

Protestantism; Spirit of Capitalism and Inequality

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Abstract

Max Weber, a German Sociologist, clearly states that one of the key factors of capitalism is the Protestantism and its religious values. He critically argues that the religious ideas and concepts of groups like Protestants promoted the capitalistic spirit. He further explores that the religion is one of the key causes of the modern economic conditions. Even though there are some critiques and opponent views, he states protestant (Calvinism) helped to bring a dimension and a stage for the social development of capitalism. Therefore, it was a first major analysis of the effect of religion to form an economic system because Protestantism was one supporting factor for the Capitalistic spirit which also led inequality.

Keywords- Calvinism, Capitalism, Inequality, Protestantism, Religion

Introduction

As Max Weber (1864-1920), a German sociologist describes an elective affinity between capitalism and Protestantism. The relationship between the “Protestant ethic” and “Capitalism” has brought a vast amount of critical discussion(Weber, 1995). Weber’s intention was to show the relationship between Calvinism and a form of capitalism not in terms of genesis, but in terms of support. Theologically and sociologically, the most precise title the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism is one of the world best-known works. He also covered in the spirit of capitalism which are ideas such as time is money, be industrious (sincere), be frugal (profit generating), be punctual, be fair and earning money is legitimate end in itself (reinvestment and increase. He correlates the ideology of Calvinism like self-glory, doctrine of pre-destination, asceticism and notion of calling with the four features of capitalism like wealth, individualism, profit and ethics. In fact, to understand the Weber’s propositions it is necessary to have the idea of the Calvinist ideology in the Protestant ethic. It is believed that first the world was created in the glory of God to fulfill his purpose and God does not exist for men’s sake; but rather, a man exists to serve God. Therefore, Calvinism was the version of Protestantism that interested Weber and one feature of Calvinism was the idea that only a small number of people are chosen for salvation. In addition Calvinism entailed the idea of predestination people were predestined to be either among the saved or among the damned. Weber does no argue that religious forces are the sole factors responsible for the development of modern capitalism; but rather, to understand whether and to what degree religious forces have influences the formation and expansion of the spirit of capitalism(Forcese, 1968). This paper presents how the Protestantism can be the supportive means for capitalism and inequality as well as some opposing critiques.

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The spirit of Capitalism

Max Weber states that the key boosting of capitalism as the base of Protestantism and his argument clarifies that the spirit of capitalism is inherited in the Protestantism and its religious values. He further argues that the religious ideas and concepts of groups like Protestants played a role for generating and creating the capitalistic spirit. He makes an observation on the relation between protestant and involvement in business and states his intent to explore religion as one of the key causes of the modern economic conditions. He further shows that certain branches of Protestantism had supported worldly tasks devoted to economic development and gain, observing them as endowed with moral and spiritual significance. Similarly it is a study of the correlation between the ascetic value of Protestantism and the occurrence of the spirit of modern capitalism. His point that the religious ideas groups like Calvinists had a role for elevating the capitalistic spirit. He further argues the modern capitalism looks profit as an end itself and generating profit at virtuous. His goals are to get the idea of that spirit and he turns to Protestantism for an explanation. Protestantism grants a worldly calling concept and gives the worldly tasks a religious matter. He argues that the religious ideas groups such as the Calvinists played a role in developing the capitalistic spirit (Zafirovski, 2018).

The spirit of inequality

According to Weber, the spirit of capitalism originates from the Protestant Ethic. The economic development encourages competition, a division between the chosen and the damned. Similarly with this concept, it is also believed that the spirit of capitalism was accompanied by another phenomenon, the spirit of inequality (Campos, 2005). It was encouraged by the pre-destination philosophy. The spirit of inequality forms the stratification of the classes, a few economic successes and masses of economic failures. The writer, Campos accepts Weber's claim, attributing the protestant work ethic and asceticism, which fueled the engine of capitalism. Such characteristics also fueled another phenomenon in society i.e. the spirit of inequality and the negative sentiment and hatred toward the damned. To justify the concept of inequality, the writer analyses the pre-destination notion paralleled to the contemporary American Dream. In addition, policy implementations targeting disadvantaged groups in society. Similarly, here the writer argues that the sources by which corporate America maintain its power (the exploitation of immigrants and international cheap labor). Accepting Weber's conclusion, one can trace the origin of inequality back to the protestant ethic since it encourages the rise of economic division between the chosen and the damned. The development of capitalism could be rooted in asceticism. With the development of economy, a division between chosen and the damned arose. The chosen's grace was expressed by the power of wealth and continues investment for further accumulation of wealth. But the most important point was that self-denial was a great important issue of the chosen ones, for his/her work was for God's will and not for the self-betterment. After this, a strong economic competition occurred among many so that they can express their chosen virtues. Of course, the competition arouses winners and losers.

Therefore, the spirit of inequality is an affinity for competition which creates

stratification of the classes, a few economic successes and masses of economic failures. Similarly the pre-destination philosophy forced for the rise of inequality; the division of economic success(chosen) and failure (dammed), the division of class structure between the wealthy (chosen) and the poor (dammed), members of the high status society(chosen) and lowest classes (dammed), the division between the political powerful (chosen) and powerless (dammed). Therefore, the Protestant ethic gave a ground start for the spirit of capitalism, the spirit of capitalism later carried the protestant ethic, the protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism brought the spirit of inequality and all three continue to linger in the societies.

Critiques

Max Weber did not directly join the concept system of the protestant ethic to the foundation and form of the capitalist system but he was happy to link the protestant ethic to another system of ideas, the spirit of capitalism. The protestant ethic is not about the emergence of modern capitalism but is about the origin of a peculiar spirit. Even though there are some particular logics mentioned, some critics have stated some critical analysis. Razzell (1977) states that Weber rejected to define and explain the universal generalization and was particularly averse to the application of evolutionary concepts. His methodology was incapable of explaining the results and he was found by the logic of his own analysis. Similarly, he continued to reject the difficulty on empirical grounds, although he produced no evidence any of his work to present that the Calvinists were more completely committed to the protestant ethic than any other puritan groups too. However, with rare exceptions , not many analysts explicitly state that Weber's Thesis stands or falls , may be valid and consistent or not, with the Calvinist theory of predestination , and do not review its theology originality and its attributed unique socio-economic outcomes relative to its pre and non-Calvinist versions. Concerning these exceptions m they suggest that it falls in this connection (Zaret, 1992). Similarly Weber has got extensive criticism on historical grounds. His thesis relies on a distorted reading of religious text. MacKinnon (1988) also argues that weber was mistaken and evasive in his interpretation of Calvinism. His critique calls attention to the significant of contractual themes in puritan theology. He further mentions that some sociologists have sought to deal with weber thesis from a great range of approaches. There is a great question on the theological assumptions weber makes on behalf of Calvinism. That is both surprising and critical because of religious ideas. Calvinism is not unique in Weber's sense; its divinity direct to the value of workday world. Like others, the Calvinist projects the ultimate value in an other-worldly direction of the spirit. So Calvinism could not and did not promote the capitalist spirit in the way Weber claims.

Implications

There is a consideration whether the implications of Weber's Calvinism and capitalism. The work can be sociologically serious in terms of validity or consistency. If the doctrine of predestination were such a religious root of the spirit of capitalism and it would have been developed and existed many centuries mean before Calvin's lifetime and the spread of Calvinism including Puritanism. Yet, these pre-Calvinist theological works evidently did

not provide such a basis in the context of Weber's Thesis. Instead, Calvin's *Institution* alone is (alongside later Calvinist-Puritan writings) considered a theological foundation of capitalism in that the specifically Calvinist doctrine of predestination provided "dogmatic foundations" to the "rational capitalistic orientation" via "inner-worldly asceticism" by methodical labor in a calling. Weber always attributes to Calvinism the same fundamental effect in the structure of the spirit of Capitalism in a given historical phase or geographical space, signifies by no means that he is required to adopt such effects prior to Calvinism. No doubt, this would apply if this capitalist effect would be the effect of the doctrine of predestination only. Nevertheless, the preceding has argued and showed that the assumption of a universal effect of the predestination doctrine is problematic (Zafirovski, 2018).

Conclusion

In conclusion, it can be stated that the protestant (Calvinism) brought a stage for the social development of capitalism though there are some critiques and opponent views. This opened not only the door of the spirit of capitalism but also the spirit of inequality between chosen and damned. Similarly, it was the first major analysis of the effect of religion to form an economic system. It is believed that Protestantism was one supporting factor for the Capitalistic spirit. And the capitalism itself had an impact on the progress of the religious ideas.

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