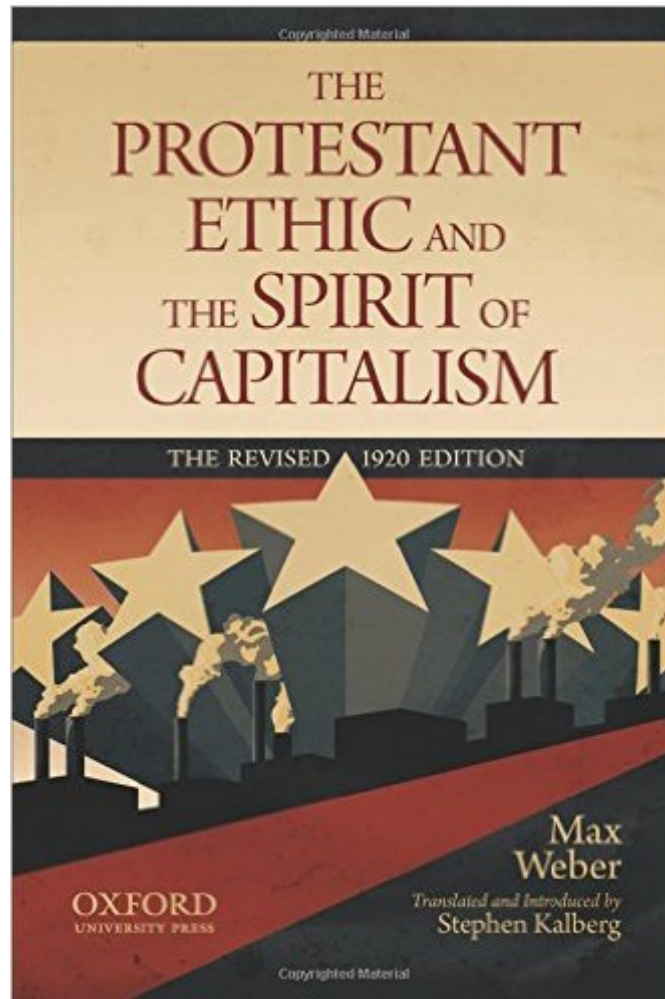


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# The Protestant Ethic And The Spirit Of Capitalism



## Synopsis

For more than 100 years, Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* has set the parameters for the debate over the origins of modern capitalism. Now more timely and thought provoking than ever, this esteemed classic of twentieth-century social science examines the deep cultural "frame of mind" that existed at the birth of modern capitalism and to this day influences attitudes toward work in northern America and Western Europe. In this volume, Stephen Kalberg revises his internationally acclaimed translation--using shorter sentences and more lucid language--to make the work even more accessible to students and other readers. Capturing the essence of Weber's style as well as the subtlety of his descriptions and causal arguments, this is the only translation of the revised 1920 edition of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* published since 1930. To draw readers into the material, this engaging volume includes extensive introductions by the editor, a chronology of Weber's life, a glossary, and numerous clarifying endnotes. Detailed commentaries discuss the controversies Weber addressed, explain his complex causal argument by reference to the general contours of his sociology, summarize the history of "the Protestant Ethic debate," and examine the significance of "the Protestant Sects" essays. Ideal for courses in sociology, anthropology, political science, history, international relations, economics, and cultural studies, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is an essential resource for anyone seeking to understand the origins and endurance of the modern West.

## Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Oxford University Press; Revised 1920 ed. edition (July 1, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0199747253

ISBN-13: 978-0199747252

Product Dimensions: 8.1 x 1.1 x 5.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.5 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (101 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #240,014 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #164 in [Books > Business & Money > Economics > Free Enterprise](#) #281 in [Books > Business & Money > Economics > Macroeconomics](#) #331 in [Books > Religion & Spirituality > Religious Studies > Sociology](#)

## Customer Reviews

Rather than a general theory or explanation of either economics or religion, Weber attempts to draw

a specific link between what he sees as the conjunction of the work ethic of Protestant (mainly Calvinist) spiritual teachings, and the success of Western European Capitalism. Weber is an astute analyst, in many ways. He rightly notes that often the 'sine qua non' of Capitalism is thought of as "greed". Arguing against this notion, Weber points out that all societies have had greedy people within their particular economic system-greed is thus a factor irrespective of economic systems. Replacing this, Weber proposes that the "spirit" of Capitalism be thought of as a particular moral attitude towards work and idleness-an attitude that holds that constant and diligent work for its own sake is a moral imperative. In the face of what Weber calls "the radical elimination of magic from the world" this work ethic was the existential option left for people in terms of atonement and personal compensation for inadequacies. I believe that these two insights are right on target. If there is a weakness involved in his characterization of this Protestant "Ethic," it lies in the fact that Weber attempts to draw a strict dichotomy in the origins of this ethic. He states forcefully that this ethic does not come out of any Enlightenment thought. The problem with trying to separate this ethic from the Enlightenment, is that this ethic which posits diligent work for its own sake is clearly found in the ethics of Immanuel Kant, who classified this kind of work and labor as a "duty" (ethical rule) that the self has to itself. In other words, how much of this is the legacy of the Reformation and how much of this is the legacy of the Enlightenment?

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