

# 'Objectivity' in Parliamentary and Scholarly Disputes: On Max Weber's Rhetorical Redescription of a Concept

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**Abstract** Max Weber's classical essay on 'Objectivity' from 1904 is here revisited from a rhetorical perspective. When Webers speaks of 'objectivity', he is referring to the *Methodenstreit* in the economics of his time from the broader viewpoint of discussing the modes of conducting scholarly disputes in general. He insists that the struggle between opposing standpoints and their supporters, widely accepted both in political and cultural life, should also be reevaluated in the scholarly controversies. The point of 'objectivity' is for Weber not to terminate scholarly disputes but *the open-minded and fair discussion* of them. This *fair play* concept of objectivity can be tracked back to the Renaissance rhetorical culture and its political institutionalisation in the English parliament, which was admired by Weber. His own rhetoric of defending 'objectivity' while altering its meaning and range of reference also illustrates the use of rhetorical redescription of a concept, characteristic of parliamentary rhetoric.

## 1. The Thesis

My thesis in this essay is that the 'objectivity' has better chances to succeed in parliamentary than in scholarly disputes. With this I aim at contesting the widespread assumption that science is inherently more valuable than politics. One of the recurrent justifications for this is the belief that scientific research is 'objective' while politics is not. By disputing the grounds for this assumption, I am practicing what Friedrich Nietzsche referred to as the transvaluation of values (*Umwertung der Werte*).

When I refer here to the terms 'objective' and 'objectivity' in quotation marks, the informed reader will recognise the subtle reference to Max Weber's famous 1904 essay "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis". I refer here to 'objectivity' exclusively in the sense in which it was used in Weber's article, which was published as a programmatic declaration of the new editorial team (Edgar Jaffé, Werner Sombart, Max Weber) in the first issue of the newly renamed journal *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*.

Weber's use of quotation marks when referring to 'objectivity' should be seen by the reader as a kind of warning (see also Drysdale 2007). Contrarily to what some scholars seem to believe (e.g., Tenbruck 1959), Weber's point was not to reject 'objectivity'. His intention was to interpret the concept in a new way that challenged all other meanings of the concept in his time.

In what sense, then, does Weber defend 'objectivity'? In what sense does 'objectivity' remain a positive value for him? Why does he continue to cling to this ambiguous concept despite the fact that his interpretation of it differs so significantly from that of his contemporaries?

## 2. 'Objectivity' in Scholarly Controversies

It does not make sense to simply invert the commonly held view that science is an inherently more valuable activity than politics. Increasing the plausibility of Weber's standpoint requires indirect rhetorical moves that shatter the presuppositions of commonly held beliefs. Quentin Skinner refers to this procedure as rhetorical re-description, and he sees its historical origins as lying in the scheme *paradiastole*, as it was practised in the Roman and Renaissance rhetoric (see esp. Skinner 1996, ch. 4; 2002, ch. 10; 2007; 2008). Skinner is particularly interested in the paradiastolic de- or re-valuation of the normative tone of concepts, in the possibilities that no value concept can surely remain beyond the dispute and that the negative concepts may be extenuated or neutralised.

In the Roman and Renaissance rhetorical literature, the paradiastolic de- and re-valuation of concepts was understood as highly controversial. The possibility of altering the normative tone of concepts by means of rhetorical re-description was frequently regarded as dangerous. Machiavelli's *Il Principe* was perhaps the most notorious example of both the devaluation of virtues and the revaluation of vices at that time (Skinner 1996, 162-180).

Many scholars, including Thomas Hobbes, found strong grounds for turning against what Skinner calls the rhetorical political culture of the Renaissance and its inherent possibility to argue *in utramque partem*. Hobbes' aim was to establish a *scientia civilis* on grounds similar to those he assumed

Euklidian geometry to be based. Hobbes, however, was himself a learned rhetorician, and he used many of his rhetorical skills in the polemic against the rhetorical culture. In the context of the English civil war and republic, Hobbes' political point of speaking against rhetoric was turned against the parliamentary style of politics based on the rhetorical principle of speaking *pro et contra* (Skinner 1996, 284-293).

The polemic against rhetoric in the name of science that is prevalent today is very similar to that presented by Hobbes. However, the belief in the stable normative order in science is part of the anti-rhetorical rhetoric found in textbooks, not in the scholarly practices in the human sciences. At least since the 1980s, "the rhetoric of human sciences" is a recurrent *topos* that cannot be eliminated simply by declaring one's belief in the value and dignity of science (see Nelson et.al. 1987). Following the example of Nietzsche and Skinner, we can claim that the rhetorical practices of the transvaluation of values are part and parcel of the research process itself.

As every scholar with vast experience in the field of human sciences knows, not all disputes are as rare and extraordinary as some famous names for controversies (*Methodenstreit*, *Positivismusstreit*, *Historikerstreit* to quote German examples) would have us believe. Today, in fact, key concepts in the human sciences tend to be just as contested and controversial as they are in politics (see for example Skinner 2002, ch. 1 and 10, Koselleck 2006). This is a challenge that should be clarified by scholars of rhetoric and conceptual history and made better intelligible even to scholars believing in the authority of 'science'.

Before delving into a deep analysis of Weber's essay, we must take a closer look at the procedure of rhetorical revaluation. In the fourth chapter of his *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes*, Quentin Skinner refers to two opposing styles and two different practices of the paradiastolic redescription of concepts. The styles are the renaming and reinterpretation of concepts, and the practices consist of altering their range of reference and normative tone.

Weber limits the renaming move to the use of quotation marks, and he definitely retains the high valuation of 'objectivity'. What remains for him, in Skinnerian terms, is to alter the range of reference of 'objectivity' and to reinterpret the 'core' of the concept. Weber is very clear about what he *does not mean* by 'objectivity', but offers no explicit constructive alternative. It is my thesis that Weber's alternative interpretation of 'objectivity' might be understood in terms of the metaphor of *fair play*. In order to render such an interpretation plausible, he must alter the range of reference applied to 'objectivity' regarding its relationships to other key concepts, such as know-

ledge, science (*Wissenschaft*), truth, subjectivity and politics. According to my interpretation, this is precisely what Weber is doing in his 1904 essay.

Weber wrote this essay while slowly recovering from a severe illness following a nervous breakdown (analysed in a detailed albeit controversial and psycho-historical manner by Radkau in 2005). Weber's illness forced him to permanently relinquish his professorship in political economy in Heidelberg in 1903. However, the long period of respite had also given new direction to his thoughts. At the same time as he was working on the 'Objectivity' essay, Weber was also working on a three-part essay on the history of the historical school in German economics through the works of Wilhelm Roscher and Karl Knies (Weber 1903-1906) and on the Protestant Ethic (Weber 1904-1905).

The immediate context of the 'Objectivity' essay refers to the contemporary disputes within the sphere of German-speaking economics, especially between Gustav Schmoller and his 'ethical' version of the historical economics and Carl Menger and the 'Austrian economics' of the marginal utility school, which idealised the natural sciences. Weber defends the historical approach, although not Schmoller's 'ethical' commitments to the Prussian state, and the theoretical intentions of economics minus Menger's naturalistic ideal of science. Weber identifies himself in 'Objectivity' essay as an economist, and most of his arguments are related to the history and the current state of that discipline. When Weber speaks of 'objectivity', he is referring directly to the *Methodenstreit* between Schmollerians and Mengerians, but with the broader aim of discussing the modes of conducting scholarly disputes in general. The key paragraph of the essay is this<sup>1</sup>:

No one can evade the fact that the problem exists ... : this is clear for anyone who observes the struggle over method, 'basic concepts' and presuppositions, the constant change of 'viewpoints' and the continual redefinition of 'concepts' – it is evident that theoretical and historical deliberations still seem to be separated by an unbridgeable clasm: 'two sciences of economics!' as a bewildered Viennese examinee once peevishly complained. What does objectivity mean in this context? The following discussion is devoted solely to this question. (Weber 2004, 367-368)

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<sup>1</sup> "Daß das Problem als solches besteht und ... , kann niemandem entgehen, der den Kampf um Methode, 'Grundbegriffe' und Voraussetzungen, den steten Wechsel der 'Gesichtspunkte' und die stete Neubestimmung der 'Begriffe', die verwendet werden, beobachtet und sieht, wie theoretische und historische Betrachtungsform noch immer durch eine scheinbar unüberbrückbare Kluft getrennt sind: 'zwei Nationalökonomien', wie ein verzweifelter Wiener Examinee seinerzeit jammernd klagte. Was heißt hier Objektivität? Lediglich diese Frage wollen die nachfolgenden Ausführungen erörtern" (Weber 1904b, 160-161).

In other words, according to Weber's thesis, the entire issue of 'objectivity' should be discussed in relation to the treatment of scholarly controversies. Anyone who speaks about 'objectivity' must also discuss the modes and procedures of treating scholarly disputes. Weber's point is that disputes cannot be solved or overcome in the name of 'scientific progress'. On the contrary, he seems to assume that scholarly controversies are an omnipresent and ongoing part of any scientific practice. Weber subscribes to the old rhetorical insight that the more intensively an issue is discussed, the more new and unconventional points of view the participants tend to construct. Academic criticism cannot be seen as a mere cathartic phase that could be overcome by a shared consensus, but should be seen instead as part of an ongoing debate lacking a neutral judge or arbiter.

Weber's main point is that each and every standpoint should be discussed fairly, critically and thoroughly. There is no 'objectivity as such', as no ideas or thoughts can exist independently of the perspectives of the scholars who present them. We can only speak of the 'objectivity' of the struggle between perspectives as regards their interpretations of reality<sup>2</sup>.

There is *no* absolutely 'objective' scientific analysis of cultural life - or to put it perhaps more precisely, without however materially altering our meaning - there is no 'objective' analysis of social phenomena *independent* of special and one-sided perspectives, on the basis of which such phenomena can be (explicitly or implicitly, consciously or unconsciously) selected as an object of research, analysed and systematically represented (Weber 2004, 374).

What views of 'objectivity' are excluded if we accept the ideas presented by Weber in these two quotes? Weber vehemently rejects the passivity of the scholar in the sense of the 'mirror theory of knowledge' (see for example Weber 1904b, 161, 181; Weber 2004, 368, 377). No less obvious, although never explicitly stated in the essay, is the idea that 'objectivity' is something that can never be possessed by an individual, but, rather, is a process that not only contains the relationship between the scholar and her subject matter also but the relationships between scholars.

In other words, Weber disputes the view that 'objectivity' is the polar opposite of 'subjectivity'. On the contrary, the quote indicates that 'subjectivity' is an inherent condition of the 'objectivity' that exists in the relation-

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<sup>2</sup> "Es gibt *keine* schlechthin 'objektive' wissenschaftliche Analyse des Kulturlebens oder - was vielleicht etwas Engeres, für unsern Zweck aber sicher nichts wesentlich anderes bedeutet - der 'sozialen Erscheinungen' *unabhängig* von speziellen und 'einseitigen' Gesichtspunkten, nach denen sie - ausdrücklich oder stillschweigend, bewußt oder unbewußt - als Forschungsobjekt ausgewählt, analysiert und darstellend gegliedert werden" (Weber 1904b, 170).

ships between opposed points of view. Similarly to political struggles, the personal dimension cannot be eliminated or underestimated in academic disputes. Weber is willing to acknowledge that personal rivalries are a source of innovation and originality in major intellectual controversies between scholars. Accordingly, he also disputes the value of the 'middle line' to serve as a kind of surrogate for truth (Weber 1904b, 154; Weber 2004, 364). In addition, intra-scientific termini such as 'laws' or 'system' are not seen as neutral arbiters of scholarly disputes (Weber 1904b, 179-180, 184; Weber 2004, 376, 383): these concepts do neither have a priority over other alternative analytic tools nor are "inexpugnable" in the Hobbesian sense (quoted in Skinner 1996, 300).

As for the value of controversies themselves, Weber is adamant in the 'Objectivity' essay about the similarity between the human sciences and politics, to which the subject matter refers. Accordingly, he insists that the value of the struggle between opposing standpoints and their supporters, widely accepted both in politics and the cultural sphere, also be accepted in scholarly disputes<sup>3</sup>.

The social and *political* character of a problem is distinguished by the fact that it *cannot* be resolved by the application of mere technical considerations to fixed ends, that *argument* can and *must* arise over the regulating standards of value, and because the problem reaches into the region of general *cultural* questions. (Weber 2004, 363)

Accordingly, the point of 'objectivity' is not the termination of scholarly disputes but *the open-minded and fair discussion* of them. The tacit assumption of Weber's essay is that there is a keen lack of recognition of both the omnipresence and the heuristic scholarly value of academic controversies in the current academic world. This applies not only to the actual situation in the discipline of German-speaking economics but also to the general practice of minimising or ignoring the disputes within universities and other fora of scholarly controversies.

### 3. How to Deal With Scholarly Disputes

Weber views the refusal to recognise the heuristic value of scholarly controversies, whether manifested in hiding them behind the academic scenes,

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<sup>3</sup> "Das Kennzeichen des sozialpolitischen Charakters eines Problems ist es ja geradezu, daß es nicht auf Grund bloß technischer Erwägungen aus feststehenden Zwecken heraus zu erledigen ist, daß um die regulativen Wertmaßstäbe selbst gestritten werden kann und muß, weil das Problem in die Region der allgemeinen Kulturfragen hineinragt" (Weber 1904b, 153).

as is the case with professorial appointments and so on, or in the repeated declarations of distinct academic schools, as a sign of stagnation. Referring tacitly to the concept of *Chinese stationariness* presented by John Stuart Mill in an essay on Bentham (Mill 1838), Weber speaks of the danger of a *chinesische Erstarrung* (Weber 1904b, 184; Weber 2004, 383). The combination of academic politeness and disgust with controversies is seen by Weber as indicating a lack of willingness to change and to move in the direction of scholarly 'progress'.

The humanistic reform of the German universities after 1800 had in principle created a more debate-friendly intellectual climate. Immanuel Kant proposed one of the main ideas behind the university reform in his essay *Der Streit der Fakultäten*, namely the inversion of the ranks between the faculties. In the old university hierarchy, the philosophical faculty was in the lowest position and was therefore not affected by the external interests than teaching in the faculties of law, medicine and theology. Kant's rhetorical move was to make of this free and unbound character of the philosophical faculty the value that characterised the spirit of the entire university as an open field of arguments. He rejected the illegitimate (*unrechtmäßig*) intervention of the bound faculties in the faculty of philosophy, but accepted that there are also legitimate (*rechtmäßig*) contests between the faculties. His idea was to propose, just a few short years after the French Revolution, that the hierarchy of university faculties be reversed and treated analogously to the parliament<sup>4</sup>.

Although Kant's essay only concerns inter-faculty disputes and makes no mention of the substantial scholarly controversies within the faculties and disciplines, it does contain the principle of open argument in place of relying on tacit solutions from academic authorities and their hierarchies. As such, he also takes up the problem that Weber would later refer to as 'objectivity'.

Kant's characterisation of the free faculty of philosophy as both the parliamentary opposition and the left wing indicated the need to transform the ranks between the faculties. His point is not to automatically associate the faculty of philosophy with the opposition. Rather, his intention is to present a rhetorical argument in favour of improving the chances to argue *in utramque partem*, i.e. ensuring that each and every view is heard

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<sup>4</sup>"Die Classe der obern Facultäten (als die rechte Seite des Parlaments der Gelehrtheit) vertheidigt die Statute der Regierung, indessen daß es in einer so freien Verfassung, als die sein muß, wo es um Wahrheit zu thun ist, auch eine Oppositionspartei (die linke Seite) geben muß, welche die Bank der philosophischen Facultät ist, weil ohne deren strenge Prüfung und Einwürfe die Regierung von dem, was ihr selbst ersprießlich oder nachtheilig sein dürfte, nicht hinreichend belehrt werden würde" (Kant 1798, 42).

in the *république de letters*, just as the parliamentary procedure contains the rhetorical principle of arguing *pro et contra* on every issue on the parliamentary agenda (see Skinner 2008, 138-140). We cannot properly understand the content, point and significance of a parliamentary proposal without hearing the arguments against it. This is the key point of Weber's perspectivist theory of knowledge, and it clearly illustrates its link to the rhetorical tradition of discussing scholarly controversies, which Kant also takes up in his essay on the contest of faculties.

Of course, scholarly controversies and their implicit or explicit personal parallels are dealt with in some way or another. They may be discussed openly or hidden behind closed doors; added to the agenda of debates or removed from it; brought to the fore or pushed to the background; resolved by the institutional or positional authority or simply ignored. Unlike in the parliament, there is no established procedure regarding how to institutionalise the controversies, which makes them more ambiguous and their outcome more potentially hazardous, particularly since they are often the product of personal sympathies, shifting trends or actual constellations in faculties and departments.

In the context of individual disciplines within a university, there exists an implicit hierarchical model that corresponds to Aristotle's epideictic rhetoric. The classical situation of a professor speaking to audience corresponds to the epideictic rhetoric of the festivity speakers. The audience can only respond to praise and blame by acclaiming or rejecting the standpoint they heard *ex cathedra*. Or we can use the analogy of a referendum or plebiscite, to which voters can only answer yes or no.

In Weber's time strong parallels could still be drawn between professors and the ancient festivity speakers or a Bonapartistic president standing before the plebiscite. The *plebs*, i.e. the students, could 'vote with their feet' for the professors they wanted to listen to, as they had free access to all professors, disciplines, faculties and universities. Professors competed with each other for students. The number and quality of the students professors were able to attract in lectures and in supervised dissertations boosted their reputation often more or less independently of their scholarly qualities and involvement in the controversies surrounding the theories and concepts in their discipline. Of course the popularity among students alone could not make a *Privatdozent* a professor (*Ordinarius*).

In today's more closed academic environment, the competition between scholars for students on the epideictic basis of praise and blame has been marginalised. The models of forensic and negotiation rhetoric have gained ground, but they too are unrelated to the fair treatment of theoretical disputes in the research process itself. Their existence and persistence are more

broadly recognised today than they were in Weber's time, and aspects of regulating the deliberations between scholar partially exist local contexts, but there is no systematic procedure in existence that is analogous to that of the parliamentary procedure.

#### 4. The Ideal of Fair Play

My analysis of Weber's essay has thus far identified the treatment of scholarly controversies as the problem of 'objectivity', highlighted his disqualification of the existing uses of this notion as irrelevant, as well as specified the intellectual context in which he claims that the discussion of 'objectivity' requires a formal procedure that did not exist at that time. As I have indicated, my thesis is that *fair play* characterised Weber's regulative ideal of 'objectivity' that is applicable to all scholarly disputes. In other words, according to my interpretation, Weber sees 'objectivity' as referring to a situation in which scholarly controversies are treated according to the principle that every proposal in an intellectual controversy is discussed in a fair manner from opposing points of view.

The notion of *fair play* is barely present in the textual corpus of Max Weber. Nonetheless, it is a part of his Anglophile orientation to politics. The *fair play* principle was not a new invention born out of the rhetoric of English sportsmanship during the nineteenth century. On the contrary, it was the manifestation of much older strains of thought, such as the medieval chivalry tradition<sup>5</sup> and the Renaissance rhetorical culture. Expressions of this principle can be found, for example, in the works of William Shakespeare, who has recently been more closely associated with the rhetorical tradition than ever before (see Adamson et al. 2007, including Skinner's essay on *paradiastole*).

If the principle of *fair play* is seen as more than just a minimum requirement of not violating the rights of others, it refers above all to the deliberative genre of rhetoric. In it there is no arbiter or judge as in forensic rhetoric, no limitation of the alternatives to yes and no as in epideictic rhetoric, and no permanently established partners as in negotiation rhetoric. Deliberation *pro et contra* is open-ended, and anyone has the possibility to both persuade others and be persuaded by them. The ability to fairly present and weigh alternatives is the main precondition of deliberative rhetoric.

The fair chance for all points of view – both those already in existence and those constructed over the course of the deliberations – to be heard

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<sup>5</sup> See Weber's discussion of the concept of *Spiel* in the relationships between medieval *Ritter* in Weber 1922, 651.

in scholarly debates is based above all on the idea of the fair chances to change. The *fair play* creates an occasion for change, the opportunity for presenting new perspectives in the face of existing ones, without, however, giving them any special privileges over those already in existence. This is most explicit in Weber's discussion of the process of conceptual revisions (*Umbildungsprozess der Begriffe*)<sup>6</sup>:

The history of the sciences of social life is, and thus remains, a constant shift from the attempt to order facts in thought through conceptual construction - the dissolution of cognitive constructs so realized by the extension and displacement of scientific horizon - to the reformation of concepts on this changed foundation. (Weber 2004, 398-399)

The lack of any procedural model guiding the use of deliberative rhetoric in scholarly disputes is a good point of departure in attempting to understand Weber's defence of *fair play*. Weber suggests the duplication of a rhetorical paradigm from a context in which such a model exists, namely the parliamentary style of politics. As a life-long *homo politicus*, he, unlike most of his German colleagues, had no difficulty reading scholarly practices as analogous to political practices without denying the existence of the differences between them.

The above-quoted passage indicates the use of an analogy to the alternation of parliamentary majorities, although in the scholarly world there is seldom any clear division between 'government' and 'opposition'. The analogy applies to the parliament, in which there is a flexible majority that can be constructed and deconstructed on the basis of speaking in the plenum and committees, as was the case in the French Third Republic (see Roussellier 1997). Although Weber idealised the British style of cabinet government in his view on parliamentarism (Weber 1918, 259; Weber 1994, 230), the quote implies that in the academic world he favoured a situation with no strong government vs. opposition divide or strict party discipline. Such a constellation was a precondition of preventing stagnation and enabling the conceptual process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction in scholarly disputes, as presented in the above-quoted passage.

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<sup>6</sup> "Die Geschichte der Wissenschaften vom sozialen Leben ist und bleibt daher ein steter Wechsel zwischen dem Versuch, durch Begriffsbildung Tatsachen gedanklich zu ordnen, – der Auflösung der so gewonnenen Gedankenbilder durch Erweiterung und Verschiebung des wissenschaftlichen Horizontes, – und der Neubildung von Begriffen auf der so veränderten Grundlage" (Weber 1904b, 207).

## 5. Parliamentary Procedure as the Paradigm of Fair Play

It is the procedural principles of the parliament that are indebted to the rhetorical culture of the Renaissance, although they only really began to be codified and institutionalised over the course of the eighteenth century (see Redlich 1905). In his study on the British parliamentary procedure Redlich also speaks explicitly on fair play, for example in the following passage<sup>7</sup>:

This is an instance of the application of a general principle that a recognised formula for the advancing of a piece of parliamentary business by one of the stages through which it has to pass can only be met by an acknowledged formula of amendment. The provisions thus established form a striking group in which the characteristic parliamentary mark of 'fair play' is plainly to be seen. (Redlich 1908, 231)

Weber never explicitly discusses this procedural paradigm either. Nonetheless, he occasionally refers to it as a highly established and widely accepted practice, and he hints at the fact that he not only appreciated its role in British parliamentary culture but also acknowledged its links to the rhetorical style of thought (see in particular Weber 1918, 237; Weber 1994, 180-181).

Due to Weber's stand in favour of a strong *Reichspräsident* in 1919, his defence of parliamentarism has sometimes been seen instrumental, i.e. as related to the formation of a strong political leadership (see Mommsen 1959). If we consider his entire *œuvre*, there is no doubt about Weber's strong parliamentary commitments. In some minor essays from the first decade of the twentieth century (Weber 1904a; 1908), he explicitly opposes the imperial *Reichstag* to the British Parliament and takes a vehement stand in favour of the parliamentarisation of German politics according the broad lines of the British practice. Weber sees the resistance to parliamentarism in Germany as analogous to that which had taken place in Britain 200 years earlier. He uses Britain as an example of the fact that parliamentarism has indeed not had the feared result but has instead proven its superiority over the German-style bureaucratic regime with its space for dilettantish political interventions by the monarch (for a more detailed discussion see Palonen 2004).

The link to both the deliberative genre of rhetoric and its historical paradigm of the parliamentary style of politics is most explicit in Weber's

<sup>7</sup> "Hier wirkt ein allgemeines Prinzip dahin, daß bestimmten Formen, in denen das Fortschreiten eines Parlamentsgeschäftes zum Ausdruck gelangt, auch nur mit ganz bestimmten Formen als Ausdruck der Bekämpfung des betreffenden Gegenstandes entgegengetreten werden darf. In solchen Bestimmungen tritt besonders stark das dem ganzen Parlamentsverfahren charakteristische Merkmal des 'fair Play' hervor" (Redlich 1905, 500).

pamphlet *Parliament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland*, published in early 1918. Because it was merely a pamphlet, the theoretical discussions contained in the book have largely been undervalued. However, with the help of this pamphlet, particularly its passages on the parliamentary control of bureaucracy and the bureaucratic vision of knowledge, we can better understand both the target of Weber's criticism in the 'Objectivity' essay and his vision of deliberating in scholarly controversies.

Weber characterises the political regime in the German Empire as one of the 'rule of officialdom' (*Beamtenherrschaft*). He acknowledges the indispensability of the daily rule of the bureaucracy in the modern state, which is also precisely why he is searching for counterweights to it. The parliamentarisation of the government and the formation of well-equipped professional parliamentarians are the most obvious. In addition, he discusses the aspect of bureaucracy that is most difficult to control, namely the superiority over politicians in knowledge.

Here Weber distinguishes three types of knowledge, namely substantial knowledge (*Fachwissen*), knowledge to which only officials have access (*Dienstwissen*), and the kind of knowledge that remains secret to outsiders (*Geheimwissen, Dienstgeheimnis*). How can parliamentarians control a kind of knowledge which they do not 'possess' themselves? Weber's answer to this question illustrates a clear insight into the value of the rhetorical tradition and forensic rhetoric. He demands that parliamentarians have access to files (*Akteneinsicht*), that they should be able to carry out on-the-spot-inspections (*Augenscheineinnahme*) and cross-examinations of both the experts and the officials themselves, and that they be granted the possibility to create parliamentary commissions of inquiry (*Enqueterecht*) (Weber 1918, esp. 236-237; Weber 1994, 179-180). None of these possibilities existed in the *Reichstag* of the German empire.

The first two measures give parliamentarians access to the factual basis of the knowledge privileges of the officials. The latter two measures illustrate the inherent inconsistencies or ambiguities of the character of bureaucratic knowledge itself, which means that not the facts presented by the officials but the political point or significance of their knowledge are disputed. Procedures such as cross-examination and the parliamentary commission of inquiry illustrate that both the interpretation of situations and the deliberations surrounding the proper course of action should be the responsibility of parliamentarians as opposed to officials. In all the cases mentioned, Weber relies on the concept of parliamentary procedure and its principle of discussing every item on the agenda *pro et contra*.

As Weber considers all knowledge to be perspectivistic and controversial in principle, the knowledge of the officials is also bound to the perspectives

of their respective offices and, if not controlled externally, to their status as officials. This situation is liable to lead to a *déformation professionnelle* of the rule of officialdom. Political control over the officialdom is necessary in order to avoid this type of situation, and parliamentary procedure contains models for disputing their allegedly uncontested knowledge. In other words, the parliamentary principle of treating every item *pro et contra* allows it to reduce or neutralise the knowledge privileges of the officials in favour of deliberations and decisions based on broader political judgment. The seemingly factual questions of knowledge thus become rhetorical and political questions of interpretation, judgment, deliberation and decision.

Regarding the rhetorical style of thought, Weber shares the insight that knowledge and understanding can never be a possession that can be turned into a privilege or even a monopoly, whether by scholars or officials. When 'objectivity' refers to scholarly disputes, the monopolisation and exclusion tendencies of bureaucratic knowledge present a paradigmatic case of intellectual stagnation.

In Germany, Hegel and his followers considered bureaucracy to be the incarnation of 'objectivity'. For Weber, radical measures had to be taken to struggle against such a powerful tradition. He identified them in the *Parlament* pamphlet as the political tradition of parliamentary government complemented by resources from the rhetorical tradition of parliamentary procedure. My thesis is that this discussion fourteen years later also allows us to better understand his essay on 'objectivity' not only in terms of the rhetorical ideal of *fair play* but also of its distinct underlying parliamentary paradigm of a procedure dealing with all opposing points of view.

## 6. Science as an Imperfect Form of Politics

In his two lectures published in 1919, *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (Weber 1919b) and *Politik als Beruf* (Weber 1919a), Max Weber is adamant that a clear distinction be made between science and politics. In the 'Objectivity' essay, in which his emphasis is on the deliberation of scholarly enterprises, he highlights the similarities of the practices of scholars and politicians. Unlike what most of his colleagues believed and what is still the textbook view of science to this day, the activities of both are always related to that of their colleagues, to the struggles, controversies, disputes and debates with their fields. Science (*Wissenschaft*) and politics are by no means polar opposites.

The point of Weber's essay can thus be seen as the thesis that while 'objectivity' refers to intellectual controversies, the activities of scholars are much closer to those of parliamentarians than most of them would like to admit. For both, the willingness and competence to argue *pro et contra* and

listen to opposing arguments is the key element of their practices. Of course, their activities are not identical. In particular, some of the key elements of politics are missing from the sphere of scholarly activity, for example the necessity to make binding decisions that concern the lives of other people. In addition, the majority principle tends to have much more limited value in scholarly disputes than in political disputes.

Two of Weber's three criteria for being a politician, namely *Leidenschaft*, the passionate commitment to a cause, and *Augenmaß*, detached approximate judgment, are equally important to scholars. They have less need, however, for the *Verantwortungsgefühl*, which is the sense of responsibility, particularly for the fate of other people, and are thus freer to speculate and contemplate seemingly unrealistic alternatives than politicians (Weber 1919a, 75-76; Weber 1994, 353-353).

In this sense, I see the scholarly activity as an incomplete form of politics. As such, we can better understand why Weber advocates that the *fair play* ideal of deliberative rhetoric and its paradigm of the parliamentary procedures and rhetorical practices also be regarded as an ideal for fair and open discussions in scholarly controversies. How this ideal can and should be realised in practice remains an open question. As such, it is just as important for us, the scholars of the early twenty-first century, as it was in Weber's time.

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