

Examrace

Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism: Max Weber: Emergence and Beliefs

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Emergence of Protestant Ethics

- It emerged as a sect of Christianity in the 16th century
- The main preacher of this is John Calvin therefore, it is also known as Calvinism.
- He believed that the destiny is fixed by God and it cannot be changed and that some individuals are the elected one by God
- Work hard to know who is the chosen one
- He also believed in the concept of calling – if you succeed you are the chosen one
- Weber found the reasons why Asia could not develop as much as the Europe during the Industrial revolution.
- He said that the religions did not provide the required will to exploit the resources present in the society and in spite of the potential Asia could not develop whereas Europe did, and protestant ethics gave them the path.



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- Weber asked himself this question: What made the modern Western Capitalism unique?
- Max Weber observed a close connection between religious and economic forces. He said that religion is a vital influence in every day life.
- The Protestant ethics in which Max Weber was interested was essentially Calvinist.

- He undertook a massive study of the major world religions and said that the answer lies in the religious beliefs, so he established a correlation between protestant ethic and development of modern capitalism in Europe.
- Protestant ethics provided motivation for hard work that people considered the duty to abstain from pleasure and to spend their lives working for the glory of God
- Whereas other religions of the world like Islam, Hinduism, Judaism, Christianity and Buddhism believe that wealth and profit is unethical and not desirable



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Features of Calvinism

- The Calvinist look for signs and chosen one or the elected one was to be found
- Profits were not to be spent on pleasure and had to be reinvested thus, modern capitalism was born
- Protestant ethics is responsible for the rise of capitalism in the West
- Protestant ethics believe that it is ethical, spiritual and approved by God
- By the term Spirit of Capitalism, Weber meant a set of attitudes, a belief “in maximizing wealth without much consideration of the means as long as the means are efficacious”. (helpful in producing desired results).

Beliefs

They believe in :

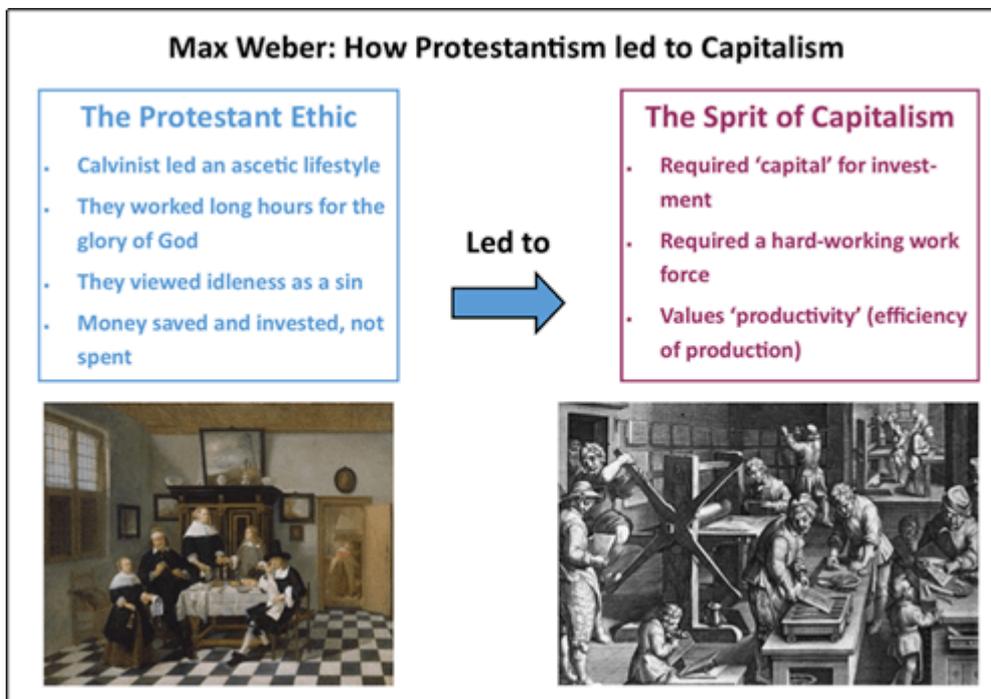
- The chosen one,
- Work is worship,
- Work is virtue,
- Time is money,

- Profit is ethical,
- Reinvestment is a Godly act,
- No holiday



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Protestant Ethics and Spirit of Capitalism book published in 1905



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Criticism

- Marx believed that infrastructure determines superstructure. According to him, capitalism required a justification for the act of profit and protestant ethics justified it

- Joseph Schumpeter argued that capitalism began in Italy in the 14th century, not in the Protestant areas of Europe
- He does not take material forces into account and that he claims that the origins of capitalism are merely a consequence of the ideas transmitted by Protestant ethics
- It is not right to say that only protestant ethics were capitalists . After industrial revolution, every class and community were taking up the opportunity and accumulating wealth
- The favorable environment (in Europe) which contributed to the rise of capitalism.

Conclusion

- The value attached to hard work, thrift, and efficiency in one's worldly calling, which, especially in the Calvinist view, were deemed signs of an individual's election.
- The calling to make more money
- Sacrificing present for future
- Denial of worldly pleasures
- It is a work ethic
- Frugality or asceticism
- Max Weber used ideal type method in comparative study of religion and found that there is an emphasis on economic success which makes protestant ethics different and unique from the other religions.
- The emergence of capitalism is a complex phenomena to study because it emerged due to various factors like inventions of machines.
- But it can be said that according to Max Weber, religion is the cause and capitalism is the consequence
- Whereas for Marxists, capitalism is the cause and rise of protestant ethics is the consequence

MCQs

1. In his monumental work 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism.' Weber suggests that the basic values of Protestantism have influenced capitalism. Which one of the following is the correct statement? The above statement revealed that Weber has:
1. altogether ruled out the role of economic factors in social change.
 2. duly recognized economic factor in social change.
 3. duly recognized economic factor but has attached prior importance to non-economic factors.

4. advocated the role of bureaucracy.

Ans.2

2. With regard to Protestant ethics which of these statements are true :

1. Protestant ethics is responsible for the rise of capitalism in the West
2. Some individuals are the elected one by God
3. Spend all the money now and don't save for future
4. Leisure is a sin

Ans. 1,2,4

#UGC-NET

#Max Weber

#Protestant Ethics And Spirit Of Capitalism

-Manishika

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