

Michigan Sociological Review

in Official Publication of the Michigan Sociological Association

Volume 17, Fall 2003

2003 Keynote Address

Mansoor Moaddel

September 11, Global Exigencies, and Sociology: A New Challenge

William DuBois

A Science of Humanity: Humanistic Sociology's Response to
Sociobiology,

Part I: Human Nature -- Basic Needs and Processes

Part II: The Mind Intervenes in Evolution

A. Troy Adams and Kenneth Kelso

Evaluation of Telementoring Service-Learning in an Introduction to
Sociology Course

Hunter Gray (Hunterbear)

American Racism: An Organizer's Reflections

Samuel R. Friedman

"American Racism": A Strategically Focused Paper

Lisa A. Eargle

Interchangeability of Part-time Farming Indicators

Gene Shackman, Ya-Lin Liu, and Xun Wang

Longitudinal Demographic Data on the Web

Kevin Borgeson

Culture and Identity among Skinhead Women

J.I. (Hans) Bakker

the Weber-Rachfahl Debate: Calvinism and Capitalism in Holland?

THE WEBER-RACHFAHL DEBATE: CALVINISM AND CAPITALISM IN HOLLAND?

(Part One)

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ABSTRACT

Felix Rachfahl argues that Max Weber is incorrect concerning historical details of the Dutch case. He uses the "liberal" ideas of the rich merchants of Amsterdam to argue that Weber was wrong. Weber replies that the history of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century is complex, but that it nevertheless does not contradict his sociological argument about Protestantism. I argue that Rachfahl's criticisms: (1) forced Weber to articulate his arguments more clearly, but (2) did not clearly point to weaknesses in Weber's historical knowledge of the Low Countries. Weber's sociological theory was strengthened. His empirical knowledge of Dutch history proves to be reasonably accurate. He was fully aware of the "partial subduing of Puritanism in Holland" but did not over-emphasize the working of Protestantism in the Netherlands.

PRECIS (ZUSAMMENFASUNG) OF ARGUMENT (PARTS ONE AND TWO)

This essay re-examines criticisms of Weber's famous Thesis on the Protestant Ethic that were made by Felix Rachfahl in 1909 and 1910. The criticisms focus mainly on Weber's alleged ignorance of details concerning the case of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. Rachfahl maintains that most Dutch merchants were not strict Calvinists. He argues that "Weber was mistaken about Calvinist influence in Holland" (Hamilton, 2000: 170). Weber responds by indicating that he is not concerned with Calvinism, *per se* but with an Ideal Type Model of this-worldly Protestant asceticism. He examines the Protestant Ethic as it emerged in modified Calvinist beliefs and in various sects such as the Quakers and Anabaptists. He is also not mainly concerned with the big financiers and very rich merchants (*Heeren*) but focuses on the middle stratum of Dutch society.

Rachfahl interprets specific historical events as refuting Weber. For example, he sees the execution of Johan van Oldenbarneveld as evidence that Calvinism did not have the impact Weber implied. But Weber's argument is not invalidated by the case of Oldenbarneveld. In Part One we briefly focus on the details of six topics. These are (a) the Dordrecht Synod, (b) roots of the conflict in the Low Countries, (c) the Reformation, (d) the Revolution against the Hapsburgs, (e) the alleged uniqueness of the Dutch case, (f) proto-Protestantism, and (g) the multiplicity of cultural and theological-ideological "currents." Part Two will deal with Oldenbarneveld and with the logic of comparative-historical methods which utilize Ideal Type Models.

In general, Weber's "Replies" to Rachfahl show that the empirical concerns Rachfahl emphasizes do not necessarily detract from the heuristic value of a

sociological statement of "elective affinity" between ideal types. It is not a question of essentialist Calvinism causing economic forms of Capitalism, but of Protestant this-worldly asceticism tending to "hang together" (*innere Zusammenhang*) with the ascetic "*Geist*" of modern capitalism. Properly interpreted, Weber's Thesis matches the evidence. In the Netherlands the Protestant Ethic was one factor in a very complex historical situation and Weber was fully aware of this complexity and of "the partial subduing of Puritanism in Holland." Weber did not, however, provide a systematic and comprehensive statement of his views on the history of the Low Countries as that history pertains to the Protestant Sects.

INTRODUCTION: PART I

Weber wrote about the Protestant Ethic precisely one hundred years ago.¹ His views have been discussed ever since. In the English-speaking world, recent translations and re-translations have put Weber squarely back into the center of attention. Because I was born in the Netherlands, it has been very interesting to me to re-examine critically an exchange of opinions that Weber had with a noteworthy critic. In re-examining the "duel" that took place in print between Weber and an expert on Dutch history, I became impressed with the extent to which Weber obviously knew the facts.

Of course, not everyone would agree that it is worth looking at the facts. Some have even argued that the Thesis is a tautology and cannot, therefore, be disproved. It postulates, after all, that the "asceticism" of certain forms of this-worldly Protestantism tends to be associated with the "asceticism" of the "spirit" of this-worldly modern capitalism. Weber, himself, rejected the idea that his thinking was circular. He felt that the accusation rested on a false reading of his work.

The Weber Thesis is not just a tautology to the effect that asceticism goes with asceticism. On the other hand, it is also not based on descriptive, idiographic historical study. Instead, it should be read as a statement that at a certain phase of history an ethos of religious (but not mystical) this-worldly asceticism tended to "hang together" with an ethos of asceticism in the economic sphere. What is provocative about this idea is that the religious and the economic spheres, even at the level of "*Geist*," have more in common than most would readily assume. Indeed, many writers have felt that the ethos of ascetic Protestantism was *never* associated with the ethos of modern capitalism. If it were simply a matter of two *identical forms* of "*Geist*" having something to do with one another, then the Weber Thesis would, indeed, be circular. But for many people the religious sphere and the economic sphere are very far from overlapping.

It is true that Weber felt that his Ideal Type Models were stated in terms of a sociological "elective affinity" and not in terms of a *causal* relation, but he nevertheless felt that the models had some basis in, or at least "isomorphism with", historical reality. However, some writers have claimed to prove that the historical materials Weber uses are not historically accurate. That is, sometimes Weber is considered to be wrong because he did not get the historical facts right, not because

he made a circular argument or used an Ideal Type methodology. The question of the empirical validity of the Weber Thesis is often so closely wrapped up with the question of the precise methodological status of the theoretical sketch that it is very difficult to disentangle the two issues. Obviously, if a critic misinterprets Weber's intentions then it is easier to make it appear that he is wrong in terms of the empirical facts.

The general argument I would like to make *here* is the following. Weber's 1904-1905 sketch of *The Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism* holds up well against the criticisms concerning the historical details made in 1909 and 1910 by Felix Rachfahl (1867-1925). Weber knew enough about history to make a heuristic sociological argument. Rachfahl, a historian, did not catch him in any major historical mistakes. But, ironically, in his attempt to trap Weber, Rachfahl did force him to be more articulate about the methodology of his *sociological* Thesis. Rachfahl wanted to find fault with Weber's historical details and inadvertently promoted the articulation of a new discipline that was just beginning to be recognized.¹

Gorski (2000a; b) and Lachmann (2000: 159-70) have made important contributions to the study of the Low Countries, but more attention needs to be focused on the relevance of the Low Country case (in general) for Weber's Thesis. The present essay represents a small step toward achieving that goal.

Alastair Hamilton (2000: 170), for one, does not accept the idea that Weber's use of historical materials stand up against criticism.² Instead, Hamilton argues that Henri Pirenne and other "great historians" have shown that Weber "was mistaken about Calvinist influence in Holland."⁴ Indeed, there is a general tendency to assume that somehow Weber was not adequately versed in historical details. After all, Rachfahl, his opponent, was a Professor of history. Weber was not. Rachfahl, who was a contemporary of Weber (1864-1920), can be considered a German expert on the Netherlands (Rachfahl, 1926).⁵ At Heidelberg Weber was not a historian but a Professor of political economy (Volkswirtschaft).⁶ Today we tend to think of him as a sociologist. But he was well read and knew a great deal about history. The "duel" between him and Rachfahl demonstrates this.

Various new translations of Weber's "Replies" to Rachfahl (Weber, 2001b; 2002b) and the famous classic essays (Weber, 1904; 1905; 1920) on "*Die protestantische Ethik and der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus*" (translations: Weber, 2002a; Weber, 2002b) have been published. Taken together, these translations have improved our knowledge. One way the translators have tightened the theoretical discussion is to stress the importance of the *footnotes*.⁷ Many readers of earlier English editions have tended to skip the original footnotes altogether. Yet, it has become increasingly clear that no scholarly evaluation of what Weber was saying can afford to overlook the detailed comments made in his extensive footnotes, particularly those added for the 1920 revised edition.

Many of those footnotes elaborate on the succinct comments that Weber makes in the essays concerning the Dutch case. Weber points out, for example, that he is using an *ideal type* of the spirit of modern capitalism. He also points out that what

Rachfahl says about the way in which he (Weber) uses the term "asceticism" is a "sterile polemic about names" (Weber, 2001b: 63; Weber 2002b: 249).

Much of the debate is about the *empirical*, historical question of the impact of Protestant asceticism in the Netherlands. But it is sometimes difficult to separate empirical points and more theoretical questions. In examining the Weber Thesis it is useful to discuss the importance "the Dutch case" for many reasons, not merely because of Rachfahl's criticisms. Less attention has been paid, for example, to the situation in the seventeenth century Netherlands than in seventeenth century England. In addition, some of the work that has been done on the situation in the Netherlands with respect to the Weber Thesis (e.g. Hyma 1938, Hansen 1967, Riemersma 1967) is questionable.⁸ It would be worthwhile to look at the entire range of articles and books, pro and con. However, because I focus here on the Rachfahl-Weber exchange, the broader historical issues would take us too far astray.

Rachfahl, as an expert on Dutch history, tries to find weaknesses in Weber's scattered comments about the Netherlands. He presents other arguments as well (e.g., concerning Lutheranism in Hamburg); but it is the question about the impact of Calvinism that is the central concern. Indeed, the title of Rachfahl's critique is: "Calvinism and Capitalism" ("*Kalvinismus und Kapitalismus*"; see Weber, 1968). Rachfahl argues that "Calvinism," considered as a historical phenomenon, did not influence "Capitalism" as an economic system, at least not to the extent to which Weber's Thesis implies. However, he also acknowledged that there might have been "an inner relationship" between Calvinism and Capitalism (Weber, 2002: 25). -

In his responses to Rachfahl, Weber refers to "... the extremely complex and interesting problem ... of the particular character [*Eigenart*] of Dutch capitalism and the inward attitude of the people toward it" (Weber, 2002b: 270-71). Weber clearly acknowledges that the historical situation in the Netherlands is complicated. But he does not shy away from the empirical problems. Indeed, there were already specific comments about the Dutch case in the original essays. He adds that he doubts whether Rachfahl "... knows more about this subject than I do..." Judged retrospectively, this seems to be true. Moreover, he comments, tongue in cheek, that he is grateful for Rachfahl's acknowledgment that he is "... not entirely ignorant of these problems..." (Weber, 2002b: 271). He adds, sarcastically, that he (Weber) is "... still very far from having a thorough grasp of them" (Weber, 2002b: 271). That is also true. Weber did not specialize in the study of the seventeenth-century Netherlands. Unlike Rachfahl, he did not do archival research in Dutch historical archives. Nevertheless, he managed to identify the main facts. It is clearly the case that Weber was "not entirely ignorant" of the Dutch-Belgian case and the problems it presents for his Thesis concerning the elective affinity between the two ideal types.

Nevertheless, it is also probably true that he actually did not have a completely *thorough* grasp of the scholarly literature on the history of the Low Countries. He did not, for example, cite the extensive Dutch literature on the history of the Dutch Reformed Church. Yet the Dutch case does apply directly to his Thesis concerning ascetic Protestantism. Rachfahl was not wrong to bring up the empirical problems associated with the seventeenth-century Netherlands. The Dutch case is very

important to consider as an empirical test of the Weber Thesis. At the same time, because the details are extremely complex, it is easy to get lost in the "trees" and lose sight of the "forest." Pro and con arguments can be made.

Weber does not help matters with his style of writing. His arguments tend to be stated in a very circuitous fashion. He rarely makes straightforward declarative statements. The debate between Weber and Rachfahl gets somewhat heated and takes on the character of a duel between two students who are members of a German fraternity and fencing club. Much of the debate is based on the use of irony. But the empirical issues can be sorted out once the paradoxical language is understood.

Various writers have addressed the topic directly (e.g. R. ersma, 1967).⁹ But there is no settled opinion among scholars. Many historians assume that Weber's ideas are largely inaccurate on historical grounds, whatever their sociological merit may be (e.g. Schema, 1997: 124, 296, 322, 329, 335, 341). Indeed, Hamilton (2000) tends to conclude that 'Rachfahl's points are telling. However, I believe that the empirical facts tend to support Weber's central ideas. As indicated, Weber makes those ideas clearer in the footnotes as a result of the necessity of answering Rachfahl's expert criticisms.

The criticism began almost immediately after Weber published his essays in the *Archiv fuer Sozialwissenschaften und Sozialpolitik* in 1904 and 1905 (Hamilton, 2000: 161). There were various supporters and detractors." The principal early critic that I will deal with here, Felix Rachfahl, was a Professor at various German universities. Rachfahl wrote a major study of the "George Washington" of the Republic of the Netherlands, William of Orange (Rachfahl, 1907, 1908; 1909; 1924). He also wrote many books and articles that are less immediately relevant here (e.g., Rachfahl 1910; 1912a; 1912b; 1913). The only other book by Rachfahl that is directly relevant is his early study of Margaret of Parma (Rachfahl, 1898).

What brings Rachfahl and the Dutch case into prominence now is recent scholarly work on Weber's Thesis. As mentioned, Weber's responses to Rachfahl have recently been translated into English (Weber, 2001b; 2002b).¹¹ But, to the present, no evaluation of Weber's Replies to Rachfahl has been published. Critical comments by Rachfahl are strongly worded. A student not fully acquainted with Weber's work could be excused for thinking that Rachfahl's critical comments are decisive. But Rachfahl's comments are often exaggerated. The true intent behind the criticisms may not have been an entirely disinterested search for truth. But it is clear that Weber was forced to refine his ideas *as a* result of Rachfahl's theoretical and empirical criticisms.

Rachfahl's critiques caused Weber to make his statement of the Thesis in 1920 stronger than it had been in 1905. Weber published the 1904-1905 essays without much editorial feedback and seems to have paid very little attention to precise phrasing of key arguments.¹² Hence, it is worth paying careful attention to the changes in what Weber wrote between 1905 and 1920. The additional footnotes and comments are now clearly designated in a recent German-language version of the 1904-1905 essays, which includes all additional materials separately (Weber, 2000[1993]: 157-203)."

Many background assumptions need to be dealt with before anyone can make a definitive statement about the Weber Thesis (Kincaid, 2002). As stated, I believe that the argument holds up well. However, I understand Weber as an "interpretive" thinker (Bakker, 1995). Thus, he was influenced, as were all members of his generation, by the ideas concerning the "human sciences" (*Geisteswissenschaften*, "moral sciences") formulated by members of an earlier generation, particularly Wilhelm Dilthey (Bakker, 1999; Lessing, 2001). In order to indicate fully the ways in which Weber's thinking is heuristic for social science investigation, it would be useful to explore many subsidiary questions. These include the contested issues concerning the precise meaning of Weber's words. But rather than get too deeply involved here in the exegesis of sociological texts (e.g. Weber, 1946; 197³), it may suffice to point out that many critics have not examined Weber's work closely.

RACHFAHL'S CRITICISMS

Felix Rachfahl, however, is not among these less thorough critics. Many contemporary commentators (historians and sociologists) can be excused for not fully grasping some of the more nuanced aspects of Weber's essays. This cannot be said of Rachfahl. He read the German original "hot off the press," and as a German university Professor he was in a position to be well acquainted with the general context. Therefore, his critical comments are worth paying attention to. Rachfahl, of course, did not have any difficulty understanding Weber's use of German. The two men came from similar academic milieus. They had both been active in fraternity life at university and were familiar with the tradition of engaging in duels for the sake of "honor." Hence, the manner in which they debate has much of the character of a duel. German readers probably enjoyed the subtle insults, and they can be enjoyed today as well. The two Professors are engaged in an intellectual duel, and there are many sarcastic asides and subtle put-downs. But, Rachfahl's criticisms of Weber focus particularly on the empirical details of the "Dutch" case. (Therefore, some of the ancillary statements are ignored here.) Was Rachfahl correct in implying that Weber's Thesis was wrong and that the Dutch case proved Weber had erred?

The question remains. Did the ethic of this-worldly Protestant asceticism have anything to do with the spirit of capitalism? The answer very much depends on how the key terms are interpreted. If we assume, as Rachfahl did, that it is a matter of "Calvinism" causing "capitalism," then Weber would be wrong. But that is not what Weber argued. It would be more precise to ask if something called the "Protestant Ethic" (*die protestantische Ethik*) actually is related in some way to something referred to by Weber as the "'Spirit' of Capitalism" (*der 'Geist' des Kapitalismus*)? To answer the basic sociological question, it is necessary to examine the empirical historical materials that are directly *relevant* to Weber's formulation. It is not possible to consider all aspects of the empirical problems associated with the Weber Thesis in this essay. But by focusing on the "Dutch" case it will be possible to move closer to an answer.

The Dutch case does not involve Holland alone. It involves all of the seven provinces of the Netherlands in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Moreover, it

also involves the whole history of the Low Countries from c. 1500 to 1800. In terms of the Weber-Rachfahl debate, however, we can restrict attention primarily to the Netherlands.

It is necessary to discuss the sixteenth century situation in the Netherlands because that is the "case study" to which Rachfahl draws most attention. As the author of a study of William of Orange (Rachfahl 1906; 1907; 1908; 1924), he was very familiar with the sixteenth century. William "the Silent" of Orange was assassinated in 1584 by Balthasar Gerards. But his direct influence continued through his son, Maurice (d. 1625), and his grandson, William H (d. 1650). Rachfahl examines details of the early seventeenth century history as well as other matters.

Despite Rachfahl's importance as a historian, his work on the Netherlands has been neglected by sociologists. Yet his historical scholarship is certainly adequate. That is, turning things around, he seems to be at least *as* knowledgeable about the Netherlands as Weber. Weber attacks Rachfahl as someone who does not know the scholarly literature; but it would be hard to agree with Weber on that point. During the period between 1905 and 1920, Rachfahl may even have been *the* German expert on the sixteenth and seventeenth century Netherlands. Considering the very high regard in which Weber is held by some sociologists, it is important to make it clear that Rachfahl was not just an obscure critic who could be easily dismissed.

Weber did not *conclusively* answer all of Rachfahl's criticisms. Weber's replies are brief and elusive. However, as a result of Rachfahl's critique, Weber did insert a number of additional footnotes in the 1920 version of the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. These additional notes and comments are precisely indicated in the most up-to-date German edition (Weber, 2000). Thus, it is possible to get a sense of how Weber's additions refer back specifically to the criticisms made by Rachfahl. It is also possible that in the decade between 1910 and 1920 Weber did modify his views to some extent, notwithstanding what Rachfahl (and others) may have said. Despite his bluster, Weber clearly did not have *complete mastery* of all of the arguments. As Chalcraft (2001: 14) points out: "One searches in vain for a consistent hermeneutic for Weber *in these exchanges*." The only consistency is in Weber's no-holds-barred assault on his critic, often accusing Rachfahl of elementary mistakes and hair-splitting. But Rachfahl himself is not above the use of the language of the dueling fraternity. Both men employ strings of insults and sarcastic phrases that are uncommon, although by no means absent, in twenty-first century scholarship. The two intellectuals fought one another to a draw, with many points in question remaining unsettled. Some of the details of the Dutch case were not examined carefully enough in their exchange to provide definitive answers to the questions raised.

If Weber had examined Rachfahl's work on William of Orange, he might even have been able to use some of Rachfahl's own conclusions against him. Rachfahl does not seem to be entirely consistent in his treatment of the Dutch Revolt against the Spanish Hapsburgs. Although he was a Roman Catholic, Rachfahl nevertheless wrote appreciatively about the Dutch Revolution against Spain.

Rachfahl's work seems to have been well received in the Netherlands. When the last of his three volumes (in four separately bound books) was published in 1924, it was not published in Germany but in the Netherlands. (A set is available at the University of Leiden Library.) Weber could not, of course, have consulted the 1924 volume. But, he certainly had access to the first two volumes (in three books). These were published at Halle at about the same time as the exchanges between the two thinkers occurred.¹⁴ Yet Weber does not cite Rachfahl's academic work. He only cites the criticisms. One of those concerns the relative lack of importance of strict, dogmatic Calvinism in Holland and the other Provinces of the United Netherlands.

STRICT CALVINISM?: A THEORETICAL AND EMPIRICAL QUESTION

I am mainly interested here in the empirical points at issue. But to properly get at those empirical questions a few crucial theoretical points do need to be re-emphasized. In recent years, various critics have raised theoretical questions, as part of their interest in empirical questions relevant to the Netherlands. I will not attempt to go into those theoretical issues here, except to say that many critics have misread Weber. The Weber Thesis does not necessarily involve some of the arguments that have been attributed to Weber by his more recent critics (see reviews by Marshall, 1993 [1982]: 132-167; MacKinnon, 1993). I mention this again because, when the Dutch case has been examined at all, it has often been within the context of attributing a "faulty" interpretation to Weber's approach (e.g., Hamilton, 1996: 99-100).¹⁵

For example, those who have commented on the situation in the Low Countries have often over-emphasized the degree to which the Weber Thesis depends on the influence of *strict* Calvinism. In fact, that is a theme in Rachfahl's criticisms. But Weber claims that the study of strict forms of Calvinism is not really what is at issue when we consider the Dutch case. Similarly, Calvin's theological dogma is not directly important for the Weber Thesis. Moreover, the Weber Thesis does not concern the causal effect of strict Calvinism on capitalism as an economic system or mode of production. Weber's analysis of Protestant asceticism is not about Calvin's specific theological arguments, nor is it about strict versions of Calvinist dogma *per se* (Naphy, 1994).¹⁶

Instead, Weber focuses on the way in which various sects *adapted to* the implications of a strict predestinationism. Schama (1997: 288-371) examines the "embarrassment" caused by sudden riches. He argues that Calvinist attacks on "Dame World" and "Queen Money" did not divert capital from expenditure on luxuries. But he also acknowledges that there were such high rates of capital accumulation during the 1660s that the link with Calvinist teaching is difficult to prove or disprove. He also indicates that zoning ordinances in Amsterdam favored a narrow street frontage of only thirty feet, even for very expensive merchant houses (*Heerenhuizen*). There was "... a preference for interior, rather than exterior, display" (Schama, 1997: 311).¹⁷ In the Netherlands the doctrine of predestination took many forms, not just the strict Calvinist forms (Kooi, 2000). Even the subsequent

interpretation of the history of Protestantism in the Netherlands went through various stages (Rooden, 1998).

What is at issue is not the dogma but the general idea of "*this-worldly asceticism*." The "this-worldly asceticism" that Weber had in mind was not the asceticism that grows out of extreme pietism and mysticism. Instead, he is clearly articulating a this-worldly asceticism among the emerging lower middle classes of craftsmen and tradesmen. He argued that it had grown out of various ways of adjusting to the social psychological *implications* of the dogma. Calvinist dogma was rarely accepted in an unaltered fashion. A variety of forms of "this-worldly asceticism," *as well as other belief systems*, characterized the seventeenth century Netherlands.

It is also true that not everyone believed in this-worldly asceticism. Forms of mysticism and hedonism also existed, as Weber himself acknowledges. In any case, it is not a matter of "testing" the effects of "Calvinism" on "capitalism," *as so many writers, including Rachfahl, have assumed*. The statements that Weber makes about the historical details of the situation in the Low Countries make that clear. He examines the Dutch case in terms of the elective affinity between this-worldly asceticism and the spirit of modern capitalism, no more and no less.

WEBER AND THE "DUTCH" CASE

What credentials did Weber have to discuss the Netherlands? Why did he think he could counter criticisms that were being made by an expert on the Dutch case? It is reasonable to assume that Weber was familiar with the history of the Netherlands in a general way, even though he lacked scholarly expertise. Weber was definitely familiar with at least some of the Dutch-language sources relevant to his problem. On the other hand, he could easily have cited other sources that would have been relevant. These include the detailed 2,100 page history of Dutch Protestantism by Ypeij and Dermout (1819-1827), that is discussed by Rooden (1998), as providing a framework for subsequent discussion.

Weber knew about the details of the history of the region now thought of as Holland — properly speaking, the Netherlands. Moreover, he probably knew about the "Benelux" region generally. (In English, especially for periods before the Dutch Revolt, the region is properly called the "Low Countries.") When the northern provinces of the Hapsburg Spanish Low Countries revolted against King Philip II (in the 1500s) the northern seven provinces became the United Provinces of the Netherlands, a republic (Motley, 1861; Geyl, 1992 [1936]; Israel, 1998; Duke, 1990). It was only much later (c. 1830) that the ten southern provinces of the Spanish Low Countries became the Kingdom of Belgium.

There are many examples that make it clear that Weber had knowledge of the details of the Dutch case. For example, Weber uses a quotation from the Dutch historian Guillaume [Willem, William] Groen van Pinsterer (1801-1876). He cites "Groen" (Groen van Pinsterer, 1920), but he does not refer to the work by John Lothrop Motley (1861).¹⁹ Groen's works were often published in French, but Weber cites a key phrase from him in Dutch. When it comes to "unintended consequences"

in the Dutch-Belgian case, Weber was certainly prepared to follow the nuances. 20° Thus, if Weber presents a view on the "Dutch" case he does so on the basis of access to at least some of the published primary and secondary literature (in Dutch, German, and French) that is most relevant.

Weber cites Conrad Busken-Huet (1826-1886), a very important literary critic,²¹ in addition to his references to Guillaume Groen van Pinsterer. However, he does not cite Rachfahl's historical work, which was published at the same time. One can imagine that the neglect of this work by Weber may have been a factor in Rachfahl's harsh criticism of him. But Rachfahl's true motivation is not known. Was he concerned about the implications that the Weber Thesis had for Roman Catholicism in Germany? Did he feel that the new discipline of sociology was a threat to historical studies? It would be worth knowing more about him personally.

FURTHER DETAILS OF WEBER'S REPLIES TO RACHFAHL'S CRITICISMS

As indicated, the criticisms of Weber's 1905 essays by Felix Rachfahl were answered by Weber in the *Archiv* (See Weber, 1968; the original dates of publication are Weber, 1910a; 1910b). These "Replies" were reprinted in German (e.g., Weber, 1978, edited by Winckelmann), and they have recently been translated (Weber, 2001b; 2002b).²² Weber specifically mentions a host of topics related to the Low Countries: Belgium, Antwerp, the Netherlands, Holland, Amsterdam, William the Silent, Oldenbarneveld, Erasmus, and Erasmian humanism. There is also considerable discussion of the importance for Dutch history of various Dutch religious communities such as the Anabaptists and the Mennonites. In this section, we briefly focus on the details of six topics. These are (a) the Dordrecht Synod, (b) roots of the conflict in the Low Countries, (c) the Reformation, (d) the Revolution against the Hapsburgs, (e) the alleged uniqueness of the Dutch case, (f) proto-Protestantism, and (g) the multiplicity of cultural and theological-ideological "currents."

The Dordrecht Synod

The Dordrecht Synod, on which Weber comments, was a reassertion of strict Calvinism against the "Arminian Remonstrants" by the Counter-Remonstrants. Men such as Gijsbert Voet (1589-1676), known as Ghijsbertus *Voetius*, took the strict Calvinist view on observance of the Sabbath. Voetius was opposed to Johannes Cocceius (1630-1669) on this issue. Cocceius maintained that, because the observance of the Sabbath is a Hebrew custom, it is not, strictly speaking, a necessary part of a commitment to Christianity. In general, Cocceius based his theology on study of the original Hebrew text rather than on a "systematic theology" whose components were required to fit together. Voetius was also opposed to ideas such as those espoused by the Remonstrants, who were asking for more liberties. (They were "remonstrating" - protesting -- against strict observances.) Voetius is referred to as a "Counter-Remonstrant" (*Contraremonstrant*) because he was opposed to a somewhat less stringent application of "systematic theology" to everyday life behavior. These kinds of debates came to a head at the Synod of Dordrecht in 1617-1619.

The Synod of Dordrecht (Dortmund) was extremely important for seventeenth-century Dutch Calvinism. Both Weber and Rachfahl appreciated that point. Whereas many groups in the Netherlands may have deviated from the strict wording of the Dordrecht (or, "Dort") decrees, the decrees nevertheless set an important standard. After 1619, the ritual re-visiting of the documents every few years (usually three) was one practice that upheld strict Calvinism in the absence of a state church (Rooden, 1998). As Weber (2002a: 55) says, "... the set of beliefs around which the great political and cultural conflicts in the most highly developed capitalist nations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries - the Netherlands, England, and France - were fought was Calvinism." The political conflicts in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century were often carried out under ideological banners. These conflicts tested the limits of the idea of predestination and the "Calvinist complex" of ideas. Voetius was one of the theologians who managed to get the Dordrecht Decrees passed. He argued that any form of "rationalism" or "latitudinarianism" was wrong and dangerous.

Roots of the Conflict

The conflicts among elites and social classes did not begin in the seventeenth century. The roots of conflict among members of elites and elite groups in various cities existed long before the United Provinces became independent *de jure* in 1609, or even *de facto* after 1574. Moreover, religious ideas were part of class, status, and power conflicts even before the Hapsburgs took over in the Low Countries. Almost one hundred years after the Weber-Rachfahl exchange, it is now possible to be somewhat less passionate about many of the arguments. With respect to the history of the Low Countries, broadly conceived, between 1300 and 1800, there clearly was a kind of "ascetic vocational" ethic that had existed before Luther's translation of the Christian Bible into German. Yet, the removal of hindrances to the full blossoming of an ascetic vocational ethic was no small matter. Weber may have been correct to point to the importance of the intensification of asceticism among members of Protestant sects (including Lutheranism *as a* sect during the early stages of the Reformation). It is one thing for a merchant to work individually, without institutional and organizational support for his this-worldly asceticism. It is quite another to belong to a sect that encourages, indeed requires, such activity.

The situation in the Low Countries over the five hundred-year period of concern was complex. However, it is clear that a slow undercurrent of asceticism in merchant and manufacturing activity was gradually emerging in certain restricted areas, particularly urban Flanders. It is also evident that the slow buildup (Oberman, 1963) eventually became a major source of structural change during the Protestant Reformation.

The intellectual and theological shift did not happen all at once (Ozmet, 1980). Ethical commitment to one's vocation may have existed among laypersons before 1500 in a few places, such as Antwerp and Brussels or Bruges. But after 1500 the revolutionary implications of the schism in religious ideology made for a completely different *Geist* or ethos. In parts of the Holy Roman Empire (most of which are today

in Germany), the struggles of the 1510s and 1520s are a significant indicator of the extent to which the change, when it finally boiled over, had revolutionary social implications (see, e.g., Russell, 1986; Oberman, 1994). To the extent that Weber did not clearly perceive the undercurrent that had begun to emerge prior to 1500, albeit in a very small and limited geographical area, he was mistaken. Rachfahl was quite correct to call him on it. R. H. Tawney and many others later took up the same argument.²³ Yet, Weber was right to stress the importance of the Reformation.

The Reformation

As almost every history textbook recognizes, the Protestant Reformation "shattered the millennial unity of Western Christendom" (Garraty and Gay, 1984: 518). There was a "confusion of religion and politics" (Haines and Walsh, 1941: 438-54). Much else was occurring at the time of the Reformation. But it is impossible to think of sixteenth and seventeenth century social change in Europe without considering the significance of changes in the structural position of the Holy Roman Emperor and his court and the [Holy] Roman Catholic Church and its administrative structures (Oberman, 1992). "The student who seeks to discover and summarize the changes wrought by the religious upheavals of the sixteenth century faces a difficult task. The movements were so complex and their ramifications so extensive that one must constantly guard against exaggerating their influence. Conversely, there are few things which were not affected by them directly or indirectly" (Haines and Walsh, 1941: 431).

The Revolution against the Hapsburgs

A significant minority resisted the Inquisition in the Low Countries, during the period of the rule of Philip II in Spain and the Spanish Low Countries (1556-1598). When King Philip II lifted the Inquisition, open rebellion broke out and the King had to resort to the use of force. The Duke of Alva established a "Council of Blood" to force submission (Rachfahl, 1898; Parker, 1998). "Against such measures Catholics and Protestants alike united in revolution under the leadership of William the 'Silent,' Prince of Orange (1533-1584)" (Haines and Walsh, 1941: 442). Alva left and King Philip II appointed Alexander Farnese. Farnese succeeded in sowing animosity against Protestantism in the northern seven provinces of the Spanish Hapsburgs. Thus he separated the Roman Catholics in the southern ten provinces from everyone in the northern provinces. The Protestants in the South fled to the North and many in the North who were Catholic were forced to convert or emigrate.

So, on one level it is true that *initially* the "struggle with Spain" did not involve a *simple matter* of Protestants opposing Catholics. Yet, Hamilton's (1996: 99) forceful statement that "The struggle with Spain did not involve an opposition of Dutch Protestants and Belgian Catholics" is quite misleading. Farnese's successful tactic of divide and conquer did eventually result in the split between a predominately Catholic South and a predominately Protestant North. Weber refers to the "Dutch people" (Weber, 2001b: 126, n10; from "Second Reply to Rachfahl" of 1910b) who migrated from the southern to the northern Spanish Netherlands during the Revolt.²⁴

They were neither Belgian nor Dutch before the seven provinces of the Netherlands officially split from the rest of the "Spanish Netherlands" (i.e., the ten provinces that, much later, became Belgium).

Uniqueness of the Dutch Case and Its Liberal Protestantism?

Let us return to the question that prompted mention of the Dordrecht Synod. Rachfahl notes that the seventeenth century Netherlands cannot be characterized as a strict Calvinist state along the lines of late seventeenth century Geneva. It is important to point out that Weber was not caught off guard by this observation. Weber was aware that "sharp contradictions" existed in Low Country history. As he says in an extended footnote (Weber, 2001b: 125-26): "That the Dutch characteristic Groen [G. Groen van Pinterer] takes for granted as a fact had much to do with the strict discipline of the Dutch religious communities will be seen by anyone with any acquaintance with the internal debates of these communities."

Problems concerning the "conduct of life" in this world are similar for all of the sects. That holds for the sects in the Low Countries at various stages of the history of that region. It also holds for Huguenots, Lombards, Pietists and Puritans of various kinds. Weber adds, sarcastically ("fencing" with Rachfahl):

I for one do not give up hope of continuing and extending these elements of my work. Admittedly, this presupposes another visit to America, *as* certain documents on Quaker and Baptist history are obtainable only over there. On the continent of Europe, certain things are missing, even from the Dutch libraries" (Weber, 2001b: 125-26).

Weber tends to treat the Dutch case as different from Geneva, but also as different from Calvinist periods in England and Scotland. For example, in a lengthy footnote to his first reply to Rachfahl (Weber, 2001b: 78-81 [1910a]; Weber, 2002b: 268-72, esp. 270-71) he explicitly says that the "peculiar" or "particular" (*Eigenart*) "nature of Dutch capitalism" and "the Dutch people's attitude to capitalism" is "indeed a very complex and interesting problem." He then points out, quite remarkably:

The peculiarity of the Dutch "spirit" at that time [presumably the seventeenth century] was certainly partly determined by the fact that the enclosure of new land by polders was one of the most profitable of all businesses. With a little exaggeration one can say that the towns created the flat country out of themselves. Large quantities of capital were invested in farming (as well as in colonial trade, which all [English] Puritans were mildly suspicious of), and this was bound to affect the 'physiognomy' of the country. In important, though not in all respects, this prevented "ascetic" Protestantism from making an impact for which it was well known elsewhere. For these farmers understandably differed from the traditional farming community on the rest of the continent, and also from the farmers of New England (Weber, 2001b: 79-80, as part of fn.14, which starts on p. 78).

The poldering of land was characteristic of the Low Countries long before the seventeenth century. Part of the reason for the success of Bruges as a trading city is precisely because of its physical location so near the sea. Amsterdam was significant

in a later period because Antwerp and Bruges could no longer function in the same way as they had. Amsterdam took over their entrepôt-trading role.

Weber goes on (in the same footnote) to consider Dutch versus "Belgian" art (i.e., Rembrandt versus Rubens). But he indicates that the "partial subduing of Puritanism in Holland is a very complex problem." He may have meant to apply this simply with respect to the history of art or he may have also been indicating the more general complexity of the empirical question of ascetic Protestantism in the seventeenth century Netherlands generally. Weber points out that the stratum of "governors" (*regenten*) and patrician merchants were "never spiritually sincere Calvinists" (Weber 2002a: 240-41 fn. 97).²⁵

Proto-Protestantism?

Some of Weber's statements tend to indicate that he was not favorably disposed to a view of matters in the Low Countries that stresses the importance of "proto-protestant" this-worldly asceticism. It is fair to criticize him to the extent that he gives short shrift to the gradual growth of factors that led up to the seventeenth century Protestant Ethic. For example, he could have been specific about the *devotio moderna*, which has been a topic of considerable interest among historians (Hyma, 1924; 1950; Post, 1968; Zijl, 1963; Epinay-Burgard, 1970). Moreover, Weber did not critically examine the work of Geed Groote (Vreese, 1940).²⁶ If there was significant Protestantism *avant la lettre*, that could be interpreted in various ways.

Weber was not open to the suggestion because it seemed to refute his insightful analysis. He argued that a very specific form of this-worldly asceticism resulted from the emphasis on predestination in Calvinism and the subsequent reaction against that idea as stringent dogma. The need for psychological reassurance, Weber argues, makes it necessary to find ways to circumvent the strictly logical conclusion of predestination theory. If there is no free will and everything is simply a matter of what God chooses, then one has no control whatsoever. But if predestination is not quite that strict, then perhaps continual striving will be a sign of being favored by God's grace. But this reaction against stringent dogma was, in part, the result of a host of subtle changes gradually leading to a major shift. Even if it is possible to speak of a kind of proto-Protestantism (in Flanders in 1490 or in Deventer in 1510) that does not mean that Weber's Thesis should be rejected.

Complex and Unique Situation, but Still "Protestant Ethic"?

Weber explicitly recognizes that even in the sixteenth century, after the "currents" of Protestant reform were well underway in parts of Europe, there were still many groups that were not particularly ascetic. Some were even quite hedonistic. This seems, at first glance, to be a contradiction of the main Thesis. But Weber does not really mean to imply that the existence of hedonistic groups is clear evidence that inner-worldly asceticism did not have an elective affinity with the emergence of a spirit of modern capitalism in the Netherlands.

Several of Weber's statements seem to be based on his own attempt to think through the various bits of evidence. At times he seems to be thinking aloud. It

appears that he wrote quickly and that he paid very little attention to editing his words. The resulting comments, especially in the additional footnotes to the 1920 edition, could be read so as to indicate that he feels the Dutch case runs counter to his Thesis. However, I believe that those statements should be taken contextually. It seems more likely that Weber was fully aware that, in *addition* to asceticism, there was much "naïve earthy *Lebensfreude*" in the Low Countries (Weber, 2002b: 126). Although he sees the Dutch case as "indeed a very complex and interesting problem" and adds that he himself is "still far from clear about the matter" (Weber, 2002b: 79), he does not seem to feel that the Dutch case refutes his Thesis.

"Erasmian" and "Arminian" currents continued to be significant (Bejczy, 2001). But the extent to which strict Calvinist ideas influenced federal politics can be seen as an indication of the continued importance of Calvinist dogma concerning such matters as predestination. This is apparent even in a situation that Weber felt ran somewhat counter to the more widely studied cases of Protestant England and America. Calvinism did not dominate the ideological preferences of all social factions in the United Provinces of the Netherlands during the Golden Age. Instead, it was important because the logical clarity of the predestination doctrine provided a kind of touchstone (Ejnatten, 2003). Once the authority of the Roman Catholic Church in all administrative and legal matters had been rejected, it became necessary to work out theological dogma as consistently as possible. Calvinist predestination is a logical endpoint for theological debates concerning theodicy. For those who were uncomfortable with a strict interpretation of Calvinist predestination, it was necessary to find meaning in asceticism and a this-worldly calling that would somewhat ameliorate the harshness of a pre-ordained eternal damnation of at least one half of the population.

Many of the ideas that Weber put forward may very well be incorrect if taken literally. Some statements made in the sketch of 1904-1905 are not substantiated in the text or in the footnotes. The "Replies" to his critics (Weber, 2001b; 2002b) help to some extent to clarify a number of points. For example, it becomes even more clear that for Weber the key to ascetic Protestantism is not necessarily the historical ideas of Luther or Calvin, much less Lutheran or Calvinist denominational dogmas. Rather, the key is in the working out of ideas of the calling and predestination by various sects, such as Calvinist groups initially and the Mennonites and Quakers at a somewhat later time.

CONCLUSION TO PART I

Even the extensive set of footnotes added to the 1920 edition (which then become endnotes in Parsons' 1930 translation) does not always provide clear substantiation on crucial points. The use of evidence is not conclusive. Hamilton (1996) is correct to point out that textbooks that discuss Weber's ideas concerning the Protestant Ethic and the "Spirit" of Capitalism should note the criticisms that have been made concerning the historically-specific details. Weber's use of evidence is not as convincing as it could have been, even for a tentative essay. His way of answering criticism leads to a hardening of generalizations that were probably formulated

initially as more tentative and exploratory. His early death (at age 56) may also have contributed to a certain "reification" of the propositions. But even had he lived to seventy, Weber might have been somewhat testy; his public personality seems to have been pugnacious.

Nevertheless, the evidence reviewed here does not provide a basis for rejecting the Weber Thesis. The criticisms by Felix Rachfahl did serve to force Weber to strengthen his analysis. But they do not refute the basic ideas. The Dutch case is complex, but it does not represent a clear "black swan" to Weber's generalizations. The case does not conclusively refute the Weber Thesis.

There are other issues in the debate that are not emphasized here. For example, as mentioned, Weber does not consider in any detail the very early stages of Protestantism, in the fifteenth century or in the sixteenth century before the denominations became structured (e.g., in Southwest Germany in 1521-1525; see Russell, 1986). The nuances got lost in the rhetoric of accusation and counter-accusation between the two opponents in the duel. Weber did not seem to want to give an inch to Rachfahl; and Rachfahl did not acknowledge the important kernel of wisdom in Weber's Thesis. It may be that some of the subtle points about gradual change and "punctuated equilibriums" got lost.

Max Weber never made "another visit to America," but it is clear that he saw the Dutch case (and presumably the general situation in the Low Countries) as sociologically related to the case of sects in the U.S. It is also clear that he consulted Dutch libraries in pursuit of answers to detailed questions concerning ascetic Protestantism. The "strict discipline" of the Dutch Anabaptist sects (e.g. the Mennonites) is clear to anyone who has had some encounters with Old Order Mennonites or Amish people. Even in the seventeenth century, many people did not accept the extreme conclusions of radical predestinationism. But strict Calvinists and other strict sects constituted a substantial minority. The Golden Age of the Netherlands cannot be understood without taking into account the impact of the stricter sects. As Schama (1997: 323-71) makes abundantly clear, the Calvinist and strict ascetic Protestant sects had a significant impact on the tenor of economic activity in the seventeenth century.

Rachfahl's criticisms served to tighten up some of Weber's statements of his arguments, but they do not conclusively invalidate Weber's original position as articulated in 1905. Weber's additional footnotes of 1920 are helpful in clarifying certain points pertaining to the Dutch case, but overall Rachfahl's criticisms are not damning. Max Weber could have discussed the Dutch case in more detail, but the details would not have proved that the Weber Thesis is incorrect.

I have attempted to clarify some aspects of the points at issue between Rachfahl and Weber; but I have only touched on other important matters. For example, I have simply mentioned some of Weber's concepts and how they should be regarded: in particular, *elective affinity*, *proto-Protestantism*, and *Geist*. In light of my understanding of these three major ideas, I have attempted to begin to explore the issues that appear to divide the two scholars. In this regard, Weber seems to prevail several times against Rachfahl. For example, *as we* shall see in Part II, the case of

Oldenbarnevelt tends to support the Weber Thesis, at least insofar as it indicates the vital importance of strict Calvinism in the rise of the Dutch Republic. However, we benefit from the fact that in 1920 Weber was forced to be much clearer than he had been in 1905. The 1920 version shows a number of refinements that can be credited to the exchange of opinions with Rachfahl (Weber, 2000: 157-203).

The enormous wealth of information found in the case of the Low Countries has only been hinted at in the exchange. Weber himself makes many useful remarks and cites well-known Dutch and Flemish scholars of his own day. But it will be valuable for sociologists and historians to continue to link the Low Countries to the Weber Thesis. The five hundred years of Low Country history from 1400 to 1900 need a fuller exploration than Weber has given to them in his work on the Protestant Ethic.²⁷

This essay has not provided definitive empirical substantiation for Weber's Thesis that links the *protestantische Ethik* and the "*Geist*" of modern capitalism. For example, I have not fully examined the extent to which these phenomena may have existed in the sixteenth century in the Netherlands. Indeed, I have not established whether and to what extent they already existed in an incipient fashion in the fifteenth century in the Burgundian Low Countries, particularly Flanders. Nor have I attempted to consider the arguments raised by Hunt and Murray (1999: 242-43) concerning the history of business (although even they acknowledge that there was a "new age" of business *after* 1550).

The detailed study of business enterprises is important as an empirical test of Weber's sketch. But, those are different issues, not raised by Rachfahl. In this essay I have been able to provide some support for the notion that the criticisms made by Rachfahl, although useful, do not really refute Weber's important heuristic ideas. *The empirical case of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century tends to support Weber's Thesis concerning the elective affinity between this-worldly Protestant asceticism and the spirit of modern capitalism*,

Weber's ideas do *not*, however, support the argument that Calvinism *caused* Capitalism. Rachfahl incorrectly *assumed* that this was Weber's Thesis, in part because he had limited knowledge of Weber's Ideal Type approach. He should certainly be excused for not fully understanding what Weber was trying to do, for Weber himself was just beginning to articulate his sociological methodology. Despite all the strident arguments on both sides, the duel between Weber and Rachfahl is useful for deepening our understanding of Weber's Thesis; and it promotes deeper understanding of a host of related issues as well. Sociologists and historians should continue to explore the seventeenth century Netherlands in terms of Weber's heuristic Ideal Type models. Furthermore, with so much emphasis in sociological research on France, England, and Germany, the full story of Low Country history deserves far more attention than it receives.

In Part Two of this essay, the details will be explored more intensively through an examination of the case of the death of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt. One of the fathers of Dutch Independence, Oldenbarnevelt was executed by the strict Calvinist faction that supported Maurice, Prince of Orange, son of William the Silent. Interpretation of this historical is at issue between Weber and Rachfahl because of the

context of the Synod of Dordrecht, a key turning point in Dutch and Reformation history. Were the Dutch more likely to be motivated by a Protestant Ethic in the seventeenth century? Did a spirit of capitalism exist? Part Two will examine these questions and further illustrate the manner in which Weber deals with the Dutch case.

NOTES

Because of the length of the manuscript it has been decided to publish this "essay" in two parts. The precedent for splitting up the paper is Weber 1904 and 1905.

I would like to acknowledge the institutional support received by the Judge Baker Children's Center in the Longwood area of Boston, Massachusetts. The Judge Baker is affiliated with Children's Hospital and Harvard University. The President of the Judge Baker, Professor Stuart Hauser, helped to provide a productive work environment. The librarians at the Widener Library of Harvard University were very helpful with locating rarely consulted German and Dutch books. The Sociological Imagination Group, especially Bernie Phillips and Thomas Kincaid, have contributed to my thinking about methods. Another paper on "Early Modern Capitalism and the Low Countries" was presented at the meeting of that Group in Atlanta, Georgia, August 16-17, 2003. My wife, J. Heidi Gralinski-Bakker contributed to the intellectual content of this paper through her insightful criticisms. This paper is part of a longer manuscript that is tentatively entitled: *The Big Picture: The Rise and Fall of the Spirit of Modern Capitalism: A Neo-Weberian Exploration of the Protestant Ethic and Globalization*.

¹ Although the first essay was published in 1904, Weber was working on it in 1902-1903. He could have taken copies with him to America when he went to attend the Congress of Arts and Science at the Universal Exposition, Saint Louis. He traveled throughout much of the U.S. in the fall of 1904, getting as far West as Guthrie, Oklahoma. He met William James (October 30, 1904) and corresponded with W. E. B. Du Bois. He traveled at least part of the way with his wife, Marianne, and Ernst Troeltsch. See Schoettker and Scaff (1998).

² Weber had not clearly and definitively articulated his methodological position before publishing the Protestant Ethic essays. Weber wrote a series of methodological essays, including his 1903 essay on Roscher, which preceded the publication of the Protestant Ethic essays. The essay on objectivity appeared in 1904 in volume 19 of the *Archiv*, whereas the first Protestant Ethic essay appeared in volume 20. Therefore, Rachfahl did have access to two important statements by Weber about his approach before reading the Protestant Ethic essays. Moreover, because Rachfahl did not publish his "First Critique" until 1909, he also could have read Weber's essays on Knies in *Schmoller's Jahrbuch*

and subsequent articles on methodology in the *Archiv* prior to that (in 1906 and 1907 See Weber 1949; 1975; 1977).

³ We need to distinguish between Alastair Hamilton (2000) and Richard Hamilton (1996).

⁴ A. Hamilton does not provide a footnote that would clarify precisely where Hem Pirenne shows that Weber is wrong. My reading of Pirenne's work does not indicate that he had disproved Weber's case. A large body of critical literature exists on Pirenne's work. Ozmet (1980: 1) points out that Pirenne may have overstated the case in his depiction of the Mediterranean as a "Moslem lake."

⁵ Although the recent English translations also include Weber's Replies to Fischer, I will ignore the criticisms raised by H. Karl Fischer (Weber 2001b: 27-51) for the time being. Fischer does make some comments about Holland, but his criticisms do not primarily concern the seventeenth century Netherlands. Moreover, Fischer and Rachfahl do not necessarily agree on key points.

⁶ The German term *Volkswirtschaft* is difficult to translate. It can be considered to mean "political economy" or "economics." Many regard Weber as an economic historian. Taken literally, the term refers to the "economy" (*Wirtschaft*) of the population of a nation ("Volk"). In English-speaking countries the field of political economy has often encompassed modern day sociology. At the University of Toronto, for example, the Department of Political Economy was for many years the only department in the university in which sociology was taught. As is the case with Max Weber in Germany, the famous Canadian Political Economist Harold Adams Innis is now often thought of as a founder of Canadian sociology.

⁷ The use of extensive notes when Weber and Rachfahl were writing was intended to provide a means for substantiation of claims. It was customary in historical writing to make a claim and then footnote the archival or other primary source. In this essay I have chosen to use the stylistic approach found in the work I am discussing. [However, the footnotes were changed to endnotes to conform to the journal's style. Ed.]

⁸ One exception is the excellent article by Stuijvenberg (1975). However, the details of his analysis are not discussed here. Such a discussion would only add complexity to the already complex task of comparing Weber with Rachfahl.

⁹ The dissertation written by Jelle C. Reimersma at the University of California, Berkeley in 1955 and published at The Hague in 1967 seems to have attracted little attention. It is not cited in recent discussions of the Dutch case. Reimersma seems to have had little impact on American sociology.

¹⁰ Hamilton (2000: 161) indicates that the articles were "greeted warmly" by Eberhard Gothein, Gerhard von Schulze-Gaevernitz, William Cunningham, Hans von Schubert, and Ernst Troeltsch. Criticisms were raised by Werner Sombart, Lujó Brentano, H. Karl Fischer, and R. H. Tawney -- as well as Felix Rachfahl. But, "In spite of their criticisms Fischer, Rachfahl and Brentano were all prepared to grant Weber certain points" (Hamilton 2000: 166). The situation got confused when Rachfahl conflated arguments made by Weber and similar, but separate, statements by Troeltsch (1865-1923). Meanwhile, Troeltsch was engaged in a debate with Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) over "whether the Reformation was still medieval in outlook or anticipated basic values of the modern world" (Ozment 1980: 260-261). [Note that Ozment inadvertently gives Dilthey's birth year as 1883. That is obviously a typographical error.]

¹ The German versions of Rachfahl's criticisms and Weber's "Responses" have been available in the *Archiv* since their initial publication, and in a convenient paperback, edited by Johannes Winkelmann, since 1968. Alastair Hamilton (2000: 162-71) discusses them, for example. However, the publication of English translations of Weber's "Replies" puts the exchange of opinions between Weber and Rachfahl center stage among English-speaking Weber scholars who are not fluent in German.

¹² Much of Weber's work after his nervous breakdown was published in the *Archiv*. He himself was an editor of that journal. The other two editors, Werner Sombart and Edgar Jaffé, were his friends and colleagues. Weber also had a very close relationship with Edgar Jaffe's wife, Else von Richthoven-Jaffé. There does not seem to have been any kind of refereeing process. It is interesting to speculate what Promotion and Tenure committees would do with these non-refereed publications today.

¹³ Surprisingly, the German text makes no mention of a 1904 early printing and a 1905 reprinting of Weber's article. It is possible that two different versions of the *Archiv* may still be in existence.

¹⁴ Rachfahl's critiques of Weber have not been translated (e.g. in Weber 2001, 2002b). Indeed, it seems that Rachfahl has been largely forgotten in the English-speaking world. Dutch scholars and others who read German use his study of William of Orange, but it has not been made available in English. There is an autobiography of him in German in a volume entitled *Geschichtswissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellung* (1926) but it does not seem to be readily available in North America. The volume by Georg von Below (1926) is available at the University of Kiel, according to Baehr and Wells (2002b: 280).

¹⁵ Both Richard Hamilton (1996) and Alastair Hamilton (2000) are critical of Weber. But they approach the criticism of the Weber Thesis from entirely different perspectives.

Alastair Hamilton (2000) does repeat some of the same criticisms as Richard Hamilton (1996) concerning Weber's use of nineteenth century data collected by his student Martin Offenbacher, but Alastair does not cite Richard. I do not discuss the details of the Martin Offenbacher dissertation and the use Max Weber makes of it because that issue is not directly relevant to the case of the Low Countries in the seventeenth century.

¹⁶ Analysis of Calvin's theological ideas can be effective only if the political and military context is taken into consideration. Calvin escaped France and settled in Geneva. Later, many French citizens came to Geneva as well (Ter Brake 1998: 73). Although his theology cannot be reduced to political expediency, it is also true that Calvin was not an ivory tower theologian contemplating ageless Church doctrine completely separately from current political conflicts. When Michael Servetus (1509-1553) was burned for heresy in 1553, Calvin wrote a "defense of orthodox faith" concerning the doctrine of the Trinity. He had not paid much attention to the Trinity, but he had been almost been condemned by the Synod of Lausanne for "Arianism." In an era when different religious beliefs could not exist side by side, it was politically dangerous to accept Servetus's antitrinitarianism.. Moreover, Servetus was also a millenarian who believed that the Archangel Michael was coming, probably in 1585! Servetus was also burned in effigy by the Inquisition. Calvin, who was expelled in 1538, returned to Geneva in 1541 but did not gain firm control until 1555. The period from 1541 to 1555 was one of political conflict (Ter Brake 1998: 43-44; Naphy 1994).

¹⁷ Schama (1997: 322-323) points out that the Weber Thesis is not refuted by the existence of a high level of personal consumption among the very rich merchants. Consumption can also be read as acknowledgment of the notion that success in worldly endeavors is a sign of God's grace. He says: "One part, then, of Max Weber's famous proposition, that the Protestant ethic restrained consumption to the advantage of capital accumulation, does not seem to hold true for the Netherlands, the most formidable capitalism the world had yet seen. But this is not to say that Calvinism meekly concurred with a riot of epicureanism. Quite the opposite was the case. Its voice, denouncing the iniquities of Dame World and the profanities of Queen Money, could be heard thundering from pulpits through the length and breadth of the Republic. But to what end, to what effect? It warned, but it seemed helpless to restrain. And if it could not restrain, did it then, as Weber also argued, sanction the increase of riches as the outward sign of salvation?"

¹⁸ Weber's use of Dutch language materials may have been limited. He sometimes quotes Dutch writers in the French versions, or translations of their works. Nevertheless, Weber's linguistic skills were prodigious and he could not have had too much trouble reading Dutch or Flemish. When he wrote his first dissertation, he demonstrated a grasp of Latin, Medieval Italian, and Spanish (Weber 2002c). In 1905, Weber started to learn Russian. Readers of the *Protestant Ethic* will have noted his use of Latin, Greek, and

Hebrew materials. Kalberg's translation improves our comprehension by translating some of these phrases for those of us who are not fluent in Latin, Greek, and/or Hebrew. I have never yet heard a sociologist say that he or she had any difficulty with the Dutch!

¹⁹ Motley is a famous American historian who is considered one of the first to have used archival sources in a thorough manner. He was able to consult the sources because he was at various times also a representative of the United States in various parts of Europe (1841 in St. Petersburg, 1861-67 in Austria, 1869-70 in Great Britain) and he visited the archives in The Hague. Edwards (1982) examines the details of Motley's views on the Netherlands. It is generally thought that his interpretation was extremely partial and that it tends to be untrustworthy by contemporary standards of historical scholarship. However, the same can be said for G. Groen van Pinsterer.

²⁰ However, he used the German "*wenig*" rather than the Dutch "*weinig*" and "*verkoopen*" rather than "*verkopen*." It is not clear from Kalberg's footnote whether Weber used the 1920 third edition of Groen van Pinsterer's famous book. But in the most recent German version it is clear that Weber added the quotation in 1920 (Weber 2000: 198, fn 420) with the incorrect spelling of "*wenig*." Weber also invents the word "*Deftigkeit*" as a substitute for the Dutch "*deftigheid*."

²¹ The quotation from Groen (1920: 254) found in Weber (2002a: 240-241, footnote 97) was not inserted by Stephen Kalberg. It does not appear in the Baehr and Wells translation (Weber 2002b: 198, footnote 298) because that is a translation of the 1905 version only. But it can be found in the German original (Weber 1993: 193, fn 2; Weber 2000: 148 fn 299 and 198 endnote 420). The quotation is: "*Doss diese Kreise freilich in den Niederlanden ranch abnahmen, zeigt Busken-Huets Darstellung (a. a. O. Bd. II, K. III and IV). Immerhin sagt Groen van Pinsterer (Handb.d. Gesch., v. h. V. 3. Aufl., #303 Anm., S. 254): 'Die Niederlanders verkoopen veel en verbruiken wenig', nosh von der Zeit nach dem westaelischen Frieden.*" One of the problems with Kalberg's excellent work is that it is not always clear in an endnote what comes from Weber 1905 or Weber 1920, and what Kalberg adds! (Kalberg uses "1920" to indicate that the second part was added in 1920 but it is not clear from the context if the entire footnote was added in 1920 or just the last part.) Kalberg does a great service by including the full reference, for the German abbreviations are not always altogether clear.

²² This discussion is largely limited to the translated versions of the "Replies" (Weber, 2001b; 2002b) and the translated versions of the essays found in Weber (2002a; 2002b). See the "Introduction" by Chalcraft (2001) and the introductions by Kalberg (Weber, 2002a: xi-lxxx) and by Baehr and Wells (Weber, 2002b: ix-lxviii). The original German of the essays was available to me at the time of writing this paper, especially in the form

of the Lichtblau and Weiss edition (Weber 2000 [1993; 1920; 1905], but I did not alwa) re-check the translations against the original.

²³ Further empirical support for the notion of a kind of "proto-Protestantism" c Protestantism *avant la letter* is the remarkable study by Paul Russell (1986). He examine popular pamphlets written between 1521 and 1525 in which laypeople expressed, perhap for the first time in history, theological opinions. After 1525 there was severe repression of such lay pamphlets by public authorities in "Lutheran" cities like Augsburg. The eigh authors Russell examines include an Imperial army paymaster, a weaver, a journeyman furrier, a shoemaker, a journeyman painter, two housewives, and a Pastor's wife. Han Sachs, the Nuremberg shoemaker, was financially successful. See Russell (1986: 165 84). In another era it is likely that Hans Sachs would have been regarded as more than just a shoemaker. His arguments against hypocritical Lutherans are closely aligned wit' Weber's notion of "this worldly asceticism." Unfortunately, no comparable detailed stud) of lay theology in the Low Countries seems to exist.

²⁴ The original German does not actually mention "Dutch" people. Weber uses the phrase "Netherlandic." See Weber (2000b).

²⁵ "*Diese Kreise sind freilich nie innerlich ernstlich calvinistisch gesinnt gewesen*" (Weber 2000 [1905]: 148 fn 300. Baehr and Wells translate the phrase as: "Admittedly, these circles were never seriously Calvinist by inward conviction" (Weber, 2002b: 198 fn 299). The conceptualization of "*innerlich ernstlich calvinistisch gesinnt*" does refer to an "inner and earnest 'calvinist spirituality'" and does not necessarily mean that they were not "Calvinists." In the seventeenth century one could be a Calvinist in a looser sense than Weber is expressly indicating and yet be very Calvinist by twenty-first century standards. Weber is clearly *not* saying that they were opposed, antipathetic or hostile to Calvinism in some form. They were not, for example, secret Catholics. Neither Baehr and Wells nor Kalberg place emphasis on the "earnestness" that Weber is referring to. How many Roman Catholics were also earnestly and inwardly spiritually convinced of Catholicism? Emperor Charles V and his son Philip II were probably not Catholic in that sense.

²⁶ Willem de Vreese (1940) re-transcribes the Middle Dutch and Latin of Geert Groote, or Gherd de Groet. He strongly criticizes a German historian, Rudolf Langenberg, whose doctoral dissertation misrepresents Groote's "De Simonia ad Beguttas" in 1902 as "*Niederdeutsch*" (*Niederduits*). Unfortunately, the details of de Vreese's critical edition of Groote's work are not mentioned by Hyma (1950). Weber and Rachfahl do not mention Langenberg.

²⁷ Weber also does not emphasize the Low Countries in his other work, for reasons that are rather complex. Schama (1997: 340-341) makes many tantalizing suggestions but

tends to misread Weber as specifically maintaining that it was the strict Calvinists themselves who were most likely to be the modern capitalist entrepreneurs. He argues that the Leiden textile manufacturers were close to the Weberian Ideal Type model. He does not recognize that it was not wealth that was a reassuring symptom of predestination but the ability to use wealth to reinvest in an enterprise or to do good works. Notwithstanding strict Calvinist repudiation (Schama 1997: 124) of the possibility that philanthropy would help the Elect to be seen favorably by God, the concept of God's grace was not accepted in its entire logical rigor. But he also tends to see Durkheim as somehow more relevant to the analysis of Dutch culture (Schama 1997: 569).

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