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## **Weber's Fragmentation of Value: Political Responsibility in a World without Symbolic References**

**Abstract:** The main question that this paper discusses is whether we have permanently lost in modern times the link between politics and ethical reasoning. The aim is to show, through Max Weber's perspective, that we live in an era in which raising fundamental questions about the meaning and purposes of life is still vital despite the recently established realization that those questions have no logically imperative answer, but different meaningful answers, all equally valid. Weber is a key figure in this dialogue because he belonged in this school of modern thinkers who recognized that modernity brought along with enlightenment, reason, and science, the collapse of ultimate foundations. Nevertheless, his philosophy is not one that will easily resort to moral nihilism or relativism. For Weber, the fragmentation of values and the 'disenchantment' of the world can be met with a political attitude, which in a classical sense can reunite a society's ethical purposes and allow for its members to live meaningful lives. But according to him, this is neither a simple nor a permanent solution to our existential predicament. It demands charismatic leadership which should be able to offer the necessary ethical substance, if only temporarily, upon which legitimate authority can be created. It is Weber's strong belief that only a charismatic leader will be able to balance and reconcile a variety of ethical convictions with political responsibility and to synthesize the contradictory demands of the modern rationalized cosmos with the necessity of symbolic foundations for politics in such a 'disenchanted' world.

**Keywords:** politics, ethics, 'value-pluralism', 'nation-state', 'life-orders', existence, conviction, responsibility, charismatic.

### **1. The variety of conditions of existence and political organization: from classical to contemporary political philosophy**

For the ancients virtue or rightness in action was something good in itself; thus the unification of ethics and politics, according to their reasoning, should be explicated and conceived as a natural phenomenon. For the moderns, the arrival of Christianity has brought a new set of imperatives in ethical life in the form of obligations (deriving from obligations to God). These obligations usually dictated the separation of politics from ethics.<sup>1</sup> Thus, on the one hand, we have the classical rational way to true happiness of which politics is indispensable and, on the other, we have the authoritative prescriptions of Christian reason which are incompatible to politics. Then, as a reaction to the absolute prescriptions of Christianity, we have the contemporary skepticism according to which morality is irreducibly plural and thus the connection between politics with a comprehensive system of ethics is pointless. One central question resulting from this process may therefore take this form: have we lost, in contemporary political philosophy, once and for all the ability to connect political action and thinking with ethical reasoning, or is it still possible to understand politics as first and foremost an activity which is inseparable from ethics? A key figure in answering this question is Max Weber. Weber's political thought has a peculiar form, in the sense that his work is sociologically oriented and thus his political terminology seems sometimes to derive from strict sociological categorizations, without the

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<sup>1</sup> J. RAWLS, *Lectures on the History of Moral Philosophy*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts and London 2000, pp. 1-2.

evaluative connotations which political philosophy is usually struggling with. Thus, «The importance and originality of Weber's political thought have at times been obscured by commentaries which have presented his work as a relatively straightforward contribution to a version of modern social science which eschews political controversy».<sup>2</sup>

However, this conception of politics, heavily based on sociological terminology, is far from meaning that Weber's political thought was restricted or reduced to sociological, scientific definitions of political action. In fact, Raymond Aron argues that Weber's own conception of the relation between science and politics constitutes the heart of his philosophical thought: «For Weber was always passionately interested in the question: What is the ideal type of political man? The ideal type of the scientist? How can one be both a politician and a professor? The question was for him personal as well as philosophical».<sup>3</sup> This is, in a sense, reminiscent of Plato's own personal and philosophical struggle towards a science of politics which would not only offer the chance for an objective education in politics and morality, but also, and as a consequence, an opportunity for philosophers –the scientists of antiquity– to become good politicians. It is therefore a valid aim to reconstruct Weber's works within the tradition of political philosophy which originates in the political and ethical thought of the classical philosophers. This is a long and sophisticated tradition, something which cannot be said of the history of sociological theory. The focus of this tradition, according to Wilhelm Hennis, is on «human nature and the process in which this nature is related with the social organization of life».<sup>4</sup>

Hence, behind the massive quantity and variety of Weber's works on sociology, political economy and the cultural orientations of social structures, there is a central question, a main theme, which subtly unites all those different and diverse sociological topics under one ontological, or existential in Aron's words,<sup>5</sup> aim: that is, the plurality of conditions in which humanity is self-organized, evaluates its own action and sets its ethical ends accordingly. It is not simply the Greek question of how to live, but the question of how to live with people who are of a different authoritative and salvationist religion,<sup>6</sup> and with people who conceive politics as the means to different ultimate ethical ends. We must therefore not lose sight of the fact that Weber's aim is related to a concern with human beings and the quality of their existence (the political problem has always been *how to live*). This means that overall the different disciplines within which Weber developed his thought are overridden by a conception of political science which he understands in the classical sense.<sup>7</sup> Hence, it is not strange that Weber's social theory revolves around 'higher' questions such as

what relations do ethics and politics actually have? Have the two nothing whatever to do with one another, as has occasionally been said? Or, is the reverse true: that the ethic of political conduct is identical with that of any other conduct? Should it really matter so little

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<sup>2</sup> P. LASSMAN, *introduction* in LASSMAN P. & SPEIRS R. (eds.), *Weber's Political Writings*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 1994, p. xi.

<sup>3</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents in Sociological Thought Vol. 2*, Anchor Books, Garden City, New York 1970, p. 222.

<sup>4</sup> K. TRIBE, *introduction* in HENNIS W., *Max Weber: Essays in Reconstruction*, Allen & Unwin, London 1988, pp. 14-15.

<sup>5</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 220.

<sup>6</sup> J. RAWLS, *Lectures*, p. 8.

<sup>7</sup> P. LASSMAN, *introduction*, in ID., *Weber's Political Writings*, p. xi. What is meant here by referring to the classical sense of 'political science' is the philosopher's aspiration to develop accounts of political organization, which will be based on 'scientific' evidence (either empirical or theoretical it does not matter), as a way of resolving perennial, that is 'higher', existential problems for the human species. In a few words, the classical approach, of which Weber is part as is the argument here, faces all political questions with an attitude which is rather focused, philosophically, on the overall conditions and purpose of human existence and meaning.

for the ethical demands on politics that politics operates with very special means, namely, power backed up by *violence*?<sup>8</sup>

All these questions are conducive to the argument that «Weber appears to stand at the end of a history of political science declining through the centuries from Plato to Aristotle, and at the beginning, as a stable point of departure, of all scientifically viable political science research».<sup>9</sup> With Plato, Weber shares the concern about the necessity for political education as an indispensable feature of a vigorous society,<sup>10</sup> because, he argues, «it is precisely the vocation of our science to say things people do not like to hear –to those above us, to those below us, and also to our own class».<sup>11</sup> He also shares the existential concern with regard to the possibility of politics as a science, or in other words, with the possibility of ever producing a stable and reliable guide so as to resolve the tensions between active and intellectual life. With Aristotle, Weber shares the same understanding of the significance that diversity has in analysing and evaluating social and political life. Aristotle's politics made the diversity of regimes of the Greek city-states intelligible, and through this diversity he attempted to pinpoint the objective ontological justifications of the ethical and political life of the *polis*. Weber's political sociology is involved with the same kind of questions on ethical legitimacy within the context of a universal history which, nevertheless, reveals an irreducible pluralism of social life.<sup>12</sup> However, Weber also has an interest in the essence of political society in terms of public affairs and political action. In this, he follows Machiavelli.

This is a breed of sociologists who are nostalgic for political action; Weber, like Machiavelli, is incontestably of this breed. He would have liked to engage in the political contest, to exercise power; he dreamed of being a statesman rather than a party leader.<sup>13</sup>

Like Machiavelli, Weber conceived statesmanship as the virtue of first understanding and then reconciling the contradictory demands of politics and ethics. Successful political activity was, for both thinkers, a more complex concept than their initial analyses implied. This complexity could only be understood after the systematic explication of the causal relation between what humans consider as 'good' and 'bad' and how far they are ready to go, practically, in order to achieve their ethical aims. At the end of the day, Weber is a political philosopher in the classical sense because his aim was to reveal the inner logic of human institutions.<sup>14</sup> This logic he found to be hidden in the ethical self-evaluations of human beings, evaluations which –as history reveals to us– are the cause for the variety of forms of social organization. It also indicates, as Weber believed, the importance of the individual and its power to change the world through self-reflection, which results into a realist approach to political affairs. Thus, Weber was not only a political philosopher in the classical sense, but also a politician in the modern sense. He was aware of the contradictions of political and ethical life and ready to take action in order to resolve or reconcile those contradictions.

Why and how, then, does Weber constitute the end of this classical line of political thought? He struggled with the old fundamental question those thinkers had struggled, i.e. 'what is the best political order and its relation to the human character?' And despite their different ontological and epistemological purposes and conceptions, he shared with Plato, Aristotle and Machiavelli a

<sup>8</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, in H. H. GERTH & C. WRIGHT MILLS (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Routledge, Oxon and New York 1998, pp. 118-119.

<sup>9</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, p. 91.

<sup>10</sup> M. WEBER, *The Nation State and Economic Policy*, in ID., *Weber's Political Writings*, p. 27.

<sup>11</sup> ID., p. 23.

<sup>12</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 289.

<sup>13</sup> ID., p. 282.

<sup>14</sup> ID., p. 290.

serious concern regarding the special ethical characteristics of political activity due to its direct and massive consequences on the quality of life of human beings. According to Hennis, Weber is the pivotal point in this tradition because he was the first who fully understood and studied all the fundamental 'highest questions', but at the same time he realized the necessity of abandoning not the questions themselves, but the desire for their permanent and universal answers. Hence, on the one hand, questions which cannot be answered with certainty are not 'idle' questions; they are essential, as well as our attempts to respond to them, which is what Weber attempted to do.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, the 'highest questions' cannot be comprehensively and consistently answered because Weber's epistemology is based on an empirical demonstration that men have lived in different societies as a result of different beliefs.<sup>16</sup> Weber's diverse sociological works are consistently permeated by this search for the essence of humanity amidst an endless plurality of situations, both practically and ethically speaking. Their main, unifying theme is therefore the study of 'the personality and the life orders'.<sup>17</sup>

The life orders, however, do possess a kind of inner regularity, an organized form of rationality that must be confronted by all who become involved in it. The tension between the regularities of these orders, 'spheres', 'values', [and] the fact that we 'are placed into various life-spheres, each of which is governed by different laws' [are] unavoidable. There is, however, a fundamental problem that is prior to these reciprocal tensions of the life orders: that *each* of these orders involves a demand, type, form, a variety of 'impositions' or perhaps opening-up of possibilities for future conduct, a formative tendency for 'personality'.<sup>18</sup>

The epistemological basis of Weber's social and value pluralism can be sufficiently explained when juxtaposed to Plato's own epistemological foundations of human activity and ethical purposes. Plato's attack on ethical and political pluralism began from the assumption that political reality should correspond to an ideal Form which is unitary and resolves the problem of the variety of moral evaluations (and thus the practical paradoxes that those entail). The ideal Forms represented the perfect essence of reality, or reality as it should have been, had humans not being prevented from capturing it due to their limited capacities to philosophize. Plato proposed thus a way for humans to expand their rational capacities and discover and apply the ideal Form and therefore redefine reality; his plan was extremely educational. Unfortunately, this solution presupposed that the ancient Greek *polis* was a universal normative concept, i.e. Plato, and Aristotle after him, assumed that the ethical end is in one way or another derived from the form of the current social organization.

Weber constructed his own understanding of value pluralism attempting to overcome this classical misconception, i.e. reality could not be limited to the temporal normative type of the Greek *polis*, or to whichever is the dominant social paradigm. On the contrary, as Weber inferred from this classical misconception, it is unrealistic to attempt to grasp ethical aims in their totality and perfect essence based on social phenomena. History has taught us that we use ideal-types of social actions, formations or institutions as a way to distil their principal features and help us understand them more easily. They are a kind of yardstick against which we compare and evaluate empirical particular cases. Ideal types only approximate to social reality; they do not and cannot mirror it faithfully. Thus we cannot somehow capture the 'real essence' of social reality because social reality does not possess a 'real essence'. Instead, it is constantly reconstructed or represented in various different ways depending on the conceptual apparatus through which we

<sup>15</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, p. 61, pp. 90-91.

<sup>16</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 234.

<sup>17</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, p. 70.

<sup>18</sup> ID., p. 72.

view it in the first place.<sup>19</sup> The conceptual apparatus is determined by various factors of which the general mindset, lifestyle or culture of a society is the most significant.

The ideal type as a yardstick of evaluation remained of course a Platonic idea. Social reality that must be evaluated against its own 'real essence' was one of the first fundamental philosophical problems that Plato posed. However, in his philosophical account facts were directly related to values or ethical judgements in an essential manner and the true definition of facts was the sufficient requirement for holistic solutions to all problems at the political, social and symbolic level. On his part, although Weber accepted the universality and the perennial nature of those problems, he thought that their solutions are neither universal nor permanent. Every time, the solution will be a different one, depending on the particular evaluative context in which the problem is raised. At the outset of his philosophy of value pluralism he makes a radical distinction between facts and values which entails a fundamental difference between the order of science and the order of value.<sup>20</sup> Thus the Platonic transition from the 'yardstick of evaluation' to the objective truth that politics must realize never takes place for Weber. If values and facts are distinguished then science and politics must be also distinguished. This does not mean that political science should not engage with existential and ethical questions; these are still there in, more or less, a similar form. It only means that political science should help us understand those questions; help us improve our lives upon this understanding; but abstain from imposing universal answers because there are none.

Weber affirmed the view that once the focus shifts to the variety of institutional forms, their types and sub-types and the equivalent pluralism of evaluations which lie behind those forms, a theoretical device such as the ideal-type is indispensable as a means of bringing some conceptual order to the chaos of reality. But this does not change the fact that ideal types are morally loaded constructs, and thus, scientifically speaking, they can only be relative types. So, social facts do not exist as things in their own right and accordingly they cannot be used normatively. What counts as a social fact is very much determined by the moral spectacles through which we view the world.<sup>21</sup> Thus, according to Aron, when you read Max Weber, you have the impression of a humanity who continues to raise fundamental questions about the meaning and purposes of life, questions which have no logically imperative answer, but different meaningful answers, all equally valid '—though, to be on the safe side, let us say equally valid in terms of premises that are all hazardous or arbitrary.'<sup>22</sup> However, despite his relativistic understanding of human history and, as a consequence, of the relationship between ethics and politics, Weber did not step away from seeking practical answers to the existential problems of humanity. This means, again, that we are placed on the most ancient ground of political science;

The mutual relation of 'conditions of existence' (political in the older context, social in the modern) and the quality ('virtue') of man [...] It should be read as 'the science of the whole man', countering a science of 'constructed' and 'unrealistic' beings, the 'mathematical ideal model' of 'abstract theory'.<sup>23</sup>

This analysis of Weber's epistemology, in combination with his existential concerns, raises the central paradox of political philosophy since Plato: how do we reconcile ethical pluralism with universally legitimate ontological aims which usually entail particular forms of political practice? It is this opposition between Weber's scientifically qualified value pluralism and his existential pursuits, which resulted into a new, modern conception of politics, despite Weber's classical approach to 'political science' as discussed above. This conception signified the transition from

<sup>19</sup> F. PARKIN, *Max Weber*, Routledge, London and New York 2002, pp. 28-29.

<sup>20</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 250.

<sup>21</sup> F. PARKIN, *Max Weber*, pp. 30-31.

<sup>22</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 271.

<sup>23</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, pp. 125-126.

classical holistic accounts of political philosophy to the more contemporary approaches of politics as an autonomous ethical order. The problem of 'virtue' within an endless variety of 'conditions of existence' seems to be insoluble and it is quite difficult to find a normative guide for action within such conditions. Weber's thought was revolving around the fact that the primary point of 'practical', 'moral' and 'social' sciences is no longer the political community in the ancient sense.<sup>24</sup> That is because the political community no longer existed. In addition, the fragmentation of value, or more correctly the realization of it, had led to 'the disenchantment of the world'. The realization of this 'disenchantment' meant that the traditional philosophical foundations of all political ideologies and doctrines were threatened by a relentless undermining of their own presuppositions.<sup>25</sup> The outcome of this 'disenchantment' is Weber's political realism. He says, "The final result of political action often, no, even regularly, stands in completely inadequate and often even paradoxical relation to its original meaning. This is fundamental to all history, a point not to be proved in detail here."<sup>26</sup>

It should not come as a surprise then that Weber belonged in this school of modern thinkers who recognized that modernity brought along with enlightenment, reason, and science, the collapse of ultimate foundations –a collapse that makes politics in a secular, post-metaphysical age look tragically groundless and uncertain.<sup>27</sup> Such an approach to politics and ethics compared to the normative tradition of political philosophy going back to Plato, does indeed seem to fall into a realist and descriptive strand of political sociology. Here, "The tensions and conflicts of the life orders become more intense, gain force, the more each is exposed to the 'dictate of consequentiality'.<sup>28</sup> Nevertheless, Weber attempts to overcome the pessimistic connotations of his own understanding of the worlds of politics and morality. Thus, his realism does not fully capture his theory of the political.<sup>29</sup> Instead, his political thought seems to reflect his inner oscillation between the world as essentially unethical and as fully ethical, but irrecoverably morally fragmented. Both paths, following Plato's reasoning, seem to lead to the same result, i.e. political *amoralism*. Thus, one of the main problems for Weber is how to respond to this *amoralism* without resorting to arbitrary ethical means.

## 2. Domination and the existential meaning: The ethical importance of the nation

According to Weber, now that the political community no longer existed, this *amoralism* is represented in the form of the 'ethically neutral' contemporary market.

Domination through a constellation of interests had an ethically neutral character, that is, it was not susceptible to ethical interpretation. This resistance, opacity, of the world in which we are 'placed' to ethical interpretation is the 'fate' with which Weber's work struggles.<sup>30</sup>

The market signifies the institutionalized transition from classical conceptions of the 'good life' and politics which are strongly connected to the community of life to the contemporary 'disenchanted world'. Value pluralism entails a rationalization of life in terms of interest and pure utility, in the place of the classical rationalization in terms of reasonable shared conceptions of the 'good life'. Utility is the dominant value of the apparently ethically neutral market. Thus, we

<sup>24</sup> ID., p. 109.

<sup>25</sup> P. LASSMAN, *introduction*, in ID., *Weber's Political Writings*, p. xix.

<sup>26</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 117.

<sup>27</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary: Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, and Hannah Arendt*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2008, p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, pp. 101-102.

<sup>29</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, p. 102.

infer, the market is naturally related to the cultural characteristics of the modern 'disenchanted' cosmos. In such a rationalized cosmos ethical demands with ontological purposes are impossible and utility becomes the substitute, or more correctly the excuse, for moral arbitrariness.<sup>31</sup> Hence, "The rationalization of Western culture, brought by science and modern capitalism, means, among other things, that "there are no mysterious incalculable forces that come into play" and consequently "one can in principle, master all things by calculation".<sup>32</sup>

Weber's conception of value pluralism and the consequent 'disenchanted world' seemingly leaves the discussion about the essence and purposes of politics at a dead end. «How do we make political evaluations and set political aims within a world where political economy has taken the place of political philosophy?» This is the question that brings to the fore all the ethical contradictions and moral conflicts that a politician, a citizen, and the moral character in general, will have to face in the modern world. In other words, the theme of 'the personality and life orders' raises, once again the problem of virtue (moral excellence), or integrity (moral consistency) in the more contemporary terms of value fragmentation. This problem is now not merely difficult to solve in practical terms (like it was for the classical thinkers), but essentially insoluble at the philosophical level. The 'life order' which amplifies the paradox for the 'personality' and indicates clearly our philosophic inability to offer a way out for the active person is no other than that of politics. There is a tragic tone implied in Weber's political thought related to the predicament of the moral character in a world where politics is ethically neutral and political economy seems to override political thought.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, one has to make a choice and try to confront the worst consequences of this realism.

[B]ecause of this fact, the serving of a cause must not be absent if action is to have inner strength. Exactly what the cause, in the service of which the politician strives for power and uses power, looks like a matter of faith. The politician may serve national, humanitarian, social, ethical, cultural, worldly, or religious ends [...] However, some kind of faith must always exist. Otherwise, it is absolutely true that the curse of the creature's worthlessness overshadows even the externally strongest political success.<sup>34</sup>

In Weber's philosophy of science there is seemingly no leading value upon which one can choose to pursue this or that course of practical action. To search for such a value is, as mentioned previously, to seek the inner connection between his practical-political views and positions and his 'purely scientific' approach to sociological themes.<sup>35</sup> According to Andreas Kalyvas, for Weber, neither structural economic imperatives nor objective historical laws nor a blind faith in scientific reason and universal morality would ever relieve modern individuals from their responsibility to decide about the political form of their collective existence. This was a matter of political struggle, decision, and contingent social-historical factors.<sup>36</sup> Hence, the paradox: on the one hand, we have the admission that the symbolic foundations of politics and therefore of power are threatened; on the other hand, that societies must fight in order to re-establish those necessary foundations. But they can only do this using the same power which is now lacking any stable ethical justification.

The broadening of the subject-matter of *philosophical* reflection [...] has led many of us laymen to believe that the old questions about the nature of human understanding are no longer the ultimate and central questions of philosophy [...] What we find is a *chaos* of different evaluative criteria, some eudaemonistic, some ethical; often both are present

<sup>31</sup> ID., p. 98.

<sup>32</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 66.

<sup>33</sup> M. WEBER, *The Nation State and Economic Policy*, p. 16.

<sup>34</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 117.

<sup>35</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, pp. 165-166.

<sup>36</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 18.

together in an obscure identification of one with the other. One finds value judgements being made everywhere without compunction [...] it is the exception rather than the rule for the person making a judgement to clarify *in his own mind*, and for others, the ultimate subjective core of which he proceeds to judge the events he is observing.<sup>37</sup>

The same clarification of value judgment in one's own mind must also take place in political conduct. Fulfilling this kind of responsibility was the political answer to the fragmentation of value and demanded a certain kind of charisma. Charismatic politics, Weber argued, must be able to transcend ideological plurality and social fragmentations in the name of a new unitary worldview.<sup>38</sup> This transcendence requires both the understanding of the peculiar ethical demands of the political 'order' and the understanding of one's self in relation to those demands. The system of values is therefore the outcome of power struggles and vice versa. The relationship between power and value is reciprocal. This means that the exercise of power always presupposes certain forms of substantive, but subjective meanings and ethical values.

It rests on a foundation of shared maxims and social imaginary significations. The symbolic struggles among antagonistic charismatic movements aim precisely at producing competing discourses and beliefs for justifying the founding of new structures of authority and of new political and social thought.<sup>39</sup>

A movement is, nevertheless, charismatic only when this self-reflection and understanding is prior to the unifying political act. It is therefore an intentional movement of self-evaluation and redefinition of society's ethical norms.

However, and despite Weber's conception of charismatic domination –an ethical conception of exercising power sufficient enough to compensate for the lack of power's symbolic foundations–

[t]he implications of this shifting of perspective from the substantive content and ends of the political to its mere use of physical coercion are not difficult to see [...] There are neither specific values nor intrinsic ends that the state has to realize nor ethical concerns unique to its nature.<sup>40</sup>

This is the unavoidable consequence of Weber's value pluralism and the origins of his political realism. Weber, nonetheless, was concerned for the practical consequences of his own conclusion, because social and individual activity within politics was for him an essential feature for beings who wished to determine their own fates. Weber's realism does not mean that in his political thought it does not matter whether politics lacks ethical causes or not. He has been described as Nietzschean when it comes to values. He distinguishes between two types of rationality: instrumental rationality (toward achieving a goal without values) and moral rationality (referring to moral, purposeful aims). Weber argues that although there can be arguments about values in terms of instrumental rationalism these are ultimately insoluble. The latter insight means politics is an insoluble struggle for rule to achieve value aims. Moreover, every individual's value rationality is ultimately valid, thus legitimate. Yet, the validity of this individual autonomy in terms of rationally determining one's own ethical causes and aims has to be achieved in the context of modern circumstances often guided by the realization of the 'disenchanted world'.

Because of the fragmentation of values and the 'disenchantment' of the world, there is an essential contradiction between political ends and ethical aims. Political ends can only be achieved through the use of power and its justification; but justification depends upon moral

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<sup>37</sup> M. WEBER, *The Nation State and Economic Policy*, pp. 18-19.

<sup>38</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 24.

<sup>39</sup> ID., p. 26-27.

<sup>40</sup> ID., p. 30.



evaluations so it is inevitably connected with human ethical aims. This justification and legitimacy of politics are, however, concepts with variable meaning and sometimes not easily comprehensible because of the variety of human values and their equal status; in other words because of moral relativism. Weber, therefore, had to bring together the inexorable fact of domination with the existential search for meaning and the quest for legitimizing one's position within a system of social stratification, considering the power inequalities will always persist and that our ability to justify them will always be limited by value pluralism.<sup>41</sup>

According to Weber, because all action is in final analysis culturally oriented and substantiated, it is necessary to transcend, in one sense, this conception of the irreducible value pluralism, and recreate –charismatically– political action based on a 'higher' cause. Despite his understanding of politics as a 'life order' within innumerable other spheres of action, Weber believes that *amoralism* –which seems to be an outcome of the irreducible value pluralism– within politics can be destructive for humanity. Even if the rules of conduct within politics are a relative thing, autonomously constituted and separate from other ethical considerations, politics has a particular characteristic which assigns to it a universal dimension. This characteristic is for Weber the ability to monopolize the use of violence. Thus, we could argue, although we can have a variety of equally important questions about the ethical aims and principles of different societies in different times, there is usually only one question –however much it may be diversely abstracted and formulated in different contexts– regarding the relation between morality and power. It is this question and its consequences for the quality of human existence that Weber conceived as the definitive and exceptional feature of the 'order of politics', which in turn required a peculiar corresponding theory about the 'political personality'. It is of the utmost importance then when he refers to 'the cause, in the service of which the politician strives for power and uses power', because it is the quality of this cause which will determine the quality of social and individual existence. What was then the cause which was worth this passionate devotion in Weber's political thought?

We wish, so far as it is in our power, to constitute external relations in a manner not directed to the immediate happiness of men and women, but rather so that, exposed to the necessities of an unavoidable struggle for existence, the best in them is preserved, the qualities both physical and spiritual which we would like to preserve for the nation.<sup>42</sup>

The nation is for Weber *the* life order that provides what can be regarded as the greatest scope for the central theme as this has been analysed so far, i.e. the options of the personality within this extreme variety of life conditions. However, in line with his own conception of value pluralism, the nation does not represent a transcending universal purpose; it is not an 'indubitable value'.<sup>43</sup> The nation as a modern type can only be interpreted in combination to its necessary supplement, that is, the state. The nation-state is a sociological type of the modern era which succinctly illustrates the current correlations between power and ethics. Thus, «Sociologically, the state cannot be defined in terms of its ends [...] Ultimately, one can define the modern state sociologically only in terms of the specific *means* peculiar to it, as to every political association, namely, the use of physical force».<sup>44</sup> Thus Weber proceeds to the definition of the state as the sole source of the 'right' to use violence:

Hence, politics for us means striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state... when a cabinet minister or an official is said to be a 'political' official, or when a decision is said to be politically determined, what is always meant is that interests in the distribution, maintenance, or

<sup>41</sup> ID., p. 47.

<sup>42</sup> M. WEBER, quoted in HENNIS W., *Max Weber*, p. 83.

<sup>43</sup> ID., p. 83.

<sup>44</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 77.

transfer of power are decisive for answering the questions and determining the decision or the official's sphere of activity. He who is active in politics strives for power either as a means in serving other aims, ideal or egoistic, or as 'power for power's sake,' that is, in order to enjoy the prestige-feeling that power gives. Like the political institutions historically preceding it, the state is a relation of men dominating men, a relation supported by means of legitimate (i.e. considered to be legitimate) violence. If the state is to exist, the dominated must obey the authority claimed by the powers that be.<sup>45</sup>

We should repeat here that this definition of the state does not mean that Weber's aim is to understand politics in a limited sense. He remains true to his own 'scientific' approach which requires an analysis clear of subjective evaluations and desires to avoid any teleological attributions to the sociological type of the state. Violence is all there is as a definitive feature. The modern state is a compulsory association which organizes domination; this domination is categorized in different types according to the type of its maintenance and organization, the way it uses the administrative means and, of course, according to the way it is being ethically justified. The state «has been successful in seeking to monopolize the legitimate use of physical force as a means of domination within a territory».<sup>46</sup>

Ethical justification of the physical force means legitimate domination. This conception is very important for understanding Weber's political thought. For him, if anything is 'vulgar', it is the result of the fashion of exploiting ethics as a means of 'being in the right'.<sup>47</sup> Thus, even if the concept of the 'state' is another sociological type with no intrinsic value as such, it becomes ethically important because it is where the modern incarnation of the struggle between politics and ethics takes place. Their relationship is now conceived as the relationship between power and legitimacy. Legitimacy is then a matter of charismatic persuasion, precisely because we now know of the relative value of ethical aims. The charismatic leader should be able to offer the necessary ethical substance, if only temporarily, upon which legitimate authority can be created. Hence, the charismatic leader is the political personality who can avoid the temptation for power politics. «Power politics, impoverishes politics because it reduces it to a "convictionless cultivation of purely formal maintenance of the state without *any* substantive goal».<sup>48</sup>

«The state itself has no *intrinsic* value in that it is a purely technical instrument for the realization of other values from which alone it derives its value, and it can retain this value only as long as it does not seek to transcend this auxiliary status».<sup>49</sup> Therefore, although the state does not constitute an autonomous value, it does have the highest ethical significance because it organizes and realizes all other values. The form and essence of this organization will result into the quality of the nation. 'A nation', Weber argues, «forgives if its interests have been damaged, but no nation forgives if its honour has been offended, especially by a bigoted self-righteousness».<sup>50</sup> This argument indicates how and why Weber attributed the highest ethical significance to the concept of the nation-state despite his instrumental definition of it. The monopoly of physical force by the state determines and is determined in a reciprocal relationship with the specific values of the particular society. If this monopoly of force effectively reorganizes and realizes those cultural values in a manner which will resolve their basic tensions and contradictions, then a national identity is created and further cultivated into integration. This identity concentrates and integrates the national sentiments in a way that provides for the re-enchantment of the world. It provides an overarching moral ideal for social unification. «For us

<sup>45</sup> ID., p. 78.

<sup>46</sup> ID., pp. 82-83.

<sup>47</sup> ID., pp. 118.

<sup>48</sup> M. WEBER quoted in KALYVAS A., *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 37.

<sup>49</sup> M. WEBER quoted in S. H. KIM, *Max Weber's liberal nationalism*, in "History of Political Thought", 23 (3/2002), p. 437.

<sup>50</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 118.

the *nation state* is not something vague which, as some believe, is elevated even higher, the more its nature is shrouded in mystical obscurity. Rather, it is the worldly organization of the nation's power». <sup>51</sup>

The diptych of the nation-state reflects Weber's attempt to synthesize the contradictory demands of the modern rationalized cosmos –wherein economic forces have become dominant and express themselves in the market– with the necessity of symbolic foundations for politics in such a 'disenchanted' world. The concept of the state is clearly differentiated from that of the nation. The nation is a cultural community that is held together by the powerful bonds of language and the moral sentiments transmitted by the mother tongue. However, although the nation and the state are two different and separate things they do require one another for mutual survival. Nations need to become states in order to defend the boundaries of the cultural community against erosion or assault. States need to become nations in order to lay the foundations of internal unity. <sup>52</sup> This unity is a matter of legitimacy. In a post-religious age, the search for meaning takes the specific form of the pursuit of political legitimacy. Thus, the stability and continuity of the modern order of the nation-state depend on the enduring belief in its validity and normativity. <sup>53</sup> This continuity and stability are fundamentally, existentially necessary for the moral self-reflection of the personality. The moral integrity of the human character is only possible when the unavoidable variety of 'value-orders' has been reconciled and overridden by a 'higher' cause. This is why the term integrity presumes an understanding of moral attitude with consistency and constancy, which are nonetheless unlikely in a fragmented world that constantly poses contradictory demands to the human personality.

This is the epitome of Weber's political thought in relation to his scientifically grounded value pluralism: the universal and unchanging problem of political philosophy is raised when we conceive of politics without ethical substance, because we have beforehand rejected the universal validity of values. The usual outcome of such a situation is political *amoralism*, which in more common terms potentially means abuse and misuse of power. According to Weber, since we accept the perennial nature of this problem we can resolve it using the resources at our disposal within the particular social paradigm we find ourselves. However, before we are able to do such a thing it is also required that we examine and understand our particular social paradigm against universal history. This is necessary because 'The behaviour of men in various societies is intelligible only in the context of their general conception of existence'. <sup>54</sup> It is necessary in order to capture both the relativity of our social paradigm in terms of cultural values and the steps we need to take politically in relation to those values. For Weber, the contextual and thus temporal solution to the universal problem of politics and ethics in the modern era is the *nation-state* when lead by a charismatic leadership. 'While aspiring to expose the normative deficit and moral arbitrariness of the existing order, charismatic movements have to rationalize and systematize their alternative views of the world to make them more appealing to various needs of the ruled'. <sup>55</sup>

The state is the culmination of modern instrumental rationalization. It was created in the first place in order to administrate the 'ethically neutral' market in an organized and efficient manner within a given territory and in competition with other states. Its conception as an ethically neutral tool represents the modern inclination to scientific objectivity and efficacy. The equivalent of this objectivity in social action is impartiality. Thus, the quality of the personality of those who serve the state (public servants) must be related to those two terms: objectivity and impartiality. The nation, on the other hand, reflects the human ontological need for an ethically substantive symbolic reference. It is thus the moral supplement of the state and the field of conduct for charismatic leaders. Without it the state is not only neutral, but it becomes pointless

<sup>51</sup> M. WEBER, *The Nation State and Economic Policy*, p. 16.

<sup>52</sup> F. PARKIN, *Max Weber*, p. 72.

<sup>53</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, pp. 54-55.

<sup>54</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 257.

<sup>55</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 60.

and dangerous, because organized violence without a moral basis leads to domination of power for power's sake. In this sense, the nation has ethical priority over the state. The nation therefore by its nature poses subjective demands to the apparently impartial administration of the state. The quality of those who pose these demands must be different from the quality of those who serve the state. This is the difference between politicians and public servants. The politicians must have the ability to calculate and promote the interests of the nation without having recourse to scientifically proven objective moral guides. Impartiality is not an option as a general normative source because politicians *de facto* engage in arbitrary moral arguments. Thus, they must be able to balance the subjective demands of the nation with the impartial attitudes of the state in order to achieve the symbolic re-orientation; and they must do this without reducing everything to utility.

### 3. The first fundamental distinction between ethics and politics: The 'ethic of conviction' and the 'ethic of responsibility'

Weber is clearly more interested in the qualities and characteristics of the politician than in the moral character of the public servant; this also indicates the ethical superiority of the nation over the state, the neutrality of which is conceived as potentially very dangerous. The political personality is ethically a more complex case because the ability to calculate the nation's interest without drifting to tactics of political *amoralism* requires a very particular and exceptional set of abilities. This set constitutes the essence of statesmanship, the charismatic domination which creates the conditions for social unification. Thus, Weber, in order for us to understand which are the qualities that make for a good politician, reduces his value pluralism to a categorization of moral values within two fundamental types that mirror the general tension between politics and ethics. These types represent the ethic of responsibility and the ethic of conviction, or the absolute ethic of ultimate ends. According to Aron these two terms might be illustrated by referring to Machiavelli –or a particular interpretation of him– on the one hand, and Kant on the other. The ethic of responsibility is one that the man of action cannot ignore. It consists in placing one-self in a situation, imagining the consequences of possible decisions, and trying to introduce into the fabric of events an act that will lead to certain desired results or consequences. This means, that an 'ethic of responsibility governs a means-ends interpretation of action'<sup>56</sup> and fits the account of republican ethics (as opposed to Christian ethics). The ethic of conviction, on the other hand, is the morality that urges each of us to act according to his moral intuitions, without explicit or implicit reference to the consequences. This ethic fits the account of Christian ethics and its philosophical expressions. According to the ethic of conviction, if someone 'has no other goal than to act in conformity with his conscience and refuses to take a specific action because his conscience impedes him, if the refusal itself is the object of his decision, then sublime or ridiculous, it matters little –he becomes irrefutable.'<sup>57</sup>

Within the endless variety of values and 'orders of life' politics, Weber admits, is a special one and cannot be dismissed with the simple observation that all values are equally valued. In other words ethical realism does not and should not lead directly to a concept of unqualified political realism<sup>58</sup> because in practice this is usually translated into political *amoralism*. The personality or moral character of those who will engage in politics is, then, of greater importance than in other spheres of human activity. The crucial feature is of course the use of power and its consequences. The absolute ethic does not ask for consequences. With regards to its ultimate

<sup>56</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 252.

<sup>57</sup> ID., p. 255.

<sup>58</sup> Hard or unqualified political realism means that the moral and practical consequences of political conduct are not recognized as exceptional. Instead politics should be regarded ethically like all other spheres of action with its own ethical rules and disconnected from wider or more ordinary moral concerns. This conception of political ethics is unavoidably related to power politics and political *amoralism*.

ends 'it is all or nothing' and if one's goal is to become a saint then one must be acting saintly in all occasions. So the question that arises is how we can reconcile this reasoning with the necessities that the use of power imposes upon political action.

We must be clear about the fact that all ethically oriented conduct may be guided by one of two fundamentally differing and irreconcilably opposed maxims: conduct can be oriented to an 'ethic of ultimate ends' or to an 'ethic of responsibility'. This is not to say that an ethic of ultimate ends is identical with irresponsibility, or that an ethic of responsibility is identical with unprincipled opportunism [...] However, there is an abysmal contrast between conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of ultimate ends –that is, in religious terms, 'The Christian does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord'– and conduct that follows the maxim of an ethic of responsibility, in which case one has to give an account of foreseeable results of one's action [...] a man who believes in an ethic of responsibility takes account of precisely the average deficiencies of people.<sup>59</sup>

Clearly, in Weber's view, there is no morality of responsibility which is not inspired by moral convictions, since in final analysis, the morality of responsibility is a search for effectiveness, and the question arises: effectiveness for what? It is equally clear that the morality of conviction, or of the ultimate ends, cannot be the morality of the state and, certainly, a morality of conviction in its purer form –one must be saintly in everything– cannot be the morality of the man who enters into the game of politics.<sup>60</sup> For Weber, from no ethics in the world can it be concluded when and to what extent the ethically good purpose 'justifies' the ethically dangerous means and ramifications.<sup>61</sup> However there is one thing granted: that the decisive means for politics is violence. Therefore, a sense of responsibility acquires more gravity in the sphere of politics; power equals responsibility and from that we can infer the pre-eminent qualities of the politician i.e. passion, a feeling of responsibility, a sense of proportion and so on. In addition, the ethic of responsibility allows us to identify the vices of the political character the major of which, according to Weber, is vanity that entails a misuse and abuse of power; for him the greatest irresponsibility is that one enjoys power merely for power's sake.<sup>62</sup> As we have already argued, 'power politics' for its own sake, without commitment to a cause, was for Weber empty and absurd.<sup>63</sup>

For Weber, despite this exposition against the 'ethic of conviction' in politics as irresponsible, the abuse or misuse of power has been explained so far in terms of action that lacks ethical substance. In addition, he clearly states that the 'ethic of conviction' does not necessarily mean irresponsibility. The same goes for the 'ethic of responsibility' which can sometimes become sheer opportunism; there is a matter of degree. Thus, it should be useful to avoid reducing all political action to either one of these two types of values. The basic tension between the two ethics reflects the more general, complex and conflicting demands of morality upon the active, and in particular the political, personality. The categorization between the two ethics is a necessary step to understanding the peculiar demands that the active, and in particular the political, life makes on the moral character. It is necessary to understand that when other people may face the consequences of one's choice –which is always the case in politics, thus its special nature– one must learn to discern where the principle of conscience meets the consequence of action. Thus, even though, essentially, in all human conduct, responsibility requires a prior cause, principle or conviction upon which it can be realized and, vice versa, conviction requires responsibility in order to retain its moral value, in politics being responsible is ultimately more important than being devoted to a cause. Weber argues,

<sup>59</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, pp. 120-121.

<sup>60</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 255.

<sup>61</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, p. 121.

<sup>62</sup> ID., pp. 115-117.

<sup>63</sup> P. LASSMAN, *introduction*, in ID., *Weber's Political Writings*, p. xxii.

«It is ‘the specific means of legitimate violence as such in the hand of human associations which determines the peculiarity of all ethical problems in politics. Whosoever contracts with violent means for whatever ends –and every politician does– is exposed to its specific consequences».<sup>64</sup>

Passion, a feeling of responsibility, a sense of proportion are all virtues reminiscent of Aristotle, and the way the politician must reconcile them reminds us the Platonic conception of the contradictory forces in the soul. The fundamental difference is that, now, there is no universally acceptable normative guide for those virtues. Thus, despite the distinctive ethical burden of politics (because of its relation to organized violence), there is no ethical authority, in Weber’s view, for the politician to consult. «He must rely on his own judgements and, ultimately, seek to reconcile, as best as he can, the demands of principle and the likely consequences».<sup>65</sup> This combination is obviously more difficult in the modern ‘disenchanted’ world. There is neither an ideal Form to be discovered nor a teleological conception of man as a political animal. Even the Machiavellian-republican conception of the good is merely one amongst others. Thus, a deep ethical self-reflection is required in addition to the understanding of the world as ethically groundless. Nevertheless, one must find a passionate conviction and guide it with sober realism. The problem that no cause can be ‘proved’, simply by intellectual means, to be superior to any other is irrelevant. All that seems to matter is that there must be a cause to supply the inner meaning essential for genuine political conduct.<sup>66</sup> ‘What goes to make up the “genuine men and women” who can follow the “vocation of politics”?’ It is once again at root the capacity of devotion to the matter at hand “if action is to have inner strength”.’<sup>67</sup>

#### 4. Weber’s solution: The responsible leader and the necessary ethical re-orientation

There is an ambiguity in Weber’s view of politics as an ethically special ‘life order’ because this would be against his own conception of value pluralism based on universal history. The vocation of politics initially seems to be another profession amongst many others. However, it is clear in his arguments that politics is an ethical sphere which is not suitable for every personality and therefore it should not be explained purely in terms of value pluralism. If this is the case, it might mean that there is a higher ethic, which is not the ethic of the ordinary man, governing the action of the statesman –provided that the political man is guided by an overarching collective aim.<sup>68</sup> Weber never said this directly, but it was the only solution he found to his existential concerns. In any case, it is in the field of political action that a human being can demonstrate how to live a life worth living, even if this evaluation is merely subjective –besides it cannot be anything else. The responsible leader is in this sense an amplified version of the responsible man in his daily affairs. The responsible leader must be able to resolve conflicts and redefine values in order to give meaning to social life, sometimes knowing that social life is meaningless. This kind of leaders must be willing to elevate national interests above sectional interests;<sup>69</sup> they must be willing to overcome the material, political and cultural fragmentation of the political society; but most importantly they must be convinced themselves that it is worth fighting for a cause, even if they acknowledge the plurality of all causes. This is the only way to ensure that leadership will

<sup>64</sup> M. WEBER, *Politics as a Vocation*, p.124.

<sup>65</sup> P. LASSMAN, *introduction*, in ID., *Weber’s Political Writings*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>66</sup> ID., p. xxiii.

<sup>67</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, p. 72.

<sup>68</sup> R. ARON, *Main Currents Vol. 2*, p. 252.

<sup>69</sup> F. PARKIN, *Max Weber*, p. 106.

not degenerate into power politics, which is in a way the only moral certainty universal history has taught us.

[Weber's] main objection against power politics does not target its limitless and arbitrary character but its symbolic deficit and its inability to influence collective representations and to realize cultural values. Power politics, by seeking power for the sake of power, consists of a waste of power as such. The means of politics have become the goals of the politician. This overturning of the means-ends relationship involves a use of power that lacks the appropriate symbolic support and fails to influence value orientations. In that sense, it lacks a "cultural mission" and suffers from a huge legitimation deficit.<sup>70</sup>

The cultural mission in this modern era for Weber is, as mentioned previously, nationalistic in its essence. In the 'disenchanted' conditions of the modern world, where the political community does not longer exist in its classical sense, the only alternative for symbolic reorientation at a mass level is the nation. Thus, the general purpose for the statesman must be the creation of public citizenship in combination with a general national patriotism. The ultimate end of politics seems then to be a political education which will infuse the virtues of the responsible leader to the rest of the citizens. Hence, despite the irreducible variety of values and 'life orders', there will always be some personalities that can put the public interest above parochial, private and class interests. From this argument we can infer Weber's conception of political science as an overriding science in the classical sense. If everything else is relative, politics is still the only stable point of reference in terms of ethical organization that humanity can rely upon. The carrier of power, i.e. the state, may be ethically neutral but the way *we* decide to use this power will never cease to have an intrinsic value. This organization may differ from time to time but the political mission in an abstract sense is always the same.

Weber's attempt to connect political action to a clear set of ethical demands so as to avoid confusion and ineffectiveness is clearly outlined in the above arguments. Starting from the new –at his time– concepts of bureaucracy, modern democracy and the expert officialdom, he perceived this great and ineluctable process that lead to professional politics as the outcome of modern rationalization. He thereafter had to reinstate the problem that classical political philosophy struggled with; that is, the tensions between politics and ethics and the demands of those tensions on the moral character of those who are involved in politics. As analyzed above, the problem was now more difficult because Weber had to take into consideration two additional factors: first, an objective approach to universal history which reveals that there are no standard values upon which we can pursue political goals; and second the right to use violence on a massive scale, which urgently required for a renewal of the symbolic foundations of politics. This renewal was of course a major problem, precisely because 'moral fragmentation' and the 'disenchantment of the world' had fuelled a new powerful tradition of skepticism in political and ethical matters.

The solution Weber suggests in this modern case of the problematic relationship between politics and ethics concentrates all those features that will allow for the transition from the classical approaches to the problem to the more contemporary accounts of it. Weber's philosophical analysis of the relation between ethics and politics is based upon the agenda of his time, namely, the debate between consequentialism and ethical absolutism considering the peculiar factor of the state's right to organized violence. Nevertheless, the essence of his argument is in continuity with the classical purposes of political philosophy. He, like Plato, Aristotle and Machiavelli, also accepts the unavoidability of the corrupting effects of politics on the moral character and he attempts to prepare political candidates for the moral strength and readiness that the conduct of political power demands. «The deepest core of the *socio-political*

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<sup>70</sup> A. KALYVAS, *Democracy and the Politics of Extraordinary*, p. 36.

problem' he argues 'is not the question of the *economic* situation of the *ruled* but of the political qualifications of the *ruling* and *rising* classes». <sup>71</sup>

Nonetheless, Weber does indeed constitute the transitional point to contemporary political philosophy, especially in terms of understanding political morality in relation to our newly conceived account of ethics as permanently fragmented and plural. What Weber proposed, with certainty, was that the variety of 'life orders', and thus 'orders of value', is endless. It is not only politics versus Christianity. The contemporary background of moral and political philosophy is more complex including the concepts of pluralism, the modern state and modern science, all of which entail a tension between politics and ethics. <sup>72</sup> Thus principle and utility can be used as general guides but they cannot be sufficient by themselves for the human personality. Judgement becomes therefore more difficult and, accordingly, the concept of choosing without being ethically prepared and certain becomes more and more significant. Hence, Weber was one of the first modern theorists who rejected the debate between deontology and utilitarianism in politics as non-realistic. Instead, his attempt is based on the reality that political responsibility demands a compromise between an absolutist and a consequentialist approach. According to him, the power that is now available requires special philosophical attention, although the basic argument has not been changed radically since antiquity. In politics it is sometimes necessary, in order to behave honourably, to use force. The intrinsic logic of either consequentialist or deontological theories is not sufficient for the good politician and the statesman.

Principles of obligation and utility are the philosophical tools used to explain the modern rationalized world. However, as Hennis argues about Weber's understanding of politics, the real nobility of humans is not defined by 'need' and 'interest' or 'right', but rather by strength and capacity for dedication. "This capacity can be misused; who would dispute it?" <sup>73</sup> But in Weber's ancient sense of political thought there is always the question of unfolding the power of the soul, an unfolding that appeared to be possible not on an individual basis, but rather communally and associatively. This ancient sense requires the forcing of the individual into the political order, allowing him to participate in its responsibilities and risks. <sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, and despite his ancient sense of political thought, Weber conceived and explained what would constitute the basis of political conduct in the contemporary world. The lack of a stable ethical set of guiding principles either in teleological, deontological or utilitarian terms has irrevocably transformed political action into a constant struggle of choices based upon arbitrary and dilemmatic situations. It is this transformation that has rendered the ethical side of politics as ultimately incomprehensible nowadays, and has therefore made politics susceptible to what all classical thinkers were afraid of; the abuse of political power.

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<sup>71</sup> M. WEBER, *The Nation State and Economic Policy*, p. 26.

<sup>72</sup> J. RAWLS, *Lectures*, p. 5.

<sup>73</sup> W. HENNIS, *Max Weber*, p. 196.

<sup>74</sup> ID., p. 196-197.