

## “Light from the East”: How Max Weber and Rudolf Steiner Understood the Disenchanted Modern West

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Max Weber and Rudolf Steiner, two German thinkers at the turn of the twentieth century, have long been characteristic of two apparently divergent styles of thinking, namely, the rational (or scientific) and the irrational (or spiritual). However, these men were products of their time and came to similar conclusions about how western modernity had become disenchanted, entrapping humanity through technology and a specific type of narrowly focused rationality. In order to make sense of radical social and intellectual upheavals, they looked “East” to try and understand the historical trajectory of Western Europe, how it reached its perceived crisis, and how it could be liberated and/or re-enchanted. Comparing these seemingly disconnected thinkers is important because it reveals that they were not as different as we tend to assume. Their warnings about technology, the loss of shared values, and the rise of interpersonal conflicts are becoming increasingly relevant today. Furthermore, bringing Steiner’s ideas into the academic discussion by comparing them to Weber’s enables us to be more pluralist, open minded, and democratic scholars, rather than rejecting certain approaches based on false binary distinctions. Weber and Steiner are two thinkers who are thought to occupy opposing positions within such categorical binaries. This presentation will demonstrate that the individual histories of these two men are more closely and complexly related than a cursory or limited investigation would reveal.