Weber and the Myth of Calvinism

Luciano Pellicani

Abstract

Many sociologists believe that much of the criticism against Weber's well-known thesis concerning the Protestant ethic “derives from a misunderstanding or an inadequate knowledge of the Weberian method.” It is advisable, therefore, to briefly summarize Weber's intentions in the words of one of his staunchest supporters: “Weber's problem was to understand how the capitalist entrepreneur's new mode of behavior could develop. His answer is that the ways of the capitalist entrepreneur are related to the ways which the Protestant religion, especially Calvinism, inspires man.” This means that, for Weber there is a “structural homology” between the behavior of the ideal type “entrepreneur” and the Calvinist mentality, and that he interpreted such structural homology “in a causal manner.”

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