaining competence in the fields of economics and history. His two major works from his student years, *The Legal Forms of Medieval Trading Companies* and *Roman Agrarian History*, demonstrated his abilities in all three of these fields. They also revealed certain intellectual tendencies that would continue to characterize Weber’s work for the rest of his life. Most important among these was the way in which Weber included both material and ideological factors in his accounts of historical causation. In both treatises, Weber asserted that certain economic developments had been determined by independent changes within the legal and political realms. In doing this Weber placed himself between the two dominant historical perspectives of time, materialism and idealism. Whereas materialism, following Marx, viewed economic relations as the root cause of all political and ideological development, and idealists, following Hegel, saw a society’s economic and social structure as a mere expression of its spiritual condition, Weber insisted that the causal chain ran in both directions, meaning that the economic realm could be influenced by the intellectual and vice versa.⁵⁵ This basic idea would remain central in Weber’s later works.

⁵⁴ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 449-479. Radkau, *A Biography*, 18.

⁵⁵ Lutz, Kaelber, “Max Weber’s Dissertation,” in *History of the Human Sciences*, 16:2 (2003): 27-57. Guenter Roth, “Introduction,” in Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), XXXV-XXXIX.

After completing these works, Weber received his habilitation and was thus qualified to hold a professorship, but for a time he wavered between the options of becoming an academic or pursuing a “practical” career in law or politics.⁵⁶ During this time of hesitation, he busied himself with a number of projects pertaining to, among other things, the condition of agricultural laborers in eastern Prussia. In 1893, Weber took up an assignment from the Association for Social Policy to conduct a survey of eastern agricultural workers, and, later that same year, with the help of the Christian socialist Paul Göhre, carried out a survey of east Prussian pastors regarding the condition of laborers in their parishes.⁵⁷ In his reports on these surveys, which he presented to the Association for Social Policy and to Evangelical Social Congress, Weber presented findings that illustrate the “modernist” tendencies of his early thought. The basic conclusion of these reports was that the *Junkers* (landowning Prussian aristocrats) had responded to the new pressures of international trade by hiring cheap Polish labor, thereby causing a flood of immigration of east Prussian German peasants into urban centers and the “Polinization” of the rural east.⁵⁸ Weber interpreted this trend as a negative result of modernization, in which the culturally advanced Protestant Germans were being ousted from their native soil by the less culturally advanced Catholic Poles, whose lower cultural level enabled them to sustain themselves in wretched conditions. Weber spoke out against this “Polinization” in defense of traditional German culture, which he believed

⁵⁶ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 162-166.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 124-133.

⁵⁸ Radkau, *A Biography*, 80.

was being undermined by modern economic forces and an “inferior” foreign culture.⁵⁹ All this sounds rather orthodox, But Weber’s modernist perspective was apparent in his recommended response to this situation, which scandalized certain conservative elements of his audience, such as the founder of the Evangelical Social Congress, the court preacher and antisemitic agitator Adolf Stöcker. To begin with, Weber recognized that the old feudal system that had characterized eastern agriculture in the pre-modern period could not be reinstated. The forces of the market could not be reversed and, thus, economic reform was necessary. As such, Weber called for an end of state support of the *Junkers*, who no longer served the interests of the German state, and for the enactment of a new policy for the establishment and support of independent German villages in the east, in order to combat the increasing Polish presence and to “weld the small farmers the soil of the fatherland, not with legal, but with psychological bonds.”⁶⁰ This willingness to accept the changes of the modern era and to oppose obsolete aspects of the German tradition, demonstrates the “modernist” aspects of the young Weber’s thought.⁶¹

⁵⁹ See his summary of his findings on this topic in Weber, “The Nation State and Economic Policy,” 7-11. It is important to note that Weber argues for the inferiority of the Poles in terms of economics, *not* in terms of race. Interestingly, Weber basically equates Poles with Catholics, because he holds that German Catholics in this area are “lost to their national community.” As such, Weber sees the relative growth of the Catholic population as a sign of increasing “Polinization.” See *Ibid.* 5.

⁶⁰ Quoted in Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 129

⁶¹ As Wolfgang Mommsen pointed out, Weber’s originally fervent concern over “Polinization” would decrease with time, as his concept of “nation” became increasingly liberal. Eventually he adopted the position that “a state [need] not necessarily be a ‘nation state’ in the sense that it [oriented] its interests exclusively in the favor of a single dominant nationality.” Mommsen, *Max Weber in German Politics*, 53-60. This position that was reflected in Weber’s outspoken support for marginalized groups within the Reich, as can be seen in his remark to one of his young admirers in Heidelberg: “If someday I am well again and can hold a seminar, I shall accept only Russians, Poles and Jews, no Germans.” This gradual movement away from German chauvinism toward an inclusive idea of the German state, reflects Weber’s increasingly sharp rejection of the orthodox mandarin perspective. Paul Honigsheim, *On Max Weber*, trans. Joan Rytina (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 13.

As a result of his work on the subject of eastern agriculture, Weber was offered a chair in economics and finance at the University of Freiburg. It was here that Weber gave his (in)famous inaugural lecture in 1895, shocking many of his listeners with brutal political pronouncements that bore only tangential connections to economics and finance.⁶² His lecture began with a summary of his findings regarding eastern agricultural questions, but it soon transitioned into a general presentation of his ideas concerning the nature of society and of the social sciences. The general tone of this presentation was one of hardnosed political realism, which stubbornly refused to forget that, at its deepest level, history was an endless struggle for power. This tough stance was very much in the spirit of Machiavelli, but also revealed traces of Nietzschean thought.⁶³ From the premise of this never ending power struggle, Weber drew the conclusion that the policies of a state must always serve the power interests of the nation that it represents. Through this claim, Weber made it clear that the preservation of the German nation was, for him, the primary value according to which all government policy should be judged. He acknowledged that many would view this nationalist stance as a prejudice, but he defended his position by arguing that all questions of policy required subjective value judgments, and that any attempt to avoid bringing subjective values into such questions only resulted in an incoherent “chaos of different evaluative judgments.” Thus, Weber argued that a political thinker was obligated to “clarify *in his own*

⁶² Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber in German Politics*, 37.

⁶³ Wilhelm Hennis, *Max Weber, Essays in Reconstruction*, trans. Keith Tribe (Boston: Allen and Unwin, 1988), 146-172.

mind, and for others, the ultimate subjective core of his judgments.”⁶⁴ For Weber, this was the nation.

In spite of the ultimately subjective nature of his valuation of the nation, Weber considered this to be a consistent value judgment by which to structure the policies of a nation-state, because it alone helped to ensure the continued survival of the nation. Any other valuational principal, such as the utilitarianism of the socialists or the traditionalism of the *Junkers*, could at times weaken the nation by favoring the well-being of specific segments of the nation over the strength of the nation as a whole.⁶⁵ Weber’s idolization of the nation, however, lacked the romantic conservative aspects that were so characteristic of the nationalism of many educated Germans. Whereas the romantic conservatives defined nations in terms specific objective qualities, such as language, ethnicity, or culture, Weber defined the nation as an essentially a political unit, in which individuals cooperated to succeed in the “struggle for existence.”⁶⁶ It was not the bonds of blood or cultural heritage but the cooperation in the unending struggle for power that forged a nation. And this struggle, Weber noted, was waged not only in the political and military realms, but in the economic realm as well.

⁶⁴ Max Weber, “The Nation State and Economic Policy,” in *Political writings*, eds. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge University Press,) 18-19.

⁶⁵ Weber, “The Nation State and Economic Policy,” 22-25.

⁶⁶ Ibid.16, 17. In this Weber, differentiated himself not only from the nationalism that was typical of German intellectuals of his day, but from the whole tradition of German nationalism, which founded itself upon the belief that the German nation embodied certain intrinsically superior qualities. See K. Steven Vincent, “National Consciousness, Nationalism, and Exclusion: Reflections on the French Case,” in *Historical Reflections*, 19, no. 3 (1993), 442-444. See also Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, 48-67. Later on, during discussion at the second German Sociologists’ Congress in 1910, Weber would substantiate his view of the nation as an essentially political unit by pointing out that even though Alsatians shared a linguistic heritage with Germans, they felt an attachment to France because they had participated, as Frenchmen, in the great political struggles of the French Revolution. See Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, 50-51.

Regarding the economic realm, Weber held that the “expanded economic community” of the modern age, far from serving as a means for international peace and cooperation, had become, in fact, “another form of the struggle of the nations with each other, one which had not eased the struggle ... but has made it more difficult...”⁶⁷ As such, the nation-state was obligated to optimize national economic power just as it was obligated to constantly improve its military capacity. This meant not only competing with other nation-states for markets and materials, but also ensuring that self-interested groups within the nation did not undermine national economic expansion for the sake of their own well-being.⁶⁸ This situation of constant competition among nations led Weber to accept that capitalism, as the most efficient means of marshaling a country's economic power, was an inevitable fate for any nation that hoped to succeed in the struggle for existence.

In summary, this address revealed a number of core values that Weber would carry with him throughout his life. Most importantly, it revealed a commitment to the German nation that was founded on a realistic consideration of power politics, rather than on romantic conservative notions of linguistic or cultural unity. Contained within this consideration was a concern for the influence of economic and social conditions upon “human types,” which

⁶⁷ Max Weber, “The Nation State and Economic Policy,” 16.

⁶⁸ In his lecture, Weber singled out the Junker's who put personal economic interests ahead of German nation-state. They did this by demanding protectionist policies from the government and by hiring cheap Polish labor in favor of Germans. Weber would employ a similar line of reasoning in arguments with socialists, arguing that national economic efficacy had to be put ahead of the well-being of the proletarian. See Radkau's discussion of the early stages of Weber's relationship to the Christian Socialist pastor Friedrich Naumann in *Max Weber: A Biography*, 134.

remained a central theme in Weber's later investigations.⁶⁹ Finally, Weber's lecture revealed his awareness of the relativity of value judgments. He recognized that no absolute perspective could be derived from scientific inquiry, and instead asserted that such inquiry functioned as a morally neutral intellectual tool, which could be employed in the service any subjectively founded ideal.

All three of these themes, the primacy of power and eternal struggle, the concern with creating noble individuals, and the lack of all objective justification for action, carried with them echoes of Nietzsche's radical thought. They were the basis for Weber's characteristic ethos, which Troeltsch would later characterize, not uncritically, as "heroic skepticism."⁷⁰ For Weber, just as for Nietzsche, the old Christian God was dead. No moral code hung over nations, demanding brotherliness and forgiveness; no grand design governed the chaotic unfolding of history. Power alone determined the course of events, and only those with the willpower to strive after the attainment of power would ever have any say in controlling their own destinies. It was precisely this Nietzschean aspect of Weber's thought that would remain forever alien to Troeltsch.⁷¹ Whereas Weber accepted, albeit with regret, the moral chaos of

⁶⁹ See Wilhelm Hennis, *Essays in Reconstruction*, 21-61. Hennis held that this concern for human types was a unifying theme throughout Weber's work. Indeed, he claimed that Weber's ultimate evaluative principle for a social system became: what type of men will rise to dominance within a given social structure?

⁷⁰ Troeltsch, "Max Weber" in *Max Weber zum Gedächtnis*, ed. Rene Kunig and Johannes Winkelmann (Cologne and Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963), 46.

⁷¹ Weber's Nietzschean nationalism is, however, unfaithful to a certain anarchistic strain running through Nietzsche's thought. Whereas Weber embraced the modern, militarized nation-state and the oppressive social forces required for maintaining it, Nietzsche rejected it, called it a "new idol," and condemned it as a great threat to individual freedom. See Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 75-78. This inconsistency, does nothing to diminish the importance of the Nietzschean flavor of much of Weber's thought. As Steven Aschheim, has shown, most Nietzsche-inspired intellectuals borrowed certain aspects of Nietzsche's perspective, while ignoring other equally central aspects of Nietzsche's thought. Because of the extraordinary diversity of Nietzsche's insights, it was possible for thinkers

the modern world, Troeltsch rejected it, and sought in all of his writings to overcome it by revivifying the moral certainties of past Christian ages. This desire to overcome the present with the values of the past was a conservative tendency that characterized Troeltsch's thought from an early age and that would place an insuperable barrier between his thought and Weber's.

Troeltsch was born in 1865 to a Protestant family in Augsburg, a city long noted for its confessional division between Protestants and Catholics. His father was a physician, who encouraged Troeltsch, his eldest son, to take a lively interest in intellectual pursuits, especially where the natural sciences were concerned. Troeltsch recalled later that his paternal home had contained all sorts of scientific curiosities, including “skeletons, anatomical compendia, electrical machines, books of plants, books about crystals, etc.”⁷² Thus, Troeltsch developed a wide range of interests, which, when he entered the University of Erlangen, left him undecided about which course of study to pursue, in spite of that university's famous Protestant theology faculty. When he did eventually decide in favor of studying theology, he did so on the basis of his “naturally vigorous religious drive,” which “seemed to guarantee that everything would work out somehow or another.”⁷³ This was the first time that Troeltsch would rely on his natural religious certainty to overcome dilemmas that could not be rationally resolved—it would not be the last.

of totally oppositional perspectives to both draw inspiration from Nietzsche's work. See Steven Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

⁷² Hans-George Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, trans. John Bowden, (London: SCM Press LTD, 1992), 3-5.

⁷³ *Ibid.* 8.

In spite of his faith in the correctness of his decision to study theology, Troeltsch quickly grew dissatisfied with the strictly orthodox theological perspective that dominated Erlangen, which took personal, subjective certainty in the truth of the gospel as the ultimate foundation of Christian thought. For Troeltsch, this approach, which turned the existence of God into a mere “postulate,” and turned all of theology into the rational elaboration of an irrational principle, failed to satisfy his personal need to serve equally his two internal masters, “thought and feeling.”⁷⁴

Thus, in the winter of 1885, Troeltsch transferred to the University of Berlin, yet, here too, he felt dissatisfied with his theological education, writing that his teacher in the subject had “been imposing but in no way illuminating.” On the other hand, Troeltsch experienced his time in the capital as a period of intellectual and cultural expansion. He took a broad range of courses, on such topics as art history and physical anthropology, and allowed himself to be swept away by feelings of national pride inspired by Berlin’s monumental landscape. The excited youth wrote to a friend that he felt his “political views in particular being vigorously stimulated, and if possible here I am more enthusiastic than before for our imperial monarchy with the Hohenzollern crown.”⁷⁵ This emotionally-charged patriotism and reverence for tradition remained a feature of Troeltsch’s mature thought that contrasted sharply with Weber’s pragmatic commitment to the national power.

In spite of his feelings of awe for the imperial capital, Troeltsch remained true to his academic vocation and continued to search for a university where he could receive a suitable

⁷⁴ Drescher, *Ersnt Troeltsch*, 9-11.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* 17.

theological education. He found such a place in the University of Göttingen, where he came under the influence of two scholars who would help Troeltsch develop his unique theological approach, Albrecht Ritschl and Paul de Lagarde.⁷⁶

Albrecht Ritschl was the preeminent systematic theologian of early Imperial Germany. His central theological claim was that religion was an essentially ethical, rather than doctrinal, phenomenon. On the basis of this claim, Ritschl offered a historical evaluation of Christian forms, not on the basis of their doctrinal accuracy, but rather on the basis of the influence that they exerted on the life-styles (*Lebensführungen*) of the faithful.⁷⁷ Ritschl's most famous application of this ethico-historical approach is found in *The History of Pietism*, in which Ritschl argued for the superiority of German Lutheranism over both Catholicism and all other Protestant Groups. Ritschl drew this conclusion because he believed that only Lutheranism, by means of an inclusive, active, worldly ethic, had been able to overcome the exclusive, ascetic tendencies that dominated all other Christian groups. Thus, while other Christian groups wasted their efforts on ineffective, otherworldly practices, Lutherans devoted their energy to ethical activity within worldly "callings" (*Berufe*) in the service of a divinely ordained society.⁷⁸ As Constance Benson correctly points out, because this ethic taught that the structures of society were divinely ordained, it contained an implicit

⁷⁶ Drescher, *Ersnt* Troeltsch, 19-21; Benson, *God and Caesar*, 55-62.

⁷⁷ Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1870-1914* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1985), 17.

⁷⁸ Albrecht Ritschl, "Prolegomena to the History of Pietism" in *Three Essays*. Trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1972), 70-83, 105-120.

condemnation of any kind of resistance to traditional secular authorities, thus helped to support the rigidly hierarchical status quo within Imperial German society.⁷⁹

Many aspects of Troeltsch's thought can be traced back to Ritschl. Most importantly, Troeltsch retained his teacher's emphasis on the ethical potential of religious teachings. Throughout his career, Troeltsch's showed a marked lack of concern for the truth or falsehood of doctrine. What mattered for him were the ethical implications of a Christian teaching and whether these implications could be applied effectively in a modern context. Troeltsch also followed Ritschl in minimizing the Jewish roots of Christianity. Whereas earlier Protestant theologians, such as F.C. Bauer, had argued that Christianity represented a synthesis of Judaism and Paganism, Ritschl argued that Christianity represented an essentially gentile phenomenon. In his own works, Troeltsch followed Ritschl's lead, paying minimal attention to the Jewish origins of Christian thought.⁸⁰ Troeltsch also retained a historical approach to the study of religion, which can be traced back partially to Ritschl, but which, in its broader comparative scope, probably owes more to Troeltsch's other influential teacher, Lagarde.

Whereas Troeltsch's relationship to Ritschl is widely acknowledged, his relationship to Lagarde is not. This probably has to do with the fact that Lagarde is most widely known not for his theology, but rather for his virulent antisemitism and xenophobic nationalism.⁸¹ He was, however, an active theologian, and in this capacity he exerted a strong influence on Troeltsch. Unlike Ritschl, Lagarde rejected contemporary forms of Christianity. He believed

⁷⁹ Bansom, *God and Caesar*, 56.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 55-56.

⁸¹ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, 3-94.

that modern liberalism had sapped the spiritual energy of the German soul and that only a new, revitalized form of Christianity, sprung from the still living spiritual roots of the German people, could bring about the regeneration of the German nation.⁸² Lagarde believed that this regeneration would give the German nation the spiritual force it needed to overcome the cultural divisions that divided the empire, welding former Protestants, Catholic and Jews into a unified spiritual whole.⁸³ Whereas Ritschl rejected all mysticism as an inferior and extraneous aspect of religious life, Lagarde saw mysticism as the essential kernel of all religion. As such, Lagarde advocated for a return to a more primitive form of life that would be more conducive religious inspiration. Lagarde based this mystical philosophy of religion on the comparative study of world religions. Drawing on his knowledge of such exotic languages as Assyrian, Lagarde supported his theological views with reference to spiritual traditions that lay far beyond the traditionally narrow scope of German theology.⁸⁴

Certain traces of Lagarde's thought can be identified in Troeltsch's work, but the precise extent of Lagarde's influence on Troeltsch is difficult to gauge. Troeltsch admitted that Lagarde led him to a "fundamental break" with some of Ritschl's views during his time in Göttingen, and he continued to view Lagarde as "one of the most stimulating and important theologians, if at the same time one of the strangest."⁸⁵ Certainly, in Troeltsch's life-long fascination with religious mysticism we see an affinity with Lagarde's view. Even

⁸² Paul de Lagarde, "The Need to Transcend Liberalism," in *Fascism*, ed. Roger Griffin, (New York: Oxford University Press.), 98-99.

⁸³ Ibid. 99. Lagarde was an outspoken antisemite of the "cultural" rather than the "racial" variety. He viewed German Jews as a manifestation of German cultural disunity and believed that a cultural revival could result in their complete assimilation into the German nation.

⁸⁴ Benson, *God and Caesar*, 56; Stern, *Cultural Despair*, 22.

⁸⁵ Drescher, *Ersnt Troeltsch*, 21; Stern, *Cultural Despair*, 35.

though he followed Ritschl in his emphasis on the ethical effects of religion, he refused to reduce religion to an essentially ethical phenomenon. Also, Troeltsch's controversial insistence on studying Christianity in relation to other world religions echoed Lagarde's comparative approach.⁸⁶ Troeltsch's lingering concern with the divisive and spiritually corrosive influence of modern life and his desire to overcome these influences and restore cultural unity through a rejuvenated form of Christianity strongly resemble the anxieties and hopes that led Lagarde to call for a newly purified, Germanic Christianity.⁸⁷ Troeltsch's enduring respect for Lagarde is attested to by his dedication of the second volume of his collected works "to the memory of Paul de Lagarde".⁸⁸

Scholars have drawn various conclusions regarding Lagarde's influence on Troeltsch from these ideological affinities. Troeltsch's biographer, Hans-Georg Drescher, acknowledged that Troeltsch was aware of Lagarde's ideas, and sympathetic to some of them, but also held that Lagarde's personal influence on Troeltsch was relatively limited, arguing that Troeltsch was never actually Lagarde's "student in the narrow sense," and that Troeltsch came to know of Lagarde's ideas only indirectly through other doctoral candidates.⁸⁹ Constance Benson, conversely, saw Troeltsch's mystical emphasis and the antisemitic implications of his thought, as direct links between Troeltsch and Lagarde.⁹⁰ It is

⁸⁶ See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Absoluteness of Christianity* (Richmond, Va. John Knox Press, 1971); Ernst Troeltsch, "Christianity and the History of Religion," trans. James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense, in *Religion in History* (Minnneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 77-86.

⁸⁷ See Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 25, 1004. Troeltsch's desire for spiritually unity carried with it the "cultural" antisemitic implications similar to Lagarde's. Troeltsch's unified culture was, by definition a Christian culture, thereby excluding the possibility that Jews could be a part of it.

⁸⁸ Benson, *God and Caesar*, 57.

⁸⁹ Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch: Leben und Werk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 48.

⁹⁰ Benson, *God and Caesar*, 57-61, 94, 95.

certainly important to recognize the affinity between Troeltsch and Lagarde, but there is not enough evidence to prove that Troeltsch derived his views directly from him. The importance of mysticism as a religious phenomenon was recognized by many theologians, and even Ritschl acknowledged it, though only as an aspect of “inferior” forms of Christianity.⁹¹ Broad comparative approaches to the history of religion were being carried out by a number of scholars, both in Germany and in neighboring countries.⁹² And, as we have already seen, skepticism of modernity and a nostalgic longing for spiritual unity was widely prevalent among German intellectuals. All of these facts go to show that the aspects in which Troeltsch resembled Lagarde, were not unique to these two scholars, but simply manifestations of broader social and intellectual trends. However, the striking similarities between Troeltsch and Lagarde are still significant because they reveal the powerful romantic conservative currents that flowed through Troeltsch thought.

In 1891, as Weber was writing his habilitation on Roman agriculture, Troeltsch completed his licentiate thesis, “Reason and Revelation in Johann Gerhard and Melancthon,” a historical study of Lutheran theological developments during the time immediately following Luther’s death. In this work, Troeltsch emphasized the important role played by Melancthon in mediating between Luther’s uncompromising religious vision and the practical demands of the situation by drawing on traditional aspects of pre-reformation doctrine, such as the idea of Natural Law. For Troeltsch, this theoretical justification for Christian activity within the secular realm was essential for ensuring the survival of

⁹¹ Claude Welch, *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century*, 10-11.

⁹²Gottfried Kuenzlen, “Die Unbekannte Quelle der Religionssoziologie Max Webers,” *Zeitschrift für Soziologie* (August 1978): 215-227.

Lutheranism. Troeltsch concluded that Christianity was always compelled to mediate between pure religious impulses and the practical demands of a given cultural situation. Based on the vast cultural changes of the modern times, Troeltsch argued that modern theologians were faced with the task of finding a new way to mediate between Christianity and the world.⁹³ Both of these themes, the importance of mediating between religion and contemporary culture, and the need for a new means of facilitating this mediation brought about by modern changes, played a major role throughout Troeltsch's career.

In a later essay, "Christianity and the History of Religion," published in 1897, Troeltsch used a comparative approach to argue for the superiority of Christianity among world religions. Troeltsch began by positing a Hegelian teleological structure for religious development, according to which religion began as an expression of religious feeling within a narrow, parochial framework and progressed toward total universality. He then sought to discern which world religion most closely approximated the goal of universality, and therefore represented the highest form of religion. He immediately dismissed all religions from consideration, except for Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity and then dispatched the first two of these with a single paragraph each. Whereas Islam "represents a regression from Judaism and Christianity and has never been able to conceal its characteristic ties to the Arab nation and war," Buddhism restricted salvation to a tiny minority of religious elites, while condemning "the vast majority of people [to] remain caught up in the cycle of

⁹³ Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 35-39.

reincarnations.”⁹⁴ Thus, Troeltsch concluded that only Christianity had “completely broken out of the spell of the religion of nature” to attain “an absolute and unconditional universality.” Troeltsch concluded this essay with a discussion of the pernicious effects of modern science, which he believed was promoting ethical relativism and the unobtainable dream of “innerworldly cultural happiness.” Troeltsch ruled out all non-religious attempts to overcome these increasingly unbearable problems, and asserted that only a return to the universally valid ideas of Christianity, which represented the attainment of the spiritual goal of history, could resolve these issues.⁹⁵

A comparison of these two early works, reveals a number of features that remained characteristics of Troeltsch’s later thought. The first of these is Troeltsch’s belief that historical inquiry was capable of revealing universal values. This belief was founded on an idealistically-inspired belief in a teleological universe. Because Troeltsch believed that history progressed toward a spiritually ideal goal, he concluded that he only needed to discern the general direction of historical development in order to recognize the goal. Once this was accomplished, he then only needed to assess where various historical phenomena stood in relation to this goal, in order to determine the relative value of these phenomena. Troeltsch drew the conclusion that Christianity represented the closest approximation of the spiritual goal of history, and thus he believed that his historical investigations demonstrated Christian superiority. Second, in these works, Troeltsch condemned modern, secular culture,

⁹⁴ Here Troeltsch reduced both of these religions to a single stereotypical image, revealing both his and the general public’s ignorance of the great degree of variety that exists within these religious traditions. For example, Troeltsch fails to recognize the commitment of Mahayana Buddhism to the salvation of all beings from suffering and the pacifism of the Islamic Sufis.

⁹⁵ Ernst Troeltsch, “Christianity and the History of Religion,” 77-86.

as a vain, self-deluding experiment, which could only end in despair if it was not overcome by means of a return to Christianity. But, at the same time, Troeltsch believed that this return to Christianity could be achieved only if Christian doctrine adapted itself to modern conditions. Thus, for Troeltsch, the role of the theologian was to help to create a modern form of Christianity, by means of which secular modern culture, with its fragmentation and hopelessness, could be overcome. Troeltsch's essentially conservative goal of subordinating modern European culture to Christian values led him to become of a revolutionary innovator within the field of theology.

The preceding descriptions of Weber and Troeltsch reveal to two very different personalities, with divergent sets of goals and directions of intellectual development. The young Weber was staunch realist, who accepted the difficulties of modernity and sought to deal with them in a pragmatic manner. He rejected all idealistic attempts to derive an absolute set of values from scientific inquiry and insisted that modern science could act only as a tool in the service of subjective value judgments. He was equally realistic in his early historical inquiries, offering historical analyses that attuned themselves to the subtle interrelations of material and ideal forces. In this way, he avoided the dogmatic rigidities of both Hegelian and Marxist views. For Weber, history was determined neither by the unfolding of the world-spirit, nor by an inevitable evolution of class relations, but rather an aimless and infinitely-complex interplay of forces. Within this chaotic world, Weber affirmed the value of the German nation, yet he acknowledged that this value was ultimately subjective and could derive no support from the historical or social sciences. As such, Weber

viewed scholarship a value-neutral tool, which, when wielded objectively, could make possible the achievement of various goals, but could never answer the ultimate question: which goals *should* we strive to achieve?⁹⁶

Troeltsch's worldview was separated from Weber's by a vast spiritual gulf. He viewed history as "the unfolding of a uniform and essentially simple spiritual import."⁹⁷ Not only did Troeltsch believe in the existence of universal values; he also believed that historical scholarship could determine what these values were. He believed that his studies had revealed Christianity to be the most perfect manifestation of these values yet attained, and he thus condemned modern secularism as an ethical and spiritual regression. He believed that the social conflict and moral disorientation that characterized modernity resulted from this regression, and that these could be resolved only through a renewal of pre-modern Christian values. His future efforts would focus on the relationship of Christianity to modernity, with the ultimate goal of reshaping Christianity in such a way that it would be able to overcome the forces of modernity and reunite Europe within its eternally valid ethical teachings. Troeltsch was an innovative theologian, but it was this reactionary goal that motivated his efforts.

Notwithstanding these fundamental differences, some common ground existed between Weber and Troeltsch. Both of them displayed a deep distrust of the modern situation. Even though Troeltsch sought to overcome modernity while Weber sought to

⁹⁶ See Max Weber, "Objectivity in Social Science and Social Policy" in *The Philosophy of the Social Sciences: A Reader*, ed. Maurice Natanson (New York: Random House, 1963), 360-367; Mi Gyung Kim, "A Historical Atlas of Objectivity," in *Modern Intellectual History*, 6, 3 (2009): 584-587

⁹⁷ Troeltsch, "Christianity and the History of Religion," 86.

understand and adapt to it, they both harbored a deep anxiety about modern conditions. They shared in this feeling with the vast majority of their mandarin peers. Thus, even though the two scholars responded to the problem of modernity in different ways, they could at least agree that this problem existed and deserved to be studied. It therefore makes sense that their major cooperative efforts, which began to bear fruit in 1904, centered on precisely the issue of modernity, its causes, its effects, and its possible resolution. As the following chapter will show, Weber and Troeltsch retained their vastly differing attitudes toward modernity throughout their years of cooperation. But this divide did not prevent them from helping one another to refine and elaborate their conflicting ideas concerning the problem of modernity and its possible resolution.

Chapter Two

Ideological Tension, Scholarly Cooperation

By the time Weber and Troeltsch became colleagues at the University of Heidelberg in 1896, they had already firmly entrenched themselves within contrasting worldviews. Weber adhered to a staunch, sometimes even brutal, political realism, which viewed history as an endless and aimless struggle between competing national powers. In his early works on medieval business and ancient agriculture, he had shown sensitivity to the material bases of power, but also argued that intellectual and legal forces were capable of influencing the material sphere and thus the course of history.⁹⁸ On the basis of this view, he argued for a pragmatic form of nationalism, according to which each national group should strive to ensure its existence by rationally competing with other groups for power.⁹⁹ Any group that failed to do this would be quickly eliminated from the game of history. He believed that social scientists had an important role to play in the struggle for national power: the production of reliable social and economic information, on the basis of which rational policy could be founded. As a researcher, Weber conformed to this role, as can be seen in his critical reports on East German agriculture, which implied that contemporary governmental policy favored the Junkers at the expense of the German nation as a whole. Unlike the majority of his peers, Weber was not afraid to criticize the traditional elites; in fact, when such criticism was called for, he believed it was an intellectual's duty to deliver it.

⁹⁸ Guenther Roth, "Introduction," in Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), XXXV-XL.

⁹⁹ Weber, "The Nation State and Economic Policy," in *Political Writings*, 17.

Troeltsch viewed history and his place in it from a vastly different perspective. Troeltsch was, like Weber, a nationalist, but the basis of this nationalism was his emotional attachment to German tradition. His student days in Berlin had left him with an unshakable sense of “awe” before the glory of the “Hohenzollern crown,” and his Christian faith was similarly emotional in its foundation.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Troeltsch’s critical inquiries into Christian history were always balanced out by an unshakable faith in the validity of Christianity, which was anchored in his “naturally vigorous religious drive.”¹⁰¹ As a student, he immersed himself in the tradition of German idealism, taking up a pseudo-Hegelian view of history, which allowed him to read a moral and spiritual purpose into the course of world events. On the basis of this perspective, he concluded that Protestant Christianity represented the highest realization of these purposes. Thus, he interpreted the growing secularism of the modern era as an ongoing disaster of the highest degree. Because he believed that the effectiveness of Christianity was dependent upon its ability to mediate between its timeless core values and the environment in which it found itself, Troeltsch insisted that Christianity needed to adapt itself to address the modern situation if it was going to rescue European culture from the hopelessness and futility of a purely secular existence. This was the task that Troeltsch took upon himself, and, as a professor of theology, he began carrying out innovative and theological and historical investigations in the service of this essentially conservative goal, preserving and strengthening Protestant Christian values in order to oppose the soulless culture of the modern era.

¹⁰⁰ Hans-George Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 17.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.* 12

We are thus presented with a stark contrast between Weber as a progressive, secular rationalist, and Troeltsch as a romantic, religious conservative. And yet, these men would go on to develop an intimate friendship and to influence one another's thinking in fundamental ways. How was this possible? Quite simply, their friendship was, essentially, a pragmatic alliance between two thinkers who sought to incorporate one another's insights into divergent projects. Each man respected the remarkable intellectual abilities of the other—each one occasionally described the other as a “genius”—and so they engaged in a “daily exchange of ideas” which helped them both further their own intellectual goals.¹⁰² Weber, who already recognized the importance of ideological forces in history, applied theological insights derived from Troeltsch to historical and sociological problems, while Troeltsch employed Weber's methods and findings in his attempt to understand the relationship of Christianity to modernity. While these two projects were not essentially contradictory, the motives behind these goals were. Weber was committed to a value-free analysis of modern society in order to allow for rational decision making within a changing world; Troeltsch sought to combat secular modernity and to reestablish the dominance of Christian values within German society. However, it seems that Weber and Troeltsch remained, for many years, unconcerned with this fundamental conflict of values. Troeltsch once wrote that both he and Weber knew of these differences, but that “they practically never spoke [of them].”¹⁰³ Weber and Troeltsch could cooperate only because they were either unconcerned or willfully uninformed about each other's ultimate scholarly intentions. This arrangement actually

¹⁰² Chapman, “Polytheism and Personality,” 2.

¹⁰³ Graf, “Max Weber und Protestantische Theologie,” 144.

proved to be quite stable during the happy pre-war years that the two spent at Heidelberg; however, when war broke out in 1914, and the two men transferred their activities from the intellectual to the practical sphere, their conflicting values would lead them into open conflict with one another, bringing an end to their friendship and scholarly cooperation.

Though Weber and Troeltsch became colleagues at Heidelberg in 1896, and soon established friendly relations with one another, their effective collaboration did not begin until 1903.¹⁰⁴ The main reason for this was that within a year of joining the Heidelberg faculty, Weber was struck by a crippling psychological illness, which practically eliminated him from the scholarly realm until around 1903. During its first acute phase, the illness involved psychotic symptoms, but its main enduring symptom was extreme anxiety over the possibility of nocturnal emissions (referred to by Weber and his wife as “demons”), which resulted in insomnia and the incapacity for strenuous intellectual activity.¹⁰⁵ Troeltsch did occasionally visit the ailing Weber, but given the fact that Weber could hardly even read during this acute phase of his illness, it seems unlikely that the visits proved to be intellectually fruitful for either party.¹⁰⁶ On top of this, Weber was rarely in Heidelberg during the time of his illness. He spent much of his time during this period in Italy and

¹⁰⁴ Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, 227-228.

¹⁰⁵ Joachim Radkau, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. Patrick Camiller (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009), 150, 156-159, 210-216. Earlier scholars, such as H. Stewart Hughes, have tended to give much more heroic/existential interpretations of Weber’s breakdown, but Radkau makes a convincing case for this rather unflattering interpretation of the illness. See H. Stewart Hughes, *Consciousness and Society* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002), 329, 333.

¹⁰⁶ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 243, 251-252, 257, 260. For most of the duration of his illness, Weber could not read or write without becoming “excited” and “irritated,” and he feared that such intellectual activities “set him back.” It was not until 1901 that Weber began reading again, and it was only in 1902 that he began engaging once again with texts in his own field, such as Georg Simmel’s *Philosophy of Money*. It is of course possible that Weber read some of Troeltsch’s work during this time, but Marianne makes no mention of it.

Switzerland, seeking reprieve from his internal torments, further limiting the opportunities for contact between the two thinkers.¹⁰⁷

Thus, it was not until 1903 that Weber and Troeltsch really began their intellectual exchange. By this time, Weber had regained his capacity for sustained intellectual effort, as illustrated by his first publication since his collapse, a methodological essay dealing with the meaning of value neutrality in the social sciences.¹⁰⁸ It was also in this year that Weber finally returned permanently to Heidelberg, which allowed him to reintegrate himself into to the mainstream of intellectual life.¹⁰⁹

Soon after his return, Weber renewed his friendship with Troeltsch. In February 1904, he and Troeltsch began attending the meetings of the Eranos Circle, which consisted of a select group of Heidelberg professors, all of whom shared an interest in religious scholarship. During each monthly meeting of this group, one member hosted the others at his house, treating the others to a presentation of his most recent work and then to a lavish dinner.¹¹⁰ Both Weber and Troeltsch took great pleasure in these meetings, enjoying both the camaraderie and the intellectual exchange that the group fostered. It was in this pleasant environment that Weber, in February 1905 presented some of his findings on “Protestantism and Modern Business Life,” which he drew from his nearly completed essay, *The Protestant Ethic and the “Spirit” of Capitalism*.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Radkau, *Max Weber*, 565-566.

¹⁰⁸ Max Weber, *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*, trans. Guy Oakes, (New York: The Free Press, 1975).

¹⁰⁹ Radkau, *Max Weber*, 279.

¹¹⁰ Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 122.

¹¹¹ Radkau, *Max Weber*, 287.

Many of the ideas put forward in this presentation were inspired by a trip that Weber and Troeltsch took in the late summer of 1904 to St. Louis, Missouri. The occasion for the trip was an invitation extended to both scholars to speak at the Congress of Arts and Science. By the time they set off for America, Weber had already published the first three chapters of his essay on the Protestant ethic, but the decisive final chapters, in which he would introduce his famous concept of ascetic Protestantism, would not appear until after his return from the trip. Weber was clearly excited to be traveling to the land where he believed both the Protestant ethic and modern capitalism were most fully manifested. He viewed the trip as an opportunity to examine new sources and to personally witness the sociological effects of American Protestantism. Troeltsch and Weber landed in New York at the end of August and made their way from there via upstate New York and Chicago to St. Louis for the congress on September 19. During these approximately twenty days, Weber and Troeltsch experienced America during one of its most intense periods of urbanization and industrialization.

Weber and Troeltsch reacted very differently to the overwhelming urban scenes they witnessed in New York and Chicago. The differences in their assessments of the American metropolises reflected their differing attitudes toward modernity. Weber found the new world fascinating and described with awe the massive “fortresses of capital,” which he said were neither beautiful, nor ugly, but somehow “beyond both.”¹¹² It was not that Weber was unambiguously in favor of these urban wildernesses, which he sometimes described as “human deserts” that swallowed up the individual, but rather that he was excited to

¹¹² Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 282-283.

experience the cutting edge of modernity first hand.¹¹³ Thus, his wife wrote that “he finds everything more beautiful and better than in our country on principle; his criticism does not come until later.”¹¹⁴ Troeltsch, on the other hand, immediately rejected the chaotic and filthy cities, finding these “outward symbols of the American spirit antipathetic and repulsive.”¹¹⁵ He seems to have sought refuge in his room and to have avoided traveling out into the cities whenever possible. Troeltsch’s intolerance of America bothered Weber, who wrote that he felt “annoyed at my German fellow travelers who groan about America after a day and a half in New York.”¹¹⁶

The contrasting reactions of these two scholars to American modernity reflected their opposing attitudes toward modernity in general. As German mandarins, they were both naturally predisposed to feel a distinct uneasiness about the advance of modernity with its massive forces that seemed to undermine the significance of cultivated individuals. But whereas Troeltsch tended to retreat into his hotel room away from this alien world of tramcars and skyscrapers, Weber sought to immerse himself in it—not because it was beautiful, but because it was inevitable. Modern capitalism represented a force that could not be stopped. Better to accept it and study it objectively than to bow one’s head and wish it away. Traces of these contrasting responses to modernity color their later works: Troeltsch would seek to overcome modernity through a reinvigoration of Christianity, while Weber

¹¹³ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 286.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.* 282

¹¹⁵ Lawrence Scaff, *Max Weber in America* (Princeton University Press, 2011), 29.

¹¹⁶ Scaff, *Weber in America*, 282. Troeltsch, on the other hand, expressed appreciation for Weber’s company, writing: “it is a rich gain to see this land of businesses with him. Of course he too keeps studying what he sees and strives to take it in. But as he thinks aloud, I have the benefit.” See Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 107.

would seek to understand modernity objectively and, through this, to understand how individuals might continue to live with dignity amongst the moral and material chaos that it carried in its wake.

In spite of their disagreements about America and modernity, Weber and Troeltsch remained on good terms with one another throughout the trip. The excited intellectual exchange in which the two scholars engaged during this trip is illustrated in an account by the German-American minister Hans Haupt, whom Weber and Troeltsch visited on their way from New York to Chicago. Haupt was the son of a professor of Protestant theology at the German University of Halle, and he was known for hosting traveling German intellectuals. Weber and Troeltsch made plans to meet with Haupt in his hometown outside of Buffalo, requesting that he “collect as much material as possible about the American denominations and their moral teachings and attitudes, especially in relation to economic practices.” Haupt worked diligently at this task in preparation for the arrival of the distinguished professors, and managed to amass a considerable collection of documents. When his guests finally arrived, however, Haupt was disappointed by their behavior. During the several days they spent with Haupt, “they talked and argued all the time. But they hardly asked for Haupt’s opinion and failed to inspect the material he had gathered, but they took it with them.” After the visit was over, Haupt was left with “the impression that the professors knew all that could be known without having to weigh empirical evidence.”¹¹⁷ From this report, it can be

¹¹⁷ Wilhelm Pauck, *Harnack and Troeltsch: Two Historical Theologians*, (New York, Oxford University Press, 1968), 71-72. This account also seems to indicate that neither of the professors was particularly excited about collecting empirical evidence. Rather than examining the evidence or interviewing Haupt, the two converse mainly with each other, most likely attempting to fit their new experiences into the theoretical frame works that

concluded that, in spite of their different attitudes toward American modernity, both scholars remained on good terms with one another, and both continued to engage with each other over the question of the relationship of religion to economics, a question which would remain at the heart of their investigations for the remainder of their careers.

After the St. Louis congress, Weber and Troeltsch separated. Troeltsch, who had planned to accompany the Webers for the duration of their trip, had to rush home immediately upon the conclusion of the congress after learning of the death of his mother-in-law.¹¹⁸ Thus, the Webers traveled on alone, completing a tour of the Southern states before returning to Germany in November. Within four months of his return to Germany, Weber published the second half of *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism*, a work that drew heavily upon the theological sources and ideas that Troeltsch had introduced him to.¹¹⁹ An analysis of Troeltsch's influence upon the content of this essay will be carried out after its main arguments are briefly summarized.

The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism has often been interpreted as a historical argument in the Hegelian tradition, in which Weber opposed the Marxist materialist narrative for the emergence of capitalism with a purely idealistic explanation of capitalism's emergence from certain theological ideas. Weber's responses to interpretations of this kind were understandably gruff, given that he explicitly stated in the text of *The*

they had brought with them from Germany. Critics, such as Felix Rachfahl, would later fault Weber and Troeltsch for their relative lack of concern for empirical analysis. This account suggests that such criticism was valid.

¹¹⁸ Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 108.

¹¹⁹ Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Friendship Among Experts: Notes on Weber and Troeltsch" in *Max Weber and his Contemporaries* (New York: Cambridge University Press), 222.

Protestant Ethic that he was not attempting to substitute a purely idealistic view of history for one that was purely materialistic.¹²⁰ He held that both the materialistic and the idealistic view of history were “one-sided,” and that both kinds of investigations could only serve as “preparatory” studies for more definitive historical works that would attempt to comprehend the dynamic interplay between material and ideal factors.¹²¹

Weber considered *The Protestant Ethic* to be just such a preparatory study, in which he investigated certain “idealistic” historical forces important for the emergence and early development of modern capitalism. But this does not mean that Weber ignored material factors. On the contrary, Weber stated that the outcome of equivalent idealistic factors could be strongly determined by the material situations in which they emerged. For example, Weber held that the spirit of capitalism was extremely strong in eighteenth-century New England and Pennsylvania, but that economic activity there remained at a very low level of capitalist development.¹²² But he also held the opposite to be true, as he illustrated by pointing out the difficulty that the “economic traditionalism” of peasant populations caused early modern business owners in economically advanced parts of Europe.¹²³ Weber indicated that capitalism’s emergence and ascendance to its dominant position within modern civilization was the result of a historical coincidence of corresponding material and ideal forces, namely the material factors of capital accumulation and technological progress and

¹²⁰ See his responses to Felix Rachfahl’s critique in *The Protestant Ethic Debate: Max Weber Responds to his Critics*, trans. Austin Harrington, Liverpool University Press, 2001, 89-132.

¹²¹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and The Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Stephen Kalberg, (Los Angeles: Roxbury Press, 2002), 125.

¹²² *Ibid.* 27.

¹²³ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 23.

the ideal factor of an economic attitude that viewed rationally organized labor and wealth accumulation as ethical duties, along with other ideal factors, such as advances in commercial law.¹²⁴

This feeling of obligation to labor rationally for the sake of acquisition was what Weber meant by “the spirit of capitalism.” In his essay, Weber argued that this capitalist spirit first emerged out of the ethical teachings of certain “ascetic” Protestant groups. For members of these groups, which included Calvinists, Pietists, Quakers, and Methodists, a life directed toward rational acquisition ceased to be considered spiritually questionable, as it had been in medieval Christianity, and instead became a mark of spiritual distinction. This shift was the result of a complex of doctrinal changes, which revolutionized the conception of the ideal Christian life. The exact combination of ideas varied from group to group, but the main ideas included the rejection of monasticism, the glorification of labor within a vocation (*Beruf*), the acceptance of predestination, and the belief that Christians should function as an active tools of divine will, rather than as passive vessels of divine love. From all these doctrinal stances, the ideal of rational, constant vocational labor was deduced. Thus, Weber asserted that the first carriers of the spirit of capitalism were the members of these ascetic Protestant groups. These were the people who had the inner motivation to break through the barrier of economic traditionalism. They did this by methodically rationalizing their lives toward the goal of wealth accumulation and then by reinvesting this wealth rather than “squandering” it on mere personal enjoyment. After laying out all of this point by point,

¹²⁴ See Max Weber, *Zur Geschichte der Handelsgesellschaften im Mittelalter*, eds. Gerhard Dilcher and Sussanne Lepsius (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008).

Weber finally offered what appears to be his thesis statement: “One of the constitutive components of the modern capitalist spirit ... was the rational organization of life on the basis of the *idea of the calling*. It was born out of the idea of *Christian Asceticism*.”¹²⁵

This is the core of Weber’s argument. Here we can see that he was not arguing that capitalism arose out of Protestantism, but simply that the teachings of certain Protestant groups changed the attitudes and lifestyles of certain individuals in such a way that they became predisposed to succeed in the emerging economic conditions of early modern Europe. However, Weber does argue that the success of these ascetic individuals had the effect of transforming the economies in which they appeared. Eventually, a life of rational, vocational labor became the only viable option for members of modern capitalist societies, even though the original religious motivations for such an ascetic lifestyle quickly faded away. To show that this was the case, Weber first argued that the original religious motivations for ascetic labor began to wither within a few generations of their appearance. This was due not only to the fact that the wealth produced by ascetic Protestantism proved a powerful temptation to secular enjoyment, but also to the fact that the systems of economic organization first implemented by ascetic Protestants set off a process of economic selection in which all economically active people, regardless of denomination, were faced with the choice of ascetic vocational labor or failure.¹²⁶ These two factors combined to result in the spread of a secular middle-class mentality in which vocational labor became a meaningless but unavoidable aspect of modern life.

¹²⁵ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 122.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.* 29, 116.

This conclusion led Weber to his final critical comments about the state of modern capitalism, which he believed had trapped the members of modern societies within a system in which they were condemned to lives of unceasing and meaningless ascetic labor. The vocational ethic that the Puritan willingly adopted in order to ensure himself of his salvation had become, in the modern age, an oppressive and inescapable external force, which trapped the individual within a “steel-hard casing,” eliminating the possibility of universal, “Faustian” personal development and forcing him into a narrow field of “specialized activity.” Weber ended his account with a bleak vision of the future:

No one any longer knows who will live in this steel-hard casing and whether entirely new prophets or a mighty rebirth of ancient ideas and ideals will stand at the end of this prodigious development. Or, however, if neither, whether a mechanized ossification, embellished with a sort of rigidly compelled sense of self-importance, will arise. Then, indeed, if the ossification appears, the saying might be true for the ‘last humans’ in this long civilizational development:

Narrow specialists without mind, pleasure seekers without heart; in its conceit, this nothingness imagines it has climbed to a level of humanity never before attained.¹²⁷

On this chilling note, Weber concluded his study. Here Weber expressed anti-modern sentiments that were common, indeed, almost fashionable, among German intellectuals of the time. Like many of his orthodox mandarin peers, Weber felt anxious about the forces of modernity which threatened to destroy or make irrelevant the ideal of a well-rounded personal cultivation (*Bildung*) that justified the study of the humanities within the German university. Also like many of his peers, Weber indicated that some sort of spiritual renewal,

¹²⁷ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 122-124.

in the form of “new prophets” or reemergent “ancient ideas,” was the only means of rescuing society from the “ossifying” forces of modernity.¹²⁸ However, unlike most other mandarins, Weber did not claim this spiritual renewal as a task for German academics. Such a task led to the subjective realm of “value judgments” and, thus, beyond the bounds of scholarship.¹²⁹ The spiritual renewal that Weber clearly desired remained for him, a distant possibility, which he and other mandarins were powerless to bring about. Thus, Weber limited himself to a merely descriptive account of modernity and its effects.

Troeltsch also condemned the modern situation and voiced hope for spiritual renewal, but, in addition to this and in contrast to Weber, he sought to facilitate this renewal through his own scholarly work. Specifically, in *The Social Teachings of The Christian Churches*, Troeltsch hoped to aid the process of spiritual renewal by seeking ways in which Christianity could be revitalized and thereby overcome the secular forces of modernity.¹³⁰ This difference shows that Weber and Troeltsch disagreed regarding the role of scholarship. For Weber, it was a means for providing objective descriptions of reality; for Troeltsch, it was also a means of influencing the future development of this reality. These contrasting views on the role of scholarship would remain in evidence throughout their careers.¹³¹

What is significant for the purposes of the present essay is to discern the ways in which Troeltsch influenced the development of the ideas that Weber put forward in *The*

¹²⁸ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 446.

¹²⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 124.

¹³⁰ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 13.

¹³¹ This difference became particularly evident during the war, when Troeltsch reserved for intellectuals’ the special right of defining the values for which Germany was fighting, while Weber retained a practical tone, focusing on presenting Germany’s situation and future options as realistically as possible. See chapter four of the current essay.

Protestant Ethic. Given that Weber had been engaging with Troeltsch on the topic of religion since he joined the Eranos Circle in 1904, which is around the time that he began writing *The Protestant Ethic*, it is reasonable to expect to find traces of Troeltsch's thought in Weber's work.

An examination of the extensive footnotes of Weber's essay reveals repeated references to Troeltsch, sometimes in notes that extend over several pages.¹³² Weber used these references to lend support to some of his central assertions regarding the ethical implications of the various theological positions that arose during the Protestant reformation. For example, Weber supported his claim that Luther promoted an ethic of "economic traditionalism" through reference to Troeltsch's concept of Natural Law.¹³³ But Weber was dependent upon Troeltsch for much more than such occasional support on matters of detail. In fact, Troeltsch played a fundamental role in shaping Weber's basic understanding of theology, even down to the point of which theological texts Weber read and quoted.¹³⁴ Thus, Weber not only relied on Troeltsch for support on matters of theological detail; he also allowed Troeltsch to shape his entire view of the theological discourse, basing his views on the same key works that Troeltsch relied upon. One specific case in which Weber took up a

¹³² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 183, 186, 190, 191, 206, 208, 209, 221, 234, 242.

¹³³ Ibid. 43, 186. The idea of Natural Law became one of the central concepts in Troeltsch's theological system. This idea refers to a Christian doctrine, borrowed originally from Stoicism, which holds that nature represents a manifestation of the divine will, and thus that even the most unpleasant aspects of the nature must be accepted. For Troeltsch, it was this principle that allowed Christians to live within the world, rather than rejecting it, and which led to a belief in a divine sanction of inner worldly vocations. See Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 65-69.

¹³⁴ Friedrich Wilhelm Graf, "Friendship between Experts," 222. Graf pointed out that almost all of the theological texts quoted in *The Protestant Ethic* consisted of texts that had been previously cited by Troeltsch. In many cases, Weber even quotes the exact same passage as Troeltsch.

‘Troeltschean’ theological stance can be seen in his ambivalent relationship to the ideas of one of Troeltsch’s most influential teachers, Albrecht Ritschl.

Troeltsch had studied under Ritschl during his years at Göttingen, and during his time there he greatly respected the “authority, dignity, and power” of this “significant, but completely unromantic, indeed unpoetic man.”¹³⁵ Soon after leaving Göttingen, though, Troeltsch began to reject his teacher’s positions and started engaging in bitter disputes with some of Ritschl’s more loyal students.¹³⁶ As mentioned in chapter one, Ritschl had introduced Troeltsch to a historical theological approach, which judged religious positions not in terms of their dogmatic correctness, but in terms of their moral efficacy. Ritschl applied this approach very directly in his work, *The History of Pietism*, which argued for the superiority of Lutheranism over Catholicism and all other forms of Protestantism because only Lutheranism overcame the otherworldly tendencies of Christianity and enabled individuals to immerse themselves within divinely ordained inner-worldly vocations.¹³⁷ As Constance Benson has pointed out, this idealized Lutheran ethic, which Ritschl put forward as the perfect realization of Christian principles, implied that it was a Christian’s duty to obediently accept his or her place in society and that the socialists’ challenge of the status quo represented a violation of God’s will. These implications conveniently enabled Ritschl to declare an eternal alliance between Christianity, as represented by the German

¹³⁵ Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 21.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 88-89.

¹³⁷ Albrecht Ritschl, “Prolegomena to the History of Pietism” in *Three Essays*, trans. Philip Hefner (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 56-70, 89.

Protestant establishment, and the authoritarian German government, which just so happened to pay Ritschl's salary.¹³⁸

Weber was aware that the findings he presented in *The Protestant Ethic* were both dependent upon Ritschl's approach and opposed to his conclusions. Indeed, when viewed in light of Ritschl's study, it is difficult not to see Weber's essay as a polemical response to it. Weber takes up Ritschl's general approach, concerning himself primarily with the history of Christian behavior rather than Christian dogma, and he even takes up Ritschl's central claim that the vocational work ethic originated in the teachings of Luther.¹³⁹ But, in spite of these similarities, Weber argued for conclusions that contradicted those of Ritschl. Rather than claiming that Lutheranism overcame Christian otherworldliness, Weber argued that Lutherans tended to lapse back into passive mysticism. Rather than viewing the ascetic traits of Calvinism as back-sliding into a medieval form of world rejection, Weber identified Calvinism's ascetic aspects as the essential component of its ability to engage with the secular world. Weber acknowledged these differences with Ritschl in two of his endnotes, where he implied that they stemmed from Ritschl's lack of objectivity and his willingness to bring "into his study his own value judgments in respect to church-political or ... religious policy debates."¹⁴⁰ Here Weber is referring to Ritschl's ideologically motivated attempt to interpret Christianity in a way that enabled the accommodation of German Protestantism to the secularism and hierarchy that constituted the imperial status quo. This position of simultaneous reliance on and opposition to Ritschl's ideas is probably due to the fact that

¹³⁸ Benson, *God and Caesar*, 55-57.

¹³⁹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 39.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.* 191, 210.

Troeltsch, who was himself in a position of reliance on and opposition to Ritschl, had served as Weber's guide in the field of theology.

From the above observations, we may conclude that, even at this early stage of their friendship and scholarly cooperation, Weber's had already incorporated many of Troeltsch's ideas into his own thought. In return, Troeltsch began to incorporate Weber's central findings into his historical and theological works.

The first of these theological works appeared in 1906, under the title "Die Bedeutung des Protestantismus für die Entstehung der modernen Welt." The traditional English translation of the title, *Protestantism and Progress*, comes off as rather more blunt and self-satisfied than the much less normative title of the German original, which translates to "The Meaning of Protestantism for the Development of the Modern World."¹⁴¹ This title does a good job of summarizing the contents of the work, in which Troeltsch sought to determine the specific ways that Protestantism did, and *did not*, cause modernity.

Troeltsch began the work by explaining what he meant by modernity. He did this by pointing out three characteristics of the "modern spirit" that distinguished it from the middle ages: the superiority of individual judgment over traditional authority, the predominance of secular interests over otherworldly concerns, and the optimistic belief in progress.¹⁴²

Troeltsch noted that it had long been taken for granted that Protestantism "had no inconsiderable influence in producing the modern world,"¹⁴³ and he went on to point out that such famous German intellectuals as Hegel, Treitschke, and Ritschl, all in their own way, had

¹⁴¹ Drescher, *Ersnt Troeltsch*, 321.

¹⁴² Ernst Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, trans. W. Montgomery, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 11-26.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.* 40.

reserved a special place for Protestantism in their account of the development of modernity. Thus, Troeltsch was not interested in proving that Protestantism played a role in bringing about modernity, for he held this to be “indubitable,” but rather in examining the precise nature of this role and in distinguishing its historical effects from those of other important historical developments such as the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.¹⁴⁴

Troeltsch began this task by asserting that the first Protestant movements, including Lutheranism and Calvinism, were entirely unmodern in their outlook, and, in some ways, represented a reinvigoration of pessimistic, otherworldly pre-modern attitudes.¹⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Troeltsch asserted, these movements had accidental effects that, eventually and in conjunction with other historical forces, helped to usher in the modern world.¹⁴⁶ He went on to consider these effects in the political, economic, social, and intellectual realms.

In the political realm, Troeltsch asserted that that the primary assistance that Protestantism gave to emerging modernity was its fragmentation of Church authority. The ultimate effect of this, Troeltsch held, was the undermining of the Church’s ability to offer a united front of resistance to the growing forces of modernity, while simultaneously freeing emerging states from the interference of the Church.¹⁴⁷ Also, Troeltsch held that the various political tendencies of modern nation-states had been determined to a large degree by the varying stances that the different Protestant groups took toward the secular realm. He claimed that Lutheranism’s indifference to the world and trust in God resulted in its followers

¹⁴⁴ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 40-42.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 59.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 87.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 92, 106-108.

becoming “politically favorable to absolutism” and “essentially conservative.”¹⁴⁸ In contrast, Troeltsch asserted that Calvinism had fostered a tendency toward a “representative system” and a belief in the “right to resist” unjust authority. Troeltsch held that these tendencies resulted both from the tendency of the Old Testament idea of a covenant as the foundation of social legitimacy to lead to the secular idea of a State contract, and from the Calvinists’ need to organize themselves independently and to resist repression in areas where they existed as a religious minority.¹⁴⁹ Thus, in spite of a certain tendency toward elitism and exclusion, which was rooted in the Calvinist conception of predestination, Troeltsch asserted that “Calvinism took a prominent part in preparing the way for the upgrowth of the democratic spirit.”¹⁵⁰ Troeltsch asserted that the Protestant sects, due to their constant status as religious minorities, developed the idea of “the inviolability of the inner personal life by the state,” and thus served as important predecessors for later liberal ideologies that would espouse this idea in a manner that was “secularized and overgrown by the rationalistic, skeptical and utilitarian idea of toleration.”¹⁵¹ In each case, Troeltsch was careful to qualify his statements by pointing out that other non-religious factors also played a role in shaping the modern political traditions of the Protestant nations, but, nonetheless, he did not shy away from drawing connections between the current political systems of various nations and their Protestant pasts.

¹⁴⁸ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 112.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. 115, 117. Here Troeltsch credited Otto von Gierke for originally discovering the affinity between the Old Testament idea of covenant and the modern idea of a social contract, and followed von Gierke in his assertion that Calvinism helped to bring about “the democratic spirit.”

¹⁵⁰ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 112-117.

¹⁵¹ Ibid. 118-125. In this section, Troeltsch gave credit to Georg Jellinek, a fellow member of the Eranos Circle, for his explanations connection between the Protestant sects and the idea of inviolable individual rights.

In the next section on the relationship of Protestantism to the modern economic system, Troeltsch simply gave a concise rehearsal of the argument advanced in Weber's *Protestant Ethic*. Troeltsch presented a fairly accurate summary of Weber's ideas, agreeing with him on every major point, even going so far as to mention and condemn, just as Weber does, Werner Sombart's alternative theory for the rise of the capitalist spirit out of Judaism.¹⁵² He likewise followed Weber in his gloomy assessment of modern capitalism, lamenting the "calculating coldness and soullessness" that resulted from the loosening of rational capitalism from its original basis in "the social and religious spirit of early Calvinism."¹⁵³ Some minor points of disagreement are apparent. For example, Troeltsch failed to grasp Weber's subtle distinction between Calvinism and ascetic Protestantism. He claimed that the idea of the calling was not fundamentally new, but rather an extension of the Catholic idea of the divinely sanctioned nature of human societies.¹⁵⁴ But these disagreements appear insignificant when compared the almost complete agreement of Troeltsch and Weber on the meaning of Protestantism for the development of modern capitalism.

Troeltsch next considered Protestantism's relation to the modern social situation, the defining features of which he considered to be "the immense increase of population, modern economic conditions, democratic movements, and the formation of military bureaucratic states" He asserted that Protestantism had no direct connection to the development of these

¹⁵² Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 135. For Sombart's view see his 1902 book *Der Moderne Kapitalismus* (Leipzig, Dunker und Humbold, 1902).

¹⁵³ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 139.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 129.

social conditions, and only indirectly influenced this development in particular ways by favoring certain political or economic attitudes among portions of the population.¹⁵⁵ One particular social change that he did attribute partially to Protestantism was the rise of mass education, but even this, he stressed, was due largely to the influence of the Enlightenment. He explained the relative lack of social influence exerted by Protestantism by referring to the fact the movement was primarily a spiritual rather than a social phenomenon.¹⁵⁶ Similar discussions of a Lutheran tendency toward hierarchy and a sectarian tendency toward individualism, which seem to repeat the positions advanced in the section on politics are also put forward here. This repetition seems to have resulted from the fact that Troeltsch drew no sharp distinction between the social and political realms.

Finally, Troeltsch discussed Protestantism's relation to the intellectual aspects of modernity, especially science and philosophy. Here Troeltsch advanced one rather predictable point, and one rather chauvinistic. The predictable point was that Protestantism disrupted the Church's control of thought, and thereby created room for naturalistic thought to grow up alongside the church's supernaturalism. The other point was a pseudo-Hegelian assertion that the Protestant emphasis on the primacy of individual belief, which combined with the scientific spirit in the Protestant countries had "permanently secured to the Protestant peoples a scientific superiority."¹⁵⁷ Troeltsch believed that this combination began

¹⁵⁵ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 142.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid. 146, 149. This whole section on social development has an odd and contradictory feel to it. This is, first of all, because Troeltsch defined social change partially in political and economic terms, and, secondly, because Troeltsch had already argued for the political and economic effects of Protestantism, in spite of the fact that Protestantism was no more an economic movement than it was a "social" movement.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. 160-161.

occurring in the time of Locke and Leibniz, and resulted not only in breathtaking scientific and philosophical advances, but also in a fundamental shift in the nature of Protestantism itself, which he goes on to discuss in the final section of the work.

In this final section, Troeltsch turned to the area that he believed had been most directly influenced by Protestantism, the religious sphere. At the beginning of this section Troeltsch asserted that it was no surprise that the most revolutionary effects of Protestantism were related to modern religion, because “religious forces really only proceed from religious motives, and ... conversely, all the proper and immediate influence of religious innovations is confined to the sphere of religion.”¹⁵⁸ He held that religion occupied a special, isolated realm, in which it could develop freely according to its own internal logic, which seems strange given that he spent the whole book demonstrating the connections between religious and secular forces. For Troeltsch, the causal chain flows in only one direction. Religion can influence the secular world, but the secular world cannot influence religion. This perspective reveals Troeltsch’s continued adherence to an idealist perspective and conflicted with Weber’s attempt to synthesize idealist and materialist approaches to historical scholarship.

Troeltsch ended his work by considering the continuing influence of religion within the modern world. In spite of the fragmentary and irreligious appearance of the modern society, He argued that two religious movements, both derived from Protestantism, remained vital within western culture, Anglo-Saxon Calvinism and the German “religion of personal conviction,” which had resulted from the fusion of German idealism with Lutheran

¹⁵⁸ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 175.

thought.¹⁵⁹ Troeltsch dismissed all other religious movements, claiming that they represented “a flight from the modern world [rather] than a conquest of it, a flight, in general, from the practical and the real.”¹⁶⁰ Finally, Troeltsch asserted that all non-religious aspects of modernity, economic, bureaucratic, and scientific, were developing in the direction of a new bondage. Here he expressed an anxiety about modernity that was typical for German academics of his time.¹⁶¹ The reverence for the individual, which had so far characterized modernity, had its sole basis in a Protestantism that could influence other modern forces while avoiding merging with them entirely. Thus Troeltsch ended his work with the following suggestion: “Let us jealously preserve that principle of freedom which draws its strength from a religious metaphysic; otherwise the cause of freedom and personality may well be lost in the very moment when we are boasting most loudly of our allegiance to it, and of our progress in the direction.”¹⁶²

A comparison of this work to Weber’s *Protestant Ethic*, reveals both important similarities and differences between the two works. The most obvious similarity between them is their clear cut agreement regarding the relationship of Protestantism and modern capitalism. Troeltsch incorporated Weber’s thesis into his broader study of the relationship of Protestantism to modernity. In addition to this agreement regarding Protestantism’s relation to the modern economic system, they also agree on the lamentable nature of this system,

¹⁵⁹ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 181-186,194. By “religion of personal conviction” Troeltsch is referring here to modern German Protestantism, which, he believed, emphasized faith and “the emotional experience of a sense of sin and peace of heart” and moved away from any rigid dogma.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid. 185.

¹⁶¹ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 78-80

¹⁶² Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 207.

condemning it as oppressive and dehumanizing. Weber held that modernity forced modern human beings into lives of meaningless and ceaseless vocational toil, while Troeltsch believed that “the modern organization of life often becomes simply a gloomy tyrannical fate, devouring all a man’s working powers, which leaves no time for reflection...”¹⁶³

Furthermore, both Weber and Troeltsch believed that modernity had taken on this diabolical aspect only because it had been separated from the religious powers that had helped to bring it about. Weber held that vocational labor had become oppressive only because it no longer possessed the moral significance that it had for ascetic Christians, and Troeltsch attributed the “greed and pitilessness” of modern capitalism to the fact that it “no longer practiced asceticism for the honor of God, but for the gaining of power.”¹⁶⁴ One aspect of this modern situation that worried both Weber and Troeltsch was the threat it posed to the individual.

While Weber fretted that the modern economic ethic forced people to adopt narrow vocational roles and thus prevented them from developing multi-faceted personalities, Troeltsch prophesied the coming of an age in which individual freedom would be completely abolished by “economic development... and the great military and bureaucratic States”¹⁶⁵

Finally, both Weber and Troeltsch saw spiritual revival as the only possible escape from the problems of modernity. Weber insisted that the course of modern capitalism would either end with the emergence of “entirely new prophets or a mighty rebirth of ancient ideas” or “in mechanized ossification, embellished with a sort of rigidly compelled sense of self-

¹⁶³ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 123-124; *Protestantism and Progress*, 181. These grandiose descriptions of the dangers of modernity were probably informed by their recently shared experience of the chaotic, dirty, and dangerous American metropolis.

¹⁶⁴ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 123; Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 139.

¹⁶⁵ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 207.

importance,” while Troeltsch warned that total domination of the individual by social and technological forces would result if Western civilization did not renew its commitment to the ethical ideals of Protestantism.¹⁶⁶ But within this point of agreement, we also see an important disagreement. Troeltsch advocated for a return to and a renewal of Protestant Christian values, whereas Weber did not conflate cultural renewal with Christian renewal, but rather allowed for the possibility that “entirely new” spiritual forces could emerge. This seems to be one of the fundamental contrasts between Weber and Troeltsch: Weber was not afraid to seek answers in the new and unknown; Troeltsch believed only in a revival of the old.

Beyond this, some other obvious and important differences exist between the two texts. The first of these has to do with the philosophy of history. Weber’s placed himself on the middle ground between materialist and idealist approaches to history. In *The Protestant Ethic*, he insisted that, even though his study focused on the material effects of a specific set of ideas (i.e. ascetic Protestantism), further studies would have to be carried out to show the other side of the story (i.e. the effect that changes in early-modern “economic conditions” had upon the world of ideas).¹⁶⁷ In contrast to this, Troeltsch insisted that religious thought, in spite of its ability to influence political and economic developments, remained independent from these developments. Thus, in this work, Troeltsch placed himself very near to the idealist historians who saw the free development of spirit as the driving force of

¹⁶⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 124; Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 206-207.

¹⁶⁷ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 125.

history.¹⁶⁸ This is an intellectual tendency that Troeltsch carried with him from his earlier years, in which he espoused a teleological view of historical development.¹⁶⁹ In his later work, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, Troeltsch moved closer to Weber's more balanced view of material and ideal historical forces, but even in these he continued to insist that the key ideas of Christianity emerged in complete independence from material conditions.¹⁷⁰ The final significant difference between the two works lies in the contrast between the carefully restricted scope of Weber's study and Troeltsch's impetuously sprawling attempt to relate every aspect of modern culture to Protestantism. This may be the result of the privileged position that Troeltsch gave to religion. Whereas, for Weber, religion was simply one historical force among many, for Troeltsch, a vital religion such as Protestantism, "becomes a power in ordinary life only by taking up civilization into itself and giving it a special direction."¹⁷¹ From this perspective it would seem only natural to assume that Protestantism had left clear marks upon all aspects of the culture in which it had arisen.

The mixture of significant agreement and fundamental disagreement that appears in the comparison of these two works is puzzling. Even though Troeltsch accepted the findings of Weber's investigation, he contradicted the fundamental methodological assumption upon

¹⁶⁸ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 175.

¹⁶⁹ Consider, for example, *The Absoluteness of Christianity*, as discussed in the first chapter of this essay.

¹⁷⁰ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 471, 1002.

¹⁷¹ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 176. Troeltsch's belief that religion could influence every other aspect of a society is related to the stance that he would later advance regarding religion as the sole means of spiritually reunifying a society fractured by modernity. Troeltsch saw religion as a force that could weld a society's economic, political, and cultural spheres into a spiritual unity by subordinating the activities of each of these spheres to a single ethical code. He believed that only Medieval Catholicism and Ascetic Protestantism had accomplished such a unification in the past, but he hoped that a renewal of the Protestant Church could bring about another such period of cultural and ethical harmony. See *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 815-816, 1006-1013.

which this investigation rested, namely, the equality of ideal and material forces in history. Troeltsch remained committed to an essentially idealist view of history, tracing the effect of religious forces on the economic and political realms, but insisting that religion itself remained independent of all material influence. This theoretical stance almost certainly had its basis in Troeltsch's commitment to resisting materialist interpretations of Christianity, which Social Democrats had put forward in the attempt to argue that the ethic of the Gospel implied the ethical superiority of the socialist cause.¹⁷² To admit that ideal factors could be fundamentally influenced by material factors would imply both that Christian ideas had developed partially in response to the social situation of the ancient Near East, and that Christian ideals could evolve over time in response to emergent social needs. This would in turn imply that The German Evangelical Church was not the realization of some eternal religious ideal, but merely the manifestation of a certain economic and political conjuncture, that would fade away as the social world continued to change. For Troeltsch to admit this would be for him concede an enormous theoretical advantage to his ideological opponents, and thus, in spite of all his apparent reliance on Weber, Troeltsch refused to take up the Weber's central historical stance regarding the relationship of material and ideal historical forces. It is for this reason that Troeltsch, in the final section of his wide-ranging work on the historical influence of Protestantism is forced to conclude that "for every unprejudiced observer the matter really stands exactly as it appears to do, religion is really derived from religion..."¹⁷³ In his later works, especially *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*,

¹⁷² See Constance Benson, *God and Caesar*, 129-140.

¹⁷³ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 176.

even though Troeltsch drew closer to Weber's mixed view of historical causality on some matters of detail, Troeltsch remained committed to the view that the essence of Christianity could never be altered by social change. Throughout his career, Troeltsch remained committed to an idealistic account of history, and he thus stood in basic conflict with Weber's own historical perspective.

But before delving more deeply into this later work, we should first consider a few of the developments in Weber and Troeltsch's relationship that emerged after this first phase of cooperative publication. The first development was that Weber and Troeltsch were forced to publicly explain their intellectual relations to one another in response to of a critical article published in 1909 by Felix Rachfahl, which attacked the "Weber-Troeltsch thesis" of capitalist development. Because Rachfahl assumed that the Weber and Troeltsch were working together to advance a common argument, he carried out his critique by pointing out not only the historical difficulties of the "Weber-Troeltsch thesis" but also demonstrating certain "contradictions" in Weber and Troeltsch's accounts. The contradictions pointed out by Rachfahl help to illuminate certain tensions in the works of Weber and Troeltsch, and also forced Weber and Troeltsch to explain the nature of their intellectual relationship to one another. Even though their explanations do not appear to be entirely truthful, they are nonetheless helpful for discerning the nature of their intellectual relationship at this point in time.

Rachfahl was a Roman-Catholic who specialized in the political history of early modern Holland. As such, it is not difficult to imagine why he might have taken issue with

the “Weber-Troeltsch thesis,” which both excluded Catholicism from the modern world and seemed to explain the economic development of Holland in exclusively religious terms. He opened his critique, titled “Calvinism and Capitalism,” by expressing his concern over the fact that the “Weber-Troeltsch thesis,” which located the “origin of the spirit of capitalism in the Calvinist vocational ethic,” was being adopted by a number of prominent scholars, in spite of the fact that it had not yet been subjected to a critical historical assessment.¹⁷⁴ In his article, Rachfahl intended to redress this oversight.

He began with a detailed exposition of the argument for the “Weber-Troeltsch thesis” as it had been expressed in Weber’s *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, also making occasional reference to Troeltsch’s *Protestantism and Progress*. He then went on to criticize this thesis on three crucial points: the concept of the spirit of capitalism, the characterization of vocational ethic of Calvinism, and the supposed influence of Calvinism upon the spirit of capitalism. Beyond noting the historical and theoretical difficulties related to these points, Rachfahl also demonstrated that Troeltsch and Weber contradicted each other on each of them.

Rachfahl first criticized the concept of the spirit of capitalism. He explained that Weber characterized this spirit as an ascetic striving for the accumulation of property, which supposedly contradicted the natural impulse of the individual to work as little as necessary in order to live at level of material comfort that he was used to. Rachfahl challenged this characterization. First, he questioned the assumption that the desire for acquisition

¹⁷⁴ Felix Rachfahl, “Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus,” in *Die Protestantische Ethik Zwei*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, (Gutersloh Verlagshaus, 1978), 57-58.

contradicted human nature. He did this by pointing out that in all societies, examples could be found of both the “traditional” human type, satisfied with the easy-going routine of normal life, and the striver, endlessly seeking advancement.¹⁷⁵ Rachfahl then went on to argue that, in reality, few capitalists viewed acquisition as an end in itself, but rather that they tended to view acquisition as a means to other ends, such as hedonistic enjoyment or social elevation.¹⁷⁶ Rachfahl noted that even Troeltsch seemed to contradict Weber on this point. To prove this, Rachfahl quoted one of Troeltsch’s discussions of capitalist motivations in which he included “the winning of power and the honor of men.”¹⁷⁷ Both these considerations led Rachfahl to view Weber’s ascetic characterization of the “spirit of capitalism” as an unnecessary and unrealistic historical postulate.¹⁷⁸

Rachfahl’s second point of criticism was the Weber-Troeltsch thesis’ portrayal of the Calvinist vocational ethic. Weber portrayed the Protestant vocational ethic as a wholly new religious teaching, which simultaneously motivated and justified the unlimited accumulation of wealth. Rachfahl opposed this characterization on two points. First, he asserted that Calvin’s teachings had not removed all limitations on economic activity, but rather that they attempted to bind commerce and industry within strict ethical norms.¹⁷⁹ Second, Rachfahl

¹⁷⁵ Felix Rachfahl, “Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus,” 80, 76.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.* 78.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 80. Rachfahl does not take into account that Weber himself admits that in many cases, after the first few ascetic generations, modern capitalism became a pursuit of luxury or an exertion of “purely competitive passions” (*The Protestant Ethic*, 124). Weber’s ideal type is meant to describe only the early capitalists, who were supposed to have overcome the traditional system of production.

¹⁷⁸ At this point, Rachfahl acknowledges Weber’s claim that the spirit of capitalism should be considered as an ideal type that is not derive from reality, but rather employed to explain it. Though he admits that “the theoretical disciplines are not his domain,” he still insisted on raising the question of whether a concept that fails to correspond to reality can help us to understand it. See Rachfahl “Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus,” 81-82.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.* 82.

pointed out that many of the economic practices that Calvin sanctioned, such as loaning money at interest, had been accepted in Geneva for many years. On this basis, Rachfahl argued that far from acting as an ethical innovator, Calvin had merely adapted religious sanctions to preexisting economic practices.¹⁸⁰ Thus, it seemed to Rachfahl that the Calvinist ethic should be viewed as a result of the early modern capitalist spirit, rather than as a cause of it.

Rachfahl went on to question the role played by asceticism in the Calvinist ethic, and through this inquiry he revealed a disagreement between Weber's and Troeltsch's definition of asceticism. Weber defined asceticism as the rational organization of life in a way that violated natural human drives. Thus, for Weber, the Calvinist ethic, which directed all human energies away from enjoyment and toward constant, rational economic activity, was ascetic, while the Lutheran ethic, which taught a patient acceptance of the world, was not. Troeltsch, on the other hand, defined asceticism as the belief that "nothing worldly has value in itself ... Everything serves a merely religious purpose."¹⁸¹ With this definition Troeltsch was able to subsume both Lutheranism and Calvinism under the heading of "inner-worldly asceticism." For Troeltsch, both Lutheranism and Calvinism denied the value of earthly existence; they merely disagreed about the way in which one could serve religious ends while on earth. Lutheranism advocated patient detachment; Calvinism demanded rational activity. From here, Rachfahl went on to point out that in medieval Catholicism too, the laity were supposed

¹⁸⁰ Troeltsch would later make a similar point in his *Social Teachings*, arguing that the bourgeois atmosphere of Geneva helped to explain the proto-capitalist nature of Calvin's teachings. See Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 642.

¹⁸¹ Rachfahl, "Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus," 86.

to labor within the world for ultimately religious ends, thus calling into question the historical significance of the inner-worldly Protestant ethic.¹⁸²

Finally, Rachfahl criticized the historical relationship that the “Troeltsch-Weber thesis” asserted regarding the relationship of the Calvinist ethic to the emergence of the capitalist spirit. He argued that the capitalist spirit had emerged in places untouched by the Calvinist ethic and, conversely, that many Calvinist areas had failed to become capitalist. In the case of Holland, Rachfahl noted that Weber and Troeltsch offered conflicting historical accounts of the economic impact of Calvinism and that both of their accounts conflicted with historical facts. Troeltsch argued that the seed of the capitalist spirit had entered Holland with Calvinism, but that it had been prevented from blossoming because of the spread of Arminianism among the Dutch elite in the early seventeenth-century. Weber, in contrast, asserted that the capitalist spirit had entered Holland with Calvinism and that it succeeded in developing into a major cultural force during the seventeenth century, encouraging the ascetic economic practices required for the accumulation of vast reserves of capital, which enabled the emergence of Holland as a major economic power. Against both of these perspectives, Rachfahl argued that capitalism had already been thriving in the Low Countries before the emergence of Calvinism, and that the emergence of Holland as an economic power had more to do with immigration from Flanders than it did with Calvinism.

Rachfahl’s discussion of the case of Holland suggested that neither Weber nor Troeltsch were particularly interested in historical details, but rather that they were eager to

¹⁸² Felix Rachfahl, “Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus.” 89, 93. Troeltsch, in fact, made a similar point in his *Protestantism and Progress*, but was apparently unconcerned about the possibility that this idea might contradict his concept of inner-worldly asceticism. See Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 129.

fit every historical example into an overarching historical framework which emphasized the importance of religious factors at the expense of all others.¹⁸³ If this was the case, it would help to explain the puzzling situation in which Weber and Troeltsch could insist upon their agreement with one another while simultaneously contradicting each other on matters of detail. It seems that the two scholars agreed with each other on certain, central theoretical points, such as the relationship of Protestantism to capitalism, but differed from one another in the way in which they went about fitting historical content into this shared theoretical framework.¹⁸⁴ For a historian like Rachfahl, who believed in the individuality and irreducible complexity of each historical moment, this muddling of the details for the sake of overarching clarity was unacceptable. To conclude his critique, Rachfahl expressed gratitude to Weber for raising the important question of Protestantism's connection to capitalism, but he insisted that only a much more empirically founded study would be able to yield any reliable conclusions.

In the end, Rachfahl succeeded in pointing out certain important weaknesses in the two scholars' investigations. He showed how the "the spirit of capitalism" and "the Calvinist vocational ethic" both seemed to represent unrealistic abstractions, which were almost never

¹⁸³ Rachfahl, "Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus," 97-98. This fits in with the account given by Hans Haupt of the Weber and Troeltsch during their visit to America: the two scholars were fascinated by grand, theoretically-oriented narratives, not by the inconvenient minutiae of individual cases. See Wilhelm Pauck, *Harnack and Troeltsch*, 71-72.

¹⁸⁴ There are other cases in which Weber and Troeltsch took contradictory views of historical details in order to defend their shared view of the historical importance of "ascetic Protestantism" One example can be found in their discussions of the economic behavior of orthodox Lutheran Women. Weber held that these women made terrible employees because they were still bound within a traditional economic ethic. See Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 24. Conversely, Troeltsch held that Lutheranism had, in the long run, actually helped in the emergence of German capitalism, in spite of the fact that it did not help to instill adherents with the capitalist spirit. It was helpful because when capitalism entered Germany from without, it found within an endless supply of obedient and patient workers. See Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 116.

manifested in reality, and therefore, unlikely to have exerted much historical influence. He acknowledged that according to Weber's method, these abstractions were to be viewed as ideal types, rather than as concrete historical tokens, but this does not convince Rachfahl of their efficacy. For him, these conceptual models differ so greatly from reality that they cannot help in the task of describing it.¹⁸⁵ More importantly though, Rachfahl identified a number of points on which Troeltsch and Weber contradicted one another. Weber held that the spirit of capitalism represented an unnatural commitment to accumulation as an end in itself; Troeltsch admitted that capitalists usually viewed wealth as a mere means to earthly ends. Weber defined asceticism as systematic rationalization of life for otherworldly goals; Troeltsch excluded the idea of rationalization from his definition. Weber saw Luther's idea of the vocational ethic as revolutionary; Troeltsch insisted that the idea had existed in the middle ages as well. Weber viewed Holland of an early example of the success of the spirit of capitalism, Troeltsch did not.

Because of all these apparent contradictions pointed out by Rachfahl, both Weber and Troeltsch responded to Rachfahl's critique in order to clarify not only their own theoretical positions, but also their intellectual relationship to one another. These articles were one of the few times that Weber and Troeltsch spoke about their influence upon each other. As such, they are valuable for coming to an understanding of the stance that each author took toward the other at this point in their careers.

Weber was the first to respond to Rachfahl's critique, his article appearing in 1910 in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*. Weber argued against the existence of a

¹⁸⁵ Rachfahl, "Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus," 81-82.

“Weber-Troeltsch thesis,” and also addressed one of the apparent contradictions between his ideas and Troeltsch’s. Weber saw the “Weber-Troeltsch thesis” as nothing more than a rhetorical construct used by Rachfahl to make the differences between the independent works of the two scholars appear as damning evidence of internal contradiction.¹⁸⁶ Weber insisted that his and Troeltsch’s works were independent from one another. In spite of the fact that Troeltsch clearly made use of the conclusions of *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber held that Troeltsch in no way “needed” these conclusions for his own investigations. Weber also held that his and Troeltsch’s investigations examined entirely different subjects: “[Troeltsch] explores the historical development of the social teachings of the Christian churches, whereas I have so far only tried to clarify a particular phenomenon of *conduct of life* in its (original) religious conditioning.” Yet, in spite of these differing purposes, Weber acknowledged that Troeltsch’s investigation covered many points that he “would have needed to deal with,” if he had continued writing on the subject of the religious aspects of economic behavior. He also admitted that he saw “no points at all important on which to contradict [Troeltsch’s] account.”¹⁸⁷

This last statement implies that Weber viewed all of the apparent contradictions that Rachfahl pointed out to be either nonexistent or unimportant. On the matter of the definition of asceticism, Weber took up the latter position, insisting that he and Troeltsch used the concept to mean entirely different things, and that this divergence only seemed significant if

¹⁸⁶ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic Debate*, 61.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 62

one believed in the false abstraction of a Weber-Troeltsch thesis.¹⁸⁸ Of the other contradictions pointed out by Rachfahl, Weber said nothing. Presumably, these differences were either so insignificant or so obviously artificial that they did not warrant a specific refutation. Regardless, because Weber insisted upon his independence from Troeltsch, it followed that no disagreement with Troeltsch could have any bearing on the validity of Weber's theories.

After asserting his independence from Troeltsch, Weber went on, in an almost unbelievably aggressive tone, to refute Rachfahl's "sterile critique." It is not important here to go into the details of Weber's response, but it is worth noting that Weber heaped scorn upon Rachfahl for failing to recognize the distinction that he drew between Calvinism and the ascetic forms of Protestantism that developed out of it. This fact is noteworthy because this is a distinction that Troeltsch also failed to notice, as can be seen his summary of Weber's ideas in *Protestantism and Progress*.¹⁸⁹

Troeltsch's response, which also appeared in 1910, was remarkably similar in structure to Weber's. Like Weber, he began by insisting that no "Weber-Troeltsch thesis" existed and that his and Weber's projects focused on answering a fundamentally different questions. He then, also like Weber, went on to counter the supposed "contradiction" on the subject of asceticism, and then, ignoring all the other conflicts between his views and

¹⁸⁸ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic Debate*, 65. Elsewhere, Weber argued that this apparent difference was merely terminological rather than substantive See *The Protestant Ethic Debate*, 97.

¹⁸⁹ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 132-136. In *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches* Troeltsch would address this deficit and adopt Weber's more nuanced definition of Ascetic Protestantism. One wonders if Rachfahl's criticism is to thank for this amendment. See *The Social Teachings*, 807-820.

Weber's, proceeded to address the particular points of Rachfahl's article that he believed had the most direct bearing on his own work.

Troeltsch admitted that, on the matter of the relationship between Protestantism and economics, he held Weber to be "right on all essential matters" and that he had incorporated these findings into his own investigations. Nevertheless, he insisted that his and Weber's work had entirely different "content-areas and knowledge-goals."¹⁹⁰ Thus, any attempt to construe their work as advancing a common thesis had to be a misunderstanding. Interestingly though, the purposes that Troeltsch attributed to his and Weber's investigations were somewhat different from the purposes attributed to them by Weber. Troeltsch explained that his main goal was to investigate the "religious-historical question" regarding the "dependence of religious elements on actual living conditions, and the effect of each of these upon the present," whereas Weber's main goal was to offer insight into the "purely scientific problem" regarding the mutually influential relationship of material and ideal forces within history, by focusing on a specific case in which religion exerted an influence upon "economic elements."¹⁹¹ These descriptions do not quite match those given by Weber, who described Troeltsch's project as a history of the social teachings of the church and his own an investigation of the ways in which religion can condition an individual's life conduct.

This disagreement regarding the purpose of one another's investigations is a curious fact. Weber and Troeltsch clearly gave inaccurate descriptions of the goals of one another's works. Weber described Troeltsch's work as a historical examination of Christian social

¹⁹⁰ Ernst Troeltsch, *Gesamelte Schriften*, ed. Hans Baron (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966), 4:785.

¹⁹¹ Troeltsch, *Gesamelte Schriften*, 785-786.

teachings, whereas Troeltsch was actually concerned with demonstrating the independence of Protestant Christianity from secular forces and its ability to serve as a source of freedom in the modern world. Troeltsch described Weber's work as a case study implemented for the sake of investigating the question of the relation of material and ideal forces in history, but Weber's real concern was to show how the modes of conduct inherited from a now-vanished Puritan tradition had imposed a state of meaningless asceticism upon modern man.

There are two possible explanations for these inaccurate descriptions. The first is simply that the Weber and Troeltsch had not fully grasped the meaning of each other's projects. This, however, seems unlikely given their high degree of intellectual cooperation. The other possibility is that the two scholars intentionally misrepresented one another's intentions, which allowed them to argue for their independence from one another without revealing their studies' contradictory conclusions. The plausibility of this second explanation is strengthened by Paul Honigsheim's report that Weber and Troeltsch met soon after the appearance of Rachfahl's critique in order to discuss possible responses to it. Honigsheim, offered very few details about the meeting, but his description makes it clear that Weber and Troeltsch did collaborate to some extent in their responses to Rachfahl. Honigsheim wrote nothing indicating any sort of intentional misrepresentation, but one would expect him to have omitted any such details that might have blemished the reputations of his revered mentors.¹⁹²

¹⁹² Honigsheim, *On Max Weber*, 105-106. As we have already seen in chapter one, Honigsheim seems to have attempted to protect the reputations of Weber and Troeltsch by omitting all mention of their break, in spite of the fact that one of the only detailed descriptions of the break comes from a letter addressed to Honigsheim, in which Troeltsch tries to explain the quarrel. See Otto Baumgarten, *Max Weber, Werk und Person*, 489.

But whatever the reason for this disagreement, the whole exchange between Weber, Rachfahl, and Troeltsch does clarify a number of key points. First, in spite of the fact that Weber and Troeltsch had inspired and assisted one another, it seems that their claims to be working on independent projects were, in fact, genuine. Rachfahl was correct to point out that Weber and Troeltsch both relied heavily on the same thesis, namely that the “modern spirit of capitalism ... was born out of the idea of Christian asceticism,” but he is wrong to view Troeltsch and Weber as a sort of intellectual alliance. This is due to the fact that the two scholars utilized this thesis in order to support divergent projects. Weber used the thesis to show how religious ideas could shape the behavior of individuals, in order to explain the origin of an oppressive economic system. Troeltsch used it as part of a broad-ranging attempt to demonstrate Christianity’s ability to simultaneously influence and remain independent from secular forces. These divergent aims stemmed out of the two scholars’ conflicting ideological perspectives. Weber, as a progressive, secular individualist, pinpointed ascetic Protestantism as the root of the oppression of the individual that characterize the modern age, and held that this spiritual inheritance needed to be overcome if humanity was to avoid falling into a state of soulless “ossification.”¹⁹³ Troeltsch, as a conservative and committed Protestant, viewed ascetic Protestantism as a still vital spiritual force within the modern world, and one that needed to be “jealously preserved,” in order to safeguard “freedom and personality” from the oppressive forces of modernity.¹⁹⁴ Weber sought an overcoming of Protestant asceticism; Troeltsch sought its preservation, and yet they helped each other to

¹⁹³ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 124

¹⁹⁴ Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 207.

advance these conflicting goals. These conflicting goals were rooted in “political and foundational differences” that the two scholars would never resolve.¹⁹⁵ During the peaceful pre-war years that they spent together in Heidelberg, Weber and Troeltsch managed, in spite of these differences, to maintain a warm and mutually beneficial friendship. But, during the fateful years of the First World War, when both Weber and Troeltsch transferred their energies from abstract historical argument to active political engagement, these differences would come to the fore, and would tear them apart.

¹⁹⁵ Ernst Troeltsch, cited in Eduard Baumgarten, *Max Weber, Werk und Person* (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1964), 489.

Chapter Three

Deepening Friendship, Divergent Perspectives

In 1910, just as Weber and Troeltsch were busy opposing Rachfahl's accusations of intellectual alliance and insisting on their scholarly independence from one another, they were also in the process of becoming housemates. The opportunity for this arose upon the death of Weber's uncle, Adolf Hausrath, who had occupied for many years the grand, old house where Weber's mother had spent her childhood. The house stood among ancient trees and verdant gardens on the north bank of the Neckar River, which flowed gently through the heart of Heidelberg. From the southward-facing terrace of the house, one could look out over the river and see the evening sunlight as it struck the walls of Heidelberg Castle.¹⁹⁶

Hausrath's heirs put this picturesque dwelling up for rent, and Weber and Troeltsch soon decided to move into it together. Weber and his wife Marianne occupied the lower floor; Troeltsch and his family occupied the upper. At first, Weber grumbled about the cost of rent and the distance from the center of town, but he gradually "grew into" the house and its grounds.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, the four years that Weber spent living in this wonderful house, appear to be some of the happiest and most peaceful of his life. No record exists of Troeltsch's opinion of the place, but one can imagine that this jovial man, who was famous for frolicking in the Neckar in a most unprofessorial manner, must have also taken great joy in this beautiful abode.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 343, 449-450.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.* 453.

¹⁹⁸ Hughes, *Consciousness and Society*, 230.

The house soon became the central meeting place for a diverse and prestigious social circle, which included intimate friends, such as the young Karl Jaspers, bright aspiring minds, such as Friedrich Gundolf and George Lukacs, and also more distant figures, such as the famed mystical poet, Stephan George.¹⁹⁹ Weber reveled in this comfortable but intellectually stimulating environment, and passed uncounted pleasant evenings with Troeltsch and their mutual friends such as this one, which he described in a letter written in 1910:

The full glory of spring is here. Under an overcast sky, the nightingales wail in the forest. In the evening we sat under the moon on the *Kochfrauplatz* [a place in the house's garden] by the lion fountain. Troeltsch sat with a friend who sang and played the violin – and we were very happy.²⁰⁰

It was during the years that they spent living together in this atmosphere of comfort, friendship and beauty that Weber and Troeltsch produced their most broadly ranging and widely reputed works, each expanding upon their earlier studies of the relationship between religion and society to produce systematic and comprehensive works on this subject. In 1911, Troeltsch completed his *Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, and, sometime during the years from 1910-1914, Weber wrote the *Sociology of Religion*, which would appear later as a portion of his posthumously published sociological handbook, *Economy and Society*.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁹ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 455.

²⁰⁰ Max Weber, *Briefe, 1909-1910*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Tubingen, J.C.B. Mohr. 1991), 526.

²⁰¹ Some scholars, such as Arthur Mitzman, claim that Weber composed *The Sociology of Religion* between 1911-1913. See Arthur Mitzman, *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York: Knopf, 1970), 192. Others such as Guenther Roth are less specific and simply point to the years between 1910 and the outbreak of the war. See Guenther Roth, "Introduction," in *Economy and Society*, LVI-LVII.

In these works, the two authors drew closer to one another than ever before in terms of the methodologies they applied and the content and conceptual frameworks that they shared with one another. However, they also drew farther apart in terms of the ideological positions that they supported in their works. This ambivalent situation is explained by the fact that the two men, in spite of their close friendship, adhered to conflicting sets of values, and thus applied similar methods and information to divergent intellectual aims. But it seems that during the peaceful years spent on the north bank of the Neckar, surrounded by a group of thinkers ranging from the Marxists to mystics, these differences did nothing to interfere with their friendship.

Troeltsch's magnum opus, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, appeared gradually in small chunks from 1908 to 1911. In its completed form it offered a detailed analysis of the social doctrines of most major Christian groups ranging from the beginning of Christianity to the seventeenth century. In this work, Troeltsch adopted a view of historical development that accepted economic and social conditions played as crucial factors in determining the spread and impact of religious ideas. In this way, Troeltsch moved closer to Weber's historical methodology, which viewed ideal and material factors as codetermining historical forces. However, Troeltsch also retained his earlier position that religious ideas developed independently from social factors. Thus, for Troeltsch, social conditions could determine the success of religious ideas, but never their essence.²⁰² Troeltsch's refusal to recognize a social ground for religious thought was related to his desire to undermine certain attempts by socialists to claim Christianity as a forerunner to the modern socialist

²⁰² Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 1002-1004.

movement.²⁰³ But this goal of refuting Christian socialist views was only one aspect of his much broader conservative agenda, which was to counteract modern pluralism and to “return” European culture to a state of unity by subordinating all aspects of society to Christian values.²⁰⁴ An examination of Troeltsch’s text will make this conservative agenda apparent.

In the introduction to *The Social Teachings*, Troeltsch made it clear that the impetus for his historical survey of Christian social doctrine stemmed from his desire to resolve modern social tensions.²⁰⁵ The “social tension” to which Troeltsch was here referring was the class struggle led by the Social Democratic Party, which constituted *the* major political and social issue during the final years of the German Reich.²⁰⁶ Troeltsch sought to resolve this “tension” by conducting a historical analysis of the past forms of Christianity in which he would clarify the social doctrines of each of these past forms and then examine the degree to which these social doctrines succeeded in influencing actual social conditions and bringing

²⁰³ Benson, *God and Caesar*, 9-10, 129-141. To view Troeltsch’s work as a *mere* refutation of socialist interpretations of Christianity, which Benson seems to do, would be to oversimplify this complex work, but Benson is right to draw our attention to the deeply conservative social and political implications of Troeltsch’s work.

²⁰⁴ This goal represents a shift from the goal of *Protestantism and Progress*. In this earlier work Troeltsch argued for a preservation of the still-vital forms of Protestantism. In *The Social Teachings*, however, Troeltsch acknowledged that ascetic Christianity was no longer a central social force in the modern world, and instead of calling for the preservation of old forms of Christianity, insisted that a new type of Christianity would have to emerge to compete with the forces of modernity. This represented a move toward the position outlined by Weber at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*, in which Weber asserted that modernity had invalidated ascetic Protestantism and that new spiritual forces were needed. Troeltsch still remained separate from Weber’s view however, because he insisted that only Christianity could play this role as rejuvenating social force. See *The Social Teachings*, 32, 816, 1006-1012.

²⁰⁵ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 24, 32.

²⁰⁶ Benson, *God and Caesar*, 17-23, 73, 151.

about an “inward uniformity of collective life.”²⁰⁷ By social doctrine, Troeltsch meant the teachings of Christian groups that concerned the relationship of Christianity to the “most important non-religious sociological structures.” The primary structures that Troeltsch included in this category were the law, the economy, and the family.²⁰⁸ By analyzing the past ways in which Christian groups had related themselves to these structures, Troeltsch believed that he could determine which forms of Christian life had been the most successful at bringing about harmony among these antagonistic social forces. Such a discovery would enable Troeltsch to derive guiding principles on which modern theologians could base their reforms of church social doctrine, which would allow Christianity to once again unite all of secular society within a universal moral framework.²⁰⁹ Such a framework would supposedly bring an end to all class conflict, and spiritually reunite the German Reich. This is the ultimate motivation of *The Social Teachings*, and it reveals Troeltsch’s conservative assumption that social divisions were inherently undesirable and that Christianity was the means by which modern social divisions could be overcome.

In attempting to understand the teachings of the churches and the social effectiveness of these teachings, Troeltsch recognized that he needed to pay attention not only to the internal development of religious thought, but also to the influence exerted upon religious

²⁰⁷ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 34. Troeltsch’s belief that a vital Christianity would bring about a “unity of civilization,” contains an implicit attack on any Marxist interpretation of Christianity. Because Troeltsch holds that authentic Christianity must unify a society and therefore apply equally to all members of a society, it could never been seen as a religion of the poor, nor could it be wielded as an ideological weapon against the privileged.

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.* 32.

²⁰⁹ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 25, 1004.

development by contemporary social forces.²¹⁰ Troeltsch accepted that socio-economic factors played a central role in determining the spread and impact of religious ideas.²¹¹ Such a view represented a moderation of his earlier position, in which he had argued for the complete independence of religion from material factors. It also represented a marked shift toward Weber's position, which viewed ideal and material factors as equally effective historical forces.²¹² Some examples of Troeltsch's methodological shift include his attribution of early Christian ascetic tendencies to the psychological effects of living during "the decline of an overripe and static civilization," his attribution of Calvin's approval of rational commercial activity to the bourgeois atmosphere of Geneva, his assertion that the collapse of the Roman Empire enabled the growth of Christianity as an independent social force, and his claim that the rise of modern social conditions prevented past forms of Christianity from continuing to function as socially unifying forces.²¹³

However, in spite of these serious concession of the materialist approach to history, Troeltsch remained true to his idealist roots. For while he admitted that the external form of Christianity changed to fit the social conditions in which it found itself, he continued to insist that the essential ideas of Christianity arose in total independence from social factors. "Jesus, Paul, Origen, Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Francis of Assisi, Bonaventura, Luther, Calvin: as we study their thought and their feeling, we realize that it is impossible to regard them as the

²¹⁰ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 34.

²¹¹ *Ibid.* 1002.

²¹² Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 125.

²¹³ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 34, 105, 159, 642-643.

product of class struggles and economic factors.”²¹⁴ This assertion represents a continuation of the idealist approach to religious development that he was first exposed to as a student. Though he restricted the sphere within which religion could move independently to the “specifically religious,” thereby granting a huge concession to materialist interpreters of religion, he continued to assert that the central ideas of the Christian faith could never be influenced by social change and, therefore, never invalidated by it. Therefore, the question for Troeltsch was not *whether* Christian ideals remained valid in modern times, but *how* these eternally valid ideals could be reshaped in order that they might once again become the central, unifying force within Western Civilization.

The amount of historical information that Troeltsch brings to bear in answering this question is staggering, and a detailed examination of Troeltsch’s specific historical arguments is not possible in the current context. What follows is merely a presentation of the main conclusions that Troeltsch drew from his historical investigation. These are three. First, Troeltsch found that all past Christian forms belonged to one of three types: the church, the sect, and mysticism. Second, Troeltsch constructed an overarching narrative of Christian development, in which various forms of Christianity achieved varying degrees of social effectiveness. Central to this narrative was the application of the idea of Natural Law by various Christian groups. Third, Troeltsch inferred from this narrative the particular traits that a Christian group needed to possess in order to become an effective force for social unity.

²¹⁴ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 1002.

Troeltsch believed that all past forms of Christianity could be described in terms of three ideal types: the church, the sect, and mysticism.²¹⁵ He defined a church as a Christian group that considered itself to be universal, that attempted to include all members of a society within its sphere of influence, that desired an unlimited expansion of its membership until all of mankind was included within it, and that therefore compromised on social and ethical issues in order to facilitate this expansion. The reason for this ethical compromise lies in the fact that few individuals could live up to the strict demands of the uncompromising ethic of the Gospel. Thus, a church that includes the sinful must find a way to justify this theoretically, which all churches do in one way or another. Such a justification is usually carried out by diminishing the importance of the spiritual effort of the individual and emphasizing the miraculous or the institutional means by which salvation can be attained.²¹⁶ For Troeltsch, The purest representatives of the church type were found in the Catholic and Lutheran churches. Troeltsch held that Calvinism was also a church but that, over time, it had taken on sect-like characteristics.²¹⁷

Unlike the church, the sect refuses ethical compromise and accepts the numerical limitation that follows from this. Troeltsch defined the sect as a voluntary organization in which devout individuals banded together in order to pursue a life in accordance with the radical, otherworldly ethic of the Gospel.²¹⁸ The sect does not seek to expand its

²¹⁵ It should be noted that these types represent “ideal types” in the Weberian sense. As such, Troeltsch did not intend for his types to represent concrete historical realities, but rather as logically-purified models, which various groups approximated to greater or lesser degrees. This application of Weber’s historical methodology is another important example of the way that Weber and Troeltsch collaborated during the pre-war period.

²¹⁶ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 331, 338.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.* 690.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.* 342.

membership, nor to control the forces of the secular world. Instead, it adopts either a stance of opposition or indifference to the social world. In most cases the oppositional sect simply advocates for the reformation of the world so that it more closely approximates the Christian ideal, but in rare cases it can become militant, seeking to wipe away the corruption of the world and to establish the kingdom of heaven on earth.²¹⁹ Most frequently however, the members of sects seek to be left alone, in order to spiritually cultivate themselves in isolation from the contamination and distraction of worldly life. Regardless of whether the sects adopted a militant or pacifist approach though, Troeltsch ruled out sects as an effective Christian form for unifying society, because they either ignore or oppose the social spheres of law, economy, and family, and tend to exclude all but a minority of a given population. Rather than modifying themselves in order to shape the world around them, the sects rigidly insist on an otherworldly ideal, and thus fail to bring about a significant societal impact.²²⁰

Finally, there is mysticism. This form of Christianity differs from the other two in that it is not essentially social. The mystic is primarily concerned with “direct inward and present religious experience,” and thus the institutional forms of Christianity appear to be of only peripheral significance.²²¹ Whereas the church type sees salvation as something obtained through an institution, and the sect-type sees salvation as something to be obtained through moral perfection, the mystic sees salvation as something to be gained through the direct experience of God. Of course, religious institutions and moral strictures can still play an important role in bringing about such experiences, but this is the full extent of their

²¹⁹ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 345.

²²⁰ *Ibid.* 805.

²²¹ *Ibid.* 730.

significance: they are merely means for achieving a higher state of religious consciousness.²²² On the other hand, mysticism contains pantheistic tendencies, which can lead it to become indifferent to all doctrine and entirely independent from Christianity.²²³ Troeltsch considered mysticism to be the least socially effective form of Christianity. Because mysticism is essentially subjective, it has “no impulse towards organization at all.” At the most, mysticism is capable of drawing together a loose group of like-minded seekers.²²⁴ Furthermore, these loose groups express “complete indifference or impotence towards all social problems which lie outside the directly religious sphere.”²²⁵

In the course of Troeltsch’s historical account, we see that these types function merely as conceptual categories, which facilitate our ability to understand historical phenomena. Troeltsch thus adopted a methodological approach first advocated for by Max Weber, who held that all historical and sociological thought made use of such “ideal types.”²²⁶ In reality these types are only ever approximated and most concrete historical objects appear as hybrids of several types. This is the case in Troeltsch’s account. For example, Troeltsch held that medieval Christianity combined the church and the sect ideal by means of monasticism, in which the exclusive, morally rigorous Christian groups were integrated into a universal institutional framework.²²⁷ Likewise, he held that Calvinism represented a fusion of the church and sect types and that modern German Christianity was

²²² Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 730.

²²³ Ibid. 735-736.

²²⁴ Ibid. 800.

²²⁵ Ibid. 801.

²²⁶ Max Weber, “Objectivity in Social Science,” 392-398.

²²⁷ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 161-163.

characterized by a rigid universal church in which mystically-inspired philosophers and theologians were only loosely incorporated.²²⁸

Using these three types, Troeltsch constructed a narrative that traced the changing relationship between Christianity and society, beginning with the earliest Christians, charting its rise to social dominance in the form of the medieval and protestant churches, and then ending with its apparent decline during the modern period. Troeltsch held that the earliest form of Christianity, as espoused by Christ and documented in the Gospel, was a radically apolitical system. In this system, all value was placed upon the imminent arrival of the “kingdom of God,” in which all moral ideals would be realized. Because of this certainty, early Christians diverted all of their energy away from contemporary social concerns and toward a personal preparation for the coming of the kingdom. This preparation consisted in cultivating a state of “purity of intention” and inner detachment from the world.²²⁹ Troeltsch held that these ideas did not produce any organized Christian community and that they were at most capable of bringing together individuals in loose groups united in “the communism of love.”²³⁰ But such groups saw no need for social action, since the kingdom of God was coming on its own accord. For Troeltsch, these groups represented the primal form of the Christian sect, and he speculated that these groups, like the more well-known sects of the early modern period sects, refused to take oaths and to participate in official life.²³¹ It was for

²²⁸ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 688-690, 796-799.

²²⁹ *Ibid.* 52.

²³⁰ *Ibid.* 62.

²³¹ *Ibid.* 63.

this reason, Troeltsch claimed, that all later sects referred back to the social theory of the Gospel to justify their other-worldly, exclusive form of Christian organization.²³²

But while this form of Christianity spread broadly throughout western Eurasia, primarily, Troeltsch claimed, because of its appeal to the oppressed and enslaved, it could not become socially influential until the vague notion of the “kingdom of god” was replaced by “a much more stable and fully developed” “sociological-religious idea.”²³³

Troeltsch held that this “stable and fully developed” idea, was supplied to Christianity by the Stoics in their theory of relative “Natural Law.” This theory, as advanced by the Stoics, considered Natural Law to be a product of the divine will. They believed that there had once been a “golden age” in which humanity had lived in perfect agreement with divine will, and that during this time there had been “no slavery, no force, no contrast between rich and poor.” But since this time, aberrant behavior on the part of man led to the present situation, “in which the Natural Law is only expressed in a clouded and disfigured form.” Such a theory enabled those within a fallen society to judge this society according to the degree to which it conformed to Natural Law.²³⁴

This idea, Troeltsch asserted, was taken up by the Church fathers, and synthesized with early Christian mythology. The golden age was equated with the time before the fall, and the corrupt institutions of society were attributed to Original Sin.²³⁵ Such a conception allowed Christianity to become a coherent social force for the first time. Rather than ignoring

²³² Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 342.

²³³ Ibid. 46-50

²³⁴ Ibid. 152.

²³⁵ Ibid. 153.

or disdaining social institutions, Christian thinkers could now look upon them as either necessary for the mitigation of the negative effects of Original Sin or as just punishments for it.²³⁶ This allowed for the transformation of Christianity from a scattered network of otherworldly sects to a unified Church. This idea enabled such a transformation because it gave meaning to secular activity. Because of Original Sin, human beings could not all live in a communal state of brotherly love and inner simplicity. The forces of competition and need had crept into the world and now had to be dealt with. Thus the ruler, the merchant, and the slave, all had a role to play within the Christian society. All members of society had to work together, in spite of their fallen state, to live in approximate accordance with Natural Law, which had once been realized perfectly by humanity before the fall. Troeltsch calls this new social theory “relative Natural Law.”²³⁷ However, in spite of the fact that all members of a society had a place within this Christian social theory, not all roles were considered to be spiritually equal. Even though it was accepted that commerce and warfare were necessary aspects of a fallen human society, the roles of merchants and mercenaries were still considered to be spiritually inferior to the roles of priests and monks. By removing themselves to some extent from the fallen world, the clergy were able to bring their lives into a closer accord with Natural Law.²³⁸ In this way a sort of symbiotic relationship was established, in which those committed to worldly pursuits economically and politically supported those committed to otherworldly pursuits, while those committed to otherworldly pursuits spiritually supported those committed to worldly pursuits by means of an accrual

²³⁶ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 153-154.

²³⁷ Ibid. 160.

²³⁸ Ibid. 162.

and distribution of grace. With this theory, which came into existence during late antiquity but which found its purest expression only in the work of Thomas Aquinas, Christianity was able to develop, for the first time, into a powerful social force, drawing all aspects of civilization into itself and harmonizing antagonistic elements of society into a great cultural unity.²³⁹

The Idea of relative Natural Law was politically useful to Troeltsch because it allowed him to argue against socially radical conceptions of Christianity, which sought to oppose the inequalities of Wilhelmine society by appealing to the message of the Gospel. Because Troeltsch held that only Christian groups organized along the lines of the church type could become socially effective, and because he held that such an organization was possible only by means of the compromise with actual social conditions that relative Natural Law enabled, he could delegitimize any form of Christianity that called for a change in existing social conditions as a socially ineffective sect. This allowed Troeltsch to reassert the primacy of the German Evangelical church and to dismiss the claim of the Social Democrats that socialism represented a modern instantiation of the true Christian ethic of brotherliness and compromise.²⁴⁰

For Troeltsch, the incorporation of relative Natural Law into Christian thought allowed the middle ages to become the first great era of Christian cultural unity. He believed that this unity lasted until the early modern period, when new developments in religious thought undermined the Catholic social theory. Troeltsch contended that these developments

²³⁹ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 278-280, 379.

²⁴⁰ Constance Benson, *God and Caesar*, 158-180.

were due primarily to independent innovations within religious thought, which could not be attributed to any underlying social changes. He held that ideas of Martin Luther, the primary innovator of the period, arose in complete independence from all social factors. Troeltsch did admit that the reception of these ideas did have to do with certain changes that society was undergoing during the early modern period, primarily an increasingly individualistic outlook brought about by a growing urban culture, but he remained firm in his insistence that these changes did not directly determine Luther's religious ideas themselves.²⁴¹

In terms of impact on Christian social theory, Luther's most important ideas were his rejection of the Catholic conception of good works and his insistence upon the fundamental importance of personal faith. Because only faith was needed for salvation, the hierarchical edifice of the Catholic Church was deprived of any religious foundation. Because faith could be cultivated within any worldly "calling", the otherworldly ethic of medieval monasticism was deprived of its reason for existence.²⁴²

On this point, Luther diverged radically from medieval Christian social theory. On many other points, however, Luther remained in agreement with his predecessors. Most significantly, he retained their idea of Natural Law. Like the early Christians, Luther believed that human society was the result of divine will, and that the appalling aspects of this society, which seemed to necessitate unchristian behavior, could be understood as results of man's fallen state.²⁴³ However, for Luther, redemption was determined not by action but by one's inner state, and thus the Christian did not need to withdraw from the world in order to be

²⁴¹ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 464-467.

²⁴² *Ibid.* 471

²⁴³ *Ibid.* 471-474, 570-571.

saved. What this led to was “an asceticism which is in the world but not of it,” in which the world and one's position within it are fully accepted, and in which one seeks to overcome the world through faith.²⁴⁴

The result of all of this was the dissolution of the unity of medieval Christian culture. This was due to the fact that the Lutheran church lost its position of equality vis-a-vis secular authority, and, in fact, became subordinate to it. In this way, the political sphere broke out of its long-standing symbiosis with Christianity, and began to function independently from Christian principles, thereby fracturing the cultural unity imparted upon Europe by the medieval church.²⁴⁵

But Troeltsch held that cultural unity was soon restored in many parts of Europe by another form of Christianity. Troeltsch, following Max Weber, dubbed this movement ascetic Protestantism. He included under this heading various Protestant sects that had taken on certain aspects of the Church type, and neo-Calvinism, which was the product of Calvinism's incorporation of certain sect-like features.²⁴⁶ This Christian movement, was able to “dominate whole of life” in the regions where it became prominent. Like its medieval ancestor, it was able to bring all other aspects of society within its sphere of influence and thereby usher in a new age of Christian social unity.²⁴⁷

This was due to the powerful way in which ascetic Protestantism instructed Christians to relate to the world. Whereas Catholicism encouraged the minimization of worldly activity,

²⁴⁴ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 474.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 574.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 689

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.* 691.

and Lutherans encouraged passive acceptance, Ascetic Protestantism encouraged an active engagement with the world, with the end goal of changing it in such a way that it more closely approximated the Christian ideal.²⁴⁸ In this way, ascetic Protestantism continued to function within the theoretical framework of relative Natural Law, but unlike Lutheranism, it focused less on the unavoidable imperfection of worldly existence, and more on the potential for human action to bring about an approximation of Natural Law on earth.²⁴⁹ Troeltsch went on to illustrate the ways in which he believed this active Christian ethic had brought the sexual, political and economic spheres of life under its influence. In the sexual sphere, he pointed out that Calvinism exerted an influence that neither the Catholic nor the Lutheran church had been able to. Namely, it subordinated even the libidinal aspects of human nature to the active service of the community. No longer was the sexual aspect of marriage seen as a compromise made necessary by Original Sin. Rather, under the control of ascetic Protestant teachings, sex became a sober pursuit carried out without pleasure for the purely religious purpose of creating more devout Christians.²⁵⁰ In the political sphere, Troeltsch asserted that ascetic Protestantism was responsible for early stirrings of the “liberal or democratic conception of the state.” Though it justified the existence of the state in terms of relative Natural Law, just as Lutheranism had done, ascetic Protestantism managed to remain independent from the state, while at the same time imposing certain ethical imperatives, derived from Christian teaching, upon the state.²⁵¹ Finally, in his comments on the economic

²⁴⁸ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 809.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.* 816.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 809.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.* 810-812.

effects of ascetic Protestantism, he followed Max Weber's findings on every point, asserting that the ethic in this sphere involved, "an emphasis upon specialization, the feeling for advantage and profit, the abstract duty of work, the obligation toward property as towards something great, which ought to be maintained and increased for its own sake."²⁵²

After outlining these ways in which ascetic Protestantism had managed to reunite European society within a Christian social theory, Troeltsch ended his narrative by asserting that this cultural unity had been fractured by the emergence of modernity. Even though he believed that the economic and political aspects of the modern world had their origin in the social theory of ascetic Protestantism, he believed that, in the modern period, these social spheres had become independent from the Christian impulses that spawned them.²⁵³ Thus Troeltsch believed that he had diagnosed the cause of the cultural disunity of the modern world that he and so many of his fellow German intellectuals fretted over.²⁵⁴ The root cause of it was that modern social forces had grown beyond the control of any Christian social ideal. Troeltsch identified the key social changes that had broken the bonds between Christianity and society as the emergence of the "modern bourgeoisie," "the emancipation of the fourth estate," and "scientific rationalism." These forces combined to generate a new, secular social theory called "rationalistic individualism," which Troeltsch claimed conflicted

²⁵² Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 812-815.

²⁵³ Ibid. 816, 819. In this assertion Troeltsch was following Weber, who made a very similar claim at in the closing chapter of his *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*.

²⁵⁴ Ringer points out that orthodox mandarins tended to point to a particular timer period as an example of a unified culture. For some this was the middle ages, for others it was the period of Weimar Classicism. As we have seen for Troeltsch, it was the two periods during which Christianity, in the guises of medieval Catholicism and ascetic Protestantism, managed to dominate the other spheres of society. See Ringer *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 253-255.

with Christianity both in its optimism and in its tendency toward “equalitarianism.”²⁵⁵ Thus, Troeltsch concluded that a new, all-encompassing Christian social idea had to emerge if European culture was ever to regain its state of cultural unity, and to escape the inevitable “self-destruction of every kind of purely secular optimism.”²⁵⁶ Though he did not believe that he knew what form this new social theory would take, he did believe that his survey of past Christian social theories had yielded a number of insights into the characteristics that this new social theory would need to have if it was to achieve its goal of reuniting European culture.

First, Troeltsch concluded that only Christian groups organized along the lines of the church type had ever been able to unify society in the past. Though he did not deny that sects and mystics had had social consequences, he held that both of these Christian types lacked the ability of the churches to draw all aspects of a society into their sphere of influence. The church type alone possessed the ability to “supplement” the supernatural components of Christianity with an “ethic of civilization.” This ability allowed churches to compromise with existing social conditions and thus to exert a real impact upon the social world. However, Troeltsch held that the primary supplementary idea of the past, relative Natural Law, had been invalidated by modern forces, and thus that a new supplementary idea needed to emerge from within Christianity if it was to resume its role as a unifying force within European society.²⁵⁷ This conclusion implied that, if Christianity was going to reemerge as the

²⁵⁵ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 992.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.* 1001.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.* 1001. Troeltsch did not explicitly state in his conclusion why this old idea became invalid in the modern world, but at other points he hinted that this was due to the fact that rationalism, which had once been

dominant cultural force in the western world, that the old church structures would need to be kept in place, but that the churches necessary compromise with the social world needed to be placed into a new conceptual framework. For Troeltsch, who was one of the most restlessly innovating member of the German Evangelical Church, this conclusion must have appeared quite convenient; it established a secure future for the institution of which he was a part, but also legitimated his role within that institution as a reformer and innovator.

But Troeltsch's second conclusion, that the church type could not be realized within modern social conditions, complicated matters. He held that this was the case because the universal claims of the church type required a strict insistence upon orthodoxy and thus a degree of repression of individual inquiry that was incompatible with modern views regarding intellectual freedom.²⁵⁸ However, Troeltsch believed that this difficulty could be overcome by incorporating ideas of tolerance derived from the Protestant sects and ideas of spiritual relativism derived from Christian mysticism, into a unified, national "Free Church organization," which would enable a degree of unity without impeding the individual's search for religious truth.²⁵⁹ This conclusion shows that in spite of his deeply conservative convictions, Troeltsch did not believe that the demon of modernity could be entirely exorcised. While certain aspects of modern society, such as pluralism, could be eliminated by means of a revitalized Christianity, other aspects, such as freedom of thought, would have to be tolerated.

allied to Christian thought through the influence of the Stoics, broke free from Christianity and began explaining the natural world in purely secular, non-theistic terms. See Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 161.

²⁵⁸ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 1008.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.* 1010.

Other than this concrete suggestion for a new organizational structure, Troeltsch, made no explicit statements regarding the shape that a new, vital Christianity should take. Rather, he ended his work by stressing the high stakes which rested upon the emergence of such a revitalized Christianity. He believed that his historical survey had shown that Christianity, in all its various forms, had been the sole social force in European society that had consistently upheld the importance of the individual over and against the collective, enabled mutual love to overcome the natural tendency toward conflict and competition, resolved the problem of equality in spite of the necessity of social hierarchy, and allowed the spirit of charity to ameliorate a degree of the suffering that necessarily persisted within any society. Thus, Troeltsch held that if a new form of Christianity was not discovered which could reign in the secular forces that dominated modern society, we would see the dawn of an age in which the brutal natural laws of society governed unchecked by the humanizing impulses of a Christian social ethic.²⁶⁰ Troeltsch believed that the old spiritual house of Western man was being deconstructed by the divisive forces of modernity and that a new dwelling was in the process of being built. If Christianity did not find a way to influence the course of this construction, Troeltsch feared that we would find ourselves trapped within an inhuman, monstrous edifice.

²⁶⁰ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 1005. Benson correctly points out that many of these beneficial social effects that Troeltsch attributed to Christianity, were, from a secular perspective, no effects at all. For example, Troeltsch claimed that Christianity solved the problem of hierarchy, by recognizing social differentiation as the result of the “inscrutable will of God,” and by imbuing these differences with ethical significance. Thus Christianity does not actually redress social inequality, which Troeltsch believes to be inevitable, it merely justifies it. See Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 1005; Benson, *God and Caesar*, 193.

This fear of modernity and the divisive forces that it carried in its wake was the motivating force behind Troeltsch's *Social Teachings*. In this work he sought to lay a groundwork for the reinvigoration of Christianity as a social force by studying the ways in which Christian values could become socially effective. He hoped that such a reinvigorated Christian religion would be capable of competing with and perhaps overcoming the threatening modern values of individualism and rationalism, thereby bringing about a situation of social unity and stability. As Troeltsch investigated the possible conditions for such a religious revival, he incorporated a number of Weber's ideas and methodological approaches into his study. Like Weber, he considered social factors to be an important aspect of religious development, he utilized ideal types in order to classify and analyze the various forms taken by Christianity over the centuries, and he held that ascetic Protestantism had been the key force in bringing about the modern world. Unlike Weber, however, Troeltsch refused to admit that religious thought, as opposed to religious social development, could be influenced by social conditions. Also unlike Weber, Troeltsch continued to advocate for a return to Christian values in order to protect western culture from the emerging dangers of modernity.

Weber also held grave doubts about modernity, but unlike Troeltsch, he had no faith that a revitalized Christianity could solve the great problems that it posed. As such, Weber's most comprehensive work on the subject of religion, *The Sociology of Religion*, which he composed during 1913 and 1914 as part of a general sociological handbook, did not focus at all upon the potential conditions for a religious revival in modern Europe, but rather

presented the irreligious situation of modernity as a historical fact that had resulted from the natural interplay between social and religious historical factors. Throughout this work, Weber considered the interrelationship of religion and society, emphasizing both the social impact of religion, and the influence of social conditions upon both religious movements *and* religious thought. Weber clearly and repeatedly argued that fundamental religious ideas could be traced to the sociological position of the bearers of these ideas. This is one of the most important differences that separated Weber from Troeltsch. It was rooted in a disagreement regarding the nature of religion. Whereas Troeltsch analyzed religion as a greater or lesser approximation of an absolute and eternally valid truth, Weber viewed religion as a way in which human beings sought to satisfy certain material, social and psychological needs. Unlike Troeltsch, Weber reduced religion to a purely human phenomenon. Thus, Weber could not insist, as Troeltsch did, that religious thought was somehow disconnected from the secular realm. Rather, Weber viewed religious thought as merely one means among many by which human beings strove to survive and thrive within the world.

Weber's anthropocentric view of religion is obvious from the opening lines for his work, in which he argued that religion originated from the attempt to satisfy material needs through the magical manipulation of natural forces.²⁶¹ Weber maintained this human-focused perspective throughout his discussion of the "religious propensities" of various social strata. In this discussion, Weber consistently argued that not only the outward forms of religion, but their essential ideas as well, resulted from the material, social, or psychological goods that

²⁶¹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 399-401.

the members of the religious group hoped to derive from them. Thus, Weber argued that peasants the world over, vitally tied as they are to the irrational forces of nature, have remained immune to any kind of religion which emphasizes ethical behavior over magical manipulation of nature.²⁶² In contrast, Weber held that craftsmen and merchants, who could more easily than peasants control their economic fates, tended to adopt religious views that emphasized rational, ethical behavior over magical or sacramental rites.²⁶³ Even at the highest level of religious innovation, that of prophetic revelation, Weber asserted that human need served as the central motivating factor. In this case it was the psychological need for human beings to understand their lives within the framework of a rationally structured and purpose-filled cosmos. Though the actual content of prophetic “revelations” varied considerably, they all played the same practical role of giving normative direction to human existence.²⁶⁴ On top of this existential need for order, Weber also held that more mundane needs could directly influence the content of prophecy. One striking example of this, can be seen in Weber’s speculative claim that the Christian idea of redemption from sin through Christ was derived from the worldly example of release from slavery through the repayment of debts.²⁶⁵ These examples show that Weber considered religious ideas, from the most practical to the most abstract, to be largely determined by the worldly conditions and needs of the human beings that held them.

²⁶² Weber, *Economy and Society*, 468-472.

²⁶³ Ibid. 481-484.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. 450-451.

²⁶⁵ Ibid. 485.

However, Weber held that religion could shape society even as it was shaped by it. Because religion was capable of significantly altering human behavior, and thus social reality, the relationship between religious and social forces took on a dynamic, dialectical character. As socio-economic conditions changed in response to religious influences (as well as in response to other material and ideal historical forces), these religious influences themselves changed in order to respond to the new social conditions. It was on the basis of this view that Weber argued that religious and social factors could act as codetermining historical forces.²⁶⁶

In taking this stance, Weber directly opposed one of Troeltsch's central claims – the independence of Christian thought. Not only did Weber reduce Christianity to one among a number of equally valid religious traditions, but he also reduced all religion to an essentially human response to material, social, and psychological needs. Yet, in spite of this fundamental disagreement, *The Sociology of Religion* bore a number of important similarities to Troeltsch's *Social Teachings*. In numerous matters of detail, as well as well as in larger theoretical and structural matters, it is easy to recognize traces of Troeltsch's thought. It is hard to believe that Weber could have missed the conservative religious aims of Troeltsch's work, displayed, as they are, quite prominently in its introduction and conclusion of *The Social Teachings*. Thus, we must conclude that Weber chose to incorporate some of

²⁶⁶ Thus, it seems that Weber set out to achieve in *The Sociology of Religion* the definitive historical study that he called for at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*. Whereas in *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber considered only the effect of the religious ideas upon economic behavior, in the *Sociology of Religion* Weber considered both this and the effect of economic conditions upon religious behavior. This project was carried even further in Weber's Later work *The Economic Ethics of World Religions*, in which he sought "to explore *both* causal relationships," the economic upon the religious, and the religious upon the economic. See *The Protestant Ethic*, 125, 161.

Troeltsch's findings into his own work, even though he recognized his disagreement with Troeltsch's foundational assumptions.

That Weber took Troeltsch to be a reliable authority on the history of Christianity in spite of their ideological differences is evident in Weber's report on the first Congress of Sociologists (1910) to Franz Eulenberg, a political economist at the University of Berlin. In other instances, Weber had voiced a strongly negative view of the Congress, describing feeling "disgusted at that salon of rejects."²⁶⁷ In his letter to Eulenberg, however, Weber singled out Troeltsch for special praise. He wrote that Troeltsch's presentation, which had summarized a number of the central ideas from *The Social Teachings* had been "excellent" and "above all: completely objective (*gänzlich wertfrei*)."²⁶⁸ Thus, even though Weber almost certainly recognized the fundamental differences in perspective that separated him from Troeltsch, he nonetheless viewed Troeltsch's substantive work on the history of Christianity as a reliable and objective source which he could incorporate into his own intellectual pursuits.

A letter that Weber wrote in 1913 to his publisher Paul Siebeck indicates that Weber was, in fact, interested in incorporating and extending Troeltsch's findings into a much broader religious investigation. In this letter, Weber described his plans for the work that would later come to be known as *Economy and Society*, in which he would seek to

²⁶⁷ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 423.

²⁶⁸ Max Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Tubingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1991), 6:655. For the text on which Troeltsch's presentation was based see Ernst Troeltsch, "Stoic-Christian Natural Law and Modern Secular Natural Law," in *Religion in History*, Trans. James Luther Adams (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 321-342.

“set all the major social forms in relation to the economy: from the family and household to the professional enterprise, to the kin-group, to the ethnic community, to religion (all great, world-encompassing religions: a sociology of doctrines of salvation and religious ethics – what Troeltsch has done, now for all religions, only substantially more concise), [and] finally a comprehensive theory of state and domination.”²⁶⁹

This Letter shows that Weber intentionally modeled his own investigations of religion on Troeltsch’s *Social Teachings*. Whether Weber did or did not recognize the conservative religious and political motivations of Troeltsch’s work, cannot be stated certainly, but it is clear that, in spite of these, Weber viewed Troeltsch’s work on the historical relationship between Christianity and society as exemplary, and sought to incorporate Troeltsch’s insights into the history of Christianity while simultaneously offering similar insights into the historical relationship of other major world religions to social conditions.

Thus, it is not surprising that Weber’s work resembled Troeltsch’s both in factual content and in conceptual structure. In matters of content, Weber simply followed Troeltsch’s view on a number of questions concerning the relationship of Christianity and society. For example, even though Weber emphasized the social and economic focus of the Jewish prophetic tradition, he followed Troeltsch in claiming that “Jesus was not at all interested in social reform as such.”²⁷⁰ At another point, Weber actually reversed his position on the question of the uniqueness of the Lutheran vocational ethic, which he had first touched on in

²⁶⁹ Max Weber, *Gesamtausgabe*, 8:451.

²⁷⁰ Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, 443-444. Compare to Troeltsch *The Social Teachings*, 39. “It is of the utmost importance to recognize that the preaching of Jesus and the creation of the Christian Church were not due in any sense to the impulse of a social movement. ... Christianity was not the product of a class struggle of any kind.”

The Protestant Ethic. In *The Protestant Ethic*, Weber, following Ritschl, had argued that Luther's primary contribution to the modern economic ethic had been his original claim that "inner-worldly" vocational labor was pleasing to God.²⁷¹ Troeltsch had first contradicted Weber on this point in *Protestantism and Progress*, claiming that the religious value of vocational labor "had already long been a doctrine of Catholicism," and he went on to further substantiate this claim in his *Social Teachings*.²⁷² In light of Troeltsch's findings, Weber reversed his position on the uniqueness of Luther's idea of the calling, and in his discussion of Christianity's relation to the political world referred jointly to "the medieval and Lutheran traditionalistic ethics of vocation."²⁷³ On another major point, Weber borrowed Troeltsch's concept of Natural Law, using this concept to analyze the theoretical positions taken by religious groups toward the world. As has already been discussed, Troeltsch claimed that the idea of Natural Law had allowed Christian churches to take an active stance toward the world by rationalizing imperfect social conditions in terms of Original Sin. Weber followed Troeltsch's findings on Christianity point for point, but went on to show that several other world religions used similar rationalizing ideas to justify their involvement in the flawed social world as well.²⁷⁴ Finally, Weber utilized a conceptual structure identical to Troeltsch's when he analyzed the tensions between religion and the world in terms of three major social

²⁷¹ Weber, *The Protestant Ethic*, 40.

²⁷² Troeltsch, *Protestantism and Progress*, 129; Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of Christianity*, 293-296.

²⁷³ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 600.

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 598-599.

realms, the economic, the political, and the sexual/familial, showing in each case how the various world religions either rejected or compromised with these realms.²⁷⁵

This list of Weber's appropriations could be greatly extended, but this would not further the purpose of the current essay. All that needs to be established is that Weber followed Troeltsch on a number of substantive points, showing that he viewed Troeltsch as a reliable authority on the question of the relationship of Christianity to society. However, in spite of these extensive borrowings, it is clear that Weber disagreed with Troeltsch on some of the most fundamental subjects concerning the relationship of religion to society.

We have already seen how Weber contradicted Troeltsch regarding the relationship between religious ideas and socio-economic conditions, but this is not the only significant disagreement that can be discerned in these scholars' major works. Another very important disagreement concerns the role of Christianity in the modern world. Troeltsch, as we saw, insisted that the sociological and spiritual problems of modernity could be resolved by means of a reinvigoration of the Christian religion. Indeed, this hope for a modern Christian revival appears to be the primary motivation of Troeltsch's *Social Teachings*. Weber, in contrast, expressed no hope of a modern religious revival. In *The Sociology of Religion*, he argued that the major social strata of the modern world, the bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie, and the proletariat, were all predisposed to view the world in rational, non-religious terms. Concerning the bureaucrats, Weber asserted that they tended to adopt an attitude of "comprehensive sober rationalism" and to display a "profound disesteem for irrational

²⁷⁵ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 576-610. Compare to Troeltsch's introductory remarks on the definition of "social" in Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 28-29.

religion.” These worldly, calculating organizers, with their “absolute lack of feeling of a need for salvation,” do not necessarily oppose religion, but they consider it as a mere tool by which the uneducated masses might be pacified.²⁷⁶ Weber considered the Confucian mandarins to be a near perfect approximation of this bureaucratic type, but he has also considered modern European bureaucrats to be fairly pure representatives of it. This observation of the bureaucratic disinclination to religion takes on a great significance when one considers that Weber considered increasing bureaucratization to be the nearly inevitable fate of Modern civilization.²⁷⁷ The natural conclusion to be drawn from these views, which Weber does not explicitly draw in *The Sociology of Religion*, is that modern society will be characterized by ever-increasing religious indifference as bureaucratic forms of social organization continue to spread.²⁷⁸

Similar conclusions can be drawn from Weber’s discussion on of the modern bourgeoisie and proletariat. As has already been discussed, Weber held that religious views were usually derived from the material, social or psychological needs of the individual. As such, Weber viewed the peasant tendency for magical religion to be based on his psychological need to believe that he could control the natural meteorological forces upon

²⁷⁶ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 477.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.* 223-226, 973-975.

²⁷⁸ It should be noted that Weber viewed increasing bureaucratization as one of the most significant threats to the modern individual. In spite of his acknowledgement of bureaucracy’s technical superiority over charismatic and traditional forms of legitimate domination, he feared that the incessant rationalization and compartmentalization that characterizes bureaucratic activity would ultimately lead to a society in which individuals “need order and nothing but order, who become weak and cowardly when that order is weakened for a moment...” Max Weber, quoted in Fritz Ringer, *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography* (University of Chicago Press, 2004), 222. Note that Weber’s concern over bureaucracy does not have to do with the diminishment of religion, but rather with the diminishment of the individual. His cowardly bureaucrats bear a striking resemblance to the “narrow-souled” last humans that Weber described at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*.

which his subsistence depended.²⁷⁹ Likewise, Weber argued that craftsmen tended to adopt rational, ethical religious views because they recognized that their livelihood was determined, to a large degree, by their own ability to organize their lives in a rational manner.²⁸⁰ However, Weber believed that religious means were incapable of addressing the needs of the modern proletariat. Because the worker's well-being was neither dependent on mysterious natural forces nor on his own efforts but, rather, on social conditions that were clearly open to human control, he tended to reject religion and to adopt secular, rationalized "religious surrogates" (i.e. Marxism), in his pursuit of socio-economic and psychological satisfaction.²⁸¹

In a similar manner, Weber held that the modern bourgeoisie, which had come into a dominant social position, tended not to "possess a religious character."²⁸² This could be attributed to the increasing rationalization of the modern economy and also to the related phenomenon of increasing bureaucratization within advanced capitalist economies.²⁸³

Thus, for Weber, modern society was characterized by an increasing indifference to religion. As the unabated advance of capitalism continued, the aristocracy, clergy and peasantry would continue to yield to the bourgeoisie, bureaucracy, and proletariat, and the social significance of religion would continue to decline. In *The Sociology of Religion*, Weber made no comment, regarding the desirability or undesirability of this tendency, but regarded it as a fact of modern existence. However, the implications of his findings are clear.

²⁷⁹ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 468-469.

²⁸⁰ Ibid. 482-482.

²⁸¹ Ibid. 485-486.

²⁸² Ibid. 486.

²⁸³ Ibid. 956.

The diminishment of religion is a direct product of the social forces of modernity. The modern forces of capitalism, rationalization, and bureaucratization have changed social conditions in such a way that many members of modern societies no longer need to turn to religion in order to meet their material, social, or psychological needs. Because religious behavior is based upon social conditions, to return religion to its pre-modern position of social preeminence would require the reversal of modern social forces. To achieve a conservative agenda in religion, a reactionary social policy would have to be implemented. For Weber, who was committed to national power politics, such a reversal was neither desirable nor possible.²⁸⁴ Rationalism, capitalism, and bureaucracy represented the ascendant powers of the modern era. Though they carried with them many frightening possibilities, they had also unleashed a staggering quantity of economic, scientific and organizational activity that had led to the dominant position of modern nation-states within the world. For such a modern state to reverse course and to will itself back to pre-modern social conditions would be for it to will its own political decline and its subordination to its modernizing neighbors. Modern man could lament the suffering and spiritual disorientation brought on by modernization, and he could seek to minimize these evils in various ways, but he could not will their disappearance without simultaneously willing the domination of his society by outside forces.

²⁸⁴ Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, 48-60.

This realistic commitment to power politics led him to oppose the mystical anti-modernism that was becoming an ever greater force within late Wilhelmine society.²⁸⁵ One clear example of Weber's opposition to these ideas can be seen in his rejection of Stephan George, a celebrated mystical poet who resided outside of Heidelberg and who visited Weber on a number of occasions, beginning in 1910. These two powerful personalities clearly admired one another, but they found themselves deeply divided on fundamental ideological questions. Marianne Weber described the division as follows:

Both had a profound feeling of responsibility for their time. But while Weber accepted the forces of the present as they were, as material from shaping and a mission, the other man saw only their devilish aspects and sought to overcome them by rejecting them. He conferred upon himself the office of prophet and leader in a conversion and a transformation with a backward orientation. This Weber expressly rejected.²⁸⁶

In spite of this opposition, the two men remained on good terms for a number of years. It was not until the emergence of The First World War that their differences drove them apart.²⁸⁷

Though Troeltsch was never so extreme in his anti-modern sentiments as George was, his theological works, *Protestantism and Progress* and *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, clearly opposed the modern tendencies of rationalism and individualism and, in opposition to these, championed pre-modern Christian values. These anti-modern tendencies conflicted on a basic level with Weber's political and ethical concerns. It is true that both

²⁸⁵ For a survey of the various reactionary, romantic, and anti-modern movements that began to grip Germany during the Wilhelmine period see George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology; Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964).

²⁸⁶ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 461.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.* 464.

men viewed modernity anxiously, but while Troeltsch sought to oppose it, Weber accepted it as simple given, that had to be dealt with pragmatically, rather than simply ignored or wished away. As such, Weber did not hesitate to acknowledge the spiritual dangers posed by modern forces, but he did not argue on the basis of these dangers that modernity should be opposed. Furthermore, Weber explicitly ruled out religion as a possible source of salvation from the woes of modern life. Though he had, in *The Protestant Ethic*, held out the prospect of new prophets, who might save us from the oppression of meaningless modern asceticism, by the time he wrote *The Sociology of Religion*, he no longer believed that religion could act as an effective historical force under modern social conditions. Whatever needs had once been met by prayer and prophecy would, in the modern world, either be met by some kind of “religious surrogate” or remain unmet.²⁸⁸ No amount of theological innovation could change this basic fact.

Yet, in spite of these differences, Weber and Troeltsch were able to fruitfully collaborate for more than a decade. They introduced one another to their respective fields, stimulated one another’s thinking through frequent and frank intellectual exchanges, and referred repeatedly to one another’s original work as they furthered their individual intellectual projects. Even though they recognized their fundamental disagreements, the two men were able to incorporate one another’s substantive conclusions into their own projects. On top of this, Weber and Troeltsch seem to have simply enjoyed one another’s company, and in the peaceful atmosphere of pre-war Heidelberg it is very likely that this mutual

²⁸⁸ Weber, *Economy and Society*, 485.

enjoyment seemed more important to them than any of their theoretical or political disagreements.

However, when war broke out in 1914, all of this changed. The peaceful gatherings at the Weber-Troeltsch house, which drew together Marxists, mystics and liberals in amiable and erudite exchanges, came to an end. Weber and Troeltsch volunteered to serve on the home front and began speaking out in order to influence the course of the war. It was here in the realm of practical activity that the two men would come into conflict, as they both sought to shape reality according to their contradictory political and religious ideas. In 1915, Weber would break with Troeltsch over a relatively minor issue pertaining to the treatment of French prisoners in military hospitals. Troeltsch later attributed this break to the “old political and fundamental differences.”²⁸⁹ This chapter has sought to identify the ways in which these “differences” manifested themselves in the works produced by these men prior to their break. It has also sought to understand how such a deep and fruitful collaboration could have occurred between two men so divided on ideological issues. The following chapter will examine the break itself in more detail, and will investigate the ways in which the differences that stood behind the break manifested themselves in each man’s political and scholarly activity during the war.

²⁸⁹ Ernst Troeltsch, in Baumgarten, *Max Weber, Werk und Person*, 489.

Chapter Four

Conflict: Global and Personal

In the first days of August, 1914, as the German mobilization began, the atmosphere was electric with a strange and uneven mixture of fear, excitement, and hope. For most Germans the declaration of war came as the dreaded confirmation of anxieties that had been building since the assassination at Sarajevo the week before. The majority of those who gathered in town squares across Germany on August 1, awaiting news, received the announcement of the mobilization with solemnity and then quietly dispersed. Some wept. In the larger cities, a small proportion of the crowd, consisting mostly of university students with a sprinkling of well-dressed older gentlemen, felt like celebrating. They organized impromptu “parades,” and their patriotic songs rose incongruously above the fearful murmurs and sobs that filled the air.²⁹⁰ And though this mixed reaction did not signify the moment of joyous unity and spiritual reawakening that conservative propagandists would later claim it did, it does show that many Germans did joyously greet the coming of the war.

As the typical scene described above indicates, however, war “enthusiasm” was essentially limited to Germany’s privileged classes.²⁹¹ For the nationalists who dominated Germany’s bureaucratic and military hierarchies, the war appeared as Germany’s chance to finally claim a place among the world powers commensurate to its military and industrial capacities.²⁹² For many bourgeois youths who felt stifled by the rigid conventions of

²⁹⁰ Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 68-71.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.* 40-41.

²⁹² Chickering, *The Great War*, 16.

Wilhelmine society, it seemed to promise escape into a realm of genuine existence and heroism.²⁹³ Germany's artists and writers were similarly inspired, and they seemed to sing the praises of the war, "as if in competition with one another."²⁹⁴ Even the great poet Rainer Maria Rilke, who had lived for many years in Paris and had previously expressed only political indifference, added his voice to this cultivated choir, offering up on that fateful August his "Five Songs," which accompanied the departing troops like a battle hymn:

Finally, a god! Because we often could not grasp
the gods of peace, the god of battle grasps us suddenly,
hurling his fire: and above hearts full of homeland
roars his red-hued heaven, where he thunderously resides.²⁹⁵

The majority of Germany's professors also greeted the war with enthusiasm and were prepared to lend their rhetorical and ideological services to the homeland. Just as Germany's industrial leaders shifted production to meet the emerging material needs produced by this brutal war of attrition, so too did Germany's intellectual leaders allocate an enormous amount of their energy toward meeting the spiritual needs of the conflict.²⁹⁶ Their primary duty was to manufacture a meaning for the ensuing slaughter in order to "sustain [the] mood of

²⁹³Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 1979), 46-48; George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*: (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964), 188

²⁹⁴Thomas Mann, "Gedanken im Krieg," quoted in Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914*.

²⁹⁵Rainer Maria Rilke, "Fünf Gesänge", *Die Gedichte von Rainer Maria Rilke*, accessed February 15, 2014, <http://rainer-maria-rilke.de/100144fuenfgesaenge.html>. Even though Rilke was himself an Austrian citizen, he was residing in Munich at the time of the war's outbreak and identified with the German cause.

²⁹⁶Fritz Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 182.

commitment, if not euphoria, in the much more trying circumstances that followed the failure of German armies to win the war in 1914.”²⁹⁷

The duty of producing a meaning for the war provided a two-fold opportunity to the German mandarins. It allowed them to contribute to a conflict which they viewed to be just and necessary and, simultaneously, to frame the struggle in terms of their own hopes and desires. When the war broke out, these mandarins still maintained a special claim to elite social status through their guardianship of German classical culture and learning. However, this claim to elite status had become increasingly tenuous as advances in science and industry diminished the practical significance of classical learning and as members of an increasingly democratic society began to question elitist educational institutions. Before the war, the mandarins interpreted these threats as the deplorable results of the degradation of the German spirit brought about by the forces of modernity: self-interest and greed were replacing obedience and religiosity, a naive levelling impulse was eating away at the spiritual fruits of hierarchy, interest politics were undermining social unity, and a base, materialistic utilitarianism was blinding the population to the spiritual values which the mandarins embodied and propagated: tradition, idealism, and self-cultivation.²⁹⁸

Thus, when the task of defining the meaning of the war fell to the mandarins, they tended to identify the German struggle as a struggle against modernity, casting Germany as the defender of pre-modern values, and projecting the aspects of modern society that they feared onto their western antagonists. They interpreted the sporadic expressions of

²⁹⁷ Chickering, *The Great War*, 47.

²⁹⁸ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 42-61, 128-134.

“enthusiasm” that accompanied the outbreak of the war as a reawakening of the German spirit, a reemergence of all the values that undergirded that mandarins’ elite status and that had been threatened by the emerging forces of the modern world. In the rhetoric of the most orthodox among them, the war became a Manichean battle of the soul-deadening aspects of modernity, represented by the small-minded “shopkeeper mentality” of the British and the effete rationalism and decadence of the French, against the heroic German *Volk*, which, it was imagined, would emerge strengthened and unified from the conflagration, cleansed of the impurities of the modern world through the heat of combat and newly committed to spiritual values which the mandarins themselves embodied.²⁹⁹

Along with this self-serving and mythological interpretation of the war, the majority of German mandarins were also in agreement regarding the questions of the immediate cause of the war and Germany’s concrete war aims. The mandarins blamed the onset of the war on the imperialist designs of Russia, Britain, and France, who sought to suppress the emerging German threat to their pretensions to global hegemony.³⁰⁰ Yet, in spite of Germany’s allegedly defensive position in this conflict, most mandarins supported the annexationist demands of the hyper-nationalist Pan-German League, and backed that group’s demands for an unconditional “victorious peace” and for unrestricted submarine warfare.³⁰¹

Such was the feverish intellectual climate in which Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch formulated their own stances toward the conflict. Troeltsch responded to the war as a typical mandarin, projecting his own fears about the future onto Germany’s western foes, while

²⁹⁹ Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 180-199.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.* 182.

³⁰¹ *Ibid.* 190.

interpreting the sporadic outbursts of enthusiasm that accompanied the German mobilization as a sign of the rebirth of Christianity and conservative German values. Weber's response to the war, on the other hand, was nuanced, practically oriented, and devoid of chauvinism. Out of a subjectively rooted love for his homeland, he enthusiastically served as a reserve officer, but he refused to vilify Germany's enemies. These differing reactions to the war grew out of their conflicting national and political views. Within a year of the outbreak of the war, those ideological differences would translate into personal conflict and bring about the unhappy end of Weber and Troeltsch's friendship.

Though Troeltsch's view of the war was more or less in agreement with that of other conservative mandarins, he at times showed considerably more foresight than the majority of his peers. He first articulated his view of the conflict in a speech titled "Towards an Explanation of the Mobilization," which he delivered as a public address on August 2, 1914.³⁰² In this address, Troeltsch attempted to clarify the origins of the war, to predict the nature of the conflict and the kinds of demands that it would make on German citizens, and to prophecy the positive changes that a successful resolution of the war would bring to German society.

Regarding the origins of the war, Troeltsch did not hesitate to place the blame on "the Slavic desire for domination" and "the somewhat hesitating and fearful French greed for revenge."³⁰³ Thus, Troeltsch could declare that Germany was engaged in an essentially

³⁰² Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch*, 413.

³⁰³ Ernst Troeltsch, *Nach Erklärung zur Mobilmachung. Rede bei der von Stadt und Universität berufenen Vaterländischen Versammlung* (Heidelberg: Karl Winters Verlag, 1914), 3. The fact that Troeltsch spared Great Britain from this verbal onslaught was not due to any particular fondness that he felt for that nation, but rather

defensive struggle for “life and existence,” against foes fired by “the flames of unreason and anger, of hate and jealousy...”³⁰⁴ But the struggle went beyond mere self-preservation, for Germany was threatened with destruction on the one hand by the “barbaric ... Asiatic ... slave-spirit” of the Russians, and on the other by the exhausted French culture now characterized by “interest conflicts and mass sentiment,” and therefore, in fighting to protect itself, Germany was simultaneously fighting to protect “freedom and human dignity.”³⁰⁵ Given such a situation, Troeltsch asserted that there was nothing left to do but to take up the call, “To arms! To arms!”³⁰⁶

Most historians would probably find this characterization of the war’s outbreak to be somewhat inadequate, but they might be surprised by the accuracy with which Troeltsch predicted the brutal nature of the coming conflict. Contrary to the opinions of many military leaders and eager young recruits, Troeltsch asserted that victory in this struggle was by no means assured and that it would certainly not be secured by the “heroic-romantic” means of the past but only by the inglorious modern weapons “of calculation, of prudence, [and] of endurance.”³⁰⁷ In light of this changed nature of warfare, Troeltsch was also able to predict

to the fact that the British had not yet declared war on Germany. Troeltsch would have plenty of time later in the war to articulate his disdain for English culture, including its “narrow utilitarianism” and its “hypocritical” claim to both moral superiority and world domination. See Ernst Troeltsch, “Eigentümlichkeiten des angelsächsischen Zivilisation,” in *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa*, ed. Hans Baron (Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966), 108-133.

³⁰⁴ Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 5.

³⁰⁵ Ibid. 3, 5, 6, 10.

³⁰⁶ Ibid. 6.

³⁰⁷ Ibid. 6. It was probably due to this realistic assessment of the war, along with the passion and rhetorical skill with which Troeltsch delivered his speech that allowed Weber to later describe this speech as “beautiful,” in spite of its self-serving and romantic aspects. See Weber, *Briefe, 1915-1917*, 75. Weber was probably in special agreement with Troeltsch regarding the unromantic and rational means by which the coming war would be waged. See Weber’s discussion of the gradual rationalization of warfare in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 255-261.

the total scale of the oncoming war, asserting that “there will be just as much to endure and to overcome at home as there will be in the field, and good nerves and incalculable courage will be necessary.” From the ordinary folk on the home front, he asked for patience, both for the emotional and the economic hardships that they would have to endure. From the businessmen and industrialists, he demanded dutiful effort, and the resistance of the shameful temptation to “profit off of the need of one’s comrades.”³⁰⁸ And from Germany’s cultural leaders and thinkers (i.e. the mandarins), he asked for the bolstering of the people’s spirits through the “preaching of courage and confidence” and for the formulation of a vision of a bright future, which would help to “strengthen faith and trust.”³⁰⁹

Troeltsch immediately took up to the mandarin’s special task of outlining the future for which Germany was fighting. In the same speech, he argued that the outbreak of the war had already brought two important, positive changes, and that these changes indicated a fundamental transformation of German society. First, he claimed that the outbreak of the war offered an opportunity to end the class struggle, by bringing Germans of all social standings to recognize the pettiness of their personal economic concerns in the face of the collective struggle for existence. Troeltsch hailed this change as a reawakening of the German traditions of idealism and dutifulness, which in the years before the war had been seemingly smothered underneath the modern impulses toward materialism and self-interest.³¹⁰

Secondly, Troeltsch argued that the outbreak of the war had served as a catalyst for a great

³⁰⁸ Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 9.

³⁰⁹ Ibid. 7.

³¹⁰ Ibid. 10.

reemergence of German religious consciousness in all of its forms, whether Christian, Jewish, or philosophical in nature.³¹¹

Troeltsch not only celebrated the end of the class war and the rebirth of German faith, but he heralded both of these changes as indicators of the kind of spiritually unified and reinvigorated society that Germany would become if it survived the oncoming battle. These changes were not just temporary responses to the extraordinary events of the day, but were rather the first signs of a great reawakening of the German spirit. Troeltsch held that this newly awakened spirit, which transformed striking workers into obedient soldiers and filled long-doubting minds with silent prayers, would lead post-war Germany into great period of cultural flowering. Regarding the class struggle, Troeltsch prophesied that the experience of unity brought about by the war would transform German men into “communal” men, who would “understand the necessity of discipline and unity, not only for the class struggle of the farmer and the laborer, but for the entirety of the nation.”³¹² Here, Troeltsch projected the same anti-pluralist sentiments that he had earlier expressed in his *Social Teachings of The Christian Churches*, in which he had lamented what he perceived as the disunity of modern culture, as manifested in party politics and labor unions, and called for a reintegration of society through a revivification of universal Christian values.³¹³ In his war speeches,

³¹¹ Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 11-13. For a long time Troeltsch had considered German idealism and Christianity to be two aspects of the same religious spirit (in fact, in *Protestantism and Progress*, he argues that idealism is simply a particularly German version of Protestant Christianity), but here he also equates the faith of the Jews with that of the Christians and the philosophers. This is noteworthy given Troeltsch’s general omission of Judaism from his historical works of Christianity. See *Protestantism and Progress*, 182-184.

³¹² Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 11.

³¹³ Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, 32, 816, 1006-1012. This earlier call for national integration through Christianity implied that there would be no place for Judaism within the German Empire. Even though in this speech, Troeltsch admitted the equivalency of the Jewish and the Christian god, this does

Troeltsch could interpret the war in hopeful way, because he saw it as a means of bringing about the unified society that he desired.

Troeltsch believed that the unification of society, and the end of the class struggle, was partly a direct result of the war experience, which forced cooperation and mutual sacrifice onto all classes of the German society, but he also believed that this unification had a deeper source in the reemergence of religious consciousness, which grew out of the anticipation of a conflict that defied human comprehension, and thus called forth an irrepressible “desire for a higher reason.”³¹⁴ Joyfully, the theologian proclaimed, “everywhere today, faith dares to step forward, a faith that is not nearly as dead as it appears to be ... a faith that does not allow itself to be confused by the few completely bankrupt souls, who still declare its poverty.”³¹⁵ For Troeltsch, the reemergence of this religious spirit was the source of the German virtues of inner peace, courage and trust, upon which Germany’s survival depended and which promised to propel her to new heights of spiritual and cultural achievement in the years of peace that would follow. Beyond this, the reemergence of German religiosity was also the ultimate source of the unity that allowed the German people to “forget their quarrels and squabbles” and to unite in defense of the nation.³¹⁶ In this way, Troeltsch was able to interpret the outbreak of the war as a confirmation of the conclusion that he had reached in his *Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*— that modernity could be overcome and German culture could be reunified

not lessen the assimilationist implications of his thought. Even if the Jews did worship the right God, Troeltsch believed that they did so in an inferior manner to Protestant Christians.

³¹⁴ Troeltsch “Erklärung,” 12.

³¹⁵ Ibid. 12.

³¹⁶ Ibid. 13.

through a revival of Christianity. The religious revival, which Troeltsch declared to be at hand, promised not only to strengthen Germany in the oncoming conflict, but also to usher in a new post-war era, in which the threatening and spiritually-draining aspects of modernity would be overcome by the revitalized German spirit.

This interpretation of the war clearly followed the general trend of wartime mandarin thought. Just like his orthodox peers, Troeltsch made use of his special status as a university professor to formulate a view of the war that framed it as a struggle *against* modernity. By characterizing the French as a nation weakened and debased by “interest politics and mass sentiment” (i.e. democracy), Troeltsch projected his fear of modernity onto the enemy, while he simultaneously identified the German war effort as a struggle for the pre-modern values that the German mandarins embodied: tradition, hierarchy, and spirituality.³¹⁷ He attempted to claim the initial expressions of enthusiasm for the war as a reawakening among the masses of traditional German values and to thereby turn the war into an ideological battle for the special political interests of the mandarin status group. It is true that Troeltsch remained more moderate than most of his mandarin colleagues on the subject of German war aims, but, in the way in which he attempted to interpret the war as a battle against modernity for the pre-modern values of German tradition, Troeltsch was basically indistinguishable from the most reactionary and self-serving members of Germany’s intellectual elite.

Max Weber’s initial reaction to the war stood in sharp contrast to Troeltsch’s, in that it was devoid of national chauvinism and of any attempt to mythologize the conflict. Weber’s patriotism and commitment to German victory was as strong as that of any of his peers, and

³¹⁷ Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 3.

he repeatedly described the war as a “great and wonderful” undertaking.³¹⁸ But Weber differed from most mandarins both in the way that he conceptualized the war, and in the way that he sought to contribute to it.

From the beginning of his career, Weber had held conflict between nations to be the essence of international relations. He believed that struggle between nations was an ongoing and unavoidable process that was carried out just as much during times of ostensible peace as it was during times of open war.³¹⁹ War merely altered the means by which the struggle of nations was carried out. But the unavoidability of competition and conflict did not, for Weber, entail a disdain for the other nations that participated in the struggle. Though, in his early years, Weber had entertained chauvinistic opinions regarding the “cultural inferiority” of the Poles, by the time of the outbreak of the war, he had developed a cosmopolitan respect for the institutions, values, and goals of the other European nations.³²⁰ In fact, Weber’s political philosophy of struggle and his acceptance of the cultural and moral worth of Germany’s foes naturally complemented one another. Whereas Troeltsch and other mandarins of similar outlook tended to explain the war using terms like “the Slavic desire for domination and the ... French greed for revenge,” Weber could easily interpret the actions of Germany’s rivals as rational actions carried out by nations that were, like Germany, struggling to ensure their own existence.³²¹

³¹⁸ Max Weber, *Briefe, 1913-1914*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Rainer Lepsius and Wolfgang J. Mommsen (Tubingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 2003), 782-783.

³¹⁹ Max Weber, “The Nation State and Economic Policy,” 14.

³²⁰ Mommsen, *Max Weber’s Politics*, 53-60

³²¹ Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 3.

Weber's consciousness of the compatibility of competition with and respect for rival world powers is neatly illustrated in an anecdote related by Paul Honigsheim, who studied at Heidelberg and became close to Weber in the years immediately preceding the war. He tells us that, in 1913, when Heidelberg's Russian students and émigrés wanted to celebrate the opening of a Russian library in the city, they invited Weber to give "the official speech of dedication" and found themselves captivated by Weber's profound discussion of the "human greatness" of Russia's liberal revolutionary movement.³²² But even here, in front of a largely Russian audience, Weber could not resist adding that, "should the tension between nations increase to such a point that Russia feels obliged to support Serbia, then we shall meet again on the field of honor."³²² Weber afforded a similar degree of respect to Germany's other opponents, and he refused to take up the propagandists' labels of French decadence, English soullessness, or American backwardness. Unlike his mandarin peers, Weber did not feel compelled to transform the war from geopolitical struggle into a moral and spiritual one, and could thus embrace the war without denigrating Germany's opponents.

Weber also differed from Troeltsch and the majority of his mandarin peers in the decidedly practical way in which he sought to contribute to the war. On August 2, the second day of the mobilization, as Troeltsch was delivering his speech calling on Germany's thinkers to "preach courage and confidence," Weber was already immersed in his duties as a reserve officer, scrambling to equip Heidelberg's nine military hospitals for the flood of wounded men that the war promised to bring to the city. Though Weber took pride in his position as a hospital administrator, he also deeply regretted the fact that he was not fit to

³²² Paul Honigsheim, *On Max Weber* (New York: The Free Press, 1968), 9-10.

offer his services at the front.³²³ But he made the best of this situation, and threw himself at his administrative duties, which he carried out enthusiastically, even manically, for the first fourteen months of the war. Weber seemed to delight in exhausting himself, working thirteen-hour days, constantly motoring from one hospital to another in a bright yellow automobile that his colleagues jokingly named “the flying Dutchman,” and strictly imposing the hospital’s code of discipline upon employees and patients.³²⁴ He was also successful in attracting a number of his academic colleagues to help with the task of administering the understaffed hospital system. While Weber continued to supervise the system as a whole, he began to delegate the management of individual hospitals to his academic assistants. Troeltsch was among the number of academics that Weber recruited for this task, and it was in this position as Weber’s subordinate that Troeltsch, through an act of disobedience, prompted an argument that brought an end to their long friendship.

The whole ordeal circled around Weber and Troeltsch’s disagreement regarding the proper way to treat captured enemy soldiers. Weber, as one would have expected, adamantly insisted that the rights of captured enemy soldiers should not be infringed upon in any way.³²⁵ As such, he found it entirely permissible when his Alsatian colleague, Heinrich Schneegans, who was married to a French woman, began to visit with the captured French patients housed in Heidelberg military hospitals. Schneegans and his wife would enter the hospitals to converse with the French soldiers and to distribute gifts among them. When these visitations became public knowledge, however, a popular outcry rose up against them.

³²³ Weber, *Briefe, 1913-1914*, 782.

³²⁴ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 523; Radkau, *A Biography*, 455.

³²⁵ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 523.

Without any kind of evidence, the crowd suspected the Alsatian professor and his wife of some sort of treachery, and demanded that the visitations come to an end. Weber, however, managed to prevent his superiors from reacting to the xenophobic demands of the crowd by “appealing to [their] military honor and pointing out that it was unmanly to bow to public opinion.” Troeltsch, however, saw the matter in another light, and when Schneegans came to visit the French soldiers who were recovering in Troeltsch’s hospital, Troeltsch ordered that Schneegans be accompanied and observed by a German soldier at all times. Schneegans felt deeply disgraced by the lack of trust demonstrated in this command, and as a result stopped his hospital visits entirely. Soon after, Schneegans began to find the xenophobic atmosphere of Heidelberg so oppressive that, after attaining passports for his wife and himself through Weber’s help, he left the country for Switzerland.³²⁶

When, in April 1915, Weber found out about Troeltsch’s treatment of Schneegans, he was incensed, and confronted Troeltsch about the matter one evening in the house that they still shared with one another. The argument that followed was hostile and intense. In a letter dating from 1917, Troeltsch described the event as follows: “At the beginning of the war I had a terrible row with Max Weber. He threw me out of his apartment in the most insulting manner. The reason was that he deemed my view to be chauvinistic [*chauvinistisch*] and ‘without any feeling for honor or dignity.’ It had to do with the conduct toward an Alsatian pacifist, to whom I advised silence...”³²⁷ It is worth noting Troeltsch’s labeling of

³²⁶ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 523-524.

³²⁷ Cited in Max Weber, *Briefe, 1915-1917*, 255. Troeltsch used very similar terms to describe the event to his student Paul Honigsheim, who was also close to Weber. See Eduard Baumgarten, *Max Weber, Werk und Person*, 489. Unfortunately, Honigsheim, in a book devoted to exploring Weber’s relationship to his intellectual

Schneegans as an “Alsatian pacifist,” as if this fact alone justified his actions. But, for Weber, who empathized both with individuals of other nationalities and with those who harbored pacifist sentiments, this was no justification at all.

Troeltsch was openly upset about the break, expressing both offense and sadness about the way it all played out.³²⁸ It is harder to assess how Weber felt about the matter. Given Weber’s busy schedule, his ethic of manly dutifulness, and the crisis of the war that was unfolding around him, it is likely that Weber simply attempted to bury the matter under days filled with exhausting labor. Indeed, the first documented case in which he refers to his break with Troeltsch occurs more than eight months after the fact, and then only as only a parenthetical remark that he made while recounting the Schneegans affair in a letter to the Freiburg philosopher Heinrich Rickert. He wrote: “the Schneegans affair has already cost me my relationship with Troeltsch, and if the matter goes to the press, as I expect it will, I will accept the consequences... This whole ordeal is ‘war psychosis.’”³²⁹

But how heavy, really, was the cost of losing this friendship. After all, it is difficult to imagine that Weber and Troeltsch, given their conflicting ideological commitments, could have maintained a very close relationship. And yet, all evidence indicates that their friendship remained quite strong right up until the outbreak of the war. Not only did they continue to share the grand old house on the Neckar, dining with each other frequently, but

contemporaries, chose not to discuss the conflict even though he was well acquainted with both men. He probably made the choice to exclude such a discussion for the sake of preserving the reputation of both men. See Honigsheim, *On Max Weber*.

³²⁸ Baumgarten, *Werk und Perosn*, 489.

³²⁹ Weber, *Briefe 1915-1917*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Gerd Krumeich and M. Rainer Lepsius (Tubingen, J.C.B. Mohr. 2008), 254.

these two men who loved to travel also planned trips together and went out of their way to see each other when they were traveling separately.³³⁰ The fact that the two remained so close personally up until the eve of the war supports Troeltsch's claim that the break was the result of "old political and fundamental differences," rather than any sort of personal enmity. Indeed, the resigned way that Weber referred to the break suggests that he viewed it as an unfortunate dictate of duty and honor, made necessary by Troeltsch's act of disobedience.

The root cause of the break was the difference that existed between the kinds of nationalism to which Weber and Troeltsch subscribed. These differing forms of nationalism compelled them to react to the "Schneegans incident," in conflicting ways, thus prompting Troeltsch's disobedience. Weber's view of politics as a universal struggle between nations allowed him to see the French as enemies without labeling them as evil. Weber recognized the "subjective" basis for his love of Germany and he could recognize and respect the French soldiers sacrifice for their own patriotic ideals.³³¹ In addition to this, Weber's recognition of the subjective root of all political action, allowed him to empathize with Schneegans, in spite of their political differences. Thus, it was natural that he insisted on treating Schneegans and the captured soldiers with the utmost dignity. Troeltsch's fervent devotion to Germany, on the other hand, was rooted in his belief that Germany remained the last bastion of the human spirit in a world populated by enemies who had either been debased through exposure to the evils of modernity, or who have remained submerged in a nearly sub-human barbarism. This belief in the moral inferiority of the enemy nations naturally led Troeltsch to adopt a

³³⁰ Max Weber, *Briefe 1913-1914*, 120, 147, 598.

³³¹ Weber, "The Nation State and Economic Policy," 13.

xenophobic outlook, which in turn led to his distrust of Schneegans and the wounded French. On top of this, Troeltsch's long-standing rejection of modern pluralism led him to view the pacifist Schneegans as a potential enemy of Germany's cause. His order that Schneegans be accompanied on his visits stemmed out of these feelings of ideologically conditioned distrust.

But why did the break not occur before the war? After all, it is impossible to imagine that Weber and Troeltsch, who had been close for more than a decade, were unaware of one another's views. Yet an examination of their pre-war social lives reveals that the two were part of a social circle whose members spanned the entire ideological spectrum, ranging from reactionary romantics to Marxists, but who still managed to relate amicably to one another.³³² In such a setting, Weber and Troeltsch were probably of the opinion that their theoretical differences did not have any direct bearing on their personal friendship. Things were different, however, during the war, when their conflicting views of nationalism became practically relevant. The immediate cause of the break was, thus, the unfortunate coincidence that Troeltsch ended up working as Weber's subordinate in a position where their political beliefs compelled them to take conflicting stands on an important practical matter. The ideological differences that ended the friendship had been present since the beginning, but they may never have manifested if it had not been for the unlucky circumstances of the first years of the war.³³³

³³² Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 455.

³³³ The fact that Weber did not break with other chauvinistic colleagues like Werner Sombart, who published the wildly xenophobic war pamphlet "Traders and Heroes," supports the conclusion that Weber's break with Troeltsch was a matter of circumstance rather than fate. See Radkau, *A Biography*, 203-207.

In the immediate aftermath of the break, neither party made an effort to reconcile with the other, and, when Troeltsch left Heidelberg in the summer of 1915 to fill a chair of philosophy at the University of Berlin, the emotional distance between the two men became geographical as well. Even when Weber found himself in Berlin for a few months in 1915 and 1916, and even though he and Troeltsch moved in the same social and political circles there, they did not attempt to reconnect with one another.³³⁴

During the years of war that followed the break, Weber and Troeltsch remained committed to their conflicting ideological views, and they advanced these views before increasingly large audiences, both assuming more prominent public roles as the war progressed. Troeltsch, now speaking from his chair at the most prestigious German university, could model himself as a sort of high priest of the German nation. From this position, he persisted in his attempts to bolster German commitment to the war effort through “preaching of confidence and hope.” In the numerous speeches that he delivered in this capacity, which bore such titles as “The Ideas of 1914,” “The Spirit of German Culture,” and “The Peculiarities of English Civilization,” his characterization of the war became even more xenophobic and his depiction of the German nation even more romanticized and self-serving than at the war’s outbreak.³³⁵ For example, in his speech, “The ideas of 1914,” delivered in

³³⁴ The first and only attempt at reconciliation between the two does not take place until 1919. It does not succeed. See Weber *Briefe, 1918-1920*, 768.

³³⁵ This fact contradicts Ringer’s assertion that Troeltsch moved toward the political left during the war. See Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 195. Though at the end of the war Troeltsch does, grudgingly, support democracy and the Weimar Republic, during the war itself Troeltsch takes up many far-right positions, even at times repudiating liberalism all together as a form of Western decadence. See Troeltsch “Die Ideen von 1914,” in *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa Gesammelte kulturphilosophische Aufsätze und Reden*, ed. Hans Baron (Aalen, Scientia Verlag, 1966), 46.

1916, Troeltsch interpreted the conflict as “a war of the spirit and of cultural opposites.”³³⁶ He justified this interpretation by claiming that the outbreak of the war had brought about a moment of German national epiphany, when Germany returned “to faith in the idea and the spirit,” when “materialism and its cousin, skepticism, fell flat on the ground,” and when “the ideas of the old German idealism from the time of Kant, Fichte, and Schiller stood once more in full light.”³³⁷ He argued that this spiritual reawakening had allowed Germany to overcome the “international sickness” of modernity, characterized by social division, pessimism and self-absorbed irony, and had remade German society into a unified community, in which “high and low, educated and uneducated had been welded together,” like the “limbs” of a single body.³³⁸ As a result of this reawakening of German idealism and cultural unity, Troeltsch could joyously declare the end of the age of liberalism and individualism and announce the emergence of a “strongly organized economic and military national unity [*Volkseinheit*] that corresponded to Germany’s “inner life.”³³⁹ The new spiritual and social life that Germany had realized represented the solution to the “sickness” of modernity that still plagued Germany’s imperialistic enemies, and, for this reason, Troeltsch felt justified in claiming that Germany was fighting not just for survival, but also for the spiritual development of humanity. Because only Germany could be trusted to defend the free development of smaller nations from the ambitions of the spiritually bankrupt imperial powers, he believed that Germany was justified in struggling not just to defend its borders,

³³⁶ Troeltsch, “Die Ideen von 1914,” 31.

³³⁷ Ibid. 37.

³³⁸ Ibid. 42.

³³⁹ Ibid. 46

but to strive to establish global hegemony. Only in this way would the free development of all peoples be insured.³⁴⁰

In his speech, Troeltsch expressed hopes concerning the effects of the war on German culture that were similar to those outlined in his “Toward an Explanation of the Mobilization,” but the tone in which he discussed these hopes had shifted. Earlier, Troeltsch had assessed the war as an uncertain battle for the defense of the German homeland, waged with the unromantic weapons of “calculation, planning, and endurance.”³⁴¹ But in the later speech, in spite of the strategic setbacks and staggering body counts that justified his first assessment of the war, Troeltsch abandoned his cautious tone and argued that the experience of 1914 had demonstrated the need for Germany to establish its position as a global hegemon.

Weber was not impressed by his former colleague’s later wartime speeches. He was present at the meeting of the German Society at which Troeltsch delivered “the Ideas of 1914” and wrote to Marianne that, “in my opinion, it was a weak rehash of his beautiful mobilization speech. The *intelligent* people were disappointed.”³⁴² Later, Weber criticized another of Troeltsch’s war-time speeches, “Humanism and Nationalism in our Educational

³⁴⁰ Troeltsch, “Die Ideen von 1914,” 53-54.

³⁴¹ Troeltsch, “Erklärung,” 6.

³⁴² Weber, *Briefe, 1915-1917*, 75. Weber does not make it clear why he approved of the earlier speech but criticized the later one. It is a matter of conjecture whether the change was the result of stylistic or ideological differences between the two speeches. Both cases are possible. Troeltsch’s later speech is definitely less rhetorically impressive than his earlier effort, and this would explain Weber’s use of the word “beautiful” [schön] to describe the earlier speech, rather than a more objective modifier. However, it is also possible that Weber’s criticism of the later speech has to do with its triumphalist tone. Whereas Troeltsch’s mobilization speech emphasized the uncertainty and the hardship of the coming struggle, points on which Weber certainly would have agreed, Troeltsch’s later speech, made vast annexationist demands, which Weber considered unrealistic and undesirable in light of Germany’s strategic position.

Essence,” in which Troeltsch asserted that the German spirit, and hence the correct form of German education, was uniquely characterized by “northern-gothic” elements.³⁴³ Weber described this as “a true literati-idea, and, at the same time, an unfortunate curtsy before the current fashion.”³⁴⁴

The fashion to which Weber referred was the mandarin impulse to frame and defend Germany’s wartime position in unrealistic, romanticized terms. As the war had progressed, the propaganda turned out by Germany’s educated elite had developed into a self-referential, chauvinistic vortex, in which authors borrowed one another’s xenophobic and romantic schemas to craft pleasant (for themselves at least) but completely unrealistic images of Germany’s situation.³⁴⁵ In 1915, when increasing professionalization of the military hospital system led to Weber’s dismissal from his position as director of Heidelberg’s hospitals, he found himself, in spite of his efforts in Brussels and Berlin to find a new post, without any means of contributing directly to the German war effort.³⁴⁶ As such, Weber sought to fulfill his duty to his fatherland by combatting romantic and unrealistic (and therefore dangerous) interpretations of the war, opposing them with his own practical assessments of the conflict, which he made known through various speeches and articles.

³⁴³ Ernst Troeltsch, “Humanismus und Nationalismus in unserem Bildungswesen,” in *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa*, 220.

³⁴⁴ Weber, *Briefe, 1918-1920*, 75. As Ringer, points out, Weber used the word “*literati*” as a contemptuous epithet for mandarins who failed to fulfill their duty to “manfully face unpleasant realities.” See Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 197.

³⁴⁵ Some examples of Romantic tropes that were taken up by the orthodox mandarins in general include Werner Sombart’s distinction between heroic and trading nations, Rudolf Kjellen’s concept of “the spirit of 1914.” The distinction that Ferdinand Tönnies made between integrated communities and societies of isolated individuals (*Gemeinschaften* versus *Gesellschaften*), was also coopted by the orthodox propagandists to clarify the supposed difference between the reinvigorated Germany and the spiritually exhausted western powers. See Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 188.

³⁴⁶ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 535-536; Radkau, *A Biography*, 451-463

The general tone of Weber's war-related output might best be described as determined resignation. In his presentation of Germany's wartime situation and its options for the future, Weber was not afraid to paint a bleak picture. The Germany that Weber described was so utterly different from the dawning spiritual utopia depicted by his propagandist peers that it is hard to believe that he and they were speaking of the same object. For Weber, Germany's dire wartime situation had been brought about by inept and erratic pre-war diplomacy, and the war itself mismanaged from the start by bumbling and self-interested aristocrats. Though he did admire the quiet courage of the troops during the days of the mobilization, he completely rejected the myth of "the spirit of 1914," as a transformative moment that brought about the end of Germany's old internal conflicts. Whereas Troeltsch and other mandarin commentators proclaimed the permanent social unity brought about by the war experience, Weber critically pointed out the social divisions and interest groups that had persisted in Germany in spite of the war, and he even mocked the romantic ideal of a unified national community as a completely impractical and ignorant proposal. Regarding the post-war world, Weber did hold out hopes for a moderate expansion of German power in Eastern Europe through the carving out of autonomous but economically dependent nation-states from the Russian Empire's western territories, but, more than anything, he demanded a speedy, negotiated conclusion of the bloody and economically damaging conflict.³⁴⁷ He gave absolutely no credit to the orthodox mandarins' prophecies

³⁴⁷ For Weber's moderate stance regarding German war aims, see his letter to the editors of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, quoted in Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 558; Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics*, 193-198. Mommsen points out that Weber was concerned with the long term damage that an extended conflict would inflict upon the German economy. Weber believed that no amount of annexed territory would be worth the

regarding the overcoming of modernity or the emergence of a new religious spirit. For Weber, the unpleasant realities of the modern world (e.g. the rise of mass politics, the growth of bureaucracies, and the merciless rationalization of economic systems) were the result of the eternal political and economic struggle of nations, and could not be undone in Germany without endangering the very existence of the Reich. On all of these points, Weber stood in diametric opposition to Troeltsch, demonstrating that his break with the theologian, though brought about by circumstance, ultimately resulted from a fundamental opposition of world-views.

A good summary of Weber's wartime political views can be found in his article, "Suffrage and Democracy in Germany," which appeared in 1917. Weber argued that a democratic government characterized by parliamentary rule and equal suffrage was the best way to ensure the survival of a strong and rationally governed German nation-state. Weber reached this conclusion by offering radical criticism of other possible governmental systems, including monarchy, aristocracy, limited suffrage, and corporatism. Concerning monarchy, Weber asserted that Wilhelm II had disproven the claim that monarchs could be relied upon to pursue a more rational foreign policy than democratically elected leaders, asserting that the German Empire "certainly holds the all-comer's record for a policy influenced by purely personal and emotional moods of the leadership."³⁴⁸ Regarding hereditary aristocracy, Weber was actually quite positive, accepting that such a group could function as "a bearer of

financial burden and diplomatic isolation that would result from the long campaign that would be required to secure it. Because Weber believed that the struggle between nations was waged as decisively during times of peace as during times of war, his focus on Germany's strategic position extended beyond the scope of the war itself.

³⁴⁸ Weber, "Suffrage and Democracy in Germany," 124.

political tradition, training and moderation, for which there is no substitute as far as national politics goes.”³⁴⁹ But he went on to assert that, in reality, Germany possessed no such group and that the *Junkers* were essentially a rural bourgeoisie, who became merely ineffective and offensive “parvenus” when treated as anything higher.³⁵⁰

Weber also believed that the war had demonstrated the political incompetence of Germany’s economic and cultural elite, and had thus demonstrated the false assumptions underlying arguments for a government based on a franchise that favored the wealthy and educated. Though he did not claim to know the political mood in which the troops would return from the front, he asserted that it was at least probable that they would show greater leadership potential than the privileged burghers, amongst whom “the war years have revealed ... such a repulsive lack of objectivity, such a lack of political judgment and so much deliberately cultivated ignorance to reality, that the time has come to say to them, ‘your ringing days are over, come down from the belfry.’”³⁵¹ Finally, for the idea of crafting a corporatist society, in which social divisions would supposedly be overcome through a medieval-inspired system of estates-based representation, Weber had nothing but contempt. He called it a “pipe dream,” a “non-idea” and the “product of German litterateurs.”³⁵² He contradicted the common claim (advanced, as we have seen, by Troeltsch) that the German war economy represented an overcoming of modern capitalism and a return to an ethically oriented communal form of economic life. Instead he argued that the war economy actually

³⁴⁹ Weber, “Suffrage and Democracy,” 114.

³⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 115.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.* 107

³⁵² *Ibid.* 88

represented an ethical descent from the peacetime economy of dutiful professional ethics to an orgy of unscrupulous war-profiteering, “a wild dance around the Golden Calf.”³⁵³ All prophetic calls for “relationships of community which have grown ‘organically’ on the soil of natural . . . human relation,” and for “Christian fraternal ethics” were, for Weber, nothing more than “romantic fantasies, which no well-informed person will consider worthy of the honor of serious refutation.”³⁵⁴ In taking up these harshly critical stances toward both traditional German governmental elites and toward the romantic proposal of a corporatist community, Weber placed himself in direct opposition to the majority of his mandarin peers, taking up a position on the extreme, “modernist” end of the mandarin political spectrum. Though Weber was himself uncertain of what the consequences of true German democracy would be, he was confident that they would be preferable to the continued muddling of Germany’s traditional ruling classes or the fantasies of its future-fearing intellectuals.

In spite of his assertion that romantic, corporatist conceptions of German society did not deserve serious refutation, Weber seemed to take special pleasure in dismantling the idealistic proposals for Germany’s post-war future so often put forward by mandarins and other “*littérateurs*.” Perhaps his most dramatic refutation of such ideas occurred during his participation in a 1917 conference organized Eugen Diederichs, an influential cultural figure and publisher of spiritual, occult and *völkisch* literature.³⁵⁵ Diederichs had conceived of the conference as a coming together of Germany’s cultural leaders and promising university students, with the goal of articulating a new, unifying vision of Germany’s future. The

³⁵³ Weber, “Suffrage and Democracy,” 90-91.

³⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 91, 100.

³⁵⁵ Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*, 52-62.

publisher was himself major proponent for reactionary conceptions of the German nation, and he made no effort to mask his spiritualistic and romantic intentions, holding the conference, which began on Whitsun (a Christian holiday which symbolically represents the descent of the Holy Spirit from heaven to earth), in an 800-year-old Thuringian fortress, Castle Lauenstein. To add to this atmosphere, the official program of the events included not only an eclectic mix of speeches by experts on matters mystical, but also a medieval mystery play. It was in this romanticized setting that Max Maurenbrecher, a Protestant theologian, delivered a four-hour long speech, in which he railed, in typical orthodox mandarin fashion, against the soullessness of modern Germany. He denounced parliamentarianism, demanded a return to the “old-Prussian political tradition” of authoritarian rule, and argued that the “capitalistic mechanization” of German society could be overcome only through the establishment of an “idealistically inspired state” governed by a “party of the spiritual.”³⁵⁶

As one would expect, Weber took issue with Maurenbrecher’s views. In fact, Weber was so incensed that he spontaneously mounted the podium and delivered a vicious, impromptu refutation of Maurenbrecher’s ideas. He denounced these as nostalgic nonsense, defended parliamentary democracy as Germany’s only realistic option, and asserted that if the soul of Germany was to be saved, it would not be by clinging to fantastic images of a Germanic past, but only by “soberly facing daily reality.”³⁵⁷ Many of the university students

³⁵⁶ Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber zur Politik im Weltkrieg: Schriften und Reden*, ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Gangolf Hübinger (J.C.B. Mohr Verlag, Tübingen, 1984), 701-704; Marianna Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1975), 596-602; Radkau, *A Biography*, trans. 483-487.

³⁵⁷ Weber, *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg*, 707. Because Weber’s speech was impromptu no manuscript exists. All quotes are drawn from fragmentary notes taken by audience members.

present at the conference found Weber's realism refreshing, and they gathered around him taking in what he had to say, while at the same time trying to win him over to the pacifist cause.³⁵⁸

But the youths' attempts were in vain. Weber had already made quite clear in his open letter, "Between Two Laws," published early in 1916, that pacifism was, for him, unacceptable because it logically entailed not only the renunciation of all political power, but the dismantling of the German Empire and the abandonment of modern capitalism. Weber held that militarism, empire, and capitalism all belonged together, as the various aspects of the great struggle of nation against nation, "in which not millions but hundreds of millions of people, year after year, waste away in body and soul."³⁵⁹ Weber openly admitted the consistency of Burckhardt's assertion that "power is of its nature evil, whoever wields it," and he likewise accepted that the ethic of *The New Testament* "unequivocally" opposed not just military and economic struggle, but "each and every law of the social world."³⁶⁰ But he also pointed out that for a nation to renounce its claim to power, for whatever reason, also meant abandoning its "responsibility before history."³⁶¹ To do this would mean essentially to adopt an attitude of indifference toward the future course of the world and to subordinate all earthly hopes to otherworldly values. And though Weber was himself fully committed to the German Empire, and thus to the morally ambiguous struggle for political and economic

³⁵⁸ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 599

³⁵⁹ Weber, "Between Two Laws," in *Political Writings*, 78.

³⁶⁰ Weber, *Ibid.* 76, 78. This assertion regarding *The New Testament* fundamentally contradicted Troeltsch's claim that *The New Testament* contained no socio-ethical message. In fact, in his assertion that *The New Testament* opposed economic struggle (i.e. capitalism), Weber was aligning himself with the basic idea put forward by Karl Kautsky, the leading Marxist interpreter of the Bible. See Constance Benson, *God and Caesar*, 129-147.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.* 75.

power, he recognized pacifism as a coherent alternative to his position, and he did not disdain those who, like the late Tolstoy, followed the logic of pacifism to its ultimate conclusion.³⁶² Weber framed the choice between worldly and otherworldly ethics as a free choice to be made by each individual, between opposing yet equally compelling sets of values, between warring gods.³⁶³ Weber could tell neither his readers, nor the youths who gathered around him at Castle Lauenstein, which god to serve, but he could demand that they strive to honestly recognize the implications of their choices. Neither militarism nor pacifism were morally unproblematic. Both made legitimate claims, and each contradicted the other. But to willingly distort one's view of the world in order to hide these problems, as so many war propagandists did, was mere cowardice. All that an honest man could do was strive to understand the meaning of the options that stood before him, choose in such a way that honestly reflected his own subjective value judgments, and then dutifully face the consequences of his choice.

Weber eloquently rearticulated this ethic of free, responsible choice in his famous lecture "Science as a Vocation," which he delivered to students at the University of Munich in the fall of 1917, and, in doing so, would also advance a fundamental criticism of the sort of irresponsible and unrealistic war propaganda with which Troeltsch, Maurenbrecher and so many other mandarins had filled Germany's lecture halls and newspapers.³⁶⁴ The talk began with a comparative discussion of the "external conditions" of the vocation of science in

³⁶² This broad-minded stance towards pacifism, helps to explain Weber's outrage at Troeltsch's treatment of Schneegans. Whereas Troeltsch saw the "Alsatian pacifist" as threat to German security, Weber recognized respected Schneegans' pacifism as a legitimate and coherent political perspective.

³⁶³ Weber, "Between Two Laws," 79

³⁶⁴ Radkau, *A Biography*, 487.

Germany and the United States, in which Weber discussed certain practical aspects of an academic career, such as the arbitrary way in which professorial appointments were made. But the main thrust of Weber's lecture came about only when he transitioned from these mundane considerations to a discussion of the "value of science."³⁶⁵ He began by accepting the obvious, namely that science leads to a continual increase of humanity's ability to rationally control the world, but he rejected this as an answer to the question of value of science because, in itself, this "progress" has no value and no meaning—the fact that such "progress" does exist in no way proves that it *should* exist.³⁶⁶ Weber then went on to consider various past explanations of the value of science. Beginning with Plato's belief, as expressed in the Allegory of the Cave, that science brought human beings to consciousness of "true being," and continuing through various other justifications of science as the way to "true art," to "true God," or to "true happiness," Weber discussed and then dismissed all of the past normative justifications for the practice of science. In the end, he seemed to align himself with Tolstoy's view that "science is meaningless because it gives no answer to our question, the only question important for us: what shall we do and how shall we live?"³⁶⁷

But Weber disagreed with Tolstoy on an important point. He accepted that science could not answer this ultimate ethical question, but he did not believe that this forced one to declare the pursuit of science to be meaningless. Weber believed that science had a definite,

³⁶⁵ Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 140. The German word for science (*Wissenschaft*) is much broader in meaning than its English correlate, and refers to all academic pursuits in which systematic knowledge is the goal. The distinction that exists in the English-speaking world between the sciences and the humanities is expressed in the German distinction between the spiritual sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) and the natural science (*Naturwissenschaften*).

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.* 138-139.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 143.

though limited, ethical significance. Namely, he believed that science could advance an individual's understanding of his situation and thereby help him to "give himself an account of the ultimate meaning of his own conduct."³⁶⁸ By this, Weber meant that science both presents to its practitioners a variety of possible ends and makes clear to them the means that will be necessary to achieve these ends. It remains up to each individual to decide which ends are desirable and which means are acceptable, but, nonetheless, Weber asserted that science performs an invaluable moral service by making the individual aware of his options, and thereby helping him to think clearly about questions of moral import.

This limitation of the moral value of science carried with it an implied criticism of much of Germany's academic tradition and a veiled condemnation of those mandarins who had used their authority as scientists to argue for particular political ends.³⁶⁹ Weber ended his address by making this criticism explicit. He admitted that certain figures, such as charismatic religious leaders or visionaries, could effectively reveal to a community the value of specific ends, but he held that such revelation had nothing to do with science. Thus, professors who styled themselves as prophets and who pronounced to their students the coming of a new world united in the pursuit of common ethical ends, merely revealed their ignorance of their own competencies and could, at most, succeed in "creating fanatical sects but never a genuine community."³⁷⁰ Weber dwelt especially on theology, in order to make it

³⁶⁸ Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 151.

³⁶⁹ A Fritz Ringer has shown, the guiding ideal of the German academic community since the time of the reforms of Wilhelm von Humboldt, was summed up in the concept of *Bildung*, which took as its primary goal the instilling of certain valued traits into the personality of students. Weber's definition of science as a value-neutral process, directly contradicted this traditional goal of German education. See Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 357.

³⁷⁰ Weber, "Science as a Vocation" 155.

clear that this field of science was in no way more qualified to speak definitively of ends than any other. Weber held that theology, like all other science, required its practitioners to accept certain premises that could not themselves be scientifically proven, and he asserted that the business of theology consisted merely in rationally organizing these premises into a coherent worldview.³⁷¹ Obviously, Troeltsch's desire to use theological and historical investigations to derive a new form of Christianity that would reunite Germany into a spiritual community, an ambition which he expressed most fully in his *Social Teachings*, exceeded this narrow sphere that Weber reserved for theology, as did Maurenbrecher's calls for an "idealistically inspired state" governed by a "party of the spiritual."³⁷²

Weber dismissed such projects as these as the results of anxiety in the face of the chaotic war of values that had come to characterize modern existence. Weber accepted that this situation was an uncomfortable one, but he doggedly insisted that it was a matter that could not be resolved by means of the "armchair prophecy" of presumptuous academics. He held that the unification of a community behind a single ethical vision could be brought about only by "genuine prophecy" and that this could be induced neither by academic pretension nor by anxious "yearning and tarrying."³⁷³ As such, all that was left was to "set to work to meet 'the demands of the day,' in human relations as well as in our vocation."³⁷⁴

In this speech, Weber articulated a unique view of science that set him apart from his mandarin peers. His condemnation of academic prophecy was directed against the vast wave

³⁷¹ Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 154.

³⁷² Troeltsch, *The Social Teachings*, 25, 1004; Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Max Weber zur Politik im Weltkrieg: Schriften und Reden*, 701-704.

³⁷³ Weber, "Science as a Vocation," 153-156.

³⁷⁴ *Ibid.* 156.

of academic wartime propaganda, which had used the authority of the Germany academy to pronounce, unconvincingly, the emergence of a unified ethical community and the end of the social conflicts that had characterized life in the German Empire since its foundation. Weber believed that these pronouncements accomplished nothing but the fostering of fanaticism and the blinding of the population to the actual options that stood before the German nation, which was the exact opposite of the essential ethical service that science alone could provide. Though it would be too much to insist that Weber had Troeltsch specifically in mind when he condemned academic pretensions to prophecy, it is fair to note that Troeltsch could be counted among those mandarins who had taken up such pretensions. Furthermore, Weber's special emphasis on the limitations of theology, suggest that Troeltsch might not have been far from his mind as he was speaking.

This speech, along with the other activities that Weber pursued during the final years of the war, demonstrates a political stance that put him in opposition to orthodox mandarins in general, and to Troeltsch specifically. Whereas Troeltsch articulated a romantic view of the conflict, interpreting it as a spiritual struggle that had reunited the German nation behind Christian and bourgeois values, conveniently bringing an end to the distressing modern phenomena of secularization and to class struggle, Weber demanded harsh realism in the face of a harsh reality and condemned precisely the sort of professorial wishful thinking that Troeltsch engaged in.

Given this continued ideological divergence, it is not surprising that Weber and Troeltsch failed to reconnect in the years after their break. In spite of the claims of

reconciliation made by Weber and his wife, the truth was that Weber and Troeltsch would never again enjoy the personal warmth or the scholarly cooperation that had characterized their friendship in the years before the war. Marianne's claim that "the stubborn men were brought together again by their wives," is true in only the narrowest sense.³⁷⁵ Weber and Troeltsch were brought together in 1919, but the meeting did nothing to restore their friendship. Weber writes about this meeting in a letter to his mistress, Else Jaffe, as if it were a tedious but unavoidable formality: "Troeltsch came to us on Wednesday — So you see: the amends, which nobody thought your monstrous Grauli [Else's pet name for Weber, meaning grey tabby cat] could bear to make, are taken care of."³⁷⁶ With this formal reconciliation out of the way, the two men could go their separate ways. It was the last recorded interaction that the two had with one another. When Weber died in the summer of 1920, Marianne asked Troeltsch to speak at the graveside service. Troeltsch refused, saying that he was unable to do so at that time.³⁷⁷ Perhaps Troeltsch really did have some pressing commitment that prevented him from being present at Weber's graveside service, but it is also possible that he felt that the bitter end of his friendship with Weber would have prevented him from delivering an appropriately warm graveside speech.

The obituary for Weber that Troeltsch published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, though generous in praise, also contained notes of deep resentment that would have certainly been

³⁷⁵ Marianne Weber, *A Biography*, 524.

³⁷⁶ Weber, *Briefe, 1918-1920*, in *Gesamtausgabe*, eds. Gerd Krumeich and M. Rainer Lepsius (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 2012), 768.

³⁷⁷ Radkau, *A Biography*, 203.

out of place at a memorial service.³⁷⁸ Troeltsch emphasized the important contributions that Weber had made to German science and politics, both through his own work and his inspiring influence on other leading thinkers. He included himself within Weber's sphere of influence, writing that he had "experienced the infinitely stimulating power of this man in daily conversation and that [he was] conscious of owing to him a large part of [his] knowledge and skill."³⁷⁹ Given the years that Troeltsch lived with Weber and the great extent to which Weber's investigations influenced the course of Troeltsch's theological work, this statement can be seen, not as empty or polite praise, but as a fairly accurate assessment of his intellectual debt to Weber. Troeltsch also skillfully summarized Weber's moral outlook, describing the sociologist as "a complete relativist [who] recognized only two absolutes: faith in the nation and the categorical imperative of human dignity and justice."³⁸⁰ And though Troeltsch praised Weber's moral seriousness, he also criticized him for his impersonal ethical rigidity. He wrote that Weber "had no great need of the fellowship of others... To my knowledge a strongly affective friendship linked him only to Paul Göhre [a socialist pastor with whom Weber collaborated during his early work on East-Elbian agriculture]. It ended early and abruptly, for reasons unknown to me. All his other relations were based on common objective interests."³⁸¹

No doubt many of Weber's admiring former students, who were attracted to him as much for his openness and candor as for his brilliance (not to mention Weber's wife and

³⁷⁹ Troeltsch, "Max Weber," in *Religion in History*, 362.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.* 363.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.* 361.

mistresses) would have objected to that description. More likely, these statements stem from Troeltsch's own failed friendship with Weber. For the entire duration their friendship, the two scholars' "objective interests" had stood in opposition to one another, but they nonetheless enjoyed a relationship that, given this ideological disagreement, must have had an affective rather than objective foundation.

The basic image of Weber that Troeltsch put forward in his obituary is of heroic and stoical genius—a man so utterly devoted to the truth and to his ethical principles that he would not hesitate to make any personal sacrifice in order to remain true to his ideals. And though in reality Weber was much more wavering and much more human than this mythological portrayal would have allowed, there is nonetheless some truth in it. Weber's break with Troeltsch really did represent an instance in which Weber made a personal sacrifice for the sake of his moral commitments. In the name of honor and justice, Weber broke off one of his oldest and most intimate friendships, unsentimentally, but not without regret. And though it would be questionable to proclaim this Kantian aspect of Weber's personality as its defining aspect, it is understandable that Troeltsch did so. This was the aspect of Weber's personality that had decided the ultimate fate of the friendship, and it makes sense that this was the one that presented itself to Troeltsch as he sought, after five years of estrangement, to express the essential nature of his former friend.

Conclusion

Not even the reality of military defeat and social revolution was enough to shake many German mandarins from their romantic conceptualization of the war. Rather than giving up their triumphant proclamations of German unity and might, they clung to their claims and explained away reality with pernicious myths of communist plots and “stabs in the back.” They viewed the militarily weak parliamentary republic that emerged out of the chaos of Germany’s postwar social unrest as an abomination and a confirmation of their worst fears. Having explained the war to themselves as a spiritual struggle between the exhausted political and cultural structures of the West and the ascendant German system of authority, hierarchy, and inwardness, they interpreted the democracy that resulted from the war as a spiritual defeat and an imposition from without of an alien political form. Thus, this influential stratum of German society opposed the shaky young republic and called out for a vaguely defined political alternative that would correspond to the anti-modern values they continued to espouse.³⁸²

But Troeltsch was different. As the war ground to a halt and the German Empire crumbled around him, torn apart by the very forces that he had once hoped to subdue under the gentle yoke of a new Christian ethic, he finally began to accept certain modern social and political changes as inevitable, or even preferable, to the old authoritarian system. His political and intellectual activity from 1918 to the time of his death in 1923 demonstrated a marked shift toward the “modernist” end of the mandarin political spectrum. Whereas during the war Troeltsch had joyously announced the end of the liberal era and the bankruptcy of

³⁸² Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 213-223.

Western European political thought, by the end of the war he had come out as an advocate for democracy in Germany, as evinced both by his efforts as a political journalist and by his participation in the newly founded left-liberal German Democratic Party.³⁸³

But his support for democracy was anything but enthusiastic. Troeltsch viewed democracy as a final resort, to which Germany was forced to turn by the collapse of its traditional political systems. Though mass democracy, with its pedestrian political debates and its pandering to narrow interest groups, continued to represent for Troeltsch a spiritual decline from enlightened absolutism, he was, unlike his orthodox peers, capable of recognizing that returning the old system was not an option. From the end of the war until his death, Troeltsch's newfound sense of political realism kept his idealistic and romantically inspired hopes for a culturally ascendant and spiritually unified German nation in check. He never lost these hopes, but he no longer allowed them to blind him, as they once had, to immediate social and political concerns.

This reluctant acceptance of democracy brought Troeltsch close to the attitude that Weber had held toward modernity all along: "soberly facing daily reality."³⁸⁴ As Troeltsch labored during the last five years of his life in the service of political moderation and pragmatism and against the toxic nostalgia of literary romantics and reactionary academics, he must have been aware that he had, at least partially, taken up Weber's call. It is possible

³⁸³ For Troeltsch's journalistic efforts see *Spektator-Briefe: Aufsätze über die Deutsche Revolution und Weltpolitik, 1918-1922*, ed. H. Baron (Aalen, Scientia Verlag, 1966). For a general description of Troeltsch political activity during the Weimar Republic, see Hans-Georg Drescher, *Ernst Troeltsch: Leben und Werk* (Göttingen, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991), 455-481. Fritz Ringer's curious characterization of Troeltsch as a modernist seems to result from his focus on Troeltsch's work during the Weimar period. See Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 341-348.

³⁸⁴ ³⁸⁴Max Weber, *Zur Politik in Weltkrieg*, 707.

that Troeltsch's political transformation was inspired by the example of his former friend, but, on the other hand, it could be the case that Troeltsch changed his tone simply to win the favor of the new German government.

Whatever the cause of Troeltsch's newfound openness toward modernity, he nevertheless remained inwardly devoted to his pre-modern conception of the German nation. Even as he assented to the pluralism and compromise that comes with all democracy, he continued to work toward his lifelong goal of using scholarship to lead Germany to a future of spiritual and cultural unity. Because of this enduring commitment, he remained opposed until the end of his life to the central aspect of Weber's perspective, the ethical neutrality of science.

That academic study could never answer the question of what ought to be done was a point that Weber had insisted upon since his inaugural lecture at Freiburg University in 1895. From then on, he intermittently reasserted this principle, giving it its most poetic expression in his 1917 lecture "Science as a Vocation," when he described the modern world as a clash between warring gods and argued that no amount of study could ever answer the most pressing question of all—which god should we serve?³⁸⁵

Of course, Weber's reduction of science to an ethically neutral intellectual tool provoked passionate objections from romantic intellectuals. These men saw Weber's proclamation only as symptomatic of the spiritual decline of the German university and as a sign that science itself needed to undergo a spiritual revolution if Germany was going to be saved from modern soullessness. In condemning Weber's view of science, they articulated an

³⁸⁵ Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation," in *From Max Weber*, 143.

alternative vision of an intuitive and universal science that would yield not only technical, but also moral and spiritual fruits.³⁸⁶

Troeltsch also rejected Weber's characterization of science, though in a much more measured manner. In a 1918 article, in which he sought to summarize and respond to the ongoing "Science as a Vocation" debate, Troeltsch condemned the incoherent demands of Weber's critics, using Weber's own words: "Max Weber himself used always to say in his discussions with [Stefan] George's disciples that their new Romanticism, just like the old one, would always shatter upon the hard rock of real social and economic conditions."³⁸⁷ But even as he rejected the romantics, Troeltsch sided with them in their main criticism of Weber; he insisted that Weber was wrong to limit the ethical authority of academic pursuits. Though he granted that Weber was right when it came to the physical and the social sciences, Troeltsch insisted that philosophy was

admittedly a different thing... [which] has to find, from some given starting-point a way to grasp the whole... On this question I personally hold a quite different opinion than Weber, and believe that certain instincts that can be sensed in [his critics'] work come closer the truth than Weber's skepticism and his heroic, forcible affirmation of values, which I find impossible to accept.³⁸⁸

Conveniently for Troeltsch, he happened to occupy a chair in philosophy at the University of Berlin during the final years of his life, and in his capacity as a philosopher, he attempted

³⁸⁶ For an example of such a romantic response, see Erich von Kahler, "The Vocation of Science" in *Max Weber's Science as a Vocation*, eds. Peter Lassman and Irving Velody, (London: Unwinn Hyman, 1989), 35-45. See also, Ringer, *Decline of the German Mandarins*, 352-366.

³⁸⁷ Ernst Troeltsch, "The Revolution in Science," in *Max Weber's Science as a Vocation*, 64.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.* 63.

once again to achieve his old goal of reuniting Germany under a single cultural and ethical system.

The fruit of this effort can be seen in Troeltsch's final major work, *Historicism and its Problems*, in which he strove to overcome the problem of historical relativism and to forge a new "cultural synthesis" by identifying and combining the core ideals of Germany's European heritage. Though he used different vocabulary in describing this project, his goal here was essentially the same as it had been in *The Social Teachings*. In his final work, Troeltsch was still opposing the pluralism of modern society. He could never accept Weber's diagnosis of the modern period as a new polytheism, and he continued to strive to use his position as an academic authority to reunify society under a single god whose values he could affirm. In this longing for unity, in his inability to conceive of democracy as anything more than a stopgap measure between periods of ethical and cultural homogeneity, Troeltsch remained very close to his more rigid orthodox mandarin peers and demonstrated just how exceptional Max Weber had been in his ascetic rejection of the pleasant fantasy that scholars could play the role of ersatz prophets in the divided and disenchanting modern world.

The story of Troeltsch and Weber's complex relationship leads us to a number of noteworthy conclusions. First of all, it sheds new light on the origins of their famous works, revealing that each scholar's groundbreaking insights resulted, in part, from the cross-pollination between political economy and theology that their friendship facilitated. The fact that such cooperation could take place in spite of their clear political disagreements is

interesting, revealing that neither scholar was so fanatical in his ideological alignment as to preclude cooperation with and respect for the other. Though they were opponents on the ideological level, they were friends on the personal level and partners on the professional level, which suggests that these three spheres were kept separate in each thinker's mind.

The current study helps us to understand the end of Weber and Troeltsch's friendship. It allows us to view their break not merely as the result of an unfortunate argument, but rather as a predictable outcome resulting from the heightened atmosphere of political seriousness that the war brought with it. In response to the war, Weber and Troeltsch both undertook practical courses of action in order to serve their ideological goals. Given the conflicting nature of these goals, combined with Weber and Troeltsch's continued proximity, it is not surprising that conflict resulted. Their friendship and cooperation had depended upon the separation of their ideological perspectives from their day-to-day lives. The war brought an end to this separation and, thus, brought an end to the friendship as well.

The story of Weber and Troeltsch's relationship provides a concrete instantiation of a much broader conflict on the subject of modernity. Reflection on this particular case provides insight into the role that scholarship plays in ideological conflicts in general. It suggests that scholarship is not so much a means for resolving ideological division through the discovery of objective truths, but that it is rather a tool that can be wielded by all parties in a debate, each seeking to produce a truth that furthers their own interests. Weber and Troeltsch's scholarly relationship makes this point obvious. Both scholars, studying the same subjects, drawing on the same quotes from the same sources, produced historical narratives that

supported radically different conclusions. Unsurprisingly, these conclusions fit with the political prejudices of their respective authors. Neither Weber nor Troeltsch held sophistic attitudes toward their work, but rather both believed that their efforts represented objective historical accounts. By producing such apparently objective work, both manufactured evidence for the correctness of their respective positions. Each side of the debate surrounding the modernization of German society could refer to its own “objective” literature while condemning the literature of the other side as biased. It was through this kind of self-referential ideological reinforcement that the orthodox mandarins managed to gradually work their original anti-modern sentiment into a culturally influential movement working towards goals such as “cultural synthesis” and “spiritual revolution,” which seem almost meaningless from an outsider’s perspective.³⁸⁹

It would seem that scholarship is value-free, but not in the way that Weber said it ought to be.³⁹⁰ It does not function as an objective forum, in which opposing worldviews are measured against the infinite complications and limitations of reality, but rather as a tool that can be wielded by any party and for any purpose. Its primary task is not the discovery and logical assembly of facts, but the organization of accepted facts into an advantageous representation of truth. Weber and Troeltsch spent more than a decade engaging each other on the subject of the history of religion, but this engagement brought them no closer ideologically. Each remained committed to an interpretation of the facts consistent with their own political prejudices. This seems to suggest that the study of history is not so much a

³⁸⁹ Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 402-403, 446.

³⁹⁰ For an account of Weber’s project of bringing objectivity to the social sciences see Kim, “A Historical Atlas of Objectivity,” 384-385.

means to overcoming prejudice, but rather that it is merely a method for the elaboration and sophistication of these prejudices. It suggests that our subjective values govern not only our political pursuits, as Weber admitted, but our scholarly pursuits as well. More than this, it suggests that no real distinction can be drawn between the scholarly and political spheres. Scholarship, like politics, becomes a clash between warring gods.

REFERENCES

- Aschheim, Steven E. *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany, 1890-1990*. Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992.
- Benson, Constance. *God and Caesar: Troeltsch's Social Teachings as Legitimation*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1999.
- Chalcraft, David J. and Austin Harrington. *The Protestant Ethic Debate: Max Weber Replies to his Critics, 1907-1910*. Translated by Austin Harrington and Mary Shields. Liverpool University Press, 2001.
- Chapman, Mark. *Ernst Troeltsch and Liberal Theology: Religion and Cultural Synthesis in Wilhelmine Germany*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- "Polytheism and Personality: Aspects of the Intellectual Relationship between Weber and Troeltsch." *History of the Human Sciences* 6, no. 2 (1993): 1-33.
- Chickering, Roger. *Imperial Germany and the Great War, 1914-1918*. Cambridge University Press, 1998.
- Drescher, Hans-Georg. *Ernst Troeltsch: His Life and Work*. Translated by John Bowden. London: SCM Press LTD, 1992.
- *Ernst Troeltsch: Leben und Werk*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1991.
- Hennis, Wilhem. *Max Weber, Essays in Reconstruction*. Translated by Kenneth Tribe. London: Allen & Unwinn, 1988.
- Herf, Jeffrey. *Reactionary modernism: Technology, culture, and politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984.

Hobsbawm, Eric J. *The Age of Empire, 1875-1914*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.

----- *The Age of Revolution, 1789-1848*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

Honigsheim, Paul. *On Max Weber*. Translated by Joan Rytina. New York: The Free Press, 1968.

Hughes, H. Stewart. *Consciousness and Society*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002.

Graf, Friedrich Wilhelm. "Friendship between Experts: Notes on Weber and Troeltsch." In *Max Weber and his Contemporaries*. Edited by Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Jürgen Osterhammel, 215-233. London: Allen and Unwin, 1987.

----- "Max Weber und die protestantische Theologie seiner Zeit." *Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte*. 39, no. 2 (January 1987): 122-147.

Kaelber, Lutz. "Max Weber's Dissertation." *History of the Human Sciences*, 16, no. 2. (2003): 27-53.

Kim, Mi Gyung. "A Historical Atlas of Objectivity," *Modern Intellectual History*, 6, no. 3 (2009): 569-596.

Kuenzlen, Gottfried. "Die Unbekannte Quelle der Religionssoziologie Max Webers." *Zeitschrift für Soziology*. (August 1978): 215-227.

Lagarde, Paul. "The Need to Transcend Liberalism." In *Fascism*. Edited by Roger Griffin. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Mitzman, Arthur. *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber*. New York: Knopf, 1970.

- Mommsen, Wolfgang J. *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890-1920*. Translated by Michael S. Steinberg. The University of Chicago Press, 1984.
- Mosse, George. *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich*. New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1964.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin Books, 2003.
- *Unitmely Meditations*. Edited by Daniel Breazeale. University of Cambridge Press, 1997.
- Pauck, Wilhelm. *Harnack and Troeltsch: Two Historical Theologians*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967.
- Pulzer, P. G. J. *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany and Austria*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1964
- Ringer, Fritz. *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969.
- *Max Weber: An Intellectual Biography*. Chicago University Press, 2004.
- Radkau, Joachim. *Max Weber: A Biography*. Translated by Patrick Camiller. Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2009.
- Ritschl, Albrecht. *Three Essays*. Translated by Philip Hefner. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972.
- Rilke, Rainer Maria. "Funf Gesänge." *Die Gedichte von Rainer Maria Rilke*. Accessed March 24, 2014. <http://rainer-maria-rilke.de/100144fuenfgesaenge.html>.

- Scaff, Lawrence A. *Max Weber in America*. Princeton University Press, 2011.
- Smith, Helmut Walser. *German Nationalism and Religion Conflict: Culture, Ideology, Politics, 1879-1914*. Princeton University Press, 1995.
- Stern, Fritz. *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A study in the Rise of Germanic Ideology*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974.
- Troeltsch, Ernst. *The Absoluteness of Christianity and the History of Religion*. Translated by David Reid. Richmond, VA: John Knox Press, 1971.
- *Briefe an Friedrich von Hügel: 1901-1923*. Paderborn: Verlag bonifacius-Druckerei, 1974.
- *Christian Thought: Its History and Application*. Edited by Baron F. von Hügel. Westport, CT: Hyperion Books, 1979.
- *Deutscher Geist und Westeuropa*. Edited by Hans Baron. Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966.
- *Gesamelte Schriften*. 4 Vols. Edited by Dr. Hans Baron. Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966.
- "Max Weber." In *Max Weber zum Gedächtnis*. Edited by Rene König and Johannes Winkelmann. Cologne an Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1963.
- *Protestantism and Progress*. Translated by W. Montgomery. Boston: Beacon Hill, 1958.
- *Religion in History*. Translated by James Luther Adams and Walter F. Bense. Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1991.

- “The Revolution in Science.” In *Max Weber’s Science as a Vocation*. Edited by Peter Lassman, Irving Velody and Hermino Martins. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
- *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*. 2 Vols. Translated by Olive Wyon. The University of Chicago Press. 1981.
- *Spektator Briefe: Aufsätze über die Deutsche Revolution und Weltpolitik 1918/22*. Edited by Baron von Hügel Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1966.
- Verhey, Jeffrey. *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth, and Mobilization in Germany*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Vincent, Steven K. “National Consciousness, Nationalism and Exclusion: Reflections on the French Case.” In *Historical Reflections*. 19, No. 3 (1993): 443-449.
- Weber, Marianna. *Max Weber: A Biography*. Translated and edited by Harry Zohn. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1975.
- Weber, Max. *Economy and Society*. 3 Vols. Edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich. Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff *et. al.*. New York: Bedminster Press, 1968.
- *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*. Edited and translated by H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.
- *Gesamtausgabe*. 10 Vols. Edited by Horst Baier, Rainer Lepsius, Wolfgang J. Mommsen, Wolfgang Schluchter, Johannes Winckelmann. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1998.
- “Objectivity in the Social Sciences and Social Policy.” In *Philosophy of the Social Sciences: A Reader*. Edited by Maurice Natanson. New York: Random House, 1963.

- *Political Writings*. Edited by Peter Lassman and Ronald Spiers. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Translated by Stephen Kalberg. Los Angeles: Roxbury Press, 2002.
- *Die Protestantische Ethik: Eine Aufsatzsammlung*. Edited by Johannes Winkelmann. Gutersloh: Gutersloher Verlagshaus Mohn, 1978.
- *Roscher and Knies: The Logical Problems of Historical Economics*. Translated by Guy Oakes. New York: The Free Press, 1975.
- *The Sociology of Religion*. Translated by Ephraim Fischhoff. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.
- *Zur Geschichte der Handelsgesellschaften im Mittelalter*. Edited by Gerhard Dilcher and Sussanne Lepsius. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck Verlag, 2008.
- Welch, Claude. *Protestant Thought in the Nineteenth Century, 1870-1914*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985.
- Wohl, Robert. *The Generation of 1914*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979.