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Max Weber's "Science as a Vocation": Context, Genesis, Structure

Keith Tribe

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Abstract

This essay presents the context of and motivation for Max Weber's 1917 lecture "Science as a Vocation". It provides an overview of the structure of the argument presented by Weber, and indicates the way in which it draws upon elements of his earlier work in outlining the nature of modern scientific engagement and the relation of the world of science to that of human values. Just as his essays on the Protestant Ethic turned on the central role of life conduct, so here Weber examines science in terms of the imperatives that the modern sciences impose upon its bearers.

Keywords: American higher education; German higher education; science and knowledge; science and values; science and religion.

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Keith Tribe: Independent Scholar and Translator (United Kingdom)
tess@dircon.co.uk; http://keithtribe.co.uk
Keith Tribe BA (Sociology, University of Essex, 1971) and PhD (University of Cambridge, 1977). During the 1980s he completed post-doctoral research in Heidelberg and Göttingen. During this period he began translating the work of Wilhelm Hennis on Max Weber, also publishing studies of Weber on his own account. His edition of Weber, *Economy and Society*, is currently in production with Harvard University Press, and will be published in the spring of 2019.

> ...ich bin für die Feder geboren, und für die Rednertribune, nicht für die Katheder. Die Erfahrung ist mir doch etwas schmerzlich, aber ganz eindeutig.[1]

1 Context

Towards the end of his life — he died in 1920 — Max Weber delivered two public lectures in Munich for students, at their specific request. The lectures dealt with science and with politics, two central themes for Weber. The first, given to German students on 7 November 1917, is in fact a self-presentation, an explanation of what he thought it meant to be a scholar. Karl Löwith later remarked that this lecture "condensed the experience and knowledge of an entire life." (Schluchter, 1992, pp. 14–15). The second, delivered in the aftermath of military defeat and political turmoil on 28 January 1919, condenses Weber's conception of what it took to be a politician in a modern democracy.

Germany had been at war with France, Britain and Russia since August 1914, a war that Weber had initially welcomed because he saw in it the prospect that a reactionary Tsarist regime would finally be displaced by some form of representative democracy. Nonetheless, he was opposed to the invasion and annexation of Belgium, and argued for the creation of a Polish state in the East as a buffer against Russia (Bruhns, 2017, pp. 28ff.). During the first year of the war he was fully occupied in running a military hospital on the outskirts of Heidelberg; once this work ended he occupied himself chiefly with revising and publishing the essays later collected in the three volumes of the *Religionssoziologie*. The preparation for the publication of the *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik* with which he had been so intensively engaged in 1913–1914 was put to one side for the duration of the war. He spent most of the winter of 1915/1916 in Berlin, vainly seeking to make some contribution to war policy, and reading works on China and India, which in May 1916 he described in a letter to Marianne as a solace.[2] In the autumn of 1916 he addressed a meeting in Munich of the Progressive People's Union on the topic of "Germany's Place in World Politics", marking a shift towards a more open, and public, statement of his views regarding the government's conduct of the war.[3] Then during the winter of 1916–1917 he revised the essay he had drafted in 1913 for the Verein 1917 Socialpolitik's debate on the problem of values, publishing it in early 1917 in the journal *Logos* (Weber, 1917). In June 1917 he addressed the Progressive People's Union again, arguing in Munich for the constitutional reforms necessary for "the democratization of our state."[4]

And then on 5 November 1917 at a meeting of the Munich Social Democratic Association he spoke against the dangerous political influence of the Alldeutscher Verein on government policy; he followed on from the SPD Reichstag deputy Wolfgang Heine, whose subject was the proposed truce and its opponents. As reported in the local newspaper, Weber opened as follows:

> He stated that he talked not as a man of science, but purely as a politician. As a university teacher he could claim as little authority in question of politics as he would allow anyone else — not even allow to the founder of the German Navy, if he were not able to demonstrate through his cool assessment of the most important matters more understanding of politics than a modest worker.[5]

However, two days later he did speak as a man of science to a meeting organised by the Bavarian branch of the Free Student Union, the *Freistudentische Bund. Landesverband Bayern*, actually an organization of ex-students formerly associated with the Free Student Movement (Schluchter, 1992, pp. 35 fn. 134). This

1. "I was born for writing and public speaking, not for lecturing. This insight is certainly rather painful for me, but all the same quite clear." Max Weber writing to Marianne Weber on 7 May 1918 from Vienna, where he was giving his first course of lectures since he broke off his Heidelberg lectures on "General ('Theoretical') Economics" in the summer of 1897 (MWG II/10.1, p. 166).

2. "I feel so well and ready to work *as soon as* I busy myself with Chinese and Indian material; I really yearn for it." Max to Marianne Weber, 16 May 1916 (MWG II/9, p. 420).

3. Weber's speeches in Nuremberg and Munich form the axis of Bruhns' assessment of Weber's wartime political engagement (Bruhns, 2017, pp. 35ff.).

4. Max Weber, "Was erwartet das deutsche Volk vom Verfassungsausschuß des deutschen Reichstages?" (MWG I/15, pp. 710–713).

5. Max Weber, "Gegen die alldeutsche Gefahr" (MWG I/15, p. 724).

was "Wissenschaft als Beruf", a response to a request that he contribute to a series of lectures on the nature of personal vocation in the modern world.

During 1917 a socialist/pacifist minority of students was becoming increasingly vocal nationally, condemning continuation of the war. A central figure for students in Munich was Friedrich Wilhelm Foerster, a Professor of Education in the University known for his Christian pacifist views and who during 1917 began in his lectures to advocate a truce and negotiations. Students linked to fraternities organized protests against his views, disrupting his lectures, and so other students associated with the Free Student Union organized his defense (Schluchter, 1992, p. 28). These clashes would be of relevance to Weber's stance in the two Vocation lectures; while long critical of student fraternities, he had begun to criticize those who embraced emotion, sensation and "inner experience" (*Erlebnis*) as guidelines for political activism, the stance of many pacifist students.

Meanwhile, in Russia the Tsarist government had fallen in February (8–15 March according to the new calendar) and been replaced by the Provisional Government. This was overthrown on 25 October 1917 — under the new calendar this became 7 November 1917, and so Weber's lecture on "Science as a Vocation" was delivered on the same day that the Bolsheviks seized power in Petrograd.

2 Genesis

The lecture "Wissenschaft als Beruf" initiated a planned lecture series on the topic "Geistige Arbeit als Beruf" — "Intellectual Work as a Calling". The idea for the lecture series had been prompted by an article written by Alexander Schwab on "Beruf und Jugend" and published anonymously in the monthly *Die weißen Blätter* on 15 May 1917. In this article he had described the idea of a *Beruf* as a totem of the contemporary Western European and American bourgeois world, an idol that had to be overthrown. The anticapitalist sentiments of Schwab were, in the context of the Free Student Movement, unremarkable; what marked his article out was the contention that, until now, no-one had examined this problem of the *Beruf*. He also suggested that the only two people who had said anything remotely significant about this problem were the brothers Max and Alfred Weber in Heidelberg (Schluchter, 1992, p. 37).

2.1 The Cultural Critique of the German University

The Free Student Movement had emerged at the turn of the century as a reaction to changes in the German university, which was assuming the form specialized and technical large-scale enterprise. Founded as a national body in 1900, the Deutsche Freie Studentenschaft (DFS) was not only directed against the growing size and institutional rigidity of the German universities, but claimed to represent all students not members of traditional student *Körperschften* and, moreover, sought to break the dominance of the latter as representational bodies. In many universities lectures were organized by the DFS specifically directed against the growing professional orientation of university education, and the danger that university education would become purely vocational in orientation, detached from any higher intellectual or spiritual aspirations (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, pp. 49ff).

In 1907 Friedrich Behrend had published a programme for higher education which invoked the Humboldtian ideal of the university and which criticized the growing adaptation of the German university to the cultural and economic aims of capitalist society, warning of a degeneration into generalized *Brotstudium* that would end up as merely a Philistine training. He criticized the growing specialization of the time, without however denying scientific achievements. Behrend sought to keep alive the general question of scientific principles, as well as the question of cultural foundations.

In the course of further developments different tendencies in the DFS emerged, one of which sought to develop the organization as an "academic party of action" — among proponents were Alexander Schwab, Walter Benjamin, Hans Reichenbach, Hermann Kranold and Karl Landauer. This grouping argued that universities produced not rounded personalities, but technical specialists, *Fachmenschen*. Reichenbach talked of a future community of Professors and students working in common on science, jointly committed to "das Erleben der Wissenschaft", arguing that it was only from such a direct sensation of science that the realization of scientific values could follow (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 51).

In his article of May 1917 Alexander Schwab had countered the Greek ideal of a "perfected condition" (*vollendete Zustand*) to the "modern perversity" of the contemporary Western European and American world. The Greeks had conceived economic activity as a means to an end; today, he argued, it had become an end in itself (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 53). Success in a *Beruf* should no longer been seen as success, but shame. This prompted the *Freistudentische Bund. Landesverband Bayern* (FSB) to plan a series of lectures devoted to this problematic. Two particular theses from Schwab would be addressed:

1. The restoration of a natural relationship between life and *Geist* that had been destroyed by the modern bourgeois world would be difficult where the acquisition of money and intellectual activity were linked, as in a *Beruf* — including in this category artists, academics, judges, officials, and teachers.
2. As already noted, Schwab had further argued that the only two prominent people to have said anything important about the concept of *Beruf* were Alfred and Max Weber.

Immanuel Birnbaum took on the planning of the series. Initially scheduled for the Winter Semester 1917–1918, he had trouble in recruiting some of the speakers originally envisaged. Georg Kerschensteiner agreed to talk on "Erziehung als Beruf" in October 1917, provided that it was not arranged for that year; but when Birnbaum came back to him in September 1918 Kerschensteiner asked for a further postponement into the spring of 1919. He did draft a text for this lecture, but it seems that it was never actually delivered (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 56). Wilhelm Hausenstein was likewise supposed to lecture on "Kunst als Beruf", but it seems that this was likewise never presented. Eventually this would be a lecture series with only two lectures, both by Max Weber, but this had not been the original plan.

2.2 The Lecture at Burg Lauenstein, 29 September 1917

On 29 September 1917 Weber had presented a lecture entitled "Personality and Life Orders" to a meeting at Burg Lauenstein. Although Weber's notes for his lecture have not survived, Tönnies recorded in his diary that Weber first talked of typologies of rulership and the selection of leading persons in different social systems, and more generally how life orders shaped individuals. Wilhelm Hennis's second essay on Max Weber, "Max Weber's Theme: 'Personality and Life Orders' ", takes up these points and elaborates them in the context of his first essay, "Max Weber's 'Central Question' ". Here he had emphasized the centrality of "life conduct" (*Lebensführung*),[6] suggesting that we can reconnect this Burg Lauenstein lecture to much earlier preoccupations, running back through the *Werturteilstreit* to the Protestant Ethic *Antikritik* and the Freiburg Inaugural Address of 1895.[7] In late October Weber received the invitation to give the Munich lecture and he immediately accepted since the topic was, as he wrote, "close to his heart" (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 58).

2.3 The Lecture as Presented, The Text We Read

On 7 November the lecture was delivered in the Steinickesaal, a small theatre and lecture room in Adalbertstr. 15 linked to a bookshop in Lindwurmstraße 5a owned by Carl Georg Steinicke. The local newspaper reported that the room was full, although Weber was initially disappointed that there seemed to be so few students among the audience; Birnbaum corrected this impression in a letter he wrote to Weber on 26 November 1917, saying that between 80 and 100 students had attended (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, pp. 59–60). Weber's lecture was recorded by a stenographer; Birnbaum sent a roughly corrected version to Weber on 26 November, with a request that the lecture be published as part of the planned lecture series. At the time there were no concrete plans for publication, but on 8 June 1918 Birnbaum concluded a preliminary contract with the publisher Duncker und Humblot for the planned series of four lectures, the fourth now being Max Weber again, this time lecturing on the topic of "Politik als Beruf". The original plan for the series had included a lecture on this theme, but no lecturer had previously been identified.

6. See Wilhelm Hennis (2000 Chs. 1 and 2) (originally published in 1982 and 1984 respectively). See pp. 62ff. for the context of the Burg Lauenstein lecture.

7. I sketch out in the conclusion to this essay the way in which the structure of the "Science as a Vocation" lecture resembles that of the 1895 Freiburg Inaugural lecture.

As noted above, there is no record that the second and third lectures in the series were ever delivered, and so when on 28 January 1919 Weber gave the lecture "Politik als Beruf" in the Steinickesaal, he closed a series that now consisted of only two lectures: "Wissenschaft als Beruf" and "Politik als Beruf". By this time of course the war had ended, the Empire and the Bavarian monarchy had fallen, the Versailles negotiations were in train, Friedrich Ebert was Chancellor of a new parliamentary republic, the Spartacist Uprising in Berlin had come and gone (5–12 January 1919), Rosa Luxemburg had been murdered on 15 January, and in the federal elections on 19 January Kurt Eisner's USPD had come in last in the Bavarian elections with 2.53% of the vote, as against 32.98% for the SPD and 34.99% for the Bavarian *Volkspartei*. Workers, ex-soldiers and students were agitating for the creation of regional workers and soldiers' soviets. In response to this bands of ex-soldiers joined right-wing militias which became known as the *Freikorps*. The political context of the two lectures was therefore very different, but despite this their leading ideas were those already expressed at Burg Lauenstein in September 1917.

The publication history of the two lectures further accentuated their convergence. Birnbaum had written on 30 January 1919 to Duncker und Humblot reminding them of the provisional contract from the previous year, suggesting that the publication of Weber's two lectures, as two separate publications, should not be delayed. The publisher agreed with this proposal, and so formalizing the link between the two lectures. In early February 1919 Weber made heavy corrections to the existing version of "Wissenschaft als Beruf", allusions being added to contemporary events in Munich and so further adding to the substantive convergence of the two lectures. Nonetheless, comparison with newspaper reports of the original delivery of this lecture in 1917 does not suggest that this revised version significantly altered the form the lecture had originally taken.[8] Copy was sent to press on 21 February 1919. Weber revised the stenographic record of "Politik als Beruf" between February and March 1919, delivering his final version to the publisher on 19 March 1919. The two lectures were then published together some time between late June and early July; not published, therefore, as had originally been envisaged, as two parts of a truncated series, but instead as two separate lectures with the same publication date.

While the two lectures were being printed, anarchists and socialist libertarians seized power in Munich and proclaimed a Soviet Republic, one of the leaders being Ernst Toller, who had attended the Burg Lauenstein meeting and been photographed in discussion with Weber. On 12 April this leftist regime was replaced by a communist government, which was then in turn bloodily suppressed in early May. When the lectures appeared in the bookshops trials of those involved in the Soviet Republic were still in progress, Max Weber testifying on behalf of Otto Neurath in the course of July.[9]

Weber had been highly critical of the turn radical pacifism had taken with the end of the war and the creation in late November 1918 of a left-socialist Bavarian government under the leadership of Kurt Eisner, writing to Otto Crusius on 24 November 1918 of the "socio-political masochism of those dishonourable pacifists who are now glorying in feelings of 'guilt' " (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 119 fn. 33). During December he had been heavily engaged in seeking election to the National Assembly as a candidate for the German Democratic Party (DDP), but this had come to nothing. A further round of electioneering between 2–17 January 1919 involved a number of public addresses, and he had recommended to Birnbaum that Friedrich Naumann should give the lecture, "the representative German politician of the times, pure and simple" as Birnbaum reported Weber remarking to him (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 120). But Naumann was ill, and Weber could also have been swayed by Birnbaum's alleged remark that some of his radical comrades had suggested asking Kurt Eisner to give the lecture, a man that Weber described as a "*Gesinnungspolitiker* without any sense of the consequences of his actions" (*ibidem*). Weber's final agreement to give the lecture on "Politics as a Vocation" appears to have been given no earlier than 12 January 1919.

8. Although there were several versions of the lecture — notes, draft stenographic version, corrected stenographic version, carbon copy of the corrected stenographic version, proofs — the only surviving version is the published one (Mommsen & Morgenbrod, 1992, p. 66).

9. Max Weber, "Zeugenaussage im Prozeß gegen Otto Neurath", (newspaper report) (MWG I/16, p. 495).

3 Wissenschaft als Beruf: Structure

The lecture is between nine and ten thousand words long in the original. It can be divided into four sections:

- External conditions
- Inner vocation
- What is science? The meaning of science and scientific progress
- Science and values; religion and prophecy

3.1 External Conditions [pp. 71–80]

After a preamble to which I return below, the argument begins by outlining the initial career of a young man who has dedicated himself to the vocation of science in a German university where, following qualification for teaching, he begins lecturing on subjects of his choice, supported only by the lecture fees of his students and without any clear idea that he will eventually find a post. If and when he does so, this will generally be owed to the benefaction of a patron. In America, by contrast, a career begins with appointment as a (low) paid assistant whose future depends entirely on successfully attracting students. If he does not, then he can be dismissed, something that cannot happen to a German lecturer.

In the comparison of the German and the American university system it is the latter which is treated as "modern", superseding the declining German university. The German system is "plutocratic", while the American system is "bureaucratic". Hence in no respect does Weber seek to defend his values by holding out a German system as a model confronting the rise of the American. It is in the latter that the future lies. In Germany, medicine and the natural sciences are going the American way — he writes of universities being "state capitalist" enterprises, characterized by the separation of the "worker" from the "means of production". There is an ongoing proletarianization of scientific labour.[10]

There is no doubt about the technical advantages of this situation, as with all capitalist and bureaucratic enterprises; but the *Geist* that holds sway here is one that is distinct from the ancient spirit of the German universities. All that remains of the older form is the role of chance in promotion to the position of a full Professor. Luck and not fitness determines the selection of personnel: the issue of *Personalauslese*. "Good teachers" are simply those who attract the most students; although the qualities that effect this are superficial, such as temperament or tone of voice.

3.2 Inner Vocation [80–85]

Weber then moves to the inner disposition that the young scholar requires, the inner vocation of science, moving from this discussion of the relation of the person to science into a discussion of the nature of science itself. The scientific world is fragmented into many institutions co-ordinated by the division of labour. How can an individual devote himself to something in a world so fragmented, so differentiated?

> Only through rigorous specialization can the scholar have the strong feeling, for what might be the first and the last time in his entire life: that here I have achieved something that will *last*. A decisive and solid piece of work is today always: specialized work. And whoever does not have it in him to, so to speak, don blinkers and enter into the idea that the destiny of his soul depends upon it: that he is right to make this conjecture at this point in this manuscript — he should steer well clear of science. He will never feel what can be called the "inward experience" of science. [...] For nothing is worth anything to man as a man that *cannot* be done with *passion*. (pp. 80–81)

Science is organized rationally, but has need of imagination to progress; cold calculation leads science nowhere. The source of this imagination cannot simply be lived experience, sensation; hard consistent work is usually needed before a clear and well-founded insight emerges. But

10. "The *Assistent* is as dependent upon the Director of his Institute as is an employee in a factory: — for the Director of the Institute fully believes that this is *his* Institute, in which his will is done. And the *Assistent* is often in just as precarious position as any *proletaroide* being, and like the assistant in an American university". (MWG I/17, p. 74).

> Insight does not replace work. And in turn work cannot substitute for insight, or force it into existence, just as little as passion can. (p. 82)

Today there prevails among the young the idol of "Personality" and "Inner Experience", or what used to be called "Sensation". But personality is not built upon "encountered experience", "sensation", something which transcends reflection or thought.

> Ladies and gentlemen, in the realm of science, the only person that has "personality" is he who is *wholly devoted to his work*. (p. 84)[11]

Great artists are dedicated to their work, and even the truly great, such as Goethe, can even attempt to fashion their lives as a work of art. There was however a price to be paid for this, although:

> It is no different in politics. But I am not talking about that today. (p. 84).

The dedication of a scientist is internal, not an external search for proof that one is "something other than a mere expert (*Fachmann*)." (p. 84)[12] Here again, comparison with a work of art makes clear that while a truly fulfilling work will never become obsolete, every scientist works in the knowledge that their best work will be obsolete within a few years. Each new "fulfillment" in the sciences just brings new questions, and positively seeks to be rendered obsolete.

> This is something with which everyone who wishes to serve science has to come to terms. (p. 85)

3.3 What is Science? The Meaning of Science and Scientific Progress [pp. 85–93]

> [...] to be superseded scientifically is not simply our destiny, but our goal. We cannot work without hoping that others will get further than we have. In principle this progress is infinite. And here we come to the *problem of the meaning* of science. [...] What is the point of engaging in something that in reality neither comes, nor can come, to an end? (pp. 85–86)

Modern life is dominated by technologies which we use, but do not understand in detail. We do not live in a world which we in fact understand, but rather a world which we believe to be knowable, comprehensible. There is no longer anything that is in principle unknowable, nothing that, if we took the time, we could not calculate; indeed, through calculation we can potentially control and manipulate everything. And so the world is disenchanted: while science makes the world in principle comprehensible, this very comprehensibility robs the world of mystery and enchantment, while not itself lending science any meaning. Nor does the fact that science is progressive lend it any sense. It is neither a path to nature, nor to God, least of all to human happiness. What we consider valuable in scientific research cannot be shown to be "valuable" by scientific means. Scientific knowledge cannot tell us what is "worth knowing". Only values and presuppositions can do that. Can there then in fact be a science without presuppositions, he asks?

3.4 Science and Values; Religion and Prophecy [pp. 93–111]

> What is then, under these inner presuppositions, the meaning of science as a vocation, since all these former illusions — "the path to true being", "the path to true art", "the path to true nature", "the path to a true God" — have proved unworkable. Tolstoy has given the most simple response to this by saying: "It has no meaning, because on its own it cannot answer what is for us the sole important question: 'what should we do?', 'how must we live?' " The fact that it supplies no answer is quite simply indisputable. The question is only the sense in which it gives "no" answer; and whether, instead of that, perhaps it could do something for someone who poses the question properly. Today it is common to talk of a science "without presuppositions."(p. 93)

11. "[...] der *rein der Sache* dient" = fully focussed on one thing, cause, object, purpose.

12. Here the echo of *Bewährung* is clear: the idea of personal proof before God and man, a key concept of the *Protestant Ethic*. See Peter Ghosh (2014, p. 28).

Scientific work presupposes logic and method. It also presupposes that the object of scientific work is "worth knowing".

> And there quite obviously are all our problems. For this presupposition is not capable of proof with the means of science. It permits only the ultimate meaning of science to be *interpreted*, an interpretation that one then has to reject or accept, according to one's own ultimate stance towards life. (p. 93)

From this, Weber then turns to politics: this has no place in the lecture hall. And this goes for students, whether they are right-wing German nationalists or left-wing pacifists and socialists.[13] Nor should teachers engage in politics:

> For the adoption of a practical-political position and the scientific analysis of political structures and party positions are two different things. (p. 96)

To invoke "democracy" at a public meeting means that there is no problem about identifying with it; quite the contrary, it is one's duty to make clear one's allegiance. That is not true of the lecture room, where the term "democracy" is the object of analysis, not of identity. Science and politics are quite distinct: the first concerns logical relations, whereas the second involves considerations of how one should act within a particular community. The role of the teacher is to pose problems, not provide solutions.

> [...] the prophet and the demagogue do not belong at the lectern of a lecture room. [...] I could prove from the works of our historians that wherever the man of science presents his own value judgement, there complete understanding of the facts *ceases*. But that goes beyond tonight's topic and would call for lengthy analysis. (pp. 97–98)

Nonetheless, while it is clear that there are practical reasons to refrain from forcing one's personal opinions on others, there is also the point that different value orders are in a state of irresolvable conflict. How might one, for example, choose between the value of French or of German culture? The devil for one is a god for another.

> The many ancient Gods, stripped of their enchantment and taking the form of impersonal powers, arise from their graves, seek to exercise power over our lives and resume their eternal struggle among themselves. But what becomes so hard for modern man, and most difficult for the younger generation, is to be able to live such an everyday life. All pursuit of "lived experience" stems from this weakness. For it is a weakness: an inability to contemplate the full gravity of the fate of our times. (p. 101)

Then Weber abruptly turns away from this, and re-emphasizes that students should not seek leaders in the lecture hall, but only teachers. Here he returns to an American example: the American student sees himself as part of a simple exchange: his father pays the teacher to teach his students what he knows, just like the grocer sells his mother cabbage, and that is all. If the teacher happens to be a football coach, then he is in this domain a leader. He then appeals directly to his student listeners, arguing that at least 99 out of 100 professors are not only "no football coaches for life", but no model leaders at all in matters relating to life conduct.

What then can science offer for practical and personal life? (p. 103) Which brings us back to the question of *Beruf*. He lists three things: knowledge of techniques, methodical and rational thinking, and clarity. These are all means for the achievement of an end: the first two establish a clarity about the choices that one has to make; but cannot tell you what those choices should be.

> Whether under these circumstances science is something worthy of being someone's *Beruf* [...] is once again a value judgement about which nothing can be said in a lecture hall. Because, for teaching, affirmation of this principle is a *presupposition*. (p. 105)

13. Here he refers directly to Foerster, "from whom my views are in many respects as far removed as is possible [...]" (MWG I/17, pp. 95–96).

Science is a discipline, and scientists are the "disciples of science", *Fach* and *Fachmenschen*. It is not a religion, since religions give us our human goals. But belief that science is something worth doing gives purpose to those who adopt its demands; this itself is a value that science cannot provide.

From it we should draw the moral that longing and waiting is not enough and that we must act differently. We must go about our work and meet the "challenges of the day" — both in our human relations and our vocation. But that moral is simple and straightforward if each person finds and obeys the daemon that holds the threads of *his* life. (p. 111)

4 Some Connections and Conclusions

The lecture is divided into four unequal parts. It begins with the institution in which science is practiced, but moves quickly to the motivation of the scholar/scientist. From there, it introduces the nature of scientific knowledge in general, a knowledge of a disenchanted world. The question is therefore: in what way can this knowledge develop as a perpetual institution on the one hand, with bearers who are themselves only human and finite, on the other? What kind of person would devote themselves to such a life? What qualities are here necessary?

The comparison of science and religion in the lecture does not only serve to demarcate different kinds of knowledge. It is at the same time an individual orientation: both science and religion are infinite, endless. But the scholar/scientist or the student has a finite life. Engagement with science or religion attaches a finite human being to a knowledge or a faith which is in principle infinite. One could also say that science demands of the scientist faith; but a faith in the rationalism of the enterprise with which he engages.

This argument is then extended by a consideration of the teacher/student relationship. The teacher necessarily has values as a scholar/scientist, but in the teaching situation must withhold them. This relationship is elaborated through religious analogy, stating that the teacher is not a prophet. But he begins with quite concrete and practical matters.

4.1 Internal and External Conditions

Much of the Weber commentary seeks to make sense of his writing by dividing it up into periods, or subject matter. And so we have the early work, the works of maturity, the methodology, the political writings, the work before the breakdown, the work after the breakdown, the difference between the period in which Weber first published the *Protestant Ethic* essays in 1904/1905, and their different place in the 1920 *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie*. These distinctions organize an understanding both of his life and his work.

But this 1917 lecture has the same formal structure as the Inaugural Lecture of 1895. In 1917 he begins as an economist: "We political economists possess a certain pedantic streak that I should like to retain. It is expressed in the fact that we always start from external circumstances [...]" (p. 71). In 1895 he excused himself for beginning with "dry facts", the rural structure of Prussia, the "external conditions" of the question of national policy. This inaugural lecture also turns on life orders and the conduct of life: the emigration of rural workers motivated by their interaction with the Junker landowners. In studying the migration patterns of rural workers in eastern Germany, he traced the connection of the life order in which they were placed, and how it fostered or limited particular kinds of behaviour.

Hence the opening structure of both lectures conform to the duality "order"–"conduct": external structure and internal motivation. This is itself an anthropological problem — what type of individual can conform to these demands? And how does this order enforce its demands? But following on from these "dry facts", he turns to the issues of national politics that arise from them, and the relation of economic analysis to them.

> In what way does the perspective of economic policy relate to this? Does it treat these kinds of nationalist value judgements as prejudices from which it must carefully detach itself, so that it might apply its own evaluation, uninfluenced by emotional reflexes, to economic facts? *And what is* this "own" evaluation in economic policy? [...] The economic policy of a German state, just like the standard of value (*Wertmaßstab*) of the German economic theorist, can therefore only be German (Weber, 1895/1993, pp. 558–560).

The lecture on the "National State and Economic Policy" turns on this relationship between the values of the scientist and the relation of this scientist to a science, in this case the science of economics, in whose name Weber speaks.

4.2 The Connection with *The Protestant Ethic*

In "Wissenschaft als Beruf" it is evident that any discussion of values quickly becomes an argument about religious belief; and of course the *Protestant Ethic* is primarily a study of how religious belief affects conduct: how a particular set of values guides the way in which individuals lead their lives. This suggests that Weber's studies of world religions can be understood as so many attempts to reconstruct other value systems, seeking an account of the way in which sustained capitalist development had been a characteristic only of Western Europe, despite the fact that, for instance, in China an extensive bureaucratic apparatus had developed.

More obviously, of course, is the fact that the concept of *Beruf* is central to *Protestant Ethic*, and in both lecture and essays is open to the ambiguity of this term — as calling, vocation, or simple occupation. Specialized science was inevitably becoming the province of the *Fachmensch*, and it is precisely this figure that is invoked in the closing pages of the *Protestant Ethic*:

> Then of course it might truly be said for the "ultimate beings" of this cultural development: "Specialists (*Fachmenschen*) without spirit, hedonists without heart, these non-entities imagine themselves to have conquered (*erstiegen*) a hitherto unattained stage of mankind." (Weber, 1904–1905/2014, p. 423)

"Wissenschaft als Beruf" also turns on the question of *Lebensführung*, directed to the relation of values to the choices made in life conduct, itself a central theme of *Protestant Ethic*.

4.3 The Link to the Lecture "Politics as a Vocation"

The structure of "Politik als Beruf" follows the same logic as "Wissenschaft als Beruf" — external structure, internal motivation. Central here in the discussion of the latter is the distinction between an "ethic of conviction" (*Gesinnungsethik*) and an "ethic of responsibility" (*Verantwortungsethik*), continuing the argument of "Wissenschaft als Beruf". The point of a *Beruf* is that it involves constraint, in both science and politics a distancing from sensation, passion. Nonetheless, dedication was required in both cases for anyone to have "personality" — clearly rebuking those who sought fulfillment in ungoverned sensation. As Weber said, if you want sensation, go the cinema.

4.4 Value Freedom

As noted above, the 1917 *Logos* essay on *Wertfreiheit* was a revised version of his 1913 *Stellungnahme* to a Verein für Socialpolitik symposium on value judgements. Here the same themes emerge: intellectual probity, *Fachschulung* vs. *Fachbildung*, that the lecture hall was no place for the Prophet, the nature of personality in terms of the distinction between *Erleben* and *Erfahrung*, self-importance or *Sichwichtignehmen*, what the student can reasonably expect to learn, the capacity to complete a particular task marking out the dedicated scholar, the ability to recognize even uncomfortable facts and distinguish this from any personal position, to put one's own person "to one side", and above all to avoid any exercise of one's own preferences and inclinations.

One can read "Science as a Vocation" as a "confession" of Weber's own self-understanding. What he explains is his own motivation as a scholar. Two points can be made in closing:

1. Weber distinguishes life orders from life conduct:

   In this lecture Weber emphasizes that science is a means, but not an end. Science cannot explain human goals and purposes. The values that one needs to lead one's life cannot be found in science. To be a scientist one has to have particular values, and science itself needs scientists with values, so

that science itself might make progress. Of course, science has to be objective; but in order to develop a truly progressive science it has to be embedded in a "world of values" which lend it human significance.

2. Values are universal, and the scholar/scientist is also dominated by values:

   It is the same with the lecture "Politics as a Vocation". A student who attended the 1919 lecture invited Weber and others back to her flat to continue the discussion, and she reported that "No-one had forgotten these hours in which the teacher of a value-free science passionately defended his own values, as he piled fact upon fact and weighed them." (MWG I/17, p. 123)

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