Max Weber’s early twentieth-century study of the religions and civilization of India is a great pioneering adventure in the sociology of ancient India. Weber’s insight and analysis—especially his application of the sociological perspective to the work of classical Indologists and the religious texts available to him—were to add much to the store of the social scientist. Later, historians and archaeologists were to confirm a surprising number of Weber’s theories.

The central concern of this and other of Weber’s studies of countries we today describe as “developing” was with the obstacles to industrialization and modernization. Weber anticipated by several decades a problem that has come to occupy the post-World War II world. Why had these countries failed to display the full consequences of those rationalizing tendencies which, to Weber’s mind, had so powerful an affinity with the scientific-technical transformation of the West? He isolated religious institutions and the key social strata which mediate them to the wider society as crucial for the original formation of social-psychological orientations to the practical concerns of life and, hence, for receptivity or resistance to industrialization.

H.H.G.
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CHAPTER I
INDIA AND HINDUISM

1. The General Place of Hinduism

India, in contrast to China, has been, and remains, a land of villages and of the most inviolable organization by birth. But at the same time it was a land of trade, foreign, particularly with the Occident, as well as domestic. Trade and credit usury appeared in India from ancient Babylonian times. In the northwest Indian commerce was under constant perceptible Hellenic influence. At an early period the Jews settled in the South. Zara-thustrians from Persia immigrated to the Northwest, constituting a stratum wholly devoted to wholesale trade. Into this situation came the influence of Islam and the rationalistic enlightenment of the great mogul Akbar. Under the great moguls, and also repeatedly before them, all or almost all of India for generations was formed into one political unit. Such periods of unity were interrupted, however, by long periods of disintegration with the country divided into numerous, constantly warring political dominions.

Princely methods of warfare, politics, and finance were rationalized, made subject to literary and, in the case of politics, even quite Machiavellian theorizing. Knightly combat and the disciplined army equipped by the prince appeared. While, as is occasionally maintained, use of artillery did not develop here for the first time, it appeared early. State creditors, tax farming, state contracting, trade and communication monopolies, etc., developed in the fashion characteristic of occidental patrimonial logic. For centuries urban development in India paralleled that of the Occident at many points. The contemporary rational number system, the technical basis of all "calculability," is of Indian
origin. The "positional" number system has existed for an undetermined time. The zero was invented and used sometime after the fifth or sixth century A.D. Arithmetic and algebra are considered to have been independently developed in India. For negative magnitudes the term "debts" (Ksaya) was used. In contrast to the Chinese, the Indians cultivated rational science (including mathematics and grammar). They developed numerous philosophic schools and religious sects of almost all possible sociological types. For the most part the schools and sects developed out of the basic need for rational consistency which was expressed in the most varied spheres of life. For long periods tolerance toward religious and philosophic doctrines was almost absolute; at least it was infinitely greater than anywhere in the Occident until most recent times.

Indian justice developed numerous forms which could have served capitalistic purposes as easily and well as corresponding institutions in our own medieval law. The autonomy of the merchant stratum in law-making was at least equivalent to that of our own medieval merchants. Indian handicrafts and occupational specialization were highly developed. From the standpoint of possible capitalistic development, the acquisitiveness of Indians of all strata left little to be desired and nowhere is to be found so little antichrematism and such high evaluation of wealth. Yet modern capitalism did not develop indigenously before or during the English rule. It was taken over as a finished artifact without autonomous beginnings. Here we shall inquire as to the manner in which Indian religion, as one factor among many, may have prevented capitalistic development (in the occidental sense).

The national form of Indian religion is Hinduism. The term "Hindu" was first used under the foreign domination of the Mohammedans to mean unconverted native Indians. Only in recent literature have the Indians themselves begun to designate their religious affiliation as Hinduism. It is the official designation of the English census for the religious complex also described in Germany as "Brahmanism." The term "Brahmanism" refers to the fact that a definite type of priest, the Brahman, was the leader of the religion. It is known that the Brahmans constituted a caste and that, in general, the institution of the castes—a system of particularly rigid and exclusive hereditary estates—played and continue to play a role in the social life of India.
Also, the names of the four main castes of classical Indian learning as represented in the *Laws of Manu* are known: Brahmans (priest); Kshatriyas (knights); Vaishyas (free commoners); Shudras (serfs).*

The general public is quite unfamiliar with the details of the castes with the possible exception of vague ideas about the transmigration of souls. These ideas are not false, they merely require clarification in terms of the abundant sources and literature.

Under the heading “religion” the tables of the *Census of India* for 1911 list, in round numbers, 217½ million people as “Hindus,” i.e., 69.39 per cent of the population. Among the imported faiths there are: Mussulmen (66-2/3 million or 21.26 per cent); Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and “Animists” (10.29 million or 3.28 per cent). The following non-Hindu religions are listed as native to India: Sikhs² (around three million or 0.86 per cent); Jains (1.2 million or 0.40 per cent); Buddhists (10.7 million or 3.42 per cent). However, all but a third of a million of the Buddhists reside in Burma (which since early times was almost nine-tenths Buddhistic); the remainder live in the bordering territories of Tibet (hence not on classically Indian but Mongolian territory), partly in outlying Indian territories, partly in central Asia.

To be sure, the census figures by decades cannot be compared without reservations. The percentage of Hindus since 1881 decreased from 74.32 per cent to 69.39 per cent; Islam rose from 19.74 per cent to 21.22 per cent; Christians, from 0.73 per cent to 1.24 per cent; and, finally, Animists, from 2.59 per cent to 3.28 per cent. This last figure, and also part of the percentage shifts, rests not only upon the considerable numbers of children of the uncultured animistic tribes but to a large extent upon differences in census enumeration. A further small part of the proportional decrease of Hindus is to be accounted for by the extension of the census to Burma, which resulted in a considerable increase in counted Buddhists. For the rest, the relative decline of the Hindu is partially to be attributed to differential birth and mortality rates. The relatively low social status and correspondingly low standard of living of the Hindu masses has, to some extent, religious causes. Child marriage, female infanti-

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*Translator’s note: The spelling of caste names follows Jawaharlal Nehru’s *The Discovery of India* (New York: John Day, 1946).*
CHAPTER X
THE GENERAL CHARACTER OF
ASIATIC RELIGION

If we look behind the surface with its unprecedented richness of forms to the Asiatic cultural world something remains to be said.

For Asia as a whole China played somewhat the role of France in the modern Occident. All cosmopolitan "polish" stems from China, to Tibet to Japan and outlying Indian territories. Against this India has a significance comparable to that of antique Hellenism. There are few conceptions transcending practical interests in Asia whose source would not finally have to be sought there. Particularly, all orthodox and heterodox salvation religions that could claim a role in Asia similar to that of Christianity are Indian. There is only one great difference, apart from local and pre-eminent exceptions—none of them succeeded in becoming the single dominating confession, as was the case for us in the Middle Ages after the peace of Westphalia.

Asia was, and remains, in principle, the land of the free competition of religions, "tolerant" somewhat in the sense of late antiquity. That is to say, tolerant except for restrictions for reason of state, which, finally, also for us today remain the boundary of all religious toleration only with other consequences.

Where these political interests in any way came into question, in Asia as well they had religious consequences in the grand style. They were greatest in China, but they also appeared in Japan and, to some extent, in India. As in Athens in the time of Socrates, so in Asia a sacrifice could be demanded in behalf
of Deism and Deism. And, finally, religious wars of the sects and militaristic monastic orders also played a role in Asia until the nineteenth century.

However, we observe that on the whole cults, schools, sects, and orders of all sorts adapted to each other as in occidental antiquity. Of course, the competing directions could hardly have been valued equally by the majority of ruling strata of the time or, often, by the political powers either. There were both orthodox and heterodox religious forms and the orthodox included some more or less classical schools, orders, and sects. Above all—and this is especially important for us—they were also differentiated socially—on the one side (and in small part) indeed in terms of the stratum to which they were native; on the other side, however, (and primarily) in terms of the form of hope they offered different strata of their adherents. The first phenomenon was partly expressed in such a manner that the upper social strata stood against the folk soteriology of the masses, abruptly denying all salvation religiously. China presented this type. It was partly the case that different social strata cherished different forms of soteriology. This phenomenon is in most cases, namely, in all those in which it did not lead to the formation of racial-historical sects, identical with the second. The same religious dispensed different forms of holy values and in terms of these they made demands of variable strength on the different social strata.

With very few exceptions Asiatic soteriology knew only an exemplary promise. Most of these were only accessible to those living monastically but some were valid for the laity. Almost without exception all Indian soteriologies were originally of this type. The bases of both phenomena were equivalent. Above all, both were closely interrelated. Once and for all, the clef between the literary “cultivated” and the aliterary masses of philistines rested on this. Hanging together with this was the fact that all philosophies and soteriologies of Asia finally had a common presupposition: that knowledge, be it literary knowledge or mystical gnosis is finally the single absolute path to the highest holiness here and in the world beyond.

This is a knowledge, it may be noted, not of the things of this world or of the everyday events of nature and social life and the laws that they hold for both. Rather, it is a philosophical knowledge of the “significance” of the world and life. Such a knowl-
edge can evidently never be established by means of empirical occidental science, and in terms of its particular purpose should by no means be confused with it. It lies beyond science.

Asia, and that is to say, again, India is the typical land of intellectual struggle singly and alone for a Weltanschauung, in the particular sense of the word, for the “significance” of life and the world. It can here be certified—and in face of the incompletion of the representation this is to ask acquiescence in an incomplete certification—that in the area of thought concerning the “significance” of the world and life there is throughout nothing which has not in some form already been conceived in Asia.

Each, according to the nature of its own apprehension, unavoidably (and, as a general rule, actually all genuine Asiatic and that is Indian soteriology) found gnosis to be the single way to the highest holiness, and at the same time, however, the single way to correct practice. Therefore, in no way is the proposition so close to all intellectualism more self-evident: that virtue is “teachable” and right knowledge has quite infallible consequences for right practices. In the folklore itself, for example, of Mahayanism, which plays a role for the pictorial arts somewhat similar to our biblical history, it is everywhere the self-evident presupposition. According to the circumstances, only wisdom provides ethical or magical power over the self and others. Throughout the “teaching” this “knowledge” is not a rational implement of empirical science such as made possible the rational domination of nature and man as in the Occident. Rather it is the means of mystical and magical domination over the self and the world: gnosis. It is attained by an intensive training of body and spirit, either through asceticism or, and as a rule, through strict, methodologically-ruled meditation.

That such wisdom, in the nature of the case, remained mystical in character had two important consequences. First was the formation by the soteriology of a redemption aristocracy, for the capacity for mystical gnosis is a charisma not accessible to all. Then, however, and correlated therewith it acquired an asocial and apolitical character. Mystical knowledge is not, at least not adequately and rationally, communicable. Thus Asiatic soteriology always leads those seeking the highest holy objectives to an other-worldly realm of the rationally unformed; and even because of this lack of form alone available, to a godlike
beholding, possession, property, or obsession of a holiness which is not of this world and yet can, through gnosis, be achieved in this life. It was conceived by all the highest forms of Asiatic mystical belief as an "emptying." This is an emptying of experience of materials of the world. This corresponds throughout to the normal significance of mysticism and in Asia it is only carried to its logical conclusions. The devaluation of the world and its drives is an unavoidable psychological consequence of this. It is the meaning-content of mystical holy possession which rationally cannot be further explained.

This mystically experienced holy circumstance, rationally interpreted, takes the form of the opposition of peace to restlessness. The first is "God," the second, specifically creature-like, therefore, finally, either illusory or still soteriologically valueless, bound by time and space and transitory. Its most rational interpretation, dominant throughout Asia, of the experientially-conditioned inner-attitude to the world was conditioned by the Indian samsara and karma teachings.

Through these Indian doctrines the soteriologically devalued world of real life won a relatively rational meaning. According to the most highly developed rational representations, the world was dominated by the laws of determinism. Especially in the Japanese form of Mahayanistic teaching, causality in our sense appears in external nature. In the fate of the soul the ethical value-determinism of karma obtained. From it there was no escape other than flight, by means of gnosis, into that other-worldly realm. Thereby the fate of the soul could simply take the form of an "extinction," or as a circumstance of eternal, individual rest the form of a dreamless sleep. Or it could take the form of a circumstance of an eternal peaceful state of holy feeling in the countenance of god or as a reception into divine individuality.

Similarly, the idea that for transitory deeds of transient beings on this earth "eternal" punishment or rewards in the future could be assigned, and, indeed, by power of the arrangement of a simultaneously all-powerful and good God, is for all genuine Asiatic thought absurd, appearing spiritually subaltern and so it will always appear. Therewith, however, disappeared the powerful emphasis which, as already noted, the soteriology of the occidental doctrine of the beyond placed upon the short span of this life. Given its world indifference, it could now as-
sume the form of a flight from the world or, indeed, in an inner-worldly manner, with however, world-indifferent behavior: a protection against the world and one’s own acts, not in and through both.

Whether the highest holiness is personally or, naturally, as a rule, impersonally represented—and this is for us not without importance—is a matter of degree rather than kind. The implications of the rare, however still occasionally occurring, superworldliness of a personal God was not carried through. Decisive for this was the nature of the striving for holy values. This was finally determined by the fact that thought about the meaning of the world formed a soteriology corresponding to the needs of literary strata.

These intellectual soteriologies now found themselves confronted by the practice in the life experiences of Asiatic strata. An inner connection of performance in the world with the extra-worldly soteriology was not possible. The single, inwardly consistent form was the caste soteriology of Vedanta Brahmanism in India. Its conception of calling had to operate politically, socially, and economically in an extreme, traditionalistic manner. However, it is the single, logically closed form of “organismic” holy and societal teaching which could occur.

Cultivated lay strata, in a manner corresponding to their inner situation, took up characteristic relations with respect to the soteriology. So far as they represented distinguished status levels, there were further possibilities. They could form a literally cultivated, secular knighthood, standing over and against an independent, literarily schooled priesthood, such as the old Kshatriya in India and the court knighthood of Japan. In this case they partly developed a soteriology free of priests, partly yielded to a religious skepticism as did the cultivated laity of old India and a considerable part of the distinguished intelligentsia of Japan.

In the last case, despite skepticism, and so far as it had occasion to make a settlement with religious usage, this occurred as a rule purely ritualistically and formally. Such was in part the case with cultivated strata of old Japan and old India. Or they were officials and officers as in India. Then merely this last-named relation appeared.

It became the peculiar objective of the priesthood, when these had the power—ritualistically—as was the case in India—to or-
ganize the social order to their personal situation. After the downfall of the Shogun in Japan the priesthood was no longer powerful enough to regulate the life conduct of the knighthood more than in a purely external sense. Or, in contrast to the previously mentioned cases, the distinguished laity not only constituted secular officials, or prebendaries and candidates in a patrimonial bureaucracy, but at the same time were bearers of the state cult without competition from a powerful priesthood. Then they had developed a particular, narrow ceremoniousness, a pure inner-worldly life conduct; they conducted ritual as a status ceremonial, as occurred with Confucianism in China for a whole (relatively), democratically recruited literary strata.

In Japan distinguished, secular, cultivated strata relatively free from the power of the priests despite the fact that they also were the political lords lacked the obligated ritual duties of the Chinese patrimonial bureaucratic and office-expectant character: they were knightly nobles and courtiers. In consequence of this they were lacking the bookish and scholarly element of Confucianism. They form a stratum of “cultivated men” strongly disposed to the reception and syncretism of all sorts of cultural elements and anchored, at least in the inner core, to a feudal concept of honor.

The situation of the aliterate “middle classes” in Asia, the merchants, and those belonging to the middle-class segments of craftwork, was, in consequence of the peculiarity of Asiatic soteriology, to be distinguished from occidental equivalents. Their upper strata partly took over the rational reworking of the intellectual soteriologies, that is, negatively, so far as it represented a denial of ritualism and book wisdom, but positively with respect to the general significance placed upon personal salvation-striving. By itself the finally gnostic and mystical character of these soteriologies offered no foundation for the development of an adequate, rational methodology for inner-worldly life conduct. So far as its religiosity was sublimated under the influence of the savior doctrines the religion was transposed into a different form.

Here also there worked the penetration of the gnostic and mystical character of all Asiatic intellectual soteriology and the inner relationship of God intoxication, the possession of God and Godly possession so decisive for mysticism and magicians. Everywhere in Asia where it was not, as in China and Japan, politically
suppressed, savior religiosity assumed the form of hagiolatry and indeed a hagiolatry of living saviors: the gurus and their equivalents, be it as mystagogues or as magical dispensers of grace. This gave the religiosity of the aliterary middle classes its decisive stamp.

The often completely unrestricted power of these (mostly) hereditary bearers of charisma was somewhat reduced only in China and Japan on political grounds and by force. In China this occurred in favor of the obedience of the political literary strata. In Japan it occurred by way of a weakening of the prestige of all clerical and magical power in general.

In Asia generally the power of a charismatic stratum grew. It was a stratum which established the practical life conduct of the masses and dispensed magical salvation for them. The gift of the “living savior” was the characteristic type of Asiatic piety. Beside the unbroken character of magic in general and the power of the sib appears the impregnability of charisma in its oldest form: as a pure magical power. These determined the typical course of the Asiatic social order.

In general, in circles of distinguished political or hierocratic literary strata, the massive orgiasticism and savior belief was denied along with adoration or hagiolatric formalism and ritualism. The attempt was made to sublimate them or denature them, in general with very differential success. It was most successful in China, Japan, and Tibet and in the Buddhistic outlying Indian territories, and least successful in India proper. However, these strata succeeded in breaking the dominion of magic only occasionally and only with very temporary success.

Not the “miracle” but the “magical spell” remained, therefore, the core substance of mass religiosity. This was true above all for peasants and laborers, but also for the middle classes. This concerns both miracle and spell in a two-fold sense. One can easily determine this by comparison of occidental and Asiatic legends. Both can be seen as very similar to each other and, the old, reworked, Buddhistic and Chinese legends stand at times inwardly near to the occidental. However, the two-sided division shows the contrast. The “miracle” in terms of its meaning always appears as the act of some sort of rational, world-linked, godly gift of grace, seen and practiced, thus inwardly motivated as a “spell”; in terms of its sense it stands as a manifestation of magical potencies manipulated by irrational, opera-
tional arts and by charismatically qualified beings. However, such manipulation occurs in terms of the particular free will behind nature, human or super-human, stored up through asceticism or contemplative performances.

The rose miracle of holy Elizabeth appears meaningful to us. The universality of the spell breaks through every meaningful interrelation of events. One can in the typical, average Asiatic legend, such as the Mahayanistic, determine the presence of this inner-worldly *Deus ex machina* in clearly most enigmatic form. It often appears in connection with the complete opposite, with deep, unartistic though rationalistic needs; to some extent equivalent details of legendary events are tempered by historical motives. So it is for the old treasure of Indian fairy tales, fables, and legends, the historical source of the literary fables of the entire world, produced through this religiosity of the spell-casting savior. Later it took the form of a literature constructed in an absolutely unartistic character whose significance for its reading public corresponded somewhat to the emotional and popular romance of chivalry against which Cervantes took the field.

This most highly anti-rational world of universal magic also affected everyday economics. There is no way from it to rational, inner-worldly life conduct. There were spells not only as therapeutic means, but especially as a means aimed at producing births and particularly male births. The undergoing of examinations or endurance tests was contemplated for achieving all conceivable sorts of inner-earthly values—spells against enemies, erotic or economic competition, spells designed to win legal cases, spiritual spells of the believer for forced fulfillment against the debtor, spells for the securing of wealth, for the success of undertakings. All this was either in the gross form of compulsive magic or in the refined form of persuading a functional god or demon through gifts. With such means the great mass of the aliterary and even the literary Asiatics sought to master everyday life.

A rational practical ethic and life methodology did not emerge from this magical garden which transformed all life within the world. Certainly the opposition of the sacred and the secular appeared—that opposition which in the West historically conditioned the systematic unification of life conduct, describable in the usual manner as "ethical personality." But the opposition in Asia was by no means² between an ethical God and the power
of "sin," the radical evil which may be overcome through active life conduct. Rather, the aim was to achieve a state of ecstatic Godly possession through orgiastic means, in contrast to everyday life, in which God was not felt as a living power. Also, it involved an accentuation of the power of irrationality, which the rationalization of inner-worldly life conduct precisely restricted. Or the aim was the achievement of apathetic-ecstatic Godly possession of gnosis in opposition to everyday life as the abode of transient and meaningless drives. This, too, represents an orientation that is both extra-worldly and passive and thereby from the standpoint of inner-worldly ethics it is irrational and mystical, leading away from rational conduct in the world.

Where the inner-worldly ethic was systematically "specialized," with great consequences and with sufficient, workable, soteriological premises, in practice, for the corresponding relations in the Hindu inner-worldly caste ethic, it was simultaneously traditionally and ritually absolutely stereotyped. Where this was not the case, indeed, traces of "organismic societal theories" appeared, however, without psychologically workable premises for the corresponding practical behavior. Consequently, a psychologically workable systematization was lacking.

The laity to which the gnosis and also the highest holiness is denied or which it refuses itself, is handled ritually and traditionally in terms of its everyday interests. The unrestricted lust for gain of the Asiatics in large and in small is notoriously unequalled in the rest of the world. However, it is precisely a "drive for gain" pursued with every possible means including universal magic. It was lacking in precisely that which was decisive for the economics of the Occident: the refraction and rational immersion of the drive character of economic striving and its accompaniments in a system of rational, inner-worldly ethic of behavior, e.g., the "inner-worldly asceticism" of Protestantism in the West. Asiatic religion could not supply the presuppositions of inner-worldly asceticism. How could it be established on the basis of a religiosity which also demanded of the laity life as a Bhagat, as a holy ascetic, not simply as an ancient ideal goal but a contemporary existence as a wandering beggar during workless times of his life in general—and not without consequences—a religiously recommended service?

In the Occident the establishment of a rational, inner-worldly ethic was bound up with the appearance of thinkers and
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prophets who developed a social structure on the basis of political problems which were foreign to Asiatic culture; these were the political problems of civic status groups of the city without which neither Judaism nor Christianity nor the development of Hellenic thought is conceivable. The establishment of the "city," in the occidental sense, was restricted in Asia, partly through sib power which continued unbroken, partly through caste alienation.

The interests of Asiatic intellectuality, so far as it was concerned with everyday life, lay primarily in directions other than the political. When political intellectuals such as the Confucians appeared they were aesthetically cultivated literary scholars and conversationalists (also in this sense salon-men) rather than politicians. Politics and administration represented only their prebendarv subsistences; in practice these were usually conducted through subaltern helpers.

The orthodox or heterodox Hinduistic and Buddhistic educated classes, by contrast, found the true sphere of their interests quite outside the things of this world. This was in the search for mystic, timeless salvation of the soul and the escape from the senseless mechanism of the "wheel" of existence. In order to be undisturbed in this, the Hindu avoided the fineness of the aesthetic gesture.

In order not to become vulgar the Confucian gentleman avoided close community with the Western barbarian. He separated himself from the Westerner who, represented to his understanding, a distended, untamed, and unsublimated unrestrictedness of passion; the need to shun him was necessary for his life conduct. Failure to do so could only mean lack of self-control. Asiatic self-control found its point of gravity precisely at a point negatively evaluated in the Occident. For on what central point was all alert Asiatic self-control erected, basic and without exceptions to the life methodology of the educated intellectual strata and holy seekers? What was the last content of that intensely concentrated "meditation," or that life-long literary study which were striven for, as the highest good against distractions from the outside?

The Taoistic Wu wei, the Hinduistic "emptying" of consciousness of worldly relations and worldly cares, and the Confucian "distance" of the spirit from preoccupation with fruitless problems, all represent manifestations of the same type. The occi-
dental ideal of active behavior—be it in a religious sense con-
cerning the beyond, be it inner-worldly—centrally fixes upon
“personality.” To all, highly developed Asiatic intellectual so-
teriology this could only appear either as hopelessly onesided
philistinism or as barbaric greed for life. Where it is not in the
beauty of the traditional, refined, salon-sublimated gesture as
in Confucianism it is in a trans-worldly realm of the salvation
from transience that all highest interests of Asia are located and
therewith “personality” also finds its worth.

In the highest, and not only orthodox Buddhistic conception
salvation is called “nirvana.” Neither grammatically nor actually
would it be thinkable that this—as popularly often is done—be
equated with “nothing.” From the aspect of the “world” and
seen from it, it could only be “nothing.” But from the standpoint
of the holy doctrine, the holy circumstance is quite different and
very positively evaluated. However, it must not be forgotten
that the striving of the typical Asiatic holy man is centered in
“emptying,” and that each positive holy circumstance of un-
speakable, death-defying, this-worldly holiness is in the first
place only evaluated as a positive complement of success. How-
ever, success is not always achieved. In fact, to actually attain
possession of the godly was the high charisma of the blessed.
However, how do things stand with the great mass that never
attains it? For them, in a very practical sense, “the end was
nothing, the movement everything”—a movement in the direc-
tion of “emptying.”

The Asiatic, the wholly or semi-intellectual Asiatic, easily
makes the impression on the occidental of being “mysterious”
and “secretive.” One seeks to penetrate the presumed secret
through “psychology.” Naturally, without in any way denying
that psychical and physical differences of disposition do occur,4
in general, certainly there are no greater dispositional differ-
ences than those between Hindus and Mongols. Yet both, never-
theless, find the same soteriology agreeable. It must be observed
then that psycho-physical difference is not the primary way to
understanding. Factors imprinted through education, and the
objective elements of the respective interest situations, not
“capacity for feeling,” are first palpable. What was for the occi-
dental pre-eminently irrational was for the Asiatic a ceremonial,
ritual, and habitual condition whose meaning he did not under-
stand. As generally for us, so in Asia the original sense of the customs that grew up were in themselves often not clear.

The reserved dignified countenance and silence which seems so highly significant of the Asiatic intellectual tends to taunt the curiosity of the occidental. To glean what finally stands as content behind this silence it is perhaps useful to consider a related proposition. Before the cosmos of nature we think: it must still—be it to the analyzing thinker, be it to the observer contemplating its total picture and its beauty—have some sort of "last word" as to its "significance." As W. Dilthey has observed this is to prejudge the issue. Whether there is such a "last word" as to the meaning of nature is a metaphysical indeterminable. Similarly, it is often equated with the belief that whoever, because of taste, remains silent has, indeed, much to be silent about. That, however, is no more the case true for the Asiatic than for anyone else. The soteriological product of Asiatic literature, which rested on the particular territories of these emergent problems, were not more ruthlessly worked through, than was done in the Occident.

The lack of economic rationalism and rational life methodology in Asia is, so far as other than psychological historical causes play a part, pre-eminently conditioned by the continental character of the social order as developed in terms of the geographic structure. Occidental culture was throughout established on the basis of the foreign or transient trade: Babylon, the Nile delta, the ancient polis, the Israelite Confederation was dependent on the caravan traffic of Syria. It was different in Asia.

Asiatic peoples have predominantly excluded or extremely restricted foreign trade. Such was the case until the forceful opening of trade with China, Japan, Korea. It is still true for Tibet. While it is less, it is discernible in most Indian territories. The restriction of foreign trade in China and Korea was conditioned by prebendalization which automatically led to the traditionalistic stability of the economy. Any change could endanger the income interests of a mandarin. In Japan feudalism operated in a similar manner toward stabilization of the economy.

Further—and this was also valid for Tibet—ritual reasons worked toward this end. Entrance of holy places by strangers disturbed the spirits and could have consequences for magical evil. Travel descriptions (that is, for Korea) permit us to recognize how the appearance of Europeans in the holy place could lead to frantic anxiety.
CHARACTER OF ASIATIC RELIGION

India, the territory of least closure, still had strong ritual restrictions on travel, while with ritually impure barbarian territory, there were restrictions against active trade. Political considerations also operated toward the restriction of strangers. These existed everywhere, but especially in East Asiatic territory, were they the last decisive reason why the ritual fear of foreigners was given free rein.

Can this strong closure of local culture be viewed as a form of "nationalistic feeling"? The question must be answered negatively. The character of the Asiatic intellectual strata had in essentials hindered the emergence of a "national" political form of the type developed since the late times of the medieval Occident—when for us the full implications of the idea of the nation were fully developed by the modern occidental intellectual strata.

The Asiatic culture area lacked in essentials a speech community. The cultural language was a sacred one or a speech of the literary: Sanskrit in the territory of distinguished Indians; the Chinese mandarin speech in China, Korea and Japan. Partly corresponding to these languages is the place of Latin in the Middle Ages; partly it corresponds to the Hellenistic language of late oriental antiquity or Arabic in the Islamic world; and partly to Church Latin or Hebrew in their respective cultural areas.

In Mahayanaistic cultural territory it remained in this state. In the territory of Hinayanaism (Burma, Ceylon, Siam), which basically recognized the folk idiom as a missionary language, the guru-theocracy was so absolute that there cannot be talk of any sort of secular political community formation of intellectual strata outside the monks. Only in Japan did the feudal development bring about the presuppositions of a genuinely "national" community consciousness, if also primarily on a knightly-status foundation.

However, in China the cleft separating Confucian aesthetic literary culture from all popular culture was so great that only an educated status community of literary man appeared, and the consciousness of commonality in general extended only as far as the unmediated influence of the status group itself. The Imperium was, as we saw, conceived in terms of its foundations—a confederation state of provinces, melted to unity through the periodic transfer of the high mandarins to other than their home
districts for their official service. There was also in China as in Japan a literary stratum wedded to purely political interest. Even this was lacking, however, everywhere in Asia where specifically Indian soteriology set its feet, except as in Tibet, where it dominated the masses as a monastic landlord strata; even then, however, having no "national" relation to it. The cultivated Asiatic strata remained quite "confined" to its own interests.

Wherever an intellectual stratum attempted to establish the meaning of the world and the character of life and—after the failure of this unmediated rationalistic effort—to comprehend experience in its own terms, indirect rationalistic elements were taken into consideration. It was led in some manner in the style of the trans-worldly field of formless Indian mysticism. And where, on the other side, a status group of intellectuals rejected such world-fleeing efforts and, instead, consciously and intentionally pursued the charm and worth of the elegant gesture as the highest possible goal of inner-worldly consummation, it moved, in some manner, toward the Confucian ideal of cultivation.

Out of both these components, crossing and jostling one another, however, an essential part of all Asiatic intellectual culture was determined. The conception that through simple behavior addressed to the "demands of the day," one may achieve salvation which lies at the basis of all the specifically occidental significance of "personality" is alien to Asia. This is as excluded from Asiatic thought as the pure factual rationalism of the West, which practically tries to discover the impersonal laws of the world.

They were, indeed, protected by the rigid ceremonial and hieratic stylization of their life conduct from the modern Occidental search, for the individual self in contrast to all others, the attempt to take the self by the forelock and pull it out of the mud, forming it into a "personality." To Asia this was an effort as fruitless as the planned discovery of a particular artistic form of "style." Asia’s partly purely mystical, partly purely inner-worldly aesthetic goal of self-discipline could take no other form than an emptying of experience of the real forces of experience. As a consequence of the fact that this lay remote from the interests and practical behavior of the "masses," they were left in undisturbed magical bondage.
The social world was divided into the strata of the wise and educated and the uncultivated plebeian masses. The factual, inner order of the real world of nature as of art, ethics, and of economics remained concealed to the distinguished strata because this was so barren for its particular interests. Their life conduct was oriented to striving for the extraordinary, for example, in finding throughout its point of gravity in exemplary prophecy or wisdom. However, for the plebeian strata no ethic of everyday life derived from its rationally formed missionary prophecy. The appearance of such in the Occident, however—above all, in the Near East—with the extensive consequences borne with it, was conditioned by highly particular historical constellations without which, despite differences of natural conditions, development there could easily have taken the course typical of Asia, particularly of India.