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Weber as an Engaged Intellectual and a Social Scientist in the War

Hinnerk Bruhns

The First World War (WWI) has played only a marginal role in Max Weber research in recent decades. Wolfgang Mommsen's great book on Weber and German politics (1959) and the subsequent passionate discussions at the German Sociology Conference in 1964, on the centenary of Max Weber's birth, set the tone for a long time: Nationalism, power politics, imperialism.¹ Raymond Aron's analysis of Weber's political writings led him to the conclusion that the power interests of the nation had a "sacred value" for Weber, that Germany's greatness had been the highest value for him, to which he would subordinate everything in politics. Herbert Marcuse made a direct connection between Weber's methodology and the destruction of humanity in capitalism and war: in the development of capitalist rationality, irrationality becomes reason, the rapid development of productivity and the domination of nature become destructive forces that intensify the struggle for existence within and between nation states to such an extent that the pent-up aggression is discharged in the scientific destruction of humanity. In Weber's conceptualisation, this development was "both envisaged and denounced". However, criticism then stops, accepts the supposedly inevitable and becomes apologetics. Jürgen Habermas turned against the liberal reception of Weber's political sociology that prevailed in America and emphasised that in the period of WWI, Weber had "created the image of Caesarist leader democracy on the contemporary basis of nation-state imperialism." By no means all of the contributions to the Sociology Congress were such indictments, but they largely determined the subsequent discussion of Weber's political attitudes.

After Mommsen's great book on Weber and German politics, the world war itself only became a topic in Weber research again when biographers came onto the scene: they could not leave out the topic (Radkau, 2005; Kaube, 2014; and Kaesler, 2014).² As different as the three biographies may be, their war chapters have one thing in common: they are neither interested in the connection between war and science, nor in the question of the effects of the war on Weber's social science. The thesis put forward in roughly the same years that the enormous influence of wars on the development of social theories is countered by a significant lack of interest in war on the part of social theories (Joas and Knöbl, 2008) was also not examined here using Weber as an example. It was not until 2017 that the topic of the world war was taken up again in Weber research.³

The overarching question of this special issue is the impact of the war on the "classical sociologists" and on the development of their "sociologies". From today's perspective, Weber is one of these classical sociologists. However, Weber himself referred to economics as "his" science, and his concept of sociology was not the same as what is known as sociology today. In this respect, the following is not about the 'sociologist' Weber during the war, but about the social scientist, the intellectual, and citizen Weber, who defined his

¹ The papers presented at the sociology conference and the contributions to the discussion are printed in Stammer (1965; 1974).

² The respective chapter headings are characteristic for their particular perspectives: "World War and World Flight" (Radkau), "Dying of something and dying for something - Max Weber comments on the First World War" (Jürgen Kaube). Dirk Kaesler's book has a three-part chapter entitled "The Great War (1914-1918)", in which, before "Auf Burg Lauenstein" and "Wissenschaft als Beruf", the actual war chapter, which is only ten pages long, is entitled: "Der alte Löwe leckt Blut: August 1914" (The Old Lion Licks Blood).

³ Hinz 2017: A short but interesting essay on the world war in Weber's letters. Bruhns (2017) is the first monograph on Weber and WWI.

social science as a science of reality. For the questions about the social scientist Weber in the war, about the effects of the war on his science, and about the social scientist's view of the war cannot be separated from the question of the politically engaged intellectual in the war.

Intellectuals in WWI has long been a subject of intense debate, often under the catchphrase "war of the minds" or "war with the pen". Despite his - from today's perspective - outstanding fame, Weber is by no means at the centre of these studies. This is justified and has to do with a peculiarity that distinguishes Weber from many other intellectuals, not only German ones: not a single public statement on the war by Weber is known from the first 17 months of the world war, from August 1914 to December 1915. He did not take part in the so-called '*Krieg der Geister*' (War of the Spirits) in any way. From 1916 onwards, he did occasionally wage a "war with the pen", but not against external enemies, but against internal opponents. At the centre of Weber's public engagement from the end of December 1915 were two major issues that were closely linked: peace and the nation. However, Weber had already raised this issue in a letter to Ferdinand Tönnies in the first months of the war, on 14 October 1914:

How should we think of peace? And when? The hundreds of thousands are bleeding for the appalling incompetence of our diplomacy - unfortunately, that cannot be denied, and therefore, even in the event of a final favourable outcome, I do not hope for a truly lasting peace success for us.⁴

The decisive word here is "peace success" (*Friedenserfolg*), a term coined by Weber by analogy with the commonly used word "war success". In October 1914, nobody could have imagined that the war would last more than four years. If Weber doubted at this time that a German victory, i.e. a war success, would not create the conditions for a lasting peace success, then this referred equally to the external situation, i.e. Germany's position in the European system of states, and to the internal consolidation of the young nation state, which Emile Durkheim described at the same time as an unnatural construction:

The kingdoms of Austria and Prussia are anti-natural collectives which have been made and maintained by force, and they have not found a way to replace force and a constrained dependence with attachment by consent. An empire forged in this way cannot last. The geography of Europe is going to be remade on rational and moral foundations..⁵

This was a political judgment that invoked the authority of science. Henri Bergson, President of the French *Académie des sciences morales et politiques* (Academy of Moral and Political Sciences), had made this even clearer on 8 August 1914:

The battle waged against German is the very battle of civilization against barbarism. Everyone feels it, but our Academy is especially charged with saying so. Largely devoted to the study of psychological, moral, and social questions, it accomplishes its simple scientific duty in finding in Germany's brutality and cynicism a regression to a savage state.

The difference to Weber's view of the relationship between politics and science is striking. The war clearly shows how the intellectual Weber, unlike Bergson, does not *invoke* the authority of science *in politics*, but nevertheless argues in many respects as a scientist and on the basis of scientific findings and empirical observations.

⁴ Letter to Ferdinand Tönnies, 14 October 1914 (Weber, 2003: 799). The short letter begins like this: "This war, for all its horror, is great and wonderful, it is worth experiencing [...]". Weber is referring to the fighting spirit of the soldiers and the patriotic enthusiasm in Germany at the beginning of the war.

⁵ ' Letter to Xavier Léon, 15 September 1914 (Durkheim, 1975: 470f).

The intellectual, science, and war

From the point of view of his public engagement as an intellectual and scientist, the story of "Weber and WWI" only begins on 25 December 1915, the day Weber published a long article in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* entitled "Bismarck's Foreign Policy and the Present" (Weber, 1988a: 71-92). Prima facie, it is a historical-politological examination of how a foreign policy conducted according to Bismarck's principles could have avoided or limited the war. This analysis was also a clear political statement against the Reich government's war policy and the nationalist right's desire for annexation. It was naturally understood in these circles and earned Weber the reputation of being a *Flaumacher*, i.e. that he lacked the courage to support the German war policy.

However, the story of Weber's entry into the public debate about the war could be said begin even later: on 1 August 1916, the day Weber gave his first public speech since the beginning of the war: "On the Threshold of the Third Year of War" (Weber, 1988a: 648 ff). Under this title, on a public initiative, patriotic, mostly war-enthusiastic speeches were held in many German cities on the second anniversary of the start of the war. Not so Weber's speech. It was criticised as a peace speech and commented on as follows: it is not Professor Weber but the soldiers at the front who would determine Germany's future borders.

From the summer of 1916, Weber developed an intensive period of journalistic activity. Central themes are the foreign policy situation, the conduct of the war and domestic political developments. In his analyses of Germany's political, social, institutional and economic realities, Weber is ultimately concerned with the political and social reorganisation after the war, with the future of the nation, with its internal consolidation as a prerequisite for the equal integration of the German Reich into the European system of states. Weber's extensive studies on electoral law and democracy, parliament and government led to him being appointed by Hugo Preuss in December 1918 as the only member in a non-official position on the committee that drafted the constitution of what would later become the Weimar Republic. A draft constitution in which Weber, as he emphasised himself, played an important role: "The Reich constitution is - in principle - finished, *very* similar to my proposals."⁶ This concrete collaboration on the drafting of the future German constitution was the culmination of Weber's commitment as an intellectual and academic during the war. The path to this led through various stages, which will be briefly described under the question: what did Weber prioritise: his scientific work or deployment in the war?

On the one hand, this concerns the question of how Weber prioritised academic work over political or practical engagement during the war. Related to this: what happens during the war to the scientific endeavours and projects in which Weber was involved in the years immediately before the war? Which projects did he continue and which did he not? Furthermore: how does the articulation of politics and science develop?

To answer this question, it is necessary to take a brief look at Weber's concrete activities in the first two years of the war, from August 1914 to the middle of 1916. Weber's path up to this point was characterised by three factors: Military service, seeking employment as a social economist in military service, endeavouring to bring moderation and caution to the German war effort. Right at the start of the war in August 1914, the 50-year-old reserve lieutenant, Weber, volunteered for military service with the desire to be actively involved at the front. Found physically unfit for this, he was entrusted with the establishment and management of reserve hospitals in Heidelberg. He fulfilled this task with full commitment,

⁶ Letter to Marianne Weber, 13 December 1918 (Weber, 2012b: 357).

energy, and organisational skills until October 1915. The fact that he was in uniform as a captain of the reserve during this time also, but not exclusively, contributed to his abstaining from any public statement on the war. We only know his attitude to the war during this period from private letters.

When it became apparent in the early summer of 1915 that the military hospital administration would soon be transferred to the regular military administration, Weber began to look for a subsequent assignment in military service. His aim was not to finally be able to return to his own scientific work. The establishment and management of the Heidelberg reserve hospitals had been characterised by improvisation or, in Weber's own words, dilettante administration. He wanted his future work for Germany to be based on a professional foundation, i.e. on his skills as a national economist with a particular interest in social policy issues. In August 1915, a position as an expert on social policy in the German occupation administration in Brussels was initially discussed. However, this did not materialise. After the end of the military hospital administration, Weber therefore went to Berlin in autumn 1915 to apply for a similar position in the German occupation administration in Warsaw. Again unsuccessful, as were further attempts, details about which we are not exactly informed. As a kind of substitute, Weber became involved in Friedrich Naumann's Central Europe project at the end of 1915, beginning of 1916. He was commissioned to prepare an investigation into the economic and financial situation of Congress Poland and the economic situation of the entire Polish-speaking region. In March and April, Weber took on a leading role in similar work at the *Verein für Sozialpolitik* (Association for Social Policy). The issue at stake was the establishment of an economic alliance, which for Weber entailed an overview of trade, transport and customs policy with the allies, as well as agricultural production, the supply of capital and other issues such as the formation of cartels and industrial production in Central Europe. In the memorandum against the planned unlimited submarine warfare, written in the same period, Weber argues not only politically and strategically, but also economically and sociologically. He predicts the consequences of submarine warfare, namely the USA's entry into the war, with the authority of an expert who had gained an accurate picture of the physical and mental strength of American youth and America's industrial capacities during his 1904 journey across the United States.

In addition to lobbying government offices, Weber used his long stays in Berlin in the winter of 1915/16 and spring of 1916 to conduct research in the capital's libraries for his studies on oriental religions and the historical, social, economic, and political development of China, Japan, and India, i.e. for the work on the *Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen* (Economic Ethics of the World Religions, WEWR) which he had already started long before the war. He had resumed work on this project in the spring of 1915, when his military hospital administration, which had become routine, gave him more time.

However, his priorities during the war were practical. Like many of his contemporaries, he saw Germany encircled by enemies and its existence threatened. His motivation for enlisting in the army was not nationalistic 'war enthusiasm', but a sense of civic responsibility and the need to 'be there'. This motivation also applied after the 14 months of extremely strenuous practical work in hospital administration, from the beginning of August 1914 to the beginning of October 1915. This non-scientific, practical work also had a positive effect on Weber's mental state. In autumn 1915, his priority was therefore not to devote all his energy to the scientific projects he had interrupted in August 1914. On the contrary. However, events then led him to partially resume them, but also to turn his attention to new questions and topics. We therefore ask briefly about the continuation, interruption,

abandonment, or reorientation of the academic research and projects that Weber had been working on immediately before the war.

Pre-war projects and scientific work during the war

Weber's most important projects before the war were: a) the *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik* (Outline of Social Economics; GdS) and, as part of this, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (Economy and Society; WuG), b) the discussion of value judgements, c) the economic ethics of world religions.

a) *Grundriß der Sozialökonomik*

The GdS was a collective endeavour in which Weber himself was not only involved as the sole responsible editor, but also with a large number of own contributions. The multi-volume GdS was intended to represent the state of German-language economic research both in terms of method and theory, as well as in terms of concrete, empirical research into the contemporary capitalist economy. The first volume was published in 1914, but publication was then interrupted and could only be resumed after the war. Although Weber occasionally corresponded with the publisher and some authors during the war, he did not continue working on his own contributions despite the insistence of his publisher. This initially concerned his contribution "Economy and Society", which was to conclude the large first part of the GdS: "Fundamentals of Economics". Weber had been working on this since around 1911.⁷ The considerable reorientation in terms of method and content from the pre-war to the post-war manuscripts cannot be attributed to the war. Weber had already announced it at the end of 1913. He was concerned with, as he wrote, a closed sociological theory (*geschlossene Theorie*) and presentation that related all major forms of community to the economy.⁸ The effects of the war on the post-war manuscripts can be found above all in the chapter "Basic sociological categories of economic activity". It can be assumed that without the war and the Russian Revolution, the topics of the wartime economy, the planned economy and socialisation would have occupied a less central place in this chapter than he accorded them in 1919/20. It should be mentioned in this context, however, that Weber did not participate in the "*Kriegshefte*" (War Issues) of his own journal, the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik* (Archive for Social Science and Social Policy), which were initiated by Edgar Jaffé in 1914 and focussed on the war economy. He also did not include an additional section on the war economy in his plans for the *GdS* until 1916.

It is usually overlooked that *Economy and Society* was only a part of Weber's planned contributions to the GdS. The war and his premature death not only prevented the completion of "Economy and Society", but also meant that his numerous other planned contributions could not be realised. These planned but unrealised contributions are generally overlooked in Weber research. However, they give a clear picture of the topics that occupied him at the same time as he was involved in the founding of the German Sociological Association.⁹

⁷ These parts of WuG, written before the war, were published unchanged after Weber's death, together with the post-war manuscripts edited in 1919/20, which have been published in the *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe* (Max Weber Complete Edition) under the title "Sociology. Unfinished. 1919-1920" (Weber, 2013).

⁸ Letter to Paul Siebeck, 30 December 1913 (Weber, 2003: 449).

⁹ In the 1910 planning of the GdS, Weber had reserved the following topics for himself: "economy and culture (critique of historical materialism); economy and race; object and logical nature of questions in economics; the legal foundations of the relationship between the modern state and capitalism; the general importance of modern transport conditions and modern intelligence services; the limits of capitalism in agriculture; types and scope of inhibitions, reflex effects and setbacks of capitalist development; agrarian capitalism and population grouping; capitalism and the middle class: from industrial and peasant guild politics to the "internal colonisation policy"

In these unrealised analyses of important dimensions of the contemporary capitalist economic order, lies an enormous wartime loss in Weber's academic production. If he had been able to realise these planned works even partially, we would probably have a much more differentiated picture of Weber's 'sociology' today.

b) Value freedom

Weber's work on the methodology of the social sciences dates exclusively from the pre-war period. This also applies to the essay "The Meaning of 'Value Freedom'" in the sociological and economic sciences' published in 1917 (Weber, 2012a). This is a revised version of a previously unpublished expert opinion on the value judgement debate that had taken place at a committee meeting of the *Verein für Socialpolitik* in Berlin in January 1914. Weber dealt here with the relationship between the sphere of value judgements and the sphere of empirical cognition. During the war, this problem was for him, from a methodological point of view, basically the same as before the war, at the time of the discussions in the *Verein für Socialpolitik*.

However, "the unprecedented events that we are witnessing at present" prompted Weber to spend a whole two pages at the end of the treatise on the topicality of the problem, namely the enormous increase in the prestige of the state, from which the conclusion is drawn that it must also be 'the ultimate 'value' - especially for judgements that move in the field of 'politics' - against whose existential interests all social action is ultimately to be measured'. Weber now reminds us of the duty of, as he says, 'professional "thinkers", to keep a cool head in the face of the prevailing ideals, even the most majestic, in the sense of the personal ability to 'swim against the tide', if necessary:

The 'German Ideas of 1914' were produced by the 'literati'. The 'socialism of the future' is a cliché that really means that the economy [should be] rationalised by means of a combination of further bureaucratisation and administration by vested interests in single-purpose organisations. When the parochialists in the field of economic policy, in their fanatical enthusiasm for these purely technical measures, invoke on them the blessings not only of German philosophy but also of religion - a phenomenon that nowadays occurs on a massive scale - instead of soberly discussing their appropriateness (which to quite some degree is based on cool considerations of financial policy), then that is nothing than a nauseating aberration, in the worst possible taste, on the part of conceited 'literati'. The returning warriors will have a major say in the formulation of the real 'German ideas of 1918'. (Weber, 2012a: 334).

The war had not influenced Weber's methodological concepts. However, the question of value freedom had a new topicality for him due to the public discussions on economic and political issues, which were often conducted by scientists with reference to their scientific authority. Weber's famous lecture from November 1917, Science as a Profession and Vocation, also offers nothing new, methodologically speaking, compared to the time before the war. One effect of the war, on the other hand, can be seen in the immensely increased topicality of the necessary distinction between 'practical-political statements' on the one hand and 'scientific analyses of political entities and party positions' on the other (Weber, 2012a: 335-353).

c) The economic ethics of world religions

and the "so-called new middle class"; the nature and social situation of the working class (concept of the 'worker', material class situation and material class interests; the social situation of the proletariat); the tendency towards the internal reorganisation of capitalism. (Monopolistic, public-economy and bureaucratising developmental tendencies in their social repercussions; rentierism; the tendencies of social reorganisation." (Weber, 2003: 808- 816)

The central research question of this enormous undertaking has its origins in Weber's investigations into the conditions under which modern capitalism and the modern state emerged. Starting from 'The Protestant Ethic and the 'Spirit' of Capitalism' published in 1904-05 (and in response to the controversies triggered by this series of essays), Weber pursued it in several stages. Firstly: *Agrarverhältnisse im Altertum* (The Agrarian Sociology of Ancient Civilizations), published in 1909, then, *Die Stadt* (The City), written between 1911 and 1913, and finally, the WEWR, from 1911 on at the earliest. Weber interrupted work on the first part of the WEWR (Confucianism) at the outbreak of the war. But from the spring of 1915 onwards - at that time he was still on military hospital duty - he apparently continued to work on it without major interruptions alongside his other activities. Between October 1915 and December 1918, Weber published around 900 pages on Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, Hinduism and ancient Judaism in the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*.

The overarching scientific problems of these economic and religious sociological studies were in no way influenced by the world war. However, the reality of the war is reflected in a lengthy passage from the famous '*Zwischenbetrachtung*' (Intermediate Considerations), which is quoted time and again. Here Weber reflects on the consequences of war for the creation of a sense of community in modern political communities and compares this with the ethics of brotherhood in religious heroic communities. In contrast to the economy, politics in the form of war, he emphasised, can enter into direct competition with religious ethics. War achieves even more by giving meaning to death and sanctifying it: 'The community of the army in the field is today aware of itself as a community until death, the greatest of its kind — just as in the times of warrior bands.' As a mass phenomenon, only death on the battlefield can give the individual the impression that he is dying 'for something'. Weber summed up that this achievement of placing death in the series of meaningful and consecrated events ultimately 'lies at the root of all attempts to provide the political body that exercises violence [*politischer Gewaltsamkeitsverband*] with his own dignity' (Weber, 2004: 225, transl. mod.).

For Weber, these considerations, which were presumably caused by the war, or at least updated by it, did not only belong in the realm of science. They played a role in the bloody reality of everyday life. A little-noticed corpus in Weber's correspondence are his numerous letters of condolence to relatives of fallen soldiers (Bruhns, 2017: 155-162). In none of these letters to family members, friends, and colleagues is death linked to God, religion, or the church. The religious dimension is completely ignored: only death on the battlefield, the death for the fatherland has a recognisable meaning; it is currently 'the only death worthy of a human being.' Its meaning, also for the surviving relatives, is derived from the 'immense and sublime fate that the great community is living through'.¹⁰ Weber also expresses the same conviction in the short text 'Between Two Laws' (1916) (Weber, 1994: 75-79) Here he contrasts the (meaningful) death on the battlefield with the (senseless) economic struggle of people for existence in the modern capitalist economy. On the one hand, war for honour, '*which means, simply*, commitment to the historical obligations imposed on one's own nation [*Volk*] by fate', on the other hand, a form of the struggle of man with man, in which not millions, but hundreds of millions year in, year out, wither away in body and soul, sink to the bottom or at least lead an existence to which any recognisable meaning' is truly infinitely more alien than the struggle for honour (Weber, 1994: 78). Weber had already pointed out before the war, in the section '*Machtprestige und Nationalgefühl*' (Power Prestige and National Feeling) of *Economy and Society*, that the risk of death in war could easily be

¹⁰ Letter of 23 September 1916 to Hans Schnitger (Weber, 2008: 548).

reduced to zero in the minds of the masses through emotional influence, and that intellectuals were specifically predestined to propagate the national' idea (Weber, 2001: 240, 246f).

The relationship and tension between politics and religion is a major theme of Weber's historical sociology. Here he dealt with very different political-religious worlds: on the one hand, the old world of political communities with specialised functional gods, on the other hand, the world of universalist religions of salvation, whose terrain does not coincide with that of political communities, but which enter into a symbiosis with the political powers. Weber's war writings belong in the context of a world of the coupling of state and nation, which no longer require the legitimisation of politics and society through church or religion. In this respect, they differ from the speeches or writings of numerous contemporaries in that, among other things, he left God and religion completely out of the equation, that he made no concessions to the widespread rhetoric of emperor and God, nor to the war theology of Protestant theologians and pastors in particular. Quite the opposite: Weber sharply opposed the use of religion, including in relation to the so-called Ideas of 1914, which he had sharply criticised in his speech of 1 August 1916. At that time, he had referred to the ideas of 1917, which would be decisive when peace came. As the war was still going on in 1917, he renamed them 'Ideas of 1918'.

The ideas of 1918, or the future of the nation

The nation is the central theme of Weber's war writings. Not, however, in the sense of sociological-theoretical reflections. These had already been developed in the pre-war manuscripts of *Economy and Society*. There he had defined the nation as a community of destiny, a community of remembrance: 'Common political destinies, i.e. primarily common political struggles for live and death, forge communities of remembrance which often have a stronger effect than ties of cultural, linguistic or ancestral community. They are what [...] give the "national consciousness" the final decisive touch' (Weber, 2001: 206f).

The appropriateness of this definition could certainly be verified during the war. But what scope could a theoretical definition have in different concrete political and social contexts? Weber had grown up in the years when Bismarck founded the small German nation state. He saw clearly that the internal foundation of the state had remained unfinished and that the consolidation of the German Empire as a European power state could not be achieved through foreign policy or a successful war alone. This was the meaning of the letter to Tönnies in October 1914 quoted at the beginning. The proponents of the ideas of 1914 proclaimed a development of Germany separate from that of the West, above all in opposition to the ideas of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution. Weber, on the other hand, was convinced that Germany had to develop in the same direction as its western neighbours. His analysis of the internal weaknesses of the nation state concerned the social and political constitution, the great imbalance between Prussia and the other federal states, the lack of a genuine political tradition, exacerbated by Bismarck's way of governing: he had left behind a nation without all and any political education, as well as a non-functioning parliament in which no responsible politicians could emerge. Weber was convinced that the German nation state of Bismarck and his successors was a misconstruction in crucial respects (cf. Bruhns, 2017: 265).

His 'Ideas of 1918' for post-war Germany focused on political equality, the abolition of three-class suffrage in Prussia, mass democratisation, upgrading the parliament, reducing Prussian influence in the Reich, the abolition of the dual function of Reich Chancellor and Prussian Minister President, as well as Prussian privileges in the Bundesrat. Like Hugo

Preuß, Weber considered breaking up Prussia into constituent states and political decentralisation, i.e. the relocation of parliament and ministries from Berlin to other cities. In Weber's eyes, however, the consolidation of the nation could not be achieved through structural political reforms alone. It required a new social basis. Weber, himself a bourgeois, had long mistrusted the German bourgeoisie, especially the academically educated. Before the turn of the century, he had pinned his hopes on the working class and subsequently always favoured strengthening the trade unions. Now, on the one hand, his hopes were pinned on the 'stratum of technicians and the other strata that had been pushed out into free competition as employees of large private companies'. He sees them as 'specifically modern personalities who wear their skin on the market in the economic struggle for existence and in doing so are practically exposed to the political structure of the state'. As a result of this experience, they have a better eye for political realities 'than the holders of any academic qualification', the class of sinecure candidates. On the other hand, Weber also relied on the fact that soldiers returning from the war would participate in the rebuilding of the nation as active citizens with equal voting rights. The experience of war, he believes, will have immunised them against the 'literary phrases of whatever party' and given them a sense of objectivity: 'For the tasks posed by modern war are highly objective.' This was written before 1918; however, Weber is under no illusions in this respect. The reorganisation of the nation also required an intellectual reorientation. Weber criticised the excessive weight of the German classics in the education and formation of German society. The ideas of the German classics, with their idealised enthusiasm for moral demands, came from an apolitical era. These philosophical thoughts would still have value for personal attitudes to politics, but could not serve as a guide to today's political realities: 'The modern problems of parliamentarianism and democracy and the nature of our modern state in general were completely outside their sphere of vision' (Bruhns, 2017: 64-67).

In December 1918, Weber edited his great plea in favour of the *republic* 'without reservation or ambiguity'. But what this republic should look like depended 'on the *tasks* that we give it'. These tasks are, firstly: 'a clear renunciation of imperialist dreams and thus a purely *autonomous nationality ideal*'; secondly, on condition that an acceptable peace is achieved, a '*thorough demilitarization*' and in particular the 'subordination of the military power to the civilian'; thirdly, the '*elimination of the hegemonial greater Prussia structure of the empire*', which in truth was the rule of a caste; fourthly and finally, in the interests of the future organisation of the private sector, the option for a Federal State and against a Unified State (*Einheitsstaat*) (Weber, 2021: 30-33).

It would be wrong to characterise Weber's most well-known political writings, such as 'Suffrage and Democracy in Germany', 'Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order' and 'Germany's Future Form of Government', but also his treatises on Prussian electoral law or his concrete proposals for reforming the constitution of the German Empire, as occasional or 'daily political' works. Science and politics are closely linked, and Weber's interventions in politics were always based on an intimate, empirically underpinned knowledge and analysis of the respective social, political, and economic problems. François Chazel (2005) has rightly described these political writings as '*éclairage sociologique sur des problèmes contemporains*' (Sociological Insight into Contemporary Issues).

At the Heidelberg Sociology Conference, Raymond Aron distinguished between Weber, the theorist of power politics, and Weber the man and philosopher, who, despite being a theorist, never made power or the power of the nation his god. Ten years later, Wolfgang Mommsen responded to Aron once again: he, Mommsen, had provided evidence 'that Weber's advocacy of a parliamentary democratic order was primarily intended to increase the power of the German nation-state'. (Mommsen, 1974: 443; cf. Bruhns, 2017: 190). More than

thirty years later, the thesis that the nation state was Weber's 'last normative standpoint' and that the German nation's position of power was his last value standpoint was taken up again in a much broader context. Weber was considered to be unable or unwilling to think beyond the nation state (Joas & Knöbl, 2008: 167, 196). Both statements are problematic. Not only Weber's universal-historical preoccupation with highly diverse forms of political communities, from antiquity to the present, and not only his categorisation of states into those that are (must be!) power states and those that are not, but above all, quite specifically, his preoccupation, in the midst of the war, with the concept of a political economic community - in some respects a sort of forerunner of what half a century later was to become the European Community - speaks against the latter affirmation.

On 6 April 1916, Weber spoke at the aforementioned committee meeting of the *Verein für Sozialpolitik*, at which Central Europe and the Polish question were debated. According to Weber, if Poland were to be annexed to Austria or Hungary, the consequences for Silesia and for Germany's eastern border would be so serious that they could not be offset by military and customs alliances, however long they might last, 'but only by a political, military, monetary and trade *alliance*, an absolute, eternal, indissoluble bond between the states involved [...].' The inevitable requirement would then be an eternal confederation of states with monetary and banking unity, the radical elimination of all intermediate tariffs, a common foreign policy, a common trade policy, a common railway policy, the same transport law and the same social policy:

How, of course, such a community between sovereign states with completely separate organs, but where the common bank would have to feel all the mistakes that one makes in its economy and legislation and let them affect the other state or states involved, remains obscure. It is clear that, for the foreseeable future, Germany alone would bear the burden (Weber, 1988a: 142).

Just as the nation was not Weber's unbridgeable horizon, the nation and its position of power (*Machtstellung*) were not his 'ultimate value standpoint'. He was concerned with rectifying the design flaws of the Bismarckian and Wilhelmine nation state. To make it viable in the European system of states, this nation state also had to be a power state, because otherwise, Weber concluded, it would have been better to do without the foundation of the Reich.

Conclusion

War and violence are omnipresent in Weber's historical sociology. War is a kind of natural event in the history of states, a form of the inevitable "eternal struggle of nations"; it is generated by the structure of society itself. The "basic sociological concept(s)", which Weber defines immediately after war, include the concept of struggle as a social relationship, but not war (Weber, 2013: 192 ff). Politics is also "*struggle*" (Weber, 2013: 192 ff; Weber, 1988a: 460) War is one of several means of disrupting social relationships. In his sociological definition of struggle (peaceful or violent struggle, competition, social or biological selection, etc.), Weber alludes to the outcome of the world war: the purely accidental success, or the elimination of a social relationship, e.g. a state association, due to purely concrete reasons, was not an argument against its "*general 'adaptedness'*" and had nothing to do with the selection of human types in the social or biological sense (Weber, 2013: 194).

For Weber, the world war signified above all the triumphant advance of a certain "form of life", namely "the rational, *bureaucratic* organisation, based on the division of labour, of all human associations of power, from the factory to the army and the state" across the entire world. This process was already underway (Weber, 1988a: 461). As an observer of social

reality during the war years, he is concerned about the consolidation of the supremacy of the agrarians and other war profiteers, the declassification of the soldiers and the "labour army, which enables the warriors to fight outside".¹¹ For Weber, these social, political and economic consequences, alongside the war economy, were among the social and political dimensions of the war. Observations from 1918/19, such as the collapse of hitherto legitimate rule, the war's disruption of traditional ties, the systematic habituation to illegal behaviour, the smooth continued functioning of the old administrative staff and many more, were then incorporated into Weber's "sociology", for which Weber also announced a "theory of upheavals" under the impression of the events (Weber, 2013: 529 ff).

Weber's macrosociological analysis of the world war as the triumph of an organisational form can certainly be reconciled with Emil Lederer's *On the Sociology of World War* (published in 1915). The real difference, one could say, lies in the language, i.e. in the extent to which political commitment and personal involvement colour the scientist's analytical language. In January 1915, Lederer coolly stated that the real compulsion to make peace could only be given "when the human reservoir is really exhausted, the masses of people are used up" (Lederer, 2014: 106). In January 1921, he stated with similar detachment that the use of modern industry as a means of war meant that everything that the country contained in terms of personal and material resources would have to be expended, so that victor and vanquished would end up equally exhausted and the vanquished would no longer be a suitable object of exploitation (Lederer, 2014: 222). Weber saw the same social reality, but he was unable to disregard Germany's concrete situation with regard to war, defeat, and peace. Just as Stefan Breuer (2006) spoke of a tragic sociology with regard to Weber's major themes, one could also speak of his sociological view of the world war: Now that Germany wanted to be a power and nation state, it was condemned by fate to be an army camp: "The demands placed on a people organised as a *Machtstaat* are inescapable." It corresponds to this tragic vision that Weber emphasised: "We have every reason to thank fate that there is a *Deutschtum*¹² outside the national power state" (Weber, 1994: 75f, transl. mod.).

However, such emphasis should not obscure the richness of Weber's political sociology during the war. It was an analysis of the political and social preconditions of an internally fortified nation, in other words: the concrete, not theoretical construction of the nation state. At the beginning of his major treatise on "Suffrage and Democracy in Germany" in 1917, Weber emphasises: "The complex and many-faceted problem of democracy will be dealt with in this paper only as it affects the situation at the present moment *here in Germany*." What then follows in 50 narrow pages (and likewise in the 140 pages of "*Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland*" [Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order]) is, despite frequent polemics, a detailed historical-politological-sociological analysis that deals with the problem of democracy in Germany also from an international comparative perspective. This is a major 'war prize' for the social sciences. Here, but not only here, there is also a clear answer to the question of Weber's political attitude. He concluded the essay with the statement that Germany only had the choice between, on the one side, a bureaucratic 'authoritarian state' with a sham parliamentarism and, on the other side, not only social but a real political democratisation. "Democratisation can certainly be obstructed - for the moment - because powerful interests, prejudices and cowardice are allied in opposing it. But it would soon emerge that the price to be paid for this would be the entire future of Germany" (Weber, 1994: 129).

¹¹ Letter dated 19 March 1917 to the editors of the Frankfurter Zeitung (Weber, 2008: 602).

¹² Lassman and Speirs translate *Deutschtum* as "German race". In the context of Weber's argumentation, it means German people and culture.

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