

# Max Weber on Democracy: Can the People Have Political Power in Modern States?

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Max Weber was notoriously skeptical about the applicability of ancient conceptions of democracy to political life in modern states. In his later work in particular he increasingly emphasized the unfeasibility of anything but ‘plebiscitary leadership democracy’ under contemporary political conditions. His claims about the indispensability of leadership and the ineradicable role of parties in modern political life played an essential role in the development of Robert Michels’ views about political parties.<sup>1</sup> They provided the foundation for Joseph Schumpeter’s “elitist” theory of democracy.<sup>2</sup> And they had at least some influence on Carl Schmitt’s more vociferously anti-democratic views.<sup>3</sup>

But Weber also (unlike Schmitt), had a powerful interest in establishing the extent to which human freedom, or autonomy, could be preserved in modern societies. As we shall see, freedom, for Weber, meant the capacity for meaningful action. And he was specifically concerned about the diminishing potential of human beings to realize this kind of freedom in political life.<sup>4</sup> Given this concern, we might expect his work to contain elements from which a more genuinely participatory conception of democracy might be built.<sup>5</sup>

In this paper I shall agree with those who want to attribute to Weber an implicit ideal of freedom. But I shall argue that this ideal will not help those who wish to retrieve the ‘democratic Weber.’ In fact, I shall claim, insofar as this ideal informs his understanding of democratic ideals, it is part of the problem.

I shall first outline the basis of Weber’s skepticism about democracy. This will involve analyzing his account of political power and the constraints on who can have it in modern states. According to this account, the democratic ideal of popular political power cannot be realized under modern conditions. Given the increasing attachment to the idea, since the French Revolution, that only democratic forms of government are legitimate, there seems to be a potential instability in modern politics. I hope to explain through this analysis why it is that plebiscitary leadership democracy suggests itself to him as a natural compromise between democratic ideals and political necessities.

But I shall also claim that Weber could have avoided the problem in another way. His account of the appeal of democratic ideals is informed by his ideal of freedom. It is extracted from his account of the methodical-rational personality fostered by Protestantism. It is a secularized religious conception of freedom and it is rooted in an extremely pessimistic account of secularization. If Weber had excised this element from his work he would have had available to him, on his own terms, a less

despairing account of the democratic potential of modern polities. So a re-examination of his skepticism about democracy might encourage us to retrieve a version of the democratic ideal that does not incorporate these modern and peculiarly Protestant presuppositions.

### The Nature of Political Power in Modern States

On Weber's account, political power in modern states has to take the form of *Herrschaft*. It is well-known that the translation of this term is a tricky matter. Once upon a time Henderson and Parsons rendered it as 'imperative rule.' Translators now tend to favour 'domination.'<sup>6</sup> But 'domination' does not seem to me quite to capture his precise meaning. In defining the term, Weber tells us that *Herrschaft*, is 'the probability that certain specific commands (or all commands) will be obeyed by a group of persons.' So it does not include, he points out, every mode of exercising "power" or "influence" over other persons.' He goes on to say that *Herrschaft*, or "*Autorität*" 'may be based on the most diverse motives of compliance: all the way from simple habituation to the most purely rational calculation of advantage.'<sup>7</sup>

It seems to me, then, that the term 'rule' allows us to retain more of the flexibility of Weber's concept. It can apply to the most brutal domination but equally to an entirely voluntary submission to rules, or governance by norms, as in the *Herrschaft der Vernunft*, the rule of reason.<sup>8</sup> So even if Weber insists elsewhere that voluntarism is an implausible basis for political life, that modern politics inevitably involves domination and subordination, it is important to bear in mind that he does not build this claim into the definition of *Herrschaft* itself.<sup>9</sup>

Weber acknowledges that we can conceive of a polity without political *Herrschaft*. A direct democracy (*herrschaftsfreie unmittelbare Demokratie*) is a polity without rule.<sup>10</sup> Nobody has to get anybody else to obey them, because all decisions are made by common consent. But that is not a plausible ideal for the modern world because states are too big, too diverse, and too complex to be ruled without a division of intellectual labor.<sup>11</sup>

Direct democracy is deemed possible only in small states, without significant inequalities in status, and whose organization is simple and therefore easily comprehensible. As the need for a division of intellectual labor emerges, so, inevitably, does a caste of 'notables' (*honoratiões*), who have sufficient material and intellectual resources to devote themselves to policy-making and administration on behalf of the people.<sup>12</sup> In larger polities, greater technical competence is required and 'permanent technical officials' must be appointed. Therefore, Weber tells us, 'Immediate democracy (*herrschaftsfreie unmittelbare Demokratie*) and government by notables (*Honoratiorenverwaltung*) exist in their genuine forms, free from *Herrschaft*, only so long as parties which contend with each other and attempt to appropriate office do not develop on a permanent basis. If they do, the leader of the contending and victorious party and his staff constitute a structure of rule (*herrschaftliches Gebilde*), regardless of how they attain power and whether they formally retain the previous mode of administration.'<sup>13</sup>

In complex modern states, then, there have to be rulers. Some people have to get other people to obey them. The modern state is a 'relation of men ruling men' (*Herrschaftsverhältnis von Menschen über Menschen*).

Weber enumerates three ways in which, in the field of politics, people get others to obey them. In each case there is some ambiguity about whether it involves free assent, on the basis of rational reflection, on the part of the ruled, or whether it involves merely unreflective obedience. In *Economy and Society* he presents these three types of 'legitimation' in terms of the underlying beliefs about the norms to which rulers must conform. In each case, legal-rational, traditional, and charismatic rule, obedience rests on recognition of conformity to the appropriate norm. Someone is determined to be fit to rule because they are recognized either to have a legal right to do so, or to have inherited authority by tradition, or to display particularly heroic personal attributes.<sup>14</sup> In "Politics as a Vocation," however, Weber stresses unreflective obedience in each case. Legality is linked to bureaucratization and seen to involve automatic submission to rules. Traditional authority is established through 'habitual orientation' (*gewohnheitsmäßige Einstellung*). Personal devotion to a leader stems from demagoguery and is an essentially passive state.<sup>15</sup>

The deeper questions about the psychological basis of obedience and the extent to which forms of rule, in any given case, involve voluntary submission, lie beyond the sociologist's sphere of inquiry.<sup>16</sup> Weber himself seems to be ambivalent about what empirical psychological investigation might be expected to find. But his account of legitimation at least seems to presuppose sufficient normative agreement for people to be able to endorse a form of rule should they happen to reflect on it, even though most people, most of the time may not engage in such reflection. And obedience to rulers will be contingent on their manifestly conforming to the prevailing norms. So structures of rule have to rest on 'inner justifications' (*inneren Rechtfertigungsgründe*) as well as external means (*äußeren Mittel*).<sup>17</sup>

It will be clear, then, that on Weber's account, wielding political power in modern states must be a complex affair. Power means the capacity to exercise one's will. Political power, which has to take the form of rule, will be subject to legitimacy constraints as well as other feasibility constraints. It is a form of 'independent leadership in action' (*selbständig leitender Tätigkeit*) or the 'influencing of leadership' (*die Beeinflussung der Leitung*) in the distinctively modern form of political association, the state.<sup>18</sup>

In the modern state, Weber famously tells us, '[n]o single official personally owns the money he pays out, or the buildings, stores, tools, and war machines he controls. In the contemporary 'state' – and this is essential for the concept of state – the 'separation' of the administrative staff, of the administrative officials, and of the workers from the material means of administrative organization is completed.'<sup>19</sup> Political power can only be exercised through this structure, and it is a structure whose evolution has rendered it increasingly impervious to any assertion of will.

So if Weber understands political power to be the capacity to exercise intentional control in political affairs, we can extract from his political sociology four essential preconditions for its exercise in modern states:

### I. Political Judgement

- i. The capacity to choose coherently amongst possible ends.
- ii. An understanding of the necessary means to these ends.

### II. Causal Efficacy

- iii. The physical power to implement these means.
- iv. Perceived legitimacy: i.e. the capacity to secure obedience.

Although these look like simple elements, in large modern polities they are not. The state supplies to office-holders the physical means to achieve their ends (financial, military etc.) and it also contributes, through expert officials, the kinds of specialized knowledge that are essential for sound political judgment. But intentional control of these state resources, particularly the vast and intricate bureaucracy, is itself a challenging matter. Extracting information from officials, Weber complains in 'Parliament and Government in Germany' can be extremely difficult.<sup>20</sup>

Weber's sociology of political life powerfully instills, more than anything else, an awareness of the fact that the cognitive burdens involved in political judgment have become extraordinarily weighty.<sup>21</sup> Three areas in which the growing complexity of organizations has increasingly led to a loss of intentional control by politicians are the economy, the military, and bureaucracy.<sup>22</sup>

Given this model of political power, then, we can imagine various ways in which political power might be lost. Lack of legitimacy, lack of resources, lack of information, failures of instrumental reason, and an inability to choose coherently amongst ends, can all entail a loss of power. Weber's primary concern in his later political writings seems to be less with the distribution of power in modern states than with the amount of power they can support. He worries that there is not enough political power, in the sense of intentional control of political life.

This kind of concern with political power must not of course be confused with the power politics of the contemporary exponents of *Realpolitik*. As Peter Breiner has pointed out, *Realpolitik*, for Weber, lacks coherence at the level of determining political ends, or choosing coherently amongst possible ends. For the proponents of *Realpolitik*, *Anpassung*, or adaptation to trends, overrides ethical convictions, since their ultimate end is success in enhancing the state's power. In "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality,'" Weber insists that this constant readjustment to new states of affairs, requiring also constant readjustment of means-ends reasoning, yields no clear criteria for success. It does not yield a coherent account of what successful political action consists in.<sup>23</sup>

Intentional control of political affairs has to involve specifying ends, possessing the cognitive and physical abilities to realize them, and securing obedience from the ruled. So the trick is to specify ends and employ means that are both practically feasible and preservative of 'legitimacy.'

## Democratic Ideals and Political Reality

On this analysis, it looks as though the question 'can the people have political power in modern states?' has to be answered negatively. We have already seen that Weber

rules out direct democracy as a possibility for large, modern states. But even on a more mediated, participatory model, the first two pre-conditions described, relating to political judgment, themselves seem to rule out popular political power in any meaningful sense. They provide challenges even for the most politically skilled individuals. Condition i), which requires coherent choice amongst possible ends, does not simply involve choosing one's ideals (we will come back to Weber's apparent decisionism about values). It involves choosing ends in the light of an appreciation of which aspects of political life can really be subject to intentional control. Even apart from the bureaucratic challenges, capitalist economies and the conditions of modern warfare generate inevitable opacity concerning what is feasible in both domestic and foreign policy.

Political judgment, Weber contends, is learned through the actual exercise of political power. It has to be honed by practical political education, that is, through long experience of formulating intentions and assessing their outcomes.<sup>24</sup> Adherence to a coherent and stable set of ends and instrumental reasoning towards these ends requires a form of objectivity, a 'coolness,' that has to be learned.<sup>25</sup> Weber insists that in the absence of such a political education, if ordinary people are entrusted to make political decisions, or to judge political outcomes, they are liable to respond emotionally. The aggregation of their occurrent whims and desires is liable to be a dangerously destabilizing political force.<sup>26</sup>

This means that insofar as elected officials are beholden to voters, they are not being constrained by any reliable form of political judgment. They are easily able, through the apparatus of parties, to constrain this unstable, irrational force, but at the expense of any deference to people's independent wishes. Either way, the voters, inevitably lacking genuine insight into the conditions of possibility of political action, will lack intentional control over political outcomes. So democratic participation, on this view, is likely to lead to an overall lessening of political power. This failure of intentional control will entail surrender to the blindly self-perpetuating mechanisms of rationalization, bureaucratization, and capitalism. The machinery of modern politics will then become impermeable to human values.

However, Weber also sees that since the French Revolution, people have been increasingly reluctant to accept that anyone is entitled to rule except the people themselves. 'Democratization' is an inevitable feature of the modern world and the unintended consequence of the democratic ideal, Weber believes, is uncontrolled rule by officials. Weber vociferously supports equal suffrage.<sup>27</sup> But at the same time he holds that in the political structure of the modern state, this cannot constitute the kind of freedom, or self-rule, envisaged by democratic ideals. Neither can it ensure the imposition of human will or human values on the recalcitrant material of modern political administration.

Weber asks, "How is it at all possible to salvage any remnants of 'individual' freedom of movement in any sense, given this all-powerful trend towards bureaucratization?"<sup>28</sup> His answer, of course, is that great individuals should make the 'soulless' machinery of modern politics responsive to value. If there is no such thing as a 'will of the people' that can bend political processes to consciously espoused, ultimate ends, then the people

can participate in such a will by proxy, through the Caesarist election of a charismatic leader.

In a world where democracy inevitably means demagogic manipulation, Weber claims that 'there is only the choice between leadership democracy with a 'machine' and leaderless democracy, namely, the rule of professional politicians without a calling, without the inner charismatic qualities that make a leader.'<sup>29</sup> Meaningful political action by leaders on behalf of the people is the best compromise that Weber can envisage between democratic ideals and intractable political realities. Instead of surrendering political power altogether to impersonal processes, submission to charismatic authority permits politics to be brought under human control. Although this does not confer political power, in Weber's sense, on the people, it does preserve political power for the people.

### **Protestantism, Freedom, and the Democratic Ideal**

It is an obvious fact about Weber's work that he repeatedly employs terms borrowed from religion to describe secular political phenomena. 'Charisma' and the idea of the 'calling' are his most obvious borrowings from Christianity, along with the 'soullessness' or forsakenness of modern, secular, rationalized institutions. But most significantly for our present concerns, his ideal of freedom is derived from the conception of the methodical-rational personality produced by inner-worldly asceticism.

His exploration of this phenomenon begins in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Here Weber contrasts Catholic faith in the possibility of salvation through the Church and the sacraments with the Calvinist doctrine that man is forced 'to follow his own path alone to meet a destiny which had been decreed for him from eternity.'<sup>30</sup> The latter gives rise to 'a feeling of unprecedented inner loneliness of the single individual.'<sup>31</sup> But this carving out of a sense of individuality at the same time establishes the possibility of a developing sense of autonomy.

For the Calvinist, on this account, the world exists only to serve the glorification of God. The elected Christian is in this world to increase God's glory.<sup>32</sup> This end can be attained through labor in a calling, through which the Christian can accrue the signs of God's grace. Whereas the ethical life of a Catholic in the period of the Reformation had, according to Weber, a 'hand to mouth' character, the Calvinist could not similarly display weakness at one time and atone for it at another.<sup>33</sup> We are told that '[t]he moral conduct of the average man was [...]deprived of its planless and unsystematic character and subjected to a consistent method for conduct as a whole.'<sup>34</sup> A "systematic method of rational conduct" became possible, freeing man "from the power of irrational impulses and his dependence on the world and on nature."<sup>35</sup>

This ideal of methodical-rational conduct is contrasted, at the end of *The Protestant Ethic*, with the 'mechanized petrification' of life governed by the impersonal capitalist mechanisms, devoid of their original spiritual meaning, that originated in this Protestant ethic.<sup>36</sup> Weber clearly conveys his nostalgia for the systematic self-control, the autonomy, that ascetic Protestantism fostered.

In his later sociology of religion, Weber develops his account of the relationship between ascetic religion and the methodical-rational way of life, incorporating it into a broader analysis of religious traditions.<sup>37</sup> It involves the subordination of all aspects of life to a unified set of purposes and values, rendering every aspect of life meaningful in relation to some overall spiritual goals.

It is not difficult to see the analogies with Weber's account of meaningful political action. Whereas the proponent of *Realpolitik* adopts an ad hoc, 'hand to mouth' ethic, meaningful action is reserved for those who 'time and again' reach out for 'the impossible,' those, in other words, who adhere to some extrinsic ideal in relation to which they can pattern all of their conduct.<sup>38</sup> But in modern political world, where rule is inevitable and leadership democracy the only apparent means of sustaining political power in the sense of reflective, intentional control of political life, this will be possible only for a few. The equality of the original ascetic, religious conception has been lost. This version of autonomy cannot serve as an ideal of political freedom for all.

But democratic ideals, on Weber's view, incorporate an aspiration to just this kind of freedom. This association of democratic ideals with a conception of freedom as individual autonomy is particularly prominent in Weber's 1906 essay, 'On the Situation of Constitutional Democracy in Russia.' Here Weber tells us that "those people who live in constant fear that the future will hold too much 'democracy' and 'individualism' and too little 'authority,' 'aristocracy' and 'respect for office' or such like, really should put their minds at rest. The world will see to it, only too certainly, that the trees of democratic individualism will not grow up into the heavens." Democracy and freedom, he claims "are in fact only possible if they are supported by the permanent, determined will of a nation not to be governed like a flock of sheep." However, "[t]he genesis of modern 'freedom' presupposed certain unique, never-to-be-repeated historical constellations."<sup>39</sup> These are of course the constellations, material and ideal, described in *The Protestant Ethic*. They include capitalist expansion, but also "certain ideal notions of value which grew out of a particular set of religious ideas."

Weber is making a strong claim here. He is asserting that democratic ideals are a residue of Christian religion and that a fully secular worldview cannot incorporate a commitment to democracy in its participatory forms. This has been an influential claim. It is reiterated by Joseph Schumpeter, who, like Weber recommends an elitist version of democracy as a compromise between the popular demand for self-rule and the practical necessity of having skilled rulers.<sup>40</sup> So it is worth paying attention to how Weber's argument works.

We can piece together the following account of how Weber comes to substitute charismatically conferred meaning for real participation. He views the democratic ideal as an ideal of freedom, where freedom is constituted by meaningful action, or action guided by substantive rationality. Given the unsustainability of direct democracy in large modern states, this kind of action is not a realizable political ideal for everyone. But it is possible for those few with a 'calling' for politics, that is, those best equipped to wield political power. The charismatic authority of these leaders provides a

compensatory form of meaning to others, vitiating the rule of impersonal forces over human life.

Various critics have suggested ways in which Weber's ideal of autonomy, his conception of a political 'calling,' and his 'ethic of responsibility' might be democratized.<sup>41</sup> They might, on this view, be made to serve as general ideals for participants in a democracy. Peter Breiner has defended a particularly interesting version of such a view. But I shall not enter into a detailed discussion of those arguments here. What I want to suggest, instead, is that if Weber had excised the essentially religious element from his work, his 'leadership democracy' would not have looked like the only solution available to him to the core problems it purportedly resolves. Instead of democratizing his conception of freedom as meaningful action, he might have detached the justification of democracy altogether from his unrealizable ideal of freedom. Democracy and freedom are after all, as Isaiah Berlin pointed out, different ideals. And whilst it may be the case that democracy is instrumentally useful in preserving freedom, we do not have to see it in itself as the realization of freedom.

### **Ancient and Modern Conceptions of Democracy**

I have claimed that democratic ideals, on Weber's conception, incorporate an individualistic ideal of freedom that cannot be institutionally realized in modern states. It is, then, the peculiarly modern element in democratic ideals, as he understands them, that generates his skepticism. On the account that Ober offers, the ancient conception of democracy incorporated no such constraint. *Demokratia*, he tells us, "emerged as a regime-type with the historical self-assertion of a demos in a moment of revolution, refers to a demos' collective capacity to do things in the public realm, to make things happen." A democracy is a regime in which "the demos gains a collective capacity to effect change in the public realm."<sup>42</sup> Perhaps, then, we can retrieve from the ancients a pre-Christian and more fully secular conception of democracy that can be adapted to the political conditions of the modern world.

We can of course accept, with Weber, that direct democracy is not a feasible form of political organization for modern states. There will have to be a distribution of personal political power in Weber's strong, intentional sense. Some people will have more intentional control over political life than others. Participation will not guarantee freedom, in this sense, for all. It cannot deliver an equal distribution of personal political power.

But it might nevertheless be the case that increased participation can be justified in terms of making possible what would otherwise be impossible in the public realm. Given sufficient institutional imagination, participation might be understood as a means of aggregating knowledge.<sup>43</sup> Or it might, within the right framework, generate the kind of demand for justification that assists in subjecting political life as far as possible to the authority of reason.

Joseph Schumpeter is contemptuous of such claims, precisely because he holds that this kind of collective power cannot generate personal, intentional power, or autonomy. He writes:

there is truth in Jefferson's dictum that in the end the people are wiser than any single individual can be, or in Lincoln's about the impossibility of "fooling all the people all the time." But both dicta stress the long-run aspect in a highly significant way. It is no doubt possible to argue that given time the collective psyche will evolve opinions that not infrequently strike us as reasonable and even shrewd. History however consists of a succession of short-run situations that may alter the course of events for good. If all the people can in the short run be "fooled" step by step into something they do not really want, and if this is not an exceptional case which we could afford to neglect, then no amount of retrospective common sense will alter the fact that in reality they neither raise nor decide issues but that the issues that shape their fate are normally raised and decided for them.<sup>44</sup>

But if we hold that democratic power, in the collective sense, is to be justified in terms of its longer-term benefits, and if we hold freedom from manipulation to be justified entirely independently (for instance, by liberal values), we do not have to take Schumpeter's point to be a knock-down argument against democratic ideals. It only appears to be so if we follow Weber in assuming that democratic ideals have to be justified on the grounds that they secure freedom. Absent this assumption, we might take his observation to be an argument for a participatory liberal democracy.

Perhaps more significantly from the point of view of Weber's concerns, democratic participation might help to make political life more responsive to human values. This draws us into complex interpretive issues which we cannot fully address here. Weber's understanding of the relationship between politics and ethics is notoriously problematic, particularly insofar as he seems to accept a strongly decisionist view of valuing.<sup>45</sup>

This highly individualistic and voluntaristic conception of valuing does indeed seem to be presupposed in the political writings. According to this picture, rather than being responsive to a shared ethical life, politicians with 'value-setting charisma' will make politics responsive to the values that they choose. Their personal authority will generate popular convergence on these values, securing their perceived legitimacy.

I do not have the space to address those issues fully here, but it seems to me that insofar as Weber does adopt a 'decisionist' account of valuing he is adopting a picture that is implausible even on his own terms. In his writings on the sociology of religion he offers a much more interesting and nuanced account of moral psychology. He presents gradual evaluative change as a process that is deeply intertwined with both the material conditions of our lives and the complex systems of belief that we inhabit. Whilst allowing for reflective criticism of our values, this is no more a crudely voluntarist or decisionist account of moral psychology than the one he found so compelling in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality*.<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche, of course, saw our value commitments as the product of deep psychological processes that are never entirely reflectively available to the subject who holds them.

It is this psychologically deeper account of ethical life that makes Weber's political decisionism seem implausible. It would seem to rule out the idea that leaders can choose their own values and that others can modify their basic values to conform to those of charismatic leaders. And on this deeper account it will make more sense to

think about how politics can be brought into relation with the shared ethical life of a people.

If this is so, democratic participation might be thought of as a means of making political rule maximally responsive to the avowed values of a population. And we might independently hold that these ethical commitments should be protected as far as possible from ideological manipulation, in which case, again, we will arrive at a more fully articulated account of liberal democracy.

To summarize: leadership democracy was not the only route that Weber could have taken out of his impasse. It seemed to be so only because he built into his conception of democratic ideals an unrealizable ideal of freedom. A reexamination of ancient democracy and the grounds on which it was justified might help to free us from such inherited post-Christian encumbrances.

#### NOTES

1. On the relationship between Weber and Michels, cf. Lawrence Scaff, "Max Weber and Robert Michels," *The American Journal of Sociology* 86, no. 6 (1981): 1269–1286.

2. Seymour Martin Lipset, who introduced the term "elitist theory of democracy" in his 1961 introduction to Michels' *Political Parties*, in doing so assimilated Weber's view to Schumpeter's: "Max Weber and Joseph Schumpeter, among many, have stressed that the distinctive and most valuable element of democracy is the formation of a political elite in the competitive struggle for the votes of a mainly passive electorate." Introduction to Robert Michels, *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy*, trans. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: The Free Press, 1962), 33.

3. Since the publication of Wolfgang Mommsen's influential study of Weber's politics, his views have been increasingly assimilated to Schmitt's. Cf. Wolfgang Mommsen, *Max Weber and German Politics, 1890–1920*, [*Max Weber und die Deutsche Politik, 1890–1920*, (Tübingen, 1959)], trans. Michael S. Steinberg (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1990), 410: "It was quite possible for Carl Schmitt to take plebiscitarianism to its logical conclusions by building upon Weber's theories. Schmitt's undertaking was all the easier because Max Weber had subordinated basic democratic values to the interests of national power." Cf. also Rune Slagstad, "Liberal constitutionalism and its critics: Carl Schmitt and Max Weber," in Jon Elster, and Rune Slagstad, eds., *Constitutionalism and Democracy*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 102–129.

4. In "Parliament and Government in Germany," Weber claims that one of the fundamental questions that needs to be asked about modern politics is: "In view of the growing indispensability and hence increasing power of state officialdom [. . .], how can there be any guarantee that forces exist which can impose limits on the enormous, crushing power of this constantly growing stratum of society and control it effectively? How is democracy even in this restricted sense to be *at all possible*?" Weber, *Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 159; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, ed. Johannes Winkelmann (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988), 333.

5. Mark Warren attributes to Weber a neo-Kantian ideal of autonomy, consisting in the realization of "a 'meaningful existence' attained by 'orienting actions in terms of value judgments.'" Together with Weber's 'ethic of responsibility' this supplies the basis for a substantive liberal ideal, according to which politics "is the kind of activity through which personality is cultivated and manifested as an expression of responsibility." This ideal, Warren claims, requires that individuals "participate directly in those decisions that most immediately affect their everyday lives." But he holds that Weber did not have the institutional imagination to explore the kinds of participatory democracy that might realize his ideal. Cf. Mark Warren, "Max Weber's Liberalism for a Nietzschean World," *The American Political Science Review* 82, no. 1 (1988): 31–50.

6. For a discussion of the translation history, cf. Sheldon Wolin, "Max Weber: Legitimation, Method, and the Politics of Theory," *Political Theory* 9, no. 3 (1981): 401–424, at 407.

7. Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1978), vol. 1, 212; *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft: Grundriss der Verstehenden Soziologie*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1972), 122: "'Herrschaft' soll, definitionsgemäß [...] die Chance heißen, für spezifische (oder: für alle) Befehle bei einer angebbaren Gruppe von Menschen Gehorsam zu finden. Nicht also jede Art von Chance, "Macht" und "Einfluß" auf andere Menschen auszuüben. Herrschaft ("Autorität") in diesem Sinn kann in Einzelfall auf den verschiedensten Motiven der Fügsamkeit: von dumpfer Gewöhnung angefangen bis zu rein zweckrationalen Erwägungen, beruhen."

8. Weber also distinguishes between power (*Macht*), rule (*Herrschaft*) and discipline (*Disziplin*). Power is simply the capacity to assert one's will in spite of resistance, in whatever way one can do it (Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1, 53; Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 28). *Herrschaft*, on the other hand, is "the probability that a command with a specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1, 53; Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 28: "*Herrschaft* soll heißen die Chance, für einen Befehl bestimmten Inhalts bei angebbaren Personen Gehorsam zu finden"). This is distinguished from the "prompt and automatic obedience," instilled by habituation, which constitutes discipline (Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1, 53; Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 28).

9. J.J.R Thomas, though translating *Herrschaft* as 'domination,' emphasizes that 'legitimate domination' may be founded either by imposition or by voluntary agreement. Cf. "Weber and Direct Democracy," *The British Journal of Sociology* 35, no. 2 (1984): 216–240, at 224.

10. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 171.

11. Weber's claims about the instability of direct democracy are set out by J.J.R. Thomas in "Weber and direct democracy."

12. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1, 290; *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 170.

13. Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1, 292; *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 171. Cf. also "Suffrage and Democracy in Germany," Weber, *Political Writings*, 127: "In all mass states democracy leads to bureaucratic administration and, without parliamentarisation, to pure rule (*Herrschaft*) by officials." Weber *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 289.

14. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 124.

15. Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 507.

16. Cf. Max Weber, *Die "Objectivität" sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis*, in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre*, ed. Johannes Winckelmann, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (Tübingen: J.C.B.Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1924), 146–214.

17. Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 507.

18. *Ibid.*, 505.

19. Max Weber, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Hans. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 82; Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 510–11.

20. Weber, *Political Writings*, 179; Weber *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 352.

21. This feature of his work is brought out particularly well by Peter Breiner, in his *Weber and Democratic Politics* (Cornell and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996).

22. Cf. esp. Weber, "Parliament and Government in Germany."

23. Cf. Breiner, *Weber and Democratic Politics*, 74, citing "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality,'" 23–4; Weber, "Die 'Objectivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis," 514.

24. In "Parliament and Government in Germany," this forms the core of Weber's argument for parliamentary power, as a means of educating political leaders. Weber, *Political Writings*, 145: "Whether a parliament is of high or low quality depends on whether great problems are not only discussed but are conclusively decided there. In other words, it depends on whether anything happens in parliament and on how much depends on what happens there, or whether it is merely the reluctantly tolerated rubber-stamping machine for a ruling bureaucracy." Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 320.

25. Weber, *Political Writings*, 230; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* 403–4.
26. *Political Writings*, 108, 113, 230; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* 270, 275–6, 403–4.
27. Cf. “Suffrage and Democracy in Germany,” Weber, *Political Writings*, 129: “‘Democratization’ in the sense that the structure of social estates is being leveled by the *state run by officials*, is a fact. There are only two choices: either the mass of citizens is left without freedom or rights in a bureaucratic ‘authoritarian state’ which has only the appearance of parliamentary rule, and in which the citizens are ‘administered’ like a herd of cattle; or the citizens are integrated into the state by making them its *co-rulers*.” Weber *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* 291.
28. Weber, *Political Writings*, 159; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* 333.
29. Weber, *From Max Weber*, 113; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften*, 544: “Weber, *Economy and Society* gibt nur die Wahl: Führerdemokratie mit ‘Maschine’ oder führerlose Demokratie, das heißt: die Herrschaft der ‘Berufspolitiker’ ohne Beruf, ohne die inneren, charismatischen Qualitäten, die eben zum Führer machen.”
30. Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), 61; Weber, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I., 1. Aufl. 1920, 94.
31. *The Protestant Ethic*, 60; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 93.
32. *The Protestant Ethic*, 64; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 99–100.
33. *The Protestant Ethic*, 70; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 113.
34. *The Protestant Ethic*, 71; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 115.
35. *The Protestant Ethic*, 72; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 116.
36. *The Protestant Ethic*, 124; *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie* I, 204.
37. Cf. Weber, *Economy and Society*, I, 539; *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 327: “all these methodologies of sanctification developed a combined physical and psychic regimen and an equally methodical regulation of the manner and scope of all thought and action, thus producing in the individual the most completely alert, voluntary, and anti-instinctual control over his own physical and psychological processes, and ensuring the systematic regulation of life in subordination to the religious ends.” Cf. Stephen Kalberg, “The Rationalization of Action in Max Weber’s Sociology of Religion,” *Sociological Theory*, no. 1, (Spring, 1990), 58–84. He provides the following definition of the “methodical rational way of life” (60): “The methodical rational way of life implies either a formal or a substantive rationalization of action in reference to a comprehensive constellation of ethical values. A total ‘organization of life from within’ takes place.”
38. Weber, *From Max Weber*, 128; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* 560.
39. Weber, *Political Writings*, 70–1; *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* 64–5. On asceticism as an intellectual precondition for the commitment to democracy, Cf. J.J.R. Thomas, “Weber and Direct Democracy,” 231: “If the necessary conditions for direct democracy have progressively vanished in an industrial world, so too has the *intellectual* complex which sustained such radical democratic thought as a specifically rational, political and intellectual mode. The source of this complex of thought was overwhelmingly the rational sect of inner-worldly asceticism.”
40. Joseph Schumpeter seems to accept Weber’s thesis about the emergence of modern democratic ideals. He writes: “though the classical doctrine of collective action may not be supported by the results of empirical analysis, it is powerfully supported by the association with religious belief. . . .” He goes on: “The utilitarian leaders were anything but religious in the ordinary sense of the term [. . .]. But we need only cast another glance at the picture they drew of the social process in order to discover that it embodied essential features of the faith of Protestant Christianity and was in fact derived from that faith. For the intellectual who had cast off his religion the utilitarian creed provided a substitute for it. For many of those who had retained their religious belief the classical doctrine became the political complement of it.” Modern democratic ideals, on his view, are rooted in a conception of equality whose “very meaning is in doubt, and there is hardly any warrant for exalting it into a postulate, so long as we move in the sphere of empirical analysis. But Christianity harbors a strong equalitarian element. The Redeemer died for all: He did not differentiate between individuals of different social status. In doing so, He testified to the intrinsic value of the individual soul, a value that admits of no gradations. Is not this a sanction – and, it seems to me, *the only possible sanction* – of ‘everyone to

count for one, no one to count for more than one' – a sanction that pours super-mundane meaning into articles of the democratic creed for which it is not easy to find any other?" [emphasis mine] cf. Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy* (New York: Harper & Row, 1942, 1950), 265–6.

41. Cf. Mark Warren, "Max Weber's liberalism for a Nietzschean world"; Peter Breiner, *Max Weber and Democratic Politics*.

42. Josiah Ober, "The Original Meaning of 'Democracy': the Capacity to Do Things, Not Majority Rule," *Constellations* 15, no. 1 (2008).

43. Cf. Ober, "Productive Democracy: Openness, fairness, and the organization of knowledge in the design of ancient Athenian institutions" (unpublished paper).

44. Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism, and Democracy*, 264.

45. Leo Strauss has been particularly influential in promoting this view. Cf. Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950, 1965). Mommsen sees this decisionist element as an essential feature of Weber's political thought, claiming that his "chief concern was for bureaucracy to carry out the goals set by the leader and not detract from the effectiveness of his value-setting charisma." He concludes that "[f]or this reason it was possible for Carl Schmitt to use Weber as a chief witness for his thesis that faith in legality of the parliamentary legislative state had to a great extent hardened into mere formalism." *Max Weber and German Politics*, 404–5.

46. References to Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* may be found throughout Weber's writings on both politics and religion. Cf. especially "Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen," in *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*, vol.1, 237–68; and Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Part II, V, "Religionssoziologie."

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