

## Max Weber and the reconfiguration of modernity

Colloquium, 1-3 September 2010, at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge

Today as never before our world is becoming increasingly “Weberian”. Fifty years ago “Weberian” used to mean a world of rationality and bureaucratic organisation with space open for communal and cultural emancipation. In recent decades many other, older senses of Weber’s universe have been staging a return: religion, civilizational conflict, power and rulership, nationhood, irrationalism, ultimate callings, flux and contingency.

As a specifically OECD conception of globalization founders, occidental rationalism – as the basis of modern capitalism – has been tested close to destruction. New world powers – China, India and the Asian economies - seize on core rationality structures for their own modernization: literacy, communication, science and technology, and versions of modern acquisitive capitalism. Less fortunate nations experience depths of *ressentiment* that have brought forth transformative political and religious movements.

The Weberian analytic remains as sharp and as serious as ever, but we are now presented with uncertainty in the viewpoints through which we evaluate the world. *Das Licht der großen Kulturprobleme ist weiter gezogen*. What in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was taken as canonical of Weber’s writings has now to be re-assessed.

The colloquium will take as its overarching themes the changing configurations of modernity and the new scholarship on Weber’s life and writings. It will be run in participatory seminar mode and be organised around the following four sessions:

1. Politics – rulership and democracy, rights and norms.
2. Economy and society – capitalism, religion and civilizational difference.
3. Science and the intellect – values, objectivity and the vocation of intellectuals.
4. Weberian biography – new narratives, new editions.

The conference will also mark the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Max Weber Studies*. For more information, go to <maxweberstudies.org> and <conference@britsoc.org>.

Please submit any proposed paper, with a short description, to Sam Whimster by email [s.whimster@londonmet.ac.uk](mailto:s.whimster@londonmet.ac.uk) before 1<sup>st</sup> May 2010.