

<b>Zeitschrift:</b>	Asiatische Studien : Zeitschrift der Schweizerischen Asiengesellschaft = Études asiatiques : revue de la Société Suisse-Asie
<b>Herausgeber:</b>	Schweizerische Asiengesellschaft
<b>Band:</b>	75 (2021)
<b>Heft:</b>	1
<b>Artikel:</b>	Elements of Max Weber's model of rationalization in the political analysis of Maruyama Masao
<b>Autor:</b>	Weiss, Tobias
<b>DOI:</b>	<a href="https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-956720">https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-956720</a>

### **Nutzungsbedingungen**

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

### **Conditions d'utilisation**

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

### **Terms of use**

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

**Download PDF:** 04.02.2026

**ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>**

Tobias Weiß\*

# Elements of Max Weber's model of rationalization in the political analysis of Maruyama Masao

<https://doi.org/10.1515/asia-2019-0034>

Received August 14, 2019; accepted November 20, 2020; published online May 21, 2021

**Abstract:** Maruyama Masao was one of the most influential political theorists and social scientists in postwar Japan. Many of his works were translated into other languages and his theories are still often discussed in fields like the history of ideas and in political science. In this paper, some theoretical elements in Maruyama's work borrowed from Max Weber's sociology of religion, notably his theory of ethical development and its relation to the sociology of law and the political sociology are scrutinized. Reconstructing these links enables us to better understand Maruyama's theoretical approach. For this purpose, first, Weber's model of ethical development is explicated, and, second, its influence in three of Maruyama's influential texts are highlighted.

**Keywords:** Japan; Maruyama Masao; Max Weber; rationalization

## 1 Introduction

Maruyama Masao (1914–1996) was one of the most important political analysts and theorists of postwar Japan. His most influential works appeared from the late 1940s–1960s leaving a mark on Japanese and international political philosophy and social science. Today, Maruyama is remembered most prominently for his work in the history of ideas, but he also inspired a school of empirical political science, influential in Japan to the 1970s and beyond. There is a relatively large number of writings on Maruyama in English (and German). Besides the translations of Maruyama's works<sup>1</sup>, multiple book length-treatments of Maruyama

---

<sup>1</sup> In English: Maruyama 1963, 1969, 1974. In German: Maruyama 1988, 1997, 2007, 2012. In French: 2018. In Italian: 1990.

---

\*Corresponding author: Tobias Weiß, Institut für Japanologie, Universität Heidelberg, Voßstraße 2, 69115 Heidelberg, Germany, E-mail: tobias.weiss@zo.uni-heidelberg.de

appeared in English<sup>2</sup> and researchers of intellectual history have dedicated substantial space to his work.<sup>3</sup>

Max Weber's influence on Maruyama and other postwar social scientists is well known. Maruyama himself stated that his debt to Weber was immense.<sup>4</sup> Maruyama is often categorized as belonging to the "modernist" school of social science in Japan. Along with legal scholar Kawashima Takeyoshi (1909–1992) and economic historian Ōtsuka Hisao (1907–1996), he is labelled as one of the three influential "modernists" developing a comparative program out of Weber's sociology.<sup>5</sup> The "modernists" took up Weber's model of political and economic development and used this scheme to analyze Japanese politics, economy, and society. In this general sense, there is no need to establish the argument that Maruyama was influenced by Weber.

Nevertheless, I believe reading Maruyama's work with Weber's model of rationalization in mind potentially improves our understanding of Maruyama's analysis. Weber was a prolific writer and especially because he was not able to finish all of his projects, there is substantial controversy about the interpretation of his work. Joas argues that this is actually one of the reasons for his continuing influence.<sup>6</sup> While there is hardly an intellectual biography or piece of research on Maruyama not mentioning Weber, I found detailed analyses of the specific Weberian elements in Maruyama's writings (at least in English language) are scarce. Barshay, for example, notes that Maruyama took from Weber the idea that there are different types of rationality and that formal rationality represents a superior type of rationality. He also gives a short description of Weber's model of types of action, which is based on the distinction of different degrees of rationality. Besides this, however, he does not explicitly show Weber's influence in Maruyama's writings.<sup>7</sup> The same can be said of Karube, Sasaki, and Kersten to some extent.<sup>8</sup> Koschmann devotes space to Ōtsuka Hisao's reception of Weber's Protestant ethics,<sup>9</sup> but when dealing with Maruyama he is primarily interested in the

---

<sup>2</sup> Karube 2008, Kersten 1996, Sasaki 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Barshay 2004, Koschmann 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Maruyama 1989: 194.

<sup>5</sup> Schwentker 1998.

<sup>6</sup> Joas 2017.

<sup>7</sup> Barshay 2004: 23–25, 65–67, 197–239.

<sup>8</sup> Sasaki (2012) gives a concise but relatively short overview of Weber's ideas in Maruyama's analysis, Kersten (1996) mentions Weber, but does not devote particular attention to show his influence on the ideas of subjectivity and autonomy central to her analysis. Karube (2008) mentions Weber only in passing.

<sup>9</sup> Koschmann 1996: 149–202.

concept of subjectivity, which he sees as strongly influenced by John Locke.<sup>10</sup> Schwentker, in his review of the Weber reception in Japan, argues that Maruyama's use of Weber in his intellectual history of the Edo-period and in general was pragmatic in the sense that it was mostly limited to the appreciation of single categories, but without attempting to answer Weber's systematic question regarding the relation between religion and economic ethics.<sup>11</sup>

However, I believe Maruyama's use of the Weberian framework to be relatively extensive as well as systematic. Most importantly, I believe Weber's theory of individuation and the historical development of a "modern personality"<sup>12</sup> influenced Maruyama strongly in the choice of his subjects as well as in developing his argument. By outlining the model of "occidental rationalism" Weber sketched in his sociology of religion and comparing this outline to some of Maruyama's important works, I hope to make Maruyama's approach more easily comprehensible and highlight the importance of Weber's *categorical system* for both Maruyama's history of ideas and his empirical political analyses. This is, of course, not to say that Maruyama's approach can be treated exhaustively in this manner. Maruyama knew to integrate a variety of philosophical and sociological strands, and I do not claim to disentangle all of these sources of inspiration. Nevertheless, I hope to add to the understanding of Maruyama's work by explicating Weber's model of ethical development in connection to his sociology of law, and his political and economic sociology, and show what I consider important influences of this framework.

For this paper, I was not able review all of the abundant Japanese secondary literature in Japanese on Maruyama's work, so there is a chance that I repeat arguments that were already made elsewhere, but I still hope my sketch will be of some use especially to newcomers to Maruyama's work. For many of his contemporaries, especially fellow Weberians in Japan, as for Maruyama himself, his use of Weber's theory of rationalization was probably more than evident. From a contemporary perspective, however, a reconstruction of Weber's arguments in Maruyama's work makes sense. Like in the English-language literature on Maruyama, Weber's model of rationalization does not figure prominently in the Japanese-language-literature dealing with Maruyama's theory.<sup>13</sup> The major strands of criticism against Maruyama's work can be roughly divided into four:

---

<sup>10</sup> Koschmann 1996: 171.

<sup>11</sup> Schwentker 1998: 244–245.

<sup>12</sup> Farris 2013.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately I did not have access to Takimura Ryūichi's (1989) book on Weber and Maruyama.

- 1) Marxist criticism arguing that Maruyama made the individual the main unit of analysis, underestimated the role of class struggle and focused on the importance of freedom and liberal democracy;<sup>14</sup>
- 2) Criticism of Maruyama as an elite-oriented, impractical “prophet of enlightenment” (*keimōshugisha*). Such criticism was voiced most prominently by Yoshimoto Takaaki and followed by others.<sup>15</sup>
- 3) A postmodern perspective criticizing an Eurocentric, nationalist or modernist bias in his theoretical framework and rejecting modernity as an ideal;<sup>16</sup>
- 4) An empiricist perspective criticizing Maruyama (and his disciples in Japanese political science) for comparing European theory with Japanese practice, producing insufficient empirical research and underlining the differences between other developed countries and Japan too strongly.<sup>17</sup>

While all of these criticisms offer valuable insights, I believe that an in-depth reading of Maruyama’s work with the Weberian model of rationalization in mind enables us to more specifically value the strengths of his work and the possible problems. Much of the appraisal of Maruyama’s work focuses on his insistence on constructing a modern subjectivity (*kindaiteki shutaisei*) in Japan and his theoretical approach to democracy.<sup>18</sup> A full reconstruction of his use of Weberian theory might help us to achieve a deeper understanding especially of the theoretical underpinning of his early to mid-term work.

I restrict myself here to showing Weberian influences without making any assessment about their usefulness or appropriateness from an analytical standpoint. Needless to say, however, by explicating Weberian influences on Maruyama, I hope to open the possibility for an assessment of the analytical leverage but also the possible limits of Maruyama’s approach.

I will start with an outline of Weber’s model of rationalization based mainly on Schluchter’s authoritative interpretation.<sup>19</sup> I will then give an overview of some important works by Maruyama, two of the more empirical analyses of the prewar- and wartime system, one later work on the history of ideas. In each of these works, I believe the Weberian influence becomes clear with the model of rationalization in mind.

---

<sup>14</sup> Tomida 2001: 30; Yoshida 1984.

<sup>15</sup> Washida 1990.

<sup>16</sup> Tomida 2001: 127–138; A special issue of the journal *Gendai Shisō* (1994) features prominent postmodern criticisms of Maruyama.

<sup>17</sup> The criticism can be found in condensed form in Rebaiasan 1987.

<sup>18</sup> Sasakura 2003, *Gendai Shisō* 1994.

<sup>19</sup> Schluchter 1979.

## 2 Max Weber's model of rationalization

In his studies of world religions, Max Weber developed a model of the relation between religious beliefs and social (and economic) development. Weber tried to find an answer to the question why European modernity differed from the development in other parts of the world. He began his studies of world religions with his famous analysis of the Protestant ethic. Weber sees Protestantism as a factor enabling the development of a modern capitalist work ethic. Later, Weber conducted comprehensive studies of the other world religions. He links processes of religious development to political and economic development.

### 2.1 Rationalization, disenchantment

For Weber, to explain what he considers as the specific character of modern European (or Western) society, two processes are of special importance: rationalization and disenchantment. *Disenchantment* describes the expansion of spheres of society, which are subject to rational explanation or organized according to *some sort of rational principle*. Different and conflicting rational principles are institutionalized into differentiated spheres or orders of society like economy, politics, religion or art.<sup>20</sup> According to Weber, disenchantment, the pushback against magical, irrational forces, is a precondition for the development of rational science and economy.<sup>21</sup> Disenchantment is not simply secularization (if understood as the retreat of religion). The development of systematic religions for Weber is a substantial part of the disenchantment of the world. *Rationalization* describes various processes related but not equal to disenchantment; most notably the increasing systematic ordering of various parts of society. Weber distinguishes various types of rationalization (not always clearly). Rationalization can for example also be a systematization of magic knowledge (which he argues, has taken place in China).<sup>22</sup> It can also be economic rationalization: increasing calculation and planning needed for example for an economy based on exchange of money.

According to Schluchter<sup>23</sup>, different types of action for Weber are characterized by different degrees of rationality. He distinguishes: (1) traditional, (2) affectual, (3) value rational and (4) instrumentally rational actions. While (1) traditional actions

---

<sup>20</sup> Müller 2011: 54.

<sup>21</sup> Weber 1988 [1920]: 483–484.

<sup>22</sup> Weber 1988 [1920]: 481.

<sup>23</sup> Schluchter 1979: 192.

are simply a repetition of custom and (2) affectual action is triggered by emotion without rational calculation of ends and means, (3) value-rational action is oriented towards a higher purpose. Such an action is seen as right or necessary not because of its intended results, but the action itself is justified on the basis of aesthetic value, religious duty, piety, and the like. Finally, (4) instrumental rational actions, according to Schluchter's interpretation, are the most rational actions because they include calculation of results of an action.<sup>24</sup> It is important to note that these types of action for Weber are "ideal types", methodological fictions, which occur in mixed empirical forms in the real world. However, they occur to different degrees in different historical situations and the occident, most importantly the European and American regions influenced by Protestantism, are clearly the most highly developed in terms of rationality in Weber's view of world history.

## 2.2 Ethical and religious development

Weber connects the development of religious teachings and practice to the development of ethics on the individual level. The development of certain personality types for Weber is closely connected to the development of religion.<sup>25</sup> Schluchter reconstructs different stages of religious development connected to different worldviews from Weber's writings. In this account, originally, there was but one magical worldview seeing nature and human society as one entity (monism). Demons and gods inhabited the world and they had to be banned and forced to serve humans. Humans were tied by magical force to the world of symbols. Magical taboos and rituals were widespread under this worldview. Later, cultural practices like pledging, sacrifice and worship showed an expression of distance from the gods.<sup>26</sup> With the development of cities, a body of religious specialists appeared, systematizing the religious teachings.<sup>27</sup> The world of religion became separated from everyday life. With the systematization of religion, an ethicization of magical concepts occurred. The violation of divine rules for example was reinterpreted from contamination to sin.<sup>28</sup> Weber argues that after this transition, sin (Sünde) was not a magical, irrational transgression of rituals tied to a very specific setting anymore, but a faithlessness against the prophet and his systematic, rationalized, teachings.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>24</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 12.

<sup>25</sup> Farris 2013.

<sup>26</sup> Schluchter 1979: 65.

<sup>27</sup> Bourdieu 2000: 52.

<sup>28</sup> Bourdieu 2000: 54.

<sup>29</sup> Weber 1988 [1920]: 245.

## 2.3 Ethics of convention (Gesetzesethik), ethics of conviction (Gesinnungsethik)

According to Schluchter's interpretation of Weber, the systematization of religious metaphysics diminished the magical boundaries of taboos and rituals, and humans moved to a new moral stage. Gods were not convinced to show mercy by pleasing their selfish desires anymore, but by following religious law.<sup>30</sup> Due to this rationalization, the first time in history a relatively consistent "conventional ethic" (konventionelle Ethik/Gesetzesethik) develops. Schluchter contrasts this conventional ethic with the ethic of conviction (Gesinnungsethik).<sup>31</sup> The former has to be enforced from the outside, while the latter is internalized on the level of the individual. Schluchter<sup>32</sup> and Farris<sup>33</sup> trace the model of a historical development of an ethic of conviction with a subjectively responsible, autonomous personality in Weber's writings.<sup>34</sup> Ideas of salvation and rebirth and of an (incomplete) compensation between the world of humans and the beyond mark, in Weber's view of history, a major step from conventional ethic to an ethic of conviction.<sup>35</sup>

## 2.4 Regulation of everyday life: China and India

Weber sees this *ethic* in the real sense of the word only realized in "the Occident". He sees the Asian religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Daoism) as unable to attain an actual ethical regulation of everyday behavior, because of their lack of emphasis on humans' actions during their lifetime.<sup>36</sup> Religions of Indian origin with the central concept of Karma (rebirth after death)<sup>37</sup> devalued the actual behavior during *human lifetime*, because the ever continuing cycle of birth and rebirth left much time to change behavior later and did not offer any incentive to change the world for the better. The way of escaping the never-ending cycle was actually only to be attained by escaping and neglecting worldly desires. As a way of attaining a distance from the world via neglect of everyday action, it was,

---

<sup>30</sup> Schluchter 1979: 66.

<sup>31</sup> Schluchter 1979: 66. Weber only distinguishes magical and religious ethics as well as ethics of responsibility. Schluchter systematizes Weber's model distinguishing conventional ethics and ethics of conviction among the religious ethics.

<sup>32</sup> Schluchter 1979.

<sup>33</sup> Farris 2013.

<sup>34</sup> Schluchter 1979: 71.

<sup>35</sup> Schluchter 1979: 67.

<sup>36</sup> Weber 1988 [1921]: II: 371–373.

<sup>37</sup> Weber 1988 [1921]: II: 367.

moreover, only suited for intellectuals. The masses relied on magical rituals and the like to achieve good fortune for their everyday business and never developed any conventional ethic at all.<sup>38</sup>

Confucianism and Daoism, according to Weber, were similarly unable to generate an effective regulation of people's everyday behavior.<sup>39</sup> Weber argues that the lack of separation between "this world" and "the beyond", the existence of an eternal order encompassing human society, natural phenomena as well as the divine realm in their dogma were an obstacle to disenchantment. The non-existence of an idea of an almighty god giving commandments to guide humans' actual behavior also inhibited the power to influence the everyday conduct of the masses. In his view, Confucianism contained an imperative to adapt to the actual world and leave ritual obligations restricted to specific settings (duties towards the ancestors, the village etc.) and thus remained limited in its consequences for actual behavior. Therefore, magic remained intact in the form of the Taoist heterodoxy among others and irrational rituals permeated everyday life in imperial China.<sup>40</sup> Both Indian and Chinese religions failed to build a *personality* in the Occidental sense.<sup>41</sup>

## 2.5 Universalization of ethics, expansion of community and development of the ethical individual

The highest stage of ethical development in Weber's model of individuation is accompanied by a transition from specific *norms* to universal *principles*; Through abstraction and extension, *norms* that refer to more specific groups or situations were transformed into *universal principles*.<sup>42</sup> According to Schluchter, this only became possible through the systematization of religious teachings. Theodicy, explaining injustice of the human world with eternal justice (salvation) in the afterlife, can function as principle, which can be universalized beyond boundaries of family or clan (Weber sees this type of theodicy for example in Buddhist and Hindu Karma teachings and Calvin's doctrine of predestination). If a norm calls for compensation for only a limited number of people, it is always incomplete. Especially when this theodicy is accompanied by the idea of an almighty monotheistic god, Weber sees the potential for expansion and abstraction of norms to

---

<sup>38</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] II: 368.

<sup>39</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] I: 515.

<sup>40</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] I: 516.

<sup>41</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] II: 373.

<sup>42</sup> Schluchter 1979: 72.

universal principles.<sup>43</sup> Prophecies of Salvation (Erlösungsprophetie) work towards an abstraction and extension of the norms of reciprocity, and help expand ethical rules valid in the local community or family to more general principles valid in a purely religious community (Gemeindereligionen) or beyond, breaking the boundary of the clan (Sippe). This can lead to universal expansion of the zones of validity of a religious ethic. The ethical double standard, the split between an inner ethic (Binnenmoral) and an outer ethic (Außenmoral), disappears.<sup>44</sup> In China, however, the tribe remained the main frame of reference for ethical obligations. The dominant concept of filial piety inhibited the universalization of ethics and a hindered disenchantment.<sup>45</sup>

Parallel to the processes of abstraction and universalization, a change of the ethical *subject* takes place from the group to the individual.<sup>46</sup> While religions become autonomous from primordial groups (village, clan), the believer becomes an *autonomous individual*.<sup>47</sup>

In historical perspective, Weber sees the development of ethical religions (prophetic religions) first in ancient Judaism and later during the reformation with its “protestant ethic” as major steps towards the individuation of ethics (the creation of a rational lifestyle regulated by individual conscience).<sup>48</sup>

## 2.6 Law and modern ethics

The universalization of ethics was accompanied by a separation between law and morality. Legality came to be guaranteed by society through laws, morality came to be situated in the individual. Through the differentiation of society into relatively autonomous partial orders (reification, Verdinglichung, Versachlichung)<sup>49</sup> a growing section of society moves beyond the reach of ethical norms based on religion.<sup>50</sup> For Weber, the rational partial orders are ruled by their respective instrumental rationalities: economy, politics, science, law. This development is supported by the rise of bureaucratic cadres in the various partial orders. Now, law partially takes over the role of ethics, but, at the same time, it becomes an

---

<sup>43</sup> Schluchter 1979: 67.

<sup>44</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] I: 542–544.

<sup>45</sup> Weber 1988 [1921]: 516.

<sup>46</sup> Schluchter 1979: 78.

<sup>47</sup> Kippenberg 2014: 89; This idea was formulated by Ernst Troeltsch; for its appropriation by Maruyama see below.

<sup>48</sup> Schluchter 1979: 101, footnote 149. Weber 1988 [1920] I: 523.

<sup>49</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] I: 544.

<sup>50</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] I: 544, 546.

increasingly formal, autonomous system letting go of the ambition of providing material justice.<sup>51</sup> To cope with the increasing tensions between partial orders, modern humans require an ethic of responsibility (Verantwortungsethik). A central principle of this ethic is the freedom of conscience. This existed also earlier in history, but never for dissenters.<sup>52</sup> Weber contrasts the existence of an ethical personality created by historical religious development in the Occident to the lack of a cohesive ethical personality in Asia.<sup>53</sup>

In law, Weber similarly sees a process of rationalization at work. Here, he sees rationalization as a development from judging single cases to formulating general principles. He sees a systematization and generalization in the development of law.<sup>54</sup> Weber distinguishes between material law (the enforcement of extralegal principles) and formal law. Over time he sees increasing formal rationalization in the separation of material and formal law; also autonomization in the form of a clear separation between extralegal and legal norms as well as a general trend towards abstraction.<sup>55</sup> These processes are enabling law to move beyond the “arbitrariness of the single case”. It becomes different from magical revelation, but also from patrimonial law, under which the person’s status is considered for a judgement.<sup>56</sup> With this autonomization (formalization), conflicts between law and other social spheres become possible.<sup>57</sup>

## 2.7 Development of law and of the process of law-making

Weber looks at different ways of making laws. In every system, there is some practiced law (customary/statute law), but the bulk of it is enacted law (gesetzt). Legal norms in the past were seen as given, not created.<sup>58</sup> The interpretation of legal norms developed out of this understanding as a technique to innovate within relatively strict boundaries (traditional law). Outside of this mechanism, prophecy set new holy laws. States became the successors of the prophets in this sense, setting law.<sup>59</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> Schluchter 1979: 80–84. Material justice is understood here as justice beyond the formal guarantees of the juridical system.

<sup>52</sup> Schluchter 1979: 87.

<sup>53</sup> Farris 2013.

<sup>54</sup> Schluchter 1979: 133.

<sup>55</sup> Schluchter 1979: 135.

<sup>56</sup> Schluchter 1979: 134.

<sup>57</sup> Schluchter 1979: 136.

<sup>58</sup> Schluchter 1979: 138.

<sup>59</sup> Schluchter 1979: 138, 141, 144.

In the sociology of law, Weber also sketches a developmental model. From (1) prophecy to (2) empirical creation (Rechtsschöpfung) of traditional law by notables to (3) imposition by empires and theocracy to (4) systematic enactment and education of experts.<sup>60</sup> Traditional objective laws were usually only valid within a certain group. Schluchter sees this group specific law as based on the dualism between inner ethic (Binnenmoral) and outer ethic (Außenmoral).<sup>61</sup> Ideas of generally applicable law existed, but were relatively underdeveloped.<sup>62</sup> Only with the arrival of rational natural law, legal norms could be declared universal. In law, too, Schluchter sees in Weber's sociology a model of development from concrete act to norm, then to universal principle and finally reflexive principle. Norms are more abstract than verdicts about concrete acts but still particular, natural law expands the applicability, but stays traditional. Finally, by considering all law as enacted, law becomes reflexive. It also becomes autonomous from morals and religion.<sup>63</sup>

## 2.8 Law, ethics, and worldviews

Following this model, on the level of primitive law, the basis of law and ethics is the concrete act. There is no separation between the two. This state of law corresponds with magical ethics. With the development of traditional law and a religious-metaphysical worldview, the separation between law and morals becomes possible, but usually does not materialize, because the guiding norms in law are derived from both ethical and juridical elements.<sup>64</sup> This can still be the case for systems with a developed ethics of conviction (Gesinnungsethik). For Hinduism, Judaism and the Islamic world, Weber does not find a clear separation between the two. He argues that Christianity had the potential for developing a clear separation between law and ethics as well as religious and profane law. But this could also be possible for other religions, when ethics are highly individuated and natural law is developed.<sup>65</sup> After the separation took place, formal law does not have to be identical to material justice any more. Now law becomes external, while ethic becomes internal to the individual.<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>60</sup> Schluchter 1979: 138.

<sup>61</sup> Schluchter 1979: 144.

<sup>62</sup> Schluchter 1979: 145.

<sup>63</sup> Schluchter 1979: 145.

<sup>64</sup> Schluchter 1979: 151.

<sup>65</sup> Schluchter 1979: 151.

<sup>66</sup> Schluchter 1979: 152.

## 2.9 Social differentiation, political rule

In Weber's world historical model, we find a differentiation from primitive societies to those with a high degree of sharing of labor. The idea is that with increased social sharing of labor, social roles diversify and partial orders (Teilordnungen) of society become separate from each other. For example, in modern societies the political order functions according to different principles than those which shape the economic order, and the cultural sphere again differs substantially from both. Different stages of differentiation are accompanied by different types of political rule.

## 2.10 Patriarchy and patrimony

Weber develops the category of "patriarchy" as the archetype of traditional rule.<sup>67</sup> The existing "segmental" differentiation allowed special roles for military leaders and priests, but partial orders of society were hardly separated. The political leadership was monopolized by household heads, and the distribution of power was regulated by birthright. They ruled directly (in person) over underlings and companions.

In patrimonial empires, a hierarchically layered form of differentiation developed with religion and politics becoming separate, competing for dominance and dominating other partial orders like economy and education, while these were sometimes developing partially autonomous institutions (the medieval universities for education and cities for commerce). Weber uses the sub-categories of "sultanism", "feudalism", "state of estates" (Ständestaat), and "absolutist state" to describe different historical manifestations of this type of rule. In this type of society, possession of land and other forms of wealth were the most important factors determining political power. Lords, landlords, and patricians ruled over subjects and fellows. The worldviews were dominated by theocentric or cosmocentric dualisms. Metaphysical thinking developed and conventional ethics (Gesetzesethik) and ethics of conviction (Gesinnungsethik) co-existed in this historical stage. Some symbolic systems became partly autonomous, but a unity of worldview was established, mainly by means of religion. Piety was an important rule guiding the relations between patrimonial ruler and his subordinates and subjects.<sup>68</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> I present Schluchter's (1979) interpretation of Weber's model of political development here. There are also other interpretations concerning the historical sequence of types of rule.

<sup>68</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 167.

## 2.11 Rational-legal rule

Finally, modern society, according to Schluchter's interpretation of Weber, is characterized by increasing differentiation between multiple, equal partial orders. In the modern institution state (Anstaltsstaat), Weber sees bureaucracy as the central mechanism of rule.<sup>69</sup> He distinguishes between different setups of rational rule (bureaucratic rule, parliamentary rule, rule of councils (Räteherrschaft), plebiscitary leader's rule), but all of them share basic traits. The principle of legitimization is law, in contrast to piety in traditional rule. Political power is limited by a constitution with clear specification of competences. In rational-legal systems, elected or appointed institutional representatives of the state make up the political leadership, while in traditional systems, heritage played a greater role. In both patrimonial and rational rule, a staff of administrative personnel exists, but it functions differently. In patrimonialism, the order of servants is structured according to differing privileges or a hierarchy of fiefs, in legal rule, civil servants (Beamte) serve organizations ordered hierarchically according to competence. In patrimonialism, an office is the private property or privilege of its holder. There is a tendency for appropriating the means of administration, as fief or sinecure. The private and public realms are one. Under legal rule, there is a tendency to expropriate the civil servant of the means of administration. Instead he receives a salary, and private and public goods are separated.<sup>70</sup>

In terms of political control, there is a transition from traditional rule to rational(-legal) rule. In the latter, the use of written law is an important element, the basic mechanism of rule. Personal authority in traditional rule is replaced by specific responsibility according to professional capability in modern bureaucracies and written law as a tool of governance. In patriarchal and patrimonial systems by contrast, the rights of the ruler and his servants to exercise power over his subjects (as opposed to citizens) is only limited by their real power and the subjects' willingness and ability to obey. Rule is "boundless" (schränkenlos).<sup>71</sup>

## 2.12 Protestantism, the sect, and charisma as positive forces in history

In addition to the traditional and the rational-legal type of legitimate rule, Weber also sketched a third ideal type, charismatic rule. Schluchter sees charismatic rule

---

<sup>69</sup> Schluchter 1979: 117.

<sup>70</sup> Schluchter 1979: 177–178.

<sup>71</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 761.

as primarily opposed to the institutionalization of authority in general. It is an extraordinary, uninstitutionalized form of authority, possible both in modern and premodern societies.<sup>72</sup> From this perspective, the main oppositions in Weber's model of political rule are traditional rule on the one hand and rational-legal rule on the other hand, which can both combine with elements of charismatic rule.<sup>73</sup> However, Weber does attribute an important historical role to charisma in bringing about social change. He underlines that belief in religious charisma of a chosen few (*Virtuosenreligiosität*), when rationally directed against the injustice of the social order by a concept of (divine) natural law, can turn into a revolutionary element, able to profoundly impact the political structures of rule.<sup>74</sup> However, this charismatic prophecy has to be guided by the idea of salvation and has to emerge from a tension between the secular order and god's rationalized will, not by the conservative idea of an everlasting cosmological order naturalizing political rule. Weber sees this as "inner-wordly asceticism" (*innerweltliche Askese*) appearing during the protestant uprisings leading to the confession wars in Europe, but he sees similar mechanisms at work in later bourgeois revolutions. Here, the Christian god as the source of natural law was replaced by human rationality.<sup>75</sup>

The appropriate form of social organization for this type of inner-wordly asceticism in Weber's view was the protestant sect. This archetype of the *modern association* was characterized by its voluntary character and by equality between its members joining by individual choice.<sup>76</sup> This voluntary moment stands in contrast to naturally grown communities prevalent in China and India<sup>77</sup> as well as the catholic concept of institutional church (*Anstaltskirche*) embracing every human in their sphere of influence as Christian after the obligatory baptism. Weber underlines that the sect developed into the modern association, the basic entity for the development of American democracy.<sup>78</sup> The growth of protestant sects effected a radical breaking of patriarchal and authoritarian boundaries<sup>79</sup> and had an "anti-authoritarian ascetical character".<sup>80</sup> Only the ethos bred in this organization was able to produce the modern individual personality.<sup>81</sup>

---

72 Schluchter 1979: 188.

73 Schluchter 1979: 192.

74 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 552–553.

75 Weber 2010 [1921]: 635–637.

76 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 215–217.

77 Farris 2013: 131.

78 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 217.

79 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 235.

80 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 183–184

81 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 211; 235.

### 3 Weberian elements in key works of Maruyama Masao

In the following section, I will trace some Weberian elements in key works of Maruyama Masao. I will review two of his essays analyzing the wartime political system as well as one essay focused on long-term trends in the history of ideas. Like Weber, Maruyama is concerned with the effects of ideas and worldviews on psychological and pragmatic attitudes and vice versa. He primarily tries to understand political behavior or political culture. Two of the essays reviewed here belong to Maruyama's more empirical works. They were motivated by the aim to understand the prewar and wartime system, which Maruyama and others referred to as Japanese fascism. The others aim at developing a model of Japanese history of ideas and its effects on political culture. I believe reading Maruyama's early works with Weber's model of rationalization in mind fundamentally helps to understand his approach. Maruyama read both Weber's *Economy and Society*, as well as the *Sociology of Religion* early during the prewar phase.<sup>82</sup> His student Uete Michiari mentions the *Sociology of Religion* as one of the favourite readings of Maruyama.<sup>83</sup>

The literature on Maruyama often does categorize Maruyama as "modernist" and offers some appreciation and critique of his analyses. However, it usually does not detail what exactly the "modernist" Weberian parts in Maruyama's analyses consisted of. By reconstructing Weberian elements and showing how Maruyama linked Weber's framework with the empirical reality of Japanese politics, I aim to make Maruyama's work more accessible and enhance the possibility of scrutinizing its link between theory and empirical analysis.<sup>84</sup>

#### 3.1 Theory and psychology of Japanese ultra-nationalism (1946)

##### 3.1.1 Form and substance, state and religion

In the essay, which made Maruyama well-known in Japan, he analyzes the ideological basis of the emperor-centered prewar Japanese state and the psychological

---

<sup>82</sup> Compare Schwentker 1998: 242–245.

<sup>83</sup> Uete 1995: 363.

<sup>84</sup> I do not claim to offer any comprehensive overview of Maruyama's thought. I focus mainly on Maruyama's early and arguably more influential analyses.

traits of its citizens enabling authoritarian rule. He notes the lack of a systematic ideology of Japanese ultra-nationalism compared to Germany,<sup>85</sup> but argues that not only external oppression but also a psychological mechanism forced the Japanese to support the wartime system.<sup>86</sup> Following Carl Schmitt, he argues that the European state acquired its character as a “neutral state” in the settlements following the reformation wars. The churches let go of the ambition to politically enforce religious belief on the people and the state searched to establish legitimacy beyond religious justification. The absolutist rulers faced opposition of their citizens against monopolizing any inner, value-based legitimacy of rule (*naiyōteki seitōsei*, innerliche Legitimität) derived from divine rights. They increasingly turned to formal justifications, namely upkeeping the public order. In this way, a compromise was reached between ruler and ruled guaranteeing the distinction between form and content (*keishiki to naiyō*) and private and public sphere.<sup>87</sup> Individual morals, belief, and thought came to be seen as private, while systems of law came to absorb official power regulating the external, public order. For Japan, he notes the trend of “state-centric nationalism” to found its rule on “substantial of inner values” (*naiyōteki kachi*).<sup>88</sup> From this analysis, it becomes clear that the distinction between formal and material law, and between state and religion, both central in Weber’s model of a modern state, are core ideas Maruyama appropriates.

### 3.1.2 Personality and morals, piety, and the individual

He notes that the problem of internalization of morals, the precondition for a modern personality (*kindaiteki jinkaku no zentei taru dōtoku no naimenka*), was not given serious consideration by the Japanese opposition movement in the Meiji era, the movement for freedom and people’s rights.<sup>89</sup> Maruyama points to the example of a leader of the movement, recalling his intellectual awakening after reading Mill’s “On Liberty”. He decided to throw away all his previous ideas, aiming to work for freedom and human rights from now on, but swore to hold on to filial piety and loyalty (*chūkō*).<sup>90</sup> Maruyama notes how easily one of the movement’s leaders brings together these conflicting ideas, while he should actually be fighting the latter to establish the former.<sup>91</sup> Maruyama follows Weber underlining the need for

---

<sup>85</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 17–18.

<sup>86</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 18.

<sup>87</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 20.

<sup>88</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 20.

<sup>89</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 21.

<sup>90</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 21.

<sup>91</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 20–21.

development of a modern personality with an individuated moral. Piety (*kō*), for Weber<sup>92</sup> (and Maruyama) is a behavior pattern connected to “(traditional) patriarchal rule”. It means strict adherence to tradition and subserviently following the patriarch or patrimonial ruler and does not allow room for an ethic of conviction, rooted within the individual.

### 3.1.3 State and individual, freedom of belief, law and conscience

Maruyama notes that the Meiji Constitution and the Imperial Rescript on Education (*Kyōiku ni kansuru Chokugo*), which is seen by many as indicating the state's shift towards authoritarianism, were issued at the same time (1889 and 1890 respectively). He observes that the Rescript (marking the beginning of strong efforts to teach moral discipline in schools based on piety and uncompromised loyalty towards the emperor) was “an open claim by the state to the monopoly over value decisions of its citizens” (*kachi naiyō no dokusenteki ketteisha taru koto no kōzen no senden*).<sup>93</sup> Maruyama argues that from then on the Japanese state's education policy increasingly came into conflict with Christians. This conflict for Maruyama originates from the lack of tolerance of the state for any religion fostering an inner conscience transcending the boundaries of the piety towards the ruler.<sup>94</sup>

The religion of modern Japan was the emperor system, built into the state in a kind of hierocratic structure, motivated by a premodern drive to control the values of its citizens.

Japanese law could seek to enter the inner conscience of its citizens, because it was legitimated by the inner, absolute values of the national polity (*kokutai*), without respect for any realm of privacy.<sup>95</sup> Maruyama argues that the wartime neglect of the private and its subordination to the state did not appear with the wave of totalitarianism (of the 1920s and 30s), but was built into the Meiji state structure from the beginning.<sup>96</sup> Maruyama notes that “*acts of the state were not measured by any moral measures (dōgiteki kijun) transcending the state*”.<sup>97</sup>

---

92 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 499, 542.

93 Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 21.

94 Weber (1988 [1921] I: 503–504) argues in his discussion of Confucianism that any *confession* in the real sense, any sectarian organization assessing value and dignity of the personality on the basis of belonging and self-assertion within a circle of chosen comrades aroused suspicion and persecution by the Chinese state. The persecution of Christians thus was a natural consequence.

95 Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 21–22.

96 Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 23.

97 Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 24.

### 3.1.4 Emperor as center of all value spheres, segmented differentiation

According to Maruyama, in contrast to legal formalism, which was enabled by the separation of value judgements (to be made by the absolutist ruler in early modern Europe) and strictly formal enforcement of law, the Japanese state received legitimacy from the emperor, who embodied the good, the true and the beautiful in every place and at every time (*konjaku tōzai wo tsūjite tsune ni shinzenbi no kyokuchi*).<sup>98</sup> Neither art nor science (nor religion) could exist without dependence on the final and absolute values of the national polity.<sup>99</sup> Maruyama applies Weber's model of differentiation to Japan, and sees a layered differentiation of society's functional subsystems. Partial orders are not legitimate and autonomous by themselves, but subjected to a hierarchical value order with the emperor as the absolute center.

Consequently, moral behavior extended in concentric circles from the emperor. Anything the Japanese empire did could by definition never be immoral. This pattern also applied to international relations, where Japan was defined as the center of virtue and every country's position was defined according to its proximity to Japan. Under these conditions, morals were not rooted in individual conscience, but forced on the Japanese from the outside. Maruyama sees "moral suasion campaigns"<sup>100</sup> like the Spiritual Mobilization Campaign (Kokumin Seishin Sōdōin) during the Sino-Japanese war in the late 1930s as embodying this external enforcement of moral.<sup>101</sup> With Schluchter, we could say Maruyama claimed that Japan was stuck in the stage of an "ethic of convention".<sup>102</sup> While the locus of morality was situated within the state, and its enforcement aimed to invade private life and even thought, moral was judged in terms of power.<sup>103</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 24.

<sup>99</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 22.

<sup>100</sup> Garon 1997.

<sup>101</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 25: "Moral comes pressing in from the outside" (*rinri ha ... gaiteki na undo to shite oshisemaru*).

<sup>102</sup> Weber, contrasting the different effects on systematic life conduct of protestantism and judaism on the one hand and the "institutionalised mercy" (Anstaltsgnade) granted to its believers by the catholic church on the other hand, argues that the catholic church (and Indian religions, for example), foster obedience as a central virtue. In this case the life conduct is not a systematisation from within – from a centre achieved by the individual – but comes from a centre from the outside (Weber 2010 [1921]: 437, translation T.W.). Legal sociologist and fellow Weberian Kawashima Takeyoshi in an influential article published in 1946 refers directly to Weber's distinction of inner ethic (Binnenmoral) and outer ethic (Außenmoral) making a similar argument regarding moral behaviour being externally forced on the Japanese (Schwentker 1998: 249).

<sup>103</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 25.

At the same time, there was no pure and blank exertion of force without some sort of moral legitimization. He argues that Japanese politicians were never able to express a purely Machiavellian attitude, justifying any means purely with the quest for power, but always had to conceal politics with moral arguments. This was because of the form of social differentiation the last legitimization of politics was a moral one; the emperor as harbinger of the good and just.<sup>104</sup>

### 3.1.5 Conscience and personality, sin and professional ethics

When stripped of their state authority, powerholders – individual politicians and servants of the regime alike – became “dwarfish” (*kenryoku no waishōka*), showing their weakness as individuals.<sup>105</sup> Maruyama illustrates this with the reaction of Japanese defendants accused of crimes at the Tokyo Trial. In contrast to Nazi leaders like Hermann Göring, laughing out loud when accused of terrible crimes, the Japanese defendants made a weak and whimsical impression denying any personal responsibility.<sup>106</sup> While the Nazi leaders, for Maruyama, were established personalities in the modern sense, albeit outlaws intentionally challenging reason and civilization, Japanese wartime leaders – their rule psychologically not based on a strong sense of self<sup>107</sup> by losing their integration into the layered differentiation of the “emperor system” were robbed of their sole source of legitimacy, i.e. tradition, embodied by the emperor and his ancestors.

Pathological phenomena like war crimes conducted by Japanese soldiers, according to Maruyama, can be explained by the fact that in Japan professional pride (*shokumu ni taisuru kyōji*) was not based derived from a sense of horizontal, functional sharing of labor (*yoko no shakaiteki bungōishiki*), but a vertical belonging to the highest value (*tate no kyūchiteki kachi he no zokusei*).<sup>108</sup> He explains the habit among soldiers to call civilians “people from the countryside” (*chihōjin*) with this hierarchical worldview. He also quotes general Araki Sadao, noting a strong difference between morals inside the military and in normal society (Weber's Binnenethik).<sup>109</sup>

He argues that prewar elites saw law not as something abstract and universal, but only a concrete instrument of rule restraining only the lower strata but not the

---

<sup>104</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 26–27.

<sup>105</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 27.

<sup>106</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 27.

<sup>107</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 27: “*shihai ha shinriteki ni ha tsuyoi jiga ishiki ni motozuku no de ha naku*”.

<sup>108</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 29.

<sup>109</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 29.

rulers.<sup>110</sup> There was no religious conscience of “sin” or good and evil.<sup>111</sup> He sees this as the reason why law was only binding for those lower in the hierarchy.<sup>112</sup> Those most blatantly violating laws and procedures were the imperial police officers themselves. The measure of value for estimating a person’s position was not his profession (*shakaiteki shokunō*) but his proximity to the emperor.<sup>113</sup> The “everyday morals of the political elite” were determined by a “concrete emotional” feeling of proximity to the emperor (*gutaiteki kankakuteki tennō he no kinshinkan*) rather than an abstract conscience of law, an inner sense of sin (*naimenteki na tsumi no ishiki*) or an ideal of public service (*kōboku shinnen*).<sup>114</sup> Here, we can see another key distinction, which Weber connects to the difference between traditional and rational-legal rule, namely the dichotomy between personal, affectual legitimization on the one hand and the unpersonal legitimacy of law in combination with universal ethical principles on the other hand. Also, the references to Weber’s model of development of professional ethics are quite clear. Weber sees sin (Sünde) as a concept tied to prophetic religions: Its shift of meaning from a magical transgression towards faithlessness against the prophet and his rules, which causes eternal punishment allows for an exponential increase of weight put on inner-worldly conduct and a full internalization of rules.<sup>115</sup> He sees this as a precondition of a modern professional ethic only realized in prophetic religions, not in Chinese and Indian religion.<sup>116</sup> Maruyama except on one occasion does not directly reference Weber in this text, but his statements concerning the lack of an inner sense of sin and the lack of professional ethics in the Japanese ruling strata are hardly coincidental here.

### 3.1.6 The absolute substance, responsibility and the bond with the past

Maruyama links sectionalism within the military (and other Japanese organizations) to the tendency of every part of the military and administration to unite along a vertical line with the last and absolute substance (*tate ni kyūkyōkuteki na kachiken’i ... ni goitsuka to suru shōdō*), the emperor.<sup>117</sup> For Maruyama, the exclusively vertical links between various parts of the state and society led to an

---

<sup>110</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 28.

<sup>111</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 28.

<sup>112</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 28.

<sup>113</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 28.

<sup>114</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 28.

<sup>115</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] I: 245.

<sup>116</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] II: 367.

<sup>117</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 30.

uncoordinated parallel existence without horizontal communication.<sup>118</sup> Maruyama explains the way Japan stumbled into war, in contrast to Germany's planned aggression, with this uncoordinated parallel of vertical lines.<sup>119</sup> Again, Maruyama appears to be inspired by Weber's analysis of partial orders of society. He rejects the notion of a dictatorship for prewar Japan, pointing out that a dictatorship (in which theoretically every vertical line is controlled by one person at the top) requires a free subject at the top. He quotes General Tōjō, the most powerful man in Japanese politics during most of the Pacific War, stating in parliament that he is a mere subordinate (*shin*) of the emperor. The parallel but isolated existence of various oligarchical power centers (*katōseiryoku*) trying to be close to the emperor inhibited the development of a sense of responsibility (*sekinin ishiki no seiritsu wo konnan narashimeta*).<sup>120</sup> Weber underlines in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* that under the principles of legal rule the subordinates are only obliged to follow unpersonal rational orders, within the framework of a clearly delineated competence, range of duty, and a clear limit on possible means of coercion.<sup>121</sup> Traditional rule, by contrast, is guided by piety and principally unlimited obedience.<sup>122</sup> Clearly, Maruyama is guided by this distinction and finds in the way of attribution of responsibility an empirical indicator of the not fully modernized character of the Japanese ruling system.

Maruyama notes that in Europe, the absolute monarch became the first free subject, freeing himself from medieval natural law, not protecting an everlasting order anymore but creating an order on his own (*chitsujo no yōgoshaka kara chitsujo no sakuisha ni*) setting law without needing a reference to god.<sup>123</sup> He contrasts this with the Japanese emperor, who was not a free subject, but was legitimated by the "unity with his ancestors" and thus "carried the authority by tradition descending from an eternal past" (*mugen no ko ni sakanoboru dentō no ken'i wo haigo ni seotte iru*). He and his ancestors built a single entity.<sup>124</sup> The image of history in this worldview was not an open-ended timeline, but a never-ending (virtuous) cycle connecting past and present, the everlasting virtue of the imperial line rising from

---

<sup>118</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 32–33.

<sup>119</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 31–32.

<sup>120</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 32.

<sup>121</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 161.

<sup>122</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 167, 760–761.

<sup>123</sup> The development from natural law to law imposed by the absolute ruler of the European early modern age is a recurring theme in Weber's work; Weber 2010 [1921]: 641, 646. Weber argues that only in the Occident, law, initially with the help of the absolute rulers, was stripped of its personal character. Precondition for this, according to Weber, was the conception of natural law (e.g. Weber 1988 [1921] I: 553).

<sup>124</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 34.

the center and expanding spatially to all parts of the world.<sup>125</sup> A (spatially) similar center-periphery model of the world (the middle kingdom) is described by Weber as “natural principle of administration in expanding dominions”, when describing the state structure of ancient China.<sup>126</sup>

### 3.2 Thought and behavior patterns of Japan’s wartime leaders (1949)

#### 3.2.1 Irrationality, complexity

In this essay, Maruyama starts with the question why the axis powers in World War II declared war on the United States of America just when the failure of the German offensive against the Soviet Union became clear. Analyzing materials from the Tokyo Trial, he sets out to analyze *the ethos* within Japan’s institutions of war.<sup>127</sup> He argues that Japan in contrast to Germany actually hardly had a real plan for its war against the allied countries. He cites members of the prosecution team, noting the irrational character of the Japanese decision to attack, given the extreme superiority of the US in annual aircraft production.<sup>128</sup> In contrast to the German dictatorship, the Japanese government remained very instable, even during the authoritarian phase. 15 cabinets rose and fell from 1928 (the year which the prosecution saw as the beginning of a conspiracy for world domination) until 1945, 30 foreign ministers served, 28 home ministers, and 19 war ministers.<sup>129</sup> He reminds us that key ministries were blocking each other in major conflict and notes that the Germans were unable to grasp the Japanese intentions shortly before conclusion of the tripartite pact and were astonished that the “*Army and Navy were at loggerheads*”.<sup>130</sup> The army, navy, and foreign ministry blocked each other and there was no strong leadership uniting the unplanned and disorganized political power. According to Maruyama, it was “*precisely because of the lack of planning that Japan’s leaders hurried forward*” to war.<sup>131</sup> For him the complex, unmethodical (*fukuzatsu kiwamari nai*) and irrational nature of Japanese politics (*seiji no higōr-isei*) was the pathology of Japan’s (political) structure.<sup>132</sup> He cautions against

---

<sup>125</sup> Maruyama 1995a [1946]: 34 ff.

<sup>126</sup> Weber 1988 I: 314.

<sup>127</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 101; ethos is a term often used by Weber in his sociology of religion.

<sup>128</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 99.

<sup>129</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 99.

<sup>130</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 100.

<sup>131</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 100.

<sup>132</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 100.

interpreting this irrational reality too much as a product of rational calculation of ends and means (*higōriteki genjitsu wo amari gōmokuteki ni kaishaku suru*; Maruyama points to a lack of Weber's "Zweckrationalität" here). He contrasts the instrumental rationality of the Nazis with the irrationality of Japan's wartime leaders.<sup>133</sup>

### 3.2.2 Ethical flexibility, weakness of character

Maruyama argues that Japanese leaders in contrast to the Nazis, who consciously chose to use inhumane means for war defying civilization in a spirit of "active nihilism", Japanese leaders actually believed what they were doing was just and morally sound.<sup>134</sup> He sees in their statements in the Tokyo trials a moralization of power (*dōtokuka*), for example when a general justifies the Sino-Japanese war as family quarrel between brothers.<sup>135</sup> This veiling of political power parallels the mechanism sketched above and is from a Weberian perspective indicating a lack of differentiation of partial orders of society at least within people's conscience.

Maruyama cites the American diplomat Joseph Grew, who observed in the context of the Manchurian incident (the Japanese invasion in Manchuria under the pretext of an attack on the Japanese-owned railway) that "*the great majority of Japanese are astonishingly capable of really fooling themselves*"; when an obligation runs counter to their interests, they will interpret the obligation just according to their interests without actually noting. Maruyama again notes the lack of a sense of guilt or sin (*tsumi*) in Japanese leaders.<sup>136</sup> He notes the "weak spirit" (*yowai seishin*) of wartime leaders like Konoe Fumimaro and the vagueness of testimonies and constant rejection of any individual responsibility by the defendants of the Tokyo Trials.<sup>137</sup> Maruyama argues that the weakness of character of Japanese was not a problem of single personalities, but a symptom of the problems of the whole Japanese system of rule.<sup>138</sup> He argues that defendants used the "magic of words" (*kotoba no majutsu*) to neglect their responsibility. Before the court, the imperial way (*kōdō*) formerly a slogan justifying Japanese superiority was reinterpreted by the defendants into "essentially the same idea as democracy". Maruyama argues the vagueness of Sino-Japanese expressions – according to him most prominent in vocabulary related to the imperial house – had exacerbated the lack in attribution

---

133 Maruyama 1995c: 106.

134 Maruyama 1995c: 106–107.

135 Maruyama: 1995c: 107.

136 Maruyama 1995c: 108. Probably he refers to Weber's discussion of sin (Sünde).

137 Maruyama 1995c: 109–115.

138 Maruyama 1995c: 115.

of responsibility.<sup>139</sup> Here, too, we might see Weber's influence on Maruyama. While Weber does not pay great attention to language as an indicator or cause of rationalization in his writings, he asserts that the Chinese system of writing is not fully rationalized.<sup>140</sup> Elsewhere, he also points to the magic of the imperial house, noting that “*even in the Japanese constitutional state, the correct Japanese is not allowed to doubt the emperor's origin from the sun goddess, and thus his divinity or at least cannot voice his disbelief if he does not*”.<sup>141</sup>

### 3.2.3 Tradition, bond with the past

Maruyama sees the submission to *faits accomplis* and the refuge into one's own competence as basic patterns of defense in the trials and argues that they were not faithful to their own beliefs (*jiko no shinzuru opinion ni chūjitsu de ha naku*), but repressed them as being ‘personal emotions’ (*shijō*), choosing instead to adapt themselves to the environment (*shūi ni shitagau hō wo erabi*). This they made into their morality.<sup>142</sup> Put in Weberian terms, he diagnoses the lack of an autonomous type of conscience in Japanese leaders, indicating a lack of internalization of ethical rules as well as a the lack of strong-willed and independent personality, aiming to shape the world according to their own moral visions (Weber's occidental personality developing out of protestant inner-wordly asceticism; inner-weltliche Askese). According to Maruyama, the submission to *faits accomplis* was connected to and exacerbated by the forces of tradition. He cites Japanese leaders stating that they could not defy a national policy (*kokusaku*) once it was decided and a former foreign minister stating that Japan will by “natural necessity” (*shizenteki hitsuzensei*) stick to the German side in case of war with the Soviet Union.<sup>143</sup> Maruyama argues that reality was not seen by Japanese leaders as something being created through repeated everyday effort, but as something that just had emerged from somewhere. This view meant that acting realistically meant “living in the bond with the past” (*kako he no keibaku no naka ni ikeru*).<sup>144</sup> He contrasts this spirit of Japanese militarism with the pragmatic spirit constantly calculating the balance of aim and means (*mokuteki-shudan no baransu*). Again, this is a clear reference to Weber's concept of Zweckrationalität, which he sees also present in Nazi leaders.<sup>145</sup> He presents the statement of an army general arguing he

---

139 Maruyama 1995c: 114.

140 Weber 1988 [1921] I: 412–413.

141 Weber 1988 [1921] II: 307.

142 Maruyama 1995c: 118.

143 Maruyama 1995c: 126.

144 Maruyama 1995c: 120, 124.

145 Maruyama 1995c: 120.

could not compromise with England and America over the Chinese question (the conflict over growing Japanese encroachment of China was an important reason for war) because the spirits of the war dead could be opposed to it.<sup>146</sup>

He cites General Koiso's (an army general who held multiple offices during prewar and wartime including that of Prime Minister) statement before the trial, who argued that the Japanese – no matter what their personal opinions – follow the policy of the state once it has been decided.<sup>147</sup> In this view, history is not the making of individuals, but rather something already created in the past.<sup>148</sup> The recourse to nature, the ancestors, or mere precedence to justify certain policies is interpreted by Maruyama as a sign of the traditional character of Japanese political culture.

### 3.2.4 System of irresponsibility

Maruyama traces how military and civil leaders passed on responsibility among each other, and took refuge in their bureaucratic zones of responsibility (*hōki to kennō, shokumu kengen*) without any political integration of different bureaucratic sections.<sup>149</sup> He sees the manifestation of such systematic irresponsibility in the example of the “Total War Research Institute” built in 1940 for “basic research and study” as well as “education and training of officials and others for total war” under the Prime Minister. When the prosecutors in the Tokyo Trials asked the defendants about the activities conducted here it turned out that: “*it did not know what to do and therefore members who were assigned to the institute from various departments just got together and started to do something in order to create the appearance that it was doing something*”.<sup>150</sup> Maruyama explains such irrationality with the lack of personal (charismatic) leadership and the unclear boundaries of responsibility in government. Those in positions of power did not act according to their convictions, but to their bureaucratic position. Maruyama's directly refers to Weber's description of patrimonial bureaucracy and the irresponsible control exercised by officials under an absolutist leader leading to paralysis when conflicts of interest of the subordinates were involved.<sup>151</sup> He sees this lack of responsible leadership and the bureaucratic competition for posts and competences as the product of an absolutist (*zettaishugi*) bureaucratic system (in contrast to a

---

<sup>146</sup> Maruyama 1995c:124.

<sup>147</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 119.

<sup>148</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 119–120.

<sup>149</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 129, 132.

<sup>150</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 134.

<sup>151</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 131, 136.

“modern” totalitarian (*zentaishugi*) system). He follows Weber, who points out in his sociology of rule that: *“Obviously, (also under patrimonial rule) a post (Amt) will be connected to some task. But very often within very unclear limits (...). Where the administration of large political entities is organized in a patrimonial way, any inquiry into “competences” leads to a boundless flood of titles with arbitrarily changing meanings”*.<sup>152</sup> Maruyama argued that the lack of clear boundaries of competence and the subsequent conflicts between sections of the bureaucracy and military (he cites a military officer calling this *a struggle for chairs* (posts)) were drivers of Japanese fascism. He argues that this is symbolized by the fact that a key event leading to the rise of Japanese military fascism was the threat of a reduction of military posts following from the London Naval treaty (in 1930).

### 3.2.5 Lack of charisma

Maruyama sees the incompetence, chaos and paralysis he attests to the Japanese wartime political system as rooted in the lack of charisma of Japan’s leadership. In contrast to the charismatic Meiji emperor, there was no strong leader able to politically integrate the various political factions. Also, the first generation of Meiji reformers, rich in political character (*seijikateki shishitsu*) had faded away.<sup>153</sup> In his analysis of the bureaucratic character of the Japanese power structure he follows Weber’s dichotomy between bureaucratic rule and charismatic (political) rule elaborated in Weber’s sociology of rule (*Herrschaftssoziologie*) and the essay *Politics as a Vocation*. Here, Weber contrasts the social type of demagogue (in a positive sense – a real politician), with the bureaucrat unable to exert strong leadership. The difference is that the politician takes full responsibility for his actions, while the bureaucrat in the end only follows orders.<sup>154</sup>

## 3.3 Maruyama’s history of ideas – thought in Japan (*Nihon no shisō*, 1957)

From the section above, we can see the strong and relatively systematic influence from Weber’s framework on Maruyama’s empirical political studies. But what about his later works? In *Thought in Japan* published originally in 1957, Maruyama

---

<sup>152</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 761; Maruyama uses the older reconstruction of *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, published as *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik* in 1921.

<sup>153</sup> Maruyama 1995c: 139.

<sup>154</sup> Weber 1992 [1920]; 2010 [1921]: 1062.

concentrates on his original field of specialization, the history of ideas. In this later writing as well, we can discern a number of Weberian elements.

### 3.3.1 Unsystematic syncretism

Maruyama starts by asking why there has never been any attempt to write a general history of ideas of Japan, while there have been multiple attempts to study the history of specific areas of thought like literature and ethics.<sup>155</sup> He argues that in contrast to Europe, where Christianity provided a common axis of thought, Japan combined a mix of modern and premodern elements of thought that were not systematically integrated.<sup>156</sup> The different schools of thought like Buddhism, Confucianism, and European thought never really came into dialogue with each other. Maruyama in this context argues that Japan should not try to follow the European path of modernization, but to reflect about the Japanese way of taking up foreign thought and “*renew the ‘tradition’ which inhibits dialogue and confrontation between ideas, modes of thought and worldviews*”.<sup>157</sup> He criticizes the trend to import European ideas and schools of thought without considering their historical and theoretical background and the tendency to chase the latest trend while leaving conflicts and arguments between different schools of thought unresolved.<sup>158</sup> Older debates in Japan tend to be forgotten, and are replaced by superficial discussions over recent state-of-the-art elements of European or American thought.<sup>159</sup> Maruyama argues against creating a dichotomy between traditional thought like the school of National Learning (*kokugaku*) and Western thought. He argues that even fascism in Japan contained many international elements.<sup>160</sup> Even after the opening of the country and the influx of a great variety of foreign ideas in the Meiji period, he sees, however, a distinctive, and persistent mode of its reception in Japan.<sup>161</sup>

We remember that in Weber's scheme, natural law is the precondition for developing an idea of universal law. Maruyama applies this scheme to Japan and finds, Confucianism was the only school of thought with an idea of natural law (*shizenhōteki taikei*) in Japan before 1868. However, it was challenged already in the Tokugawa era (1600–1868) and replaced during the following Meiji period. Consequently, Maruyama sees any mode of thought measuring things with eternal

---

<sup>155</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 199.

<sup>156</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 193–194.

<sup>157</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 195.

<sup>158</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 195.

<sup>159</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 195.

<sup>160</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 196.

<sup>161</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 197–198.

(universal) standards (*eien na mono ...no hikari ni terashite monogoto wo hyōka suru shikōhō*), as weakly developed in Japan.<sup>162</sup> He argues that the weak reception and early replacement of ideas of natural law by ideas of historical evolution in Japan inhibited the forming of a (systematic) tradition of thought. Evolution was equated with being the most recent trend in European or American academia.<sup>163</sup>

### 3.3.2 Conversion and enmity against principles

Older modes of thought are replaced relatively easily without much reflection, but due to the lack of systematic integration, they remain and coexist isolated from imported strands of thought and tend to eruptively come to the fore in times of crisis. Maruyama speaks of the eruption of remembering (*omoide*).<sup>164</sup> He argues that the wave of anti-Buddhist sentiment in 1868, the renaissance of Confucianism in 1881, and the criticism against the emperor-organ theory in the 1930s were examples of such eruptions.<sup>165</sup> He sees this *remembering* at the core of the phenomenon of conversion (*tenkō*), which describes the renouncing of Marxism and liberal ideas by tens of thousands of progressives in the era of militarism in the 1930s.<sup>166</sup> Maruyama argues that the way the individual adapts and arranges the thought of different periods of time and schools lacks an axis of time, and is highly dependent on the current political situation. “*What is remembered from the things imported in the past depends (...), Manyōshū, Saigyō, Jinnō Shōtōki, Yoshida Shōin, Okakura Tenshin, Fichte, Hagakure, Dōgen, Wen Tianxiang, Pascal...* (for Maruyama symbolizing conservative thought, T.W...) *when the stage shifts a 180 degree one remembers Tolstoj, Ishikawa Takuboku, Das Kapital, Lu Xun and the like* (symbolizing progressive thought, T.W.)”<sup>167</sup> Such by principle opposed modes of thought are integrated in Japan through a “*banalization of Buddhist teachings like the concept of oneness (ichinyo)*”<sup>168</sup>

He cites a conversionist artist’s poem expressing his emotional uproar and the feeling of relief when he heard news of the start of the Pacific War, pronouncing his allegiance to the emperor and the country. Maruyama argues that the *remembering*

---

162 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 209.

163 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 209.

164 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 200.

165 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 200–201. The legal scholar Minobe Tatsukichi argued that the emperor is an organ of the state. His legal theory belonged to the official canon and was taught as a standard part of the curriculum, but in 1935, under a surge of nativist sentiment, he was severely criticized and forced to step down from his post.

166 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 200–203.

167 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 200.

168 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 202.

of different strands of thought to the individual signifies the break away from the self-control through principles (formulae) (*genri (kōshiki) ni yoru jiko gyosei no kinchō kara no ridatsu*).<sup>167</sup> Maruyama interprets the conversion as an escape from the systematization of thought and the rational self-control of the modern (Weberian) individual and a return to the environment (the group) as the unit of ethical control. It is notable that for him, Buddhism (while referring to a banalized form of it) provides the language for the unratinalized syncretism. Weber had referred to Buddhism as transforming the whole world into a magical garden (Zaubergarten) resisting rationalization.<sup>170</sup>

The archenemy of the kind of syncretism Maruyama describes are schools of thought calling for “*intellectual promiscuity*” systematically analyzing the world on the basis of principles and calling for rational systematization of experience (*genriteki shisō nari, keiken no gōriteki seijo wo yōsei suru ideorogī nari*).<sup>171</sup> He sees the Christianity of the Meiji period and the Marxism of the 1920s as such examples. Maruyama describes the mechanism of “*ideology exposition*” (*ideorogī bakuro*) in contrast to Marxist “*ideology critique*” (*ideorogī hihan*) as a central mechanism in this (irrational) Japanese intellectual tradition of reception. He sees the criticism of the Kokugaku (School of National Learning) against Chinese thought as the paradigmatic case of this mechanism. Principles are attacked for being principles, but in contrast to ideology critique there is no systematic point of view from which the attack is staged. Ideology exposition criticizes every kind of ideology and rejects any *abstract*-logical interpretations of reality (*issai no rironka, chūshōka*) on the basis of immediate, everyday experience often from a literary-aesthetic point of view.<sup>172</sup> Because it does not provide any actual own rationalization (justification) of a standpoint this “*sensual*” criticism of principles according to Maruyama naturally ends up affirming the existing political order.<sup>173</sup>

### 3.3.3 Emperor system

The Meiji founding fathers noted the need for an axis of thought (similar to a religion) to balance the creation of a constitution in Japan.<sup>174</sup> According to Maruyama, due to the lack of any strong indigenous religion, the Meiji leaders constructed the imperial household as the single axis of legitimacy. The *national polity*

---

<sup>169</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 200; 203. *Genri* corresponds to Weber's Prinzipien.

<sup>170</sup> Weber 1988 [1921] II: 278.

<sup>171</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 202, 204.

<sup>172</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 206.

<sup>173</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 207.

<sup>174</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 214–215.

(*kokutai*) also became the national religion in Japan.<sup>175</sup> Maruyama sees this as the major problem in Japanese modernization. He sees the “non-religious-religion” of the national polity as possessing *magical power* (*majutsuteki na chikara*) over the people.<sup>176</sup> According to Maruyama, this magic showed its power in extreme situations, for example in the boundless pressure for individual responsibility after the Toranomon incident (1923), when an assassin unsuccessfully tried to kill the crown prince. He cites the remarks by the visiting German scholar Emil Lederer, who was shocked by the reaction: The whole cabinet resigned, every person somehow associated with the event from police chief to local police officer was dismissed regardless of whether they could have done anything to prevent the attempt. The father of the assassin gave up his mandate as diet member, built a bamboo palisade in front of his house and did not step out anymore; the village the assassin came from cancelled New Year’s holidays and started a mourning period; the principal of his school and his former teachers resigned for having failed to educate him. Another example from Lederer’s account is the discussion that arose when teachers (probably during the Kantō Earthquake in 1923) ran into their burning school houses to rescue the picture of the emperor, and died during the attempt. The following political discussion was about replacing these dangerous pictures from schools instead of just letting them burn.<sup>177</sup> Maruyama sees this “magic of the national polity” as – with the passing of legislation for control of “thought crimes” in the 1920s – transgressing the boundary of control of *external actions* (*gaibuteki kōdō no kisei*) towards full control of actual thought (*museigen na naimenteki dōshitsuka*). This in Weberian terms is a recourse to the stage of conventional ethics, when morality (not just law) was enforced by the social group.<sup>178</sup> Due to the inherent limitation of the *kokutai* as a magical – irrational and unsystematic – entity, the core of the national polity was, however, void. Any attempt to achieve a clear systematization or definition of it, would have made it the potential subject to the kind of ideology exposition that was directed against any systematic body of thought.<sup>179</sup>

### 3.3.4 Culture and institutions: unsystematic pluralism of power poles and system of irresponsibility

In the second part of the essay, Maruyama argues that this pattern of reception of thought influenced the way Japanese political institutions functioned. Japanese

---

<sup>175</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 215.

<sup>176</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 215.

<sup>177</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 216–217.

<sup>178</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 217. Compare section 2, Schluchter 1979: 78.

<sup>179</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 217.

institutions might have been modern, but the way they were run was influenced by the contradicting ideas and the chaotic parallel existence of various strands of thought. He points out that, while the Emperor had a supreme status in the Meiji constitution, the system of rule relied strongly on extraconstitutional measures, for example the *senior retainers* (*genrō*; elder statesmen who were informally involved in major political decisions). Maruyama sees a behavioral tendency to evade clear attribution of responsibility at work here, which is rooted in the spirit of the feudal system of Japan placing relatively much weight on reciprocity and give and take (*onjō, hōon*).<sup>180</sup>

Maruyama points to the European development from a divine natural order in the middle ages to the idea of the absolute ruler as the first law-setting subject enabled by the centralization of power (this development is described in Weber's sociology of the state).<sup>181</sup> In Japan, the various factions of court nobles and Samurai from rebelling fiefdoms driving the Meiji restoration placed great emphasis on internal mechanisms of compromise and evaded to let any subject inside the political system stand out, while also evading any discussion about the emperor who became the constituent power and sovereign. Maruyama connects this precarious balance of power within the elite to the tradition of thought letting multiple ways of thought coexist without ordering the worldview in a rational way (*sekai ninshiki wo gōriteki ni seijo sezu ni "dō" wo tagenteki ni seizon saseru shisōteki "dento"*).<sup>182</sup> The result was an ambiguous power structure with a lack of clear attribution of responsibilities.

This left much space for escaping responsibility while at the same time an "ethics of unlimited responsibility" (*mugensekinin no kibishii rinri*; as seen in the events described by Lederer) was at work.<sup>183</sup> Weber, in his sociology of rule, had pointed to the "*boundlessness of responsibility of rule in patrimonial states*" arguing that "*The officials (in patrimonial empires) are allowed to do what they can given the limits imposed by the power of the ruler and the obedience and ability of their subordinates. The fixed norms and regulations of bureaucratic administration are lacking*".<sup>184</sup> As we have seen above, Maruyama recognizes patrimonial characteristics in the structure and political culture of the Japanese state.<sup>185</sup>

---

<sup>180</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 221.

<sup>181</sup> Sketched in Weber 2010 [1921] 1046–1051.

<sup>182</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 222.

<sup>183</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 222.

<sup>184</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 746, 761.

<sup>185</sup> Compare also Yagyū 1999: 494.

### 3.3.5 An eternal political order

The constitution was enacted, but monarchical power was envisioned as “eternal”, and no mechanism to ever change it was included.<sup>186</sup> Maruyama points to the contradiction of a “modern state” without any possibility to review the constitution (He speaks of an eternal constitution, *kintei kenpō*).<sup>187</sup> The constitution was enacted, but it lacked a subject capable of changing it. In Weberian terms, it was a hybrid of traditional and legal rule lacking any reflexivity.<sup>188</sup> In this context, Maruyama points out that there is a relation between the idea that political institutions are distinct from the question of their creation and the idea of importing ideas and theory as complete and ready-made entities.<sup>189</sup> He argues that in Europe, the tradition of a single, absolute god (*yūitsu zettai no kami*; in Weber’s work in German: allmächtiger, monotheistischer Gott) developed into the conception of the absolute ruler as the rule-setting subject of a systematic word-order (*sekai chitsujo no keikakuteki sōzō*) and later into the idea of the world of experience as something to be created (by humans).<sup>190</sup>

### 3.3.6 Mix of rational and irrational organization

He sees the success of Japan’s rapid industrialization as enabled by the lack of intermediate (autonomous) feudal powers like the European guilds and churches able to resist top-down modernization by an absolutist ruler. In Weber’s account of the genesis of the modern state, these intermediate powers were eliminated by an alliance between specialists of law (the predecessors of both the modern bureaucracy and modern politicians) and the absolutist rulers. They, however, also remained an important source for subjective rights of citizens against the state.<sup>191</sup> Maruyama argues that in Japan, a sense of the limits of bureaucratic rule did not develop.<sup>192</sup> Bureaucratic modernization, however, was restricted to the

---

<sup>186</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 222.

<sup>187</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 222; 224.

<sup>188</sup> Weber (2010 [1921]: 447–448) argues that religiously stereotyped law is a major obstacle to the rationalization of law, because it cannot be changed, only interpreted until god himself proclaims a new law. This changes with the systematisation of religious rules to an ethic of conviction. At this stage, a meaningful system of religious rules generates a systematic conduct of life and breaks up the stereotyping of singular (unchangeable) norms.

<sup>189</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 225.

<sup>190</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 225–226.

<sup>191</sup> Weber 2010 [1921]: 1,046–1,052.

<sup>192</sup> Compare Yagyū 1999: 487. The idea of a sense of the limits of state power is taken from Troeltsch (1925: 297–338) cited in Yagyū 1999.

intermediate level of society. At the head, there was an alliance of a variety of elites aiming to maintain a balance of power between its various factions, at the bottom there was the village community, dominated by local notables.<sup>193</sup> The village community according to Maruyama was an “*emotionally-concrete association*” (*jōchoteki chokusetsuteki ketsugōtai*), with full control over its individual members inhibiting any individual autonomy. The leadership tried to keep this community free of the political divisions and differentiations which modernization brought about. Top-down rationalization encroaching into the private sphere and the creation of a functional hierarchy (Maruyama borrows the German term *Amtshierarchie* from Weber)<sup>194</sup> combined with patriarchal principles like belonging to cliques (*batsu*) and personal considerations (*jōjitsu*) simultaneously spread in all types of organizations and groups.<sup>195</sup> Maruyama sees this as a coexistence of formal rationality (*keishikiteki gōrika*) concentrated more strongly in the center) and a community-oriented irrational order at the lower levels. At the very top again, clan-based patrimonial attitudes and mechanisms (*dōzokuteki, kasanseiteki seishin*; Weber's German terms are *Sippe* and *Patrimonie*) retained influence. Maruyama argues that the enterprise conglomerates (*zaibatsu*) with their structure of a holding company as main house were an example of this.<sup>196</sup> He argues that the stability of the Japanese system rested on the balancing of these two principles and was in constant state of emergency due to the import of new institutions.<sup>197</sup> The conservative elites were constantly in fear of losing the natural tradition, which was not compatible with any rationalization and abstraction. The conservative scholar of law Hozumi Yatsuka, for example, argued that with the introduction of the civil code, loyalty and piety will be destroyed.<sup>198</sup>

### 3.3.7 Literature and society, Marxism as spiritual revolution

The contradiction between unbound rational bureaucratization on the one side and the longing for the natural condition, the experience of reality (*jikkan*) on the other side, creates a “*hardly bridgeable gap between bureaucratic thought and that of the normal people*”. Maruyama believes that this gap shaped the relation between human and organization in Japan.<sup>199</sup> In Japanese literature, he sees a

---

<sup>193</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 227.

<sup>194</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 229.

<sup>195</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 228.

<sup>196</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 229.

<sup>197</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 230.

<sup>198</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 230.

<sup>199</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 233.

tendency towards fine-grained description of emotions and argues that the turn towards realism (in opposition to moralistic literature of the Edo period) in late 19th century lacked the precondition of a development of literary rationalism (classicism). This led literature to form an alliance with the School of National Learning (*kokugaku*), totalizing immediate experience (*jijitsu no zettaika*). He argues that this contributed to a lack of separation of norms from personal wishes, within the personality.<sup>200</sup> Again we can see Maruyama's concern with the constitution of a rational autonomous type of conscience.

This, combined with the low status of most literary writers as “dropouts of the bureaucracy” and “useless existences” (*yokeisha*) (the lack of autonomy of the cultural order) according to Maruyama contributes to polarization between exact natural sciences and reality of everyday life.<sup>201</sup> The accompanying worldview neglects regularities and rules in the realm of society and degrades them to questions of style, which do not follow any scientific rules. He sees for example the literary totalization of the experience of war as something similar to a natural phenomenon in literature as caused by literature's opposition to abstraction and ideology.<sup>202</sup>

In the final section of the essay, Maruyama reflects on the role of Marxism in Japan's history of ideas. He underlines the importance of Marxism, “*which became the single representative of social science in Japan since the 1920s*”.<sup>203</sup> Maruyama believes that the role of “*theory as a lever moving reality*”, for the first time was realized with the spread of Marxism in Japan. Due to the lack of a Christian tradition, Marxism for the first time “*taught the full social spectrum of people that thinking is not just some intellectual play in a study room, but that people's personal responsibility is at stake (ningen no jinkakuteki sekinin ga kakerarete iru)*”.<sup>204</sup> We can interpret this in the sense that Marxism played the role that Weber ascribed to Protestantism creating an ethics of conviction, attributing full responsibility for one's whole conduct of life, among broad strata of society in Japan for the first time.

Marxism, however, came into conflict with literature and traditional thought. It was criticized as formalism (*kōshikishugi*) and its abstractions were not recognized as methodological fiction, but judged by the standards of results in concrete reality. Theory naturally remains lacking when taken as reality. Also among Marxists themselves, Maruyama sees an “auto-intoxication” with an irrational, anti-abstract

---

200 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 234.

201 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 235.

202 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 235.

203 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 236.

204 Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 236–237.

spirit leading to blind faith in theory and lack of intellectual modesty.<sup>205</sup> In the conclusion, Maruyama contrasts two types of culture, one where differing subsystems of society exist without much communication (the emperor system society) and one where differing subfields are able to communicate and integrate, which he sees to some extent realized in Japan's postwar society. He closes the essay with a call for exchange between literature and social science.

## 4 Conclusion

From this review, certain Weberian elements in Maruyama's analysis become clear. Maruyama relies strongly on a dichotomy between rational and irrational (magical) types of thought, behavior, and institutions. In Weber's model, rationalization proceeds from the concrete-emotional to the abstract-universal, from magic and emotion to norm and principle. The model connects his sociology of religion, his sociology of law and his political sociology. The "resistance to principles and abstraction" and the "lack of universal standards" Maruyama sees in Japanese thought thus carries with it a strong irrational element.

Weber's model of rationalization of ethics and the accompanying scheme of the development of a modern personality connect Maruyama's empirical analysis of Japanese fascism with his history of ideas. The "weak personalities of wartime leaders" and the lack of ethical individuation are connected to the "magic of the national polity" and the lack of an axis to systemically integrate thought. The modern personality, capable of acting as a politician and taking responsibility and consciously changing the political order, needs to politically integrate different sectors of society in a rationalized political system. His emphasis on the need to establish an autonomous subject thus seems not only inspired by John Locke, as Koschmann argues,<sup>206</sup> but there is an intimate relation with Weber's sociology of religion, law and politics.

Maruyama sees many elements of Weber's ideal type of patrimonialism in the prewar Japanese ruling structure. For example, he connects the vague attribution of political responsibility in government institutions and the lack of limits to state control of the citizens to this patrimonial character of rule. Differentiation of various partial orders of society – be it religion, law, politics, or art – and their internal systematization is another central element of rationalization for Weber.<sup>207</sup> Maruyama analyses the state of systematization in various subfields as well as

---

<sup>205</sup> Maruyama 1995e [1957]: 237.

<sup>206</sup> Koschmann 1996: 171.

<sup>207</sup> Müller 2011.

their communication among each other and finds it lacking in prewar and – to some extent also – in postwar Japan. In a hierarchically integrated differentiation, subsystems of society fight each other, trying to expand their sphere of influence and unite with the final magical substance, the emperor. This for Maruyama was one of the main reasons dragging Japan into World War II.

Maruyama attempts to analyse the social and organizational distribution of rationality in time and space. He attempts to answer Weber's question regarding the historical influence of ideas on actual behavior on a mass scale – most fully realized in the rational life conduct of the protestant sects, the forerunners of the modern personality committing itself to a vocation. In his work on Fukuzawa Yukichi<sup>208</sup> as well as in *Thought in Japan*, he is concerned with the historical development of ideas enabling coherence between thought and action. He attributes major steps towards a coherent life conduct guided by a systematic value system to Fukuzawa in the 1870s (among intellectuals) and Japanese Marxism in the 1920s (among the masses).<sup>209</sup> In his analysis of organizational principles, he also attributes different degrees of rationalization to different layers of society, the middle strata being more fully rationalized than the top and bottom.<sup>210</sup>

The ethnocentrism of Weber's model and the scheme of development close to evolutionism<sup>211</sup> make Maruyama a target of postmodern criticism.<sup>212</sup> It is important to note, however, that Maruyama's statements on the need for reflecting the *Japanese way of modernity*, and his emphasis on the partly modern character of the empire system implies that he does not necessarily advocate a single way towards

---

208 Maruyama 1995b [1947].

209 See section 3.3. above.

210 I am of course not claiming to exhaustively explain Maruyama's theoretical construct only with his debt to Weber. Maruyama was an eclectic thinker and at times also explicitly aimed to criticize and develop Weber's framework (for example in the 1952 article *Seiji no sekai*; Maruyama 1995d [1952]). Furthermore the term "Weberian" needs to be treated carefully because, notably in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* Weber provides sort of an attempt at a full inventory of 19th and early 20th century German social science. Maruyama had vast knowledge of the discussion in German (as well as American and English) sociology, philosophy and political science. When attempting to identify Weberian elements in Maruyama's thought, there is thus a danger to lump together certain things as Weberian, which might not necessarily have found the way to Maruyama via Weber. I do believe, however, that the elements I have identified above – notably from the sociology of religion and sociology of rule – can be labeled "Weberian" with some justification.

211 Compare Kanai 1997: 157. Because Weber's ideal types are supposed to be methodological fictions, it could be argued that Weber's model is not actually evolutional. However, it is hard to deny that the sequence of religious development he presents resembles evolutionist development schemes.

212 Koschmann 1996.

modernity. Most of his (English-language) critics have acknowledged this.<sup>213</sup> In his later work, he critically reflects on his former use of a developmental scheme of history.<sup>214</sup> In my opinion, the ambiguous and ad-hoc definition of the process of rationalization in Weber's (and Maruyama's) work<sup>215</sup> is connected to the problems of ethnocentrism and evolutionism. A critical reappraisal of both the empirical and theoretical work of Maruyama and his disciples could try to assess the analytical advantages of his Weberian standpoint as well as the limitations deriving from his reliance on this framework. It might be worthwhile to think about how the category of rationalization could be replaced or adjusted, to evade the associated problems, while trying to save some of Maruyama's insights in an adapted framework.

## References

Barshay, Andrew (2004): *The Social Sciences in Modern Japan: The Marxian and Modernist Traditions*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Bourdieu, Pierre (2000): *Das religiöse Feld: Texte zur Ökonomie des Heilsgeschehens*. Konstanz: UVK.

Farris, Sara (2013): *Max Weber's theory of personality. Individuation, politics and orientalism in the sociology of religion*. Leiden: Brill.

Garon, Sheldon (1997): *Molding Japanese minds. The state in everyday life*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Gendai Shisō (1994): *Gendai Shisō* 22 (1). Tokushū: Maruyama Masao: Matsurigoto no kōzō (Special issue: Maruyama Masao: The structure of matsurigoto). Tokyo: Seidosha.

Joas, Hans (2017): *Die Macht des Heiligen. Eine Alternative zur Geschichte von der Entzauberung*. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

Karube, Tadashi (2008): *Maruyama Masao and the fate of liberalism in twentieth-century Japan*. Tokyo: International House of Japan.

Kersten, Rikki (1996): *Democracy in postwar Japan: Maruyama Masao and the search for autonomy*. London: Routledge.

Kippenberg, Hans (2014): "Dialektik der Entzauberung. Säkularisierung aus der Perspektive von Webers Religionssystematik". In: *Alte Begriffe – neue Probleme. Max Webers Soziologie Im Lichte neuer Problemstellungen*. Edited by Thomas Schwinn and Gert Albert. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 81–116.

Koschmann, Victor (1996): *Revolution and subjectivity in postwar Japan*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

---

<sup>213</sup> Koschmann 1996, Barshay 2004.

<sup>214</sup> The influence from Weber's theory of rationalization only applies to Maruyama's early to mid-term work. Maruyama in his later work explicitly rejected models depicting a general historical development in the realm of ideas. For a complete appraisal, his later works focusing more strongly on processes of cultural exchange would have to be taken into account (see Seifert 2016).

<sup>215</sup> Compare Müller 2011: 47.

Maruyama, Masao (1963) [1949]: "Thought and behavior patterns of Japan's wartime leaders". In: *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. Edited by Ivan Morris. London: Oxford University Press, 83–134.

Maruyama, Masao (1988) [1957]: "Denken in Japan". In: *Denken in Japan*. Edited by Wolfgang Seifert and Wolfgang Schamoni. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 21–88.

Maruyama, Masao (1989) [1978]: "Auf der Suche nach einer Methode der Ideengeschichte—Eine Erinnerung". Translated by Wolfgang Seifert. *Leviathan* 17 (2): 176–200.

Maruyama, Masao (1995a) [1946]: "Chō-kokkashugi no ronri to shinri" (The logic and psychology of ultra-nationalism). In: *Maruyama Masao Shū (Works of Maruyama Masao)* 3. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 17–36.

Maruyama, Masao (1995b) [1947]: "Fukuzawa ni okeru "jitsugaku" no tenkai. Fukuzawa Yukichi no tetsugaku kenkyū josetsu" (The turn to applied learning in Fukuzawa. Introduction to Fukuzawa Yukichi's philosophy). In: *Maruyama Masao Shū (Works of Maruyama Masao)* 3. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 107–131.

Maruyama, Masao (1995c) [1949]: "Gunkoku shihaisha no seishinkeitai" (Thought and behaviour patterns of Japan's wartime leaders). In: *Maruyama Masao Shū (Works of Maruyama Masao)* 4. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 97–142.

Maruyama, Masao (1995d) [1952]: "Seiji no sekai" (The world of politics). In: *Maruyama Masao Shū (Works of Maruyama Masao)* 5. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 125–192.

Maruyama, Masao (1995e) [1957]: "Nihon no Shisō" (Japanese thought). In: *Maruyama Masao Shū (Works of Maruyama Masao)* 7. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 191–244.

Maruyama, Masao (2007) [1946]: "Logik und Psychologie des Ultranationalismus" (Chō-kokkashugi no ronri to shinri). In: *Freiheit und Nation in Japan. Ausgewählte Aufsätze 1936–1949*. Edited by Wolfgang Seifert. München: Iudicium, 113–44.

Müller, Hans-Peter (2011): "Rationalität, Rationalisierung, Rationalismus. Von Weber zu Bourdieu?" In: *Die Rationalitäten des Sozialen*. Edited by Andrea Maurer and Uwe Schimank. Wiesbaden: VS, 43–64.

Rebaiasan (1987): "Hakkan shui". *Rebaiasan Sōkangō*: 4–6.

Sasaki, Fumiko (2012): *Nationalism, political realism and democracy in Japan: The thought of Masao Maruyama*. London: Routledge.

Sasakura, Hideo (2003): *Maruyama Masao no shisōsekai* (The intellectual world of Maruyama Masao). Tokyo: Misuzu Shobō.

Schluchter, Wolfgang (1979): *Die Entwicklung des okzidental Rationalismus: eine Analyse von Max Webers Gesellschaftsgeschichte*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck.

Schwentker, Wolfgang (1998): "Western Impact and Asian values in Japan's modernization: a Weberian critique". In: *Max Weber, Democracy and modernization*. Edited by Ralph Schroeder. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 166–181.

Seifert, Wolfgang (2007): "Vorwort des Herausgebers". In: *Maruyama Masao. Freiheit und Nation in Japan: ausgewählte Aufsätze 1936–1949*. Edited by Wolfgang Seifert. München: Iudicium, 7–19.

Seifert, Wolfgang (2016). "Maruyama Masao". In: *Wiley encyclopedia of Sociology*. New York: Wiley.

Takimura, Ryūichi (1987): *Weber to Maruyama-seijigaku (Weber and Maruyama's political science)*. Tokyo: Keisōshobō.

Tomida, Kōji (2001): *Maruyama Masao. "Kindai shugi" no shatei* (Maruyama Masao – The range of "modernism"). Nishinomya: Kansei Gakuin Daigaku Shuppankai.

Troeltsch, Ernst (1925): *Gesammelte Schriften* 4. Edited by Hans Baron. Tübingen: Mohr: 297–338.

Uete, Michiari (1995): "Kaidai" (Editor's Commentary). In: Maruyama, Masao. *Maruyama Masao Zenshū (Complete works of Maruyama Masao)* III. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 355–380.

Washida, Koyata (1990). *Yoshimoto Takaaki-ron*. Tokyo: San-Ichi Shobō.

Weber, Max (1988a) [1921]: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I*. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck.

Weber, Max (1988b) [1921]: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie II*. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck.

Weber, Max (1988c) [1921]: *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie III*. Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck.

Weber, Max (1992) [1920]: *Politik als Beruf*. Ditzingen: Reclam.

Weber, Max (2010) [1921]: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der verstehenden Soziologie*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins.

Yagyū, Kunichika (1999): "Max Weber und Ernst Troeltsch in Japan. Die Rezeption ihrer Werke bei Maruyama Masao". In: *Max Weber und das moderne Japan*. Edited by Wolfgang Mommsen and Wolfgang Schwentker. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 481–98.

Yoshida, Masatomi (1984). *Sengo shisōron* (Theory on postwar thought). Tokyo: Aoki Shoten.

## Further translations

Maruyama, Masao (1963/1969) [1949]: *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*. Edited by Ivan Morris. London: Oxford University Press.

Maruyama, Masao (1974) [1952]: *Studies in the Intellectual History of Tokugawa Japan*. Transl. by Mikiso Hane. Tokyo: University of Tokyo Press.

Maruyama, Masao (1990) [1946-1982]: *Le Radici dell'Espansionismo. Ideologie del Giappone Moderno. Prefazione di Shūichi Katō*. Torino: Edizioni della Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli.

Maruyama, Masao (1997) [1992]: *Loyalität und Rebellion*. Edited by Wolfgang Schamoni and Wolfgang Seifert. München: Iudicium.

Maruyama, Masao (2012) [1947-1949]: *Freiheit und Nation in Japan. Ausgewählte Aufsätze 1936–1949, Band 2*. Edited by Wolfgang Seifert. München: Iudicium.

Maruyama, Masao (2018) [1952]: *Essais sur l'histoire de la pensée politique au Japon*. Préface de Geraldine Muhlmann, traduction française et annotations de Jaques Joly. Paris: Les Belles Lettres.