Tokugawa Religion

The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan

By Robert N. Bellah

THE FREE PRESS
A Division of Macmillan, Inc.
NEW YORK

Collier Macmillan Publishers
LONDON
Acknowledgments

Finally I want to express thanks for the many tangible and intangible services rendered by my wife. Besides editing the entire manuscript and doing some of the typing on it, she made several substantive suggestions. She was my best critic and at all times a source of encouragement.

1957

ROBERT N. BELLAH

Introduction to the Paperback Edition

Robert N. Bellah

Tokugawa Religion, originally published in 1957, has been in continuous use in English and in Japanese (the Japanese translation came out in 1962) ever since. In bringing out this edition of the book, The Free Press and I decided to use a new subtitle, "The Cultural Roots of Modern Japan," which more accurately reflects its contents than the original one did, and to add this introduction. We have left the text of the book as it is. On many matters of detail, scholarship has advanced so rapidly in the last thirty years that it would require rewriting the whole book to take account of it. The book has never been valued primarily for its descriptive detail but rather for its argument, its claim for the role of Japan's premodern culture in its modernization process. The book remains one of the few sustained efforts to apply a Weberian sociological perspective to a case that Weber himself did not seriously study. The questions it raises are perennial ones in Japanese studies.

Nonetheless, the world of the mid-1980s is very different from the world of the mid-1950s. Therefore, it is worthwhile to reflect on the historical conditions out of which the book originally came, on what has happened to Japan and the rest of the world since it was first published, and on where we stand today with respect to the central issues the book raises.

In the early 1950s, when I was studying at Harvard with Talcott Parsons and Edwin Reischauer, Serge Eliseeff and John Pelzel, the world seemed much simpler than it does now, even aside from the fact
Maruyama’s analysis raised questions that were neither adequately dealt with in Tokugawa Religion nor in the modernization theory of the 1950s from which it drew. I had assumed that the economy is the critical sphere in modernization and that anything that contributed to freeing the economy from traditionalistic restraints and allowing it to develop in accordance with its own laws was positive for modernization. I assumed that economic development was not only an intrinsic good but that the other benefits of modernization flowed more or less certainly from it. Maruyama pointed out that economic development did not necessarily correlate with political democratization or ethical universalism. He argued that economic development, unaccompanied by certain other changes, could even undermine the conditions of its own continuation.

Yet on the face of it the events of the last thirty years would seem to prove me right and Maruyama’s criticism merely carping. Japan’s sustained economic growth has been nearly miraculous. In 1960 Prime Minister Ikeda declared the national goal of doubling the gross national product in a decade. Since then the goal has been several times exceeded, and Japan’s rate of growth has been consistently the highest in the world. When Tokugawa Religion was written, Japan was exporting no automobiles, to take only a vivid example, whereas today Japanese automobiles are crowding the competition everywhere in the world. In 1957 Japan was modestly recovering from the devastation of World War II; in 1985 Japan is an economic superpower rapidly surpassing all of its rivals.

But, if we ask what is the price of Japan’s success, then the story becomes more complex. Japan’s competitive economic success is based, in part on a Japanese society that is the most effectively administered in the world. Japanese bureaucrats are well-trained, dedicated, and efficient. This is nowhere more true than in the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI), which finely tunes the economy for rapid responsiveness to changing international markets. MITI does not accomplish this through command, for the Japanese have, of course, a private, free-enterprise economy. Rather, by controlling information and credit and relying on the cooperativeness of their counterparts in private industry, government bureaucrats are able to bring a degree of planning into economic life that is more effective than anything on either side of the Iron Curtain. Labor unions are organized by company rather than by industry and work closely with management to insure high productivity. Mass communication and education are closely tied into the dominant apparatus of control.

Japan has a democratic constitution and laws defending civil rights that are as good as any in the world. Yet Japan is not a democracy in the sense for which Maruyama and his fellow critics hoped in the 1950s. Japan is the very model of the administered society, the type toward which most of the industrial societies seem to be moving. Indeed, some Americans, particularly in schools of business administration, are urging that the United States follow the Japanese example more quickly. But the administered society could also be called “administrative despotism” if one meant by that term the gentle and benevolent despotism of the schoolmaster state, not the harsh tyranny of ideological dictatorship.

Although one may doubt the ability of any contemporary society to sustain an ethical universalism, Japan would seem to be especially inhospitable to it. Most Japanese are still closely tied into groups that demand their loyalty and cut them off from sympathy with outsiders. Kato Shuichi has called this phenomenon “competitive groupism” and Shimazono Susumu has called it “group utilitarianism.” Such an attitude can stimulate self-sacrifice and devotion, but the ends of such ethical action seldom transcend the interests of one’s group. Even the new religions, the primary expression of postwar Japanese spirituality, emphasize personal and group prosperity and the morality of group cohesion rather than any more transcendental ethical injunctions. An ethical individualism that would require respect for the dignity of each individual person, even in the face of the demand for group conformity, seems as remote in Japan today as in any previous period of history. Japanese women, for example, have made little progress in their quest for social equality, even in comparison with what has happened in other industrial societies. Here too there is little comfort for those who, in the 1950s, hoped for a more fundamental transformation of Japanese society.

However, are we not being too critical, even utopian? After all, isn’t Japan’s way the only way to go? Don’t we need, in the period of advanced modernity, the intelligent guidance of experts and “social discipline” for the people? Isn’t that the only basis of continuing prosperity in the modern world and isn’t that, after all, what most people want?

Yet we must ask whether the results of rapid economic growth, which
that I was much younger. The United States and its allies had recently been victorious in a war against Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and militarist Japan. If a war ever seemed just, that one did. And after the war it seemed as if the worst were over. Not that there were no problems, but it was thought that nothing could compare to the terrible struggle so recently completed.

It was the heyday of modernization theory. Modernization theory, especially in the United States, was a kind of late child of the enlightenment faith in progress. Modernization was the process that produces all the good things: democracy, abundance—in short, a good society. Like ours. I’m afraid that was a major implication of the whole idea. America and a handful of other “advanced industrial societies” were, if not already good societies, so clearly headed in that direction that they made clear the end to which all the other societies, as they modernized, were tending. It is not that evil was denied. Fascism and Communism and assorted other disasters of modernity, including some in the United States, were indeed recognized but explained as distortions or pathologies of the “normal” course of modernization.

Talcott Parsons, my teacher, was a leading modernization theorist, and, thanks in part to his long immersion in the thought of Max Weber, a far more complex and subtle theorist than most. But just as American psychoanalysts had created an optimistic Freud, so Parsons had created an optimistic Weber. For Parsons the process of modernization, understood as Weber understood it as a process of rationalization, did not, as Weber believed, lead relentlessly to an iron cage. For Parsons the normal course of rationalization leads to a good society.

It is hard for us to realize today how optimistic, how euphoric, was the atmosphere in American social science in that first decade after the end of World War II. The belief that social science was rapidly becoming scientific and the belief that its results would be socially ameliorative still held together to an extent hard to imagine today, when we have become so much more modest both about science and about amelioration. But that was the atmosphere in which Tokugawa Religion was written. Japan was the only non-Western nation to have transformed itself into “a modern industrial nation” thus joining that small handful of exemplars of the course all would take. Tokugawa Religion sought to show how the premodern cultural roots of Japan help to account for that success.

Today scholars are much less certain that we understand what modernization is or even if its consequences are “normally” benign. We would be much more hesitant to claim that the United States represents the direction in which all other societies are moving. As our own problems—fiscal, political, international—have accumulated, especially since the mid-1960s, we have even begun to wonder if some other society might show us the way we seem to have lost. And ironically it is Japan, which in 1945 unconditionally surrendered to us, that is today most often suggested as a model for us to follow. But more pervasive than the Japan boom that has been going on in the United States for several years is a skepticism as to whether we even understand what the criteria for “successful modernization” might be and a doubt as to whether any society adequately exemplifies such success.

In 1958, in the first major Japanese review of Tokugawa Religion (the longest and most serious book review I have ever received), Maruyama Masao raised doubts about the analysis contained in the book, doubts that have subsequently grown stronger in my own mind. Maruyama, perhaps the most influential Japanese social scientist in the postwar period, found the book both stimulating and infuriating. “There are not many books lying around which can shake us out of our inertia,” he wrote. “Of the many American research works on Japan which are constantly coming out, Bellah’s book, more than any in a long time, has aroused my appetite and my fighting spirit.” What Maruyama liked was the strong theoretical framework of the book which threw into highlight the central problems of Japanese modernization. What he disliked was what he considered my overly optimistic interpretation of the major developments in modern Japan as tending in the direction of “rationalization” and “modernization.”

In particular Maruyama doubted a central point of my argument, namely, that Japan had found an adequate “functional equivalent” for the universal ethic of Protestant Christianity that had contributed so signalry in the West to modern developments in the economy, in politics, in science, in the family, and elsewhere. He questioned whether the particularism of Japan, its tendency to concentrate loyalty on particular groups and their leaders, from the emperor and the nation down to the family, could really be, as I had argued, an adequate substitute for ethical universalism. The distortions in Japan’s modernization, according to Maruyama, were not fortuitous but intrinsic. A modernization that Maruyama could affirm awaited the arrival of a universalism which he did not see appearing on the scene.
the Japanese tradition (as described in Tokugawa Religion) and its modern permutations have so assiduously fostered, have not begun to undermine the very conditions that made that growth possible. Let us take the example of the Japanese salaryman over the past several decades and ask whether the newly prosperous life he enjoys does not threaten his hold over tradition.

We must note at once the very real advantages: the greater variety of goods, the opportunity for travel, the improved medical care, and so forth. But we can also see that certain traditional patterns of life are threatened. The family home, however small, was traditionally a work of art. It contained a garden, however tiny, and involved a way of life, far more than Western domestic architecture, that allowed for a participation in the seasonal round of nature that was deeply ingrained in the Japanese spirit. It is simply impossible to reproduce that way of life in an apartment building. The rooms are almost all Western style with permanent walls. There is no garden, though perhaps there is a balcony with a flower box. The flow of life between night and day is quite different from that in a Japanese-style house. Children are apt to have their own private rooms where they must study night and day. Television dominates the living room. There is apt not to be a family shrine, so that children do not grow up in familiarity with the practice of ancestor veneration. Furthermore, apartment dwellers, as in the West, are probably strangers to one another. Neighbors may be hostile when small children make noise. The neighborhood atmosphere of the old Japanese city and town is attenuated or entirely destroyed. Finally, the husband and father is even more a stranger than was traditionally the case, for now he must work late and travel long distances between home and work. Under these conditions it is hard to see how the traditions that have made the parents hard workers and cooperative citizens can be handed down intact. Children will learn, as they do in the United States, that the accumulation of things and the expression of one’s own feelings are the meaning of life. One wonders how long the vaunted work ethic and social discipline will then survive.

Further, it is unlikely that the older pattern of living can ever again be reproduced on a large scale. The cost of land in Tokyo and other metropolitan areas has increased astronomically. Middle-class families cannot any longer look forward to the old style of life. They will spend their days in apartments, condominiums, or other such dwellings. Of course, many things can survive under these conditions, but I still think it is worth considering how heavy the toll on traditional values will be. Needless to say that the tie to the countryside, which has been so important to Japanese until just a generation ago, is fast disappearing. There is no longer any “home village” (furusato) for most Japanese. This greatly weakens the hold of Shinto, which is so closely linked to particular geographical location. The situation is worsened when we remember that urban shrines no longer have the old linkage to their neighborhood. A transient population does not feel the same ties as the old urban residents.

We have long been told how the Japanese work-group has been able to transfer the old loyalties of family and local group to the new industrial situation. But if the old loyalties are collapsing what is there to be transferred? As yet the signs of weakening are few, but we can hardly look to the future with complacency. Indeed, the handwriting is on the wall.

The Japanese seem to be headed for the same fate that has befallen other modern societies that have been taken as a beacon by many. The position of Number One in the world seems to be uncomfortable, and no one holds it long. For awhile Britain seemed to be the model admired by others, including many of the French, though the French had their own admirers. For decades the British and French have been struggling to hold on to a vestige of their earlier greatness, while in the 1950s there were those who proclaimed this to be an “American century,” and there are still a few who think so. But for some time now the United States has lost the competitive edge it once held and, though its power is immense, it no longer inspires others with the thought that it exemplifies the future. If any nation has that role today it is Japan. But the attrition that seems inevitably to accompany rapid modernization, an attrition that eventually eats into the very conditions of success, appears vividly at work in Japan, so that to predict its continued preeminence for decades to come would hardly seem warranted.

So far in this introduction I have tried to locate Tokugawa Religion in the historical circumstances of its origin and to link the strengths and weaknesses of its analysis to those circumstances. The strengths seem to be clear and considerable. I characterized Japanese society as one that emphasizes group loyalty on the one hand and individual and collective achievement on the other. This combination makes for
strong and effective group action. I located the origin of this pattern in the social structure, beliefs, and practices of Tokugawa Japan, taking as my focus the lives of ordinary people. I argued that common patterns were being diffused throughout the population, overriding the barriers of feudal caste and class. The cultural homogeneity and even egalitarianism that the modern state requires were already being prepared in Tokugawa Japan. The dynamism of modern Japan I found incipient in the way of life of ordinary Japanese in the Tokugawa Period. Today all of that seems to me to be right and worthy of further pondering and refinement.

The book's weaknesses, as Maruyama suggested, come from my unwillingness to face the defects of the Japanese pattern or to count the costs that Japanese modernization would exact. It is true that I confined myself to the Tokugawa Period and intended the book to analyze the roots of Japan's modernization but not the process of modernization itself. Yet when I was trying to get at the roots of Japan's success I might also have seen the roots of the deficiencies of that success. Perhaps at that moment, in the middle 1950s, when Japan was pulling itself out of disaster but had not yet become preeminent, it was easier to overlook the costs of the Japanese pattern of modernization than it would have been before or after.

However, the greatest weakness of the book has nothing to do with Japan but with a weakness in the modernization theory I was using: I failed to see that the endless accumulation of wealth and power does not lead to the good society but undermines the conditions necessary for any viable society at all. I suffered myself from the displacement of ends by means, or the attempt to make means into ends, which is the very source of the pathology of modernization. For a moment, at the very end of the book, I seemed to be aware that something was missing in my analysis. I wrote, "After all that has been said about the 'functions' of Japanese religion we are finally forced to consider the meaning of those functions in terms of religion itself" (p. 196). What follows that sentence is not very clear but I seem to be contrasting a situation in which religion is used as a means to another end (modernization) with a situation in which religion itself sets the end, which is to say when religion maintains its "commitment to the source of ultimate value"—that is, when it "remains religion" (p. 197). Maruyama quite rightly points out near the end of his review that my unwillingness to spell out just what Japanese "religion as religion" really means casts a pall of uncertainty over the central argument of the book.

Perhaps it is possible to attempt to do here, however briefly, what I did not (could not?) do in 1957. Perhaps then it would have seemed too naive to take Japanese religion at face value—on the surface, so to speak—but now it seems worth a try. To reduce an enormously complex set of phenomena to a very simple formula, I would say that Japanese religion is fundamentally concerned with harmony—harmony among persons and harmony with nature. Each strand of the tradition views harmony somewhat differently and offers its own peculiar approach. And yet each of them eventuates in the idea of life as ceremony, as play, almost as dance, in which what is being expressed is compassion, care for all the beings of the universe. Shinto involves respect for the 80,000 divinities who inhabit all the forms of nature and look after all the activities of men. Shinto culminates in the festival, the matsuri, when gods and men come together to celebrate joyfully the blessings of this earth in a dance that is a paradigm for life. Buddhism involves the belief that the Buddha-nature inheres in all beings, in persons and animals, in mountains and rivers, even in broken tiles and the dust of the road. One responds to this knowledge by being present to the Buddha-nature in all beings and to the Buddha-nature in oneself. One simply drinks tea, takes a walk, lies down, goes to sleep. And yet each action is perfectly appropriate and perfectly responsive to the actions of all the other myriad beings so that the cosmos itself is a great undulating net of interdependent dancers. Confucianism perceives that the order of heaven and earth is the same order as the order of human beings. Life is a ceremonial pattern (rei) in which we embody our care for others by fulfilling what is appropriate to our respective roles. In Chapter 3 I describe two essential aspects of Japanese religion: gratitude toward nurturant beings and identification with the ground of being. Both are elaborations of the common pattern I am here describing: the harmony of the compassionate dance.

There is enough of this fundamental understanding of life left to make the surface of life pleasanter in Japan than in almost any other culture. But we may doubt that the surface, the beautiful form of the practice of many aspects of daily life, really expresses the ultimate ends of the society. If it did, would the landscape be so ravaged? Would the dignity of the individual person be so easily sacrificed to the needs of the group? Would compassion for all beings rank so low and the
accumulation of wealth and power so high as motives for essential social action? Rather than setting the ends of life, the pattern of the compassionate dance seems to be used as a means for other purposes. It is useful for socializing individuals into being sensitive to the needs of the group and in allowing individuals an expressive escape from the pressures of achievement and group loyalty. Just as in the West where Christianity has often become a form of therapy to "cool out" individuals under too much pressure from the competitiveness of the "real world" (thus reinforcing rather than challenging the deeply un-Christian aspects of daily life), so has Japanese religion often become an aesthetic escape from similar pressures in Japanese life. (We must certainly admit that the contemporary social-psychological "use" of Japanese religion is preferable to the manipulation of religion—particularly shinto and Confucianism—in building a militarist, nationalist state in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.)

What would it mean to reverse the process of functionalization of religion, the reduction of the realm of ultimate ends to the status of means? What would it look like if religion set the ends, and the means—wealth and power—that have usurped the status of ends, were reduced to the status of means again? Would such a change be a form of "modernization" or would it indicate that modernization had reached a kind of limit beyond which its own inherent self-destructiveness would have become total?

These are not idle questions today. Few thoughtful people agree with a famous American who recently said, "There are no limits to growth." At the very least, there is a limit to which economic growth can answer the question of the meaning of life. We are like the sorcerer's apprentice: What we have unleashed is out of control. Nowhere is this more true than in Japan. The Japanese tradition is rich in alternatives. It remains to be seen whether there will be those who have the strength and courage to break through the structures of the administered society and show us another way.

It was not the purpose of Tokugawa Religion to explore the resources within the Japanese tradition for such a breakthrough. Rather, my emphasis on the modernizing social and economic consequences of religious belief and action was perfectly appropriate. But a careful reading will show that a concern for the integrity of the tradition is not missing. The more specific the examples, the more the integrity shines through. The treatment of Ishida Baigan, still the most com-

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prehensiv discussion of him in English, is a good example. Baigan is shown as concerned for the dignity of the merchants, as insisting that their contribution was as worthy as that of the samurai. But Baigan is not portrayed as preaching the Way as a means to get rich. His own life, an example of devoted service to others, was lived in great simplicity, and he accumulated hardly any worldly goods at all. He is as much a judgment on contemporary Japan as a forerunner of it. What seemed quaint about him a few years ago may today be what we most need to learn from him. In the continuing task of reappraising the Japanese tradition in the face of present realities, Tokugawa Religion, too, may make a modest contribution.

July 1985

Notes

1. Maruyama Masao, review of Tokugawa Religion: The Values of Pre-Industrial Japan (Free Press, 1957), in Kokka Gakkai Zasshi (Journal of the Association of Political and Social Sciences), vol. 72, no. 4, April 1958, Tokyo. Tatsuo Arima made an English translation of this review (never published) which came to nearly fifty pages in typescript.


CHAPTER I

Religion and Industrial Society in Japan

We have valuable studies of many aspects of Japanese religion in the Tokugawa Period (1600-1868) without which this book could not have been written. We do not have, however, any study in English of what the whole of Japanese religion in this period meant in the lives of the Japanese people. One of the purposes of this study is to fill this lack, even though cursorily, for a period of exceptional importance in Japanese history which immediately preceded and in many ways laid the ground for modern Japan.

In order to understand a people and their religion we need to know more than the formal creeds and doctrines to which they subscribe and the formal structure of the religious organizations in which they are enrolled. These are important facts but they tell us only about the husk of a religion. We must deal with the husk before we can come to the kernel, but it is the kernel, if such we can call the inner meaning of a religion in the personalities of individuals, which is really important for our understanding, though always difficult to grasp. Once we can grasp even imperfectly the place a religion has in the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations of individuals, then we can begin to see the way their religious commitment shapes and influences the whole of their lives, and how other parts of their lives in turn affect their religion. We will try to let Japanese of the period speak for themselves, through quotations, wherever possible.

A concern with living meaning will determine the way in which
we handle the formal organizations of doctrine that go to make up the Japanese religious tradition. We will not be concerned, for example, with an exposition of the doctrines of Buddhism, Confucianism or Shinto for their own sake. It is only as active components of the religious life of the day that we will deal with them and we will indeed find that many of their most important doctrines still were exerting a powerful influence in the Tokugawa Period. We will find that Mencius, the great 3rd century B.C. Chinese Confucian, for example, was not just a name out of the dim past, but was a contemporary force in 18th century Japan, and as such, his doctrines must be dealt with here, even though he lived centuries before and in a different country. Similarly we will find that the method of enlightenment developed by Zen Buddhism in T'ang and Sung China was still widely practised, even by merchants and artisans, in our period, and so is relevant to our study. If we succeed in getting at the meaning of the Japanese religious tradition in the lives of ordinary people in the pre-modern period, we should not only deepen our understanding of Japanese history and society, but we should also get a more meaningful idea of the religious doctrines themselves, many of which in their abstract formulation seem so exotic to Western readers.

The study of any other religion and what it means to the people who hold it can be of great interest and can extend our understanding of religion and its place in human life. But the case of Japan is of especial interest. Japan alone of the non-Western nations was able to take over very rapidly what it needed of Western culture in order to transform itself into a modern industrial nation. Students of Japan have come increasingly to feel that this success is not to be attributed to some mythical faculty of imitation which the Japanese are supposed to possess, but to certain factors in the pre-modern period which prepared the ground for later developments. Among the factors frequently discussed are certain economic advances not shared by other non-Western societies. The sociologist influenced by Max Weber's great work on the relation of religion to the development of modern Western society, especially the modern economy, naturally wonders whether religious factors might also be involved in the Japanese case. The problem stated baldly is, was there a functional analogue to the Protestant ethic in Japanese religion? This problem then will serve as a special focus of interest throughout the study. We shall attempt to understand as clearly as possible what Japanese religion actually meant to ordinary people, and we shall pay particular attention to any elements which might be connected with the rise of a modern industrial society.

In order to make clear the terms of the investigation it is necessary to define what the writer means by modern industrial society and by religion. By modern industrial society I mean a society characterized by the great importance of the economy in the social system and of economic values in the value system. It is important to be very clear about what is meant by economic values in this context. Above all I do not mean the profit, acquisitive instinct, or drive for hedonistic consumption. Many discussions of "capitalist" society have been plagued by the wholly unwarranted supposition that the "spirit of capitalism" is to be characterized by such terms. Undoubtedly such motives exist in industrial (as in non-industrial) society. They in no sense characterize it.

By economic values I mean those values which above all characterize the process of the rationalization of means. In sociological theory these values are referred to as universalism and performance, two of the "pattern variables" of the theory of action. In the process of rationalizing means, or what may equally well be called instrumental action, the ends of action are for the moment taken for granted. The only problem is how to achieve a given end with the greatest degree of efficiency and the least expenditure of energy. This involves above all adapting to the situational exigencies, for if there were no obstacles in the way of attaining a goal there would be no problem of means. In this process of instrumental or adaptive action there is no concern with particular objects as such. Every object in the situation is relevant only in so far as it has properties which bear on the problem of adaptation. Therefore we say that orientation to objects in the adaptive situation is universalistic rather than particularistic. Similarly the quality of objects in the adaptive situation has no relevance, it is only their performance which counts. In this situation it is not what an object is, but what it does which is important. Taking society as a whole as our frame of reference we can say that the economy is
the system most concerned with the adaptive problem. For this reason we can refer to the values which define the adaptive process or dimension, namely universalism and, performance, as "economic" values. Moving from the analytic level to the empirical we find economic values expressed in a high concern for productivity, a commitment to efficient production, which tends to become an overriding concern. In our own society, where these values are primary, they are expressed in such phrases as "more and better things for more people" or "an economy of abundance." Actually the same values are expressed in non-economic spheres. There is a general concern with achievement, with "doing," which may be expressed as much in recreation as in business. Universalistic attitudes may be found in science and law as well as in industry. It is only because universalistic-performance values define the adaptive dimension of the social system and the adaptive dimension is coordinate with the economy that we are justified in speaking of "economic values."

Though the type case of a modern industrial society, the United States, is characterized by a primacy of economic values in the sense just defined, this is not a necessity. Nevertheless where an industrial society is characterized by the primacy of some other value complex, economic values as defined must have a very high secondary importance. Without such values it would be impossible to have a highly differentiated and rational economy, and thus to have an industrial society at all. They are necessary if there is to be a high level of formal rationality, in Weber's sense, a continuous process of the rationalization of means free from traditionalistic restrictions and governed only by formal-rational norms. Of course no society could exist if economic rationality as here defined were absolutely unrestrictd. Complete economic rationality is bounded by political, moral, religious, and other restrictions, even in societies where economic values may be said to have primacy. Nevertheless, as against a traditionalistic society in which it is restricted to the narrowest of bounds, economic rationality must have a very broad area of free play in an industrial society. It is characteristic of a rational economy that, freed of those restrictions which keep a traditional economy static, it can not maintain the status quo but must continue its process of rationalization into ever new spheres. This is the source both of the dynamism

and of the instability of industrial societies. It is possible that the continuous rationalization of the economy may create such strains in the social system as a whole that the values legitimizing a rational economy may be threatened.

In considering the process of development from non-industrial to industrial societies, one of the most obvious facts is a shift in the basic value patterns. Thus medieval Europe was characterized by political and religious-cultural values whereas the modern United States is characterized by economic values. It is possible, however, that an industrial society may develop without a shift in basic values, but rather through a process in which economic values become very important in certain spheres and the economy as a whole reaches a certain level of differentiation where it can develop freely and rationally with only minimal restrictions. Most European industrial societies seem to illustrate this latter development. So, in my belief, does Japan.

Japan is characterized by a primacy of political values, the policy taking precedence over the economy. Here as in the case of the term "economic values" the adjective "political" is to be taken in the very broadest sense. Formally, political values are characterized by the pattern variables of performance and particularism. The central concern is with collective goals (rather than with productivity) and loyalty is a primary virtue. Controlling and being controlled are more important than "doing" and power is more important than wealth. There is need to spell out this value system in great detail here as many of the following pages will be devoted to this end. It is quite clear that political values in the generalized sense employed here are also of great importance in the West, at times primarily, at other times secondarily.

Talcott Parsons has recently pointed out that there is a process of political rationality quite comparable to that of economic rationality. Thus a society with high concern for political values may produce a situation in which power becomes generalized and extended relatively free of traditionalistic restrictions and governed only by rational norms. Of course political rationality can be no more completely unrestricted than can economic if the society as a whole is to continue to function, but here again the relative freedom which it may have tremendous consequences. I am in no position to state how important such a process is for the rise of
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industrial society in the West. That its importance was considerable I think is beyond doubt.” The Renaissance state which broke through traditionalism in the political and other spheres and led to the development of the rational legal state of modern times, the phenomenon of nationalism, and related developments, all certainly had a major significance for the rise of industrial society. It is my belief that Japan gives a peculiarly vivid example of this process of political rationalization, and that it is only through understanding this that the specifically economic development in Japan can be understood. Economic values have come to have a high importance in Japan, but they have remained subordinate to political values, and linked to them in ways which it will be necessary for us to spell out in great detail in later chapters.

Having defined in a general way what I mean by industrial society and discussed some of those processes which lead to it, it is now necessary to discuss what I mean by religion, and the relevance of religion to the development of industrial society.

By religion I mean, following Paul Tillich, man’s attitudes and actions with respect to his ultimate concern. This ultimate concern has to do with what is ultimately valuable and meaningful, what we might call ultimate value; and with the ultimate threats to value and meaning, what we might call ultimate frustration. It is one of the social functions of religion to provide a meaningful set of ultimate values on which the morality of a society can be based. Such values when institutionalized can be spoken of as the central values of a society.

The other aspect of ultimate concern is ultimate frustration. As long as frustrations are seen as caused by determinate factors such as manageable natural phenomena or appropriate social sanctions for moral breach, the normal person can deal with them as they arise and they have no character of ultimacy. However those frustrations which are inherent in the human situation, but which are not manageable or morally meaningful, of which death is the type case, may be called ultimate frustrations. The second major social function of religion is to provide an adequate explanation for these ultimate frustrations so that the individual or group which has undergone them can accept them without having core values rendered meaningless, and can carry on life in society in the face of these frustrations. This is done through some form of assertion that the ultimate values are greater than, can overcome, the ultimate frustrations and is symbolized in many ways—as the victory of God over death, of Eros over Thanatos, of Truth over illusion.

The “object” of ultimate concern, namely that which is the source of ultimate value and ultimate frustration, must be symbolized if it is to be thought about at all. We may speak of these symbols as denoting the “sacred” or the “divine.” Religious action is any action directed toward the sacred or divine. In primitive or “magical” religions the conception of the divine tends to be extremely diffuse. It is symbolized in terms of a pervasive force or power which inheres in many objects or in terms of a complex conglomeration of gods, spirits and demons. The diffuse concept of the divine permeates daily life. The effect of this tendency is that a very high percentage of acts in social life are of a sacred or semi-sacred nature. Failing to perform them or performing them incorrectly would not only be morally wrong, involving social sanctions, but sacrilegious, involving divine sanction. In this way religion undoubtedly contributes to the stereotyping and rigidity of life in traditionalistic societies.

The new conceptions of the sacred and of religious action which mark the emergence of the great world religions out of primitive traditionalism are all characterized by a relatively high degree of rationalization. It was Weber’s belief that the directions which these original rationalizations took had an enormous and in some sense determining effect on the subsequent development of those traditions. If we may characterize these more rationalized religions schematically, we may say that the concept of the divine which they hold is usually more abstract, in one sense more simple, and less diffuse than that of the primitive religions. The divine is seen in terms of a relatively few simple qualities which hold in all situations, it is seen as more radically “other” and its entanglements with the world are drastically reduced. Concomitantly religious action is simplified, is made less situational, and is concerned with a more direct relation with the divine, either in terms of carrying out divine commandments or in seeking some method for a direct apprehension of divinity. Frustration is seen as a general quality of human life, rather than primarily as an aspect of discrete
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Industrial society we shall concentrate on a single aspect, the religious, though we would insist that other aspects were also important. Since we have defined industrial society in terms primarily of economic values, we will have to show the relation of religion to these values and to economic rationalization. Because of the nature of Japanese society with its strong political emphasis it is impossible to show the connections between religion and economy without also discussing in some detail the connection of the polity and its structure with them both. In brief we are concerned with how the definition of the sacred and man's obligation to it influences values and motivations favorable to economic rationalization, and the possible importance of political rationalization as a mediating process.

After a chapter giving a brief sketch of Tokugawa society so that religious life may be seen in its proper setting, we shall go on to survey the principle manifestations of religion in the Tokugawa period, relating them both to the strata in which they are most prominently found and to any possible trends toward political or economic rationalization. Following this general survey will come a more detailed consideration of the Shingaku movement, a merchant class religious and ethical movement of the 18th and 19th centuries. Finally in the concluding chapter we will return to some of the considerations raised in this introductory discussion.

Notes

1. See especially his Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie (three volumes, Tubingen, 1920-1921) of which the following parts have been translated: The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism, Ancient Judaism, The Religion of China, and the three essays in the section on religion in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. See also Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft (two volumes, Tubingen, 1925) of which the following parts have been translated: The Theory of Social and Economic Organization, Max Weber on Law in Economics and Society, and chapters in the section on power in From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology. Complete citations may be found in the bibliography.

2. The following quotes illuminate the difference in point of view: "... we may say that a fruit of the capitalist spirit is that attitude adopted by a man towards the problems of wealth, its acquisition and use, when he holds that wealth is simply a means for the unlimited individualistic and utilitarian satisfaction of all possible human needs. A man governed by this spirit will, in acquiring wealth, choose the most efficacious means among such as are lawful and will use them without any anxiety to keep the result within certain limits. In the use of wealth he will seek indi-