

Editorial

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Professor Lawrence Scaff opens this issue with the publication of his December 2015 lecture 'Political Leadership in a Subverted World'.¹ The lecture can be regarded as a timely update on Weber's own lecture 'Politics as a Vocation'. What are we to make of the dominance of populist politics, the increasing reduction of representative democracies to plebiscitary politics, the rise of celebrity politicians and the intrusive role of the manifold media? Following Weber, we have to consider how the external conditions of politics have changed, and then consider the implications for political leadership. The rational-legal national state, which for decades has been losing some of its primacy to the growing importance of civil society (widely defined), has now strengthened and coalesced around one of its core functions, border and internal security. This function has followed a rationalization path towards a surveillance and security state with profound implications for citizens.

Another source of subversion is the monetarization of political competition, one made more intrusive through the manipulation of social media. For Weber the *dharma* of the politician was entirely different to that of the businessperson, and Weber was also strict about the autonomy of the different value spheres. The influence of economic interests could never be discounted and, in the American context, Weber was forgiving of pork-barrel politics in securing elections. But out of the training ground of hostile party politics, he expected leaders to be matured and educated by this experience. What he could not stand was either the naive ingénu or the politician who formed his beliefs according to public opinion. The

1. This was the third Max Weber Studies Lecture given during the Weber-Simmel Dialogue, organised by Isabelle Darmon and Carlos Frade and hosted by the Department of Sociology at the University of Edinburgh.

political innocent is undone by the unforgiving nature of power, and the political dilettante puts up undeliverable goals which cause more harm to his supporters and degrade trust in politics. Weber was particularly incensed by the German Kaiser's unguarded comments directly to the press, which in bypassing normal diplomatic experts raised international tensions. In 'Parlament und Regierung' he recommended that officials mediate the Kaiser's public remarks. What is now occurring goes well beyond Weber's strictures. President Trump's tweets de-stabilize international relations. Scaff notes the triumph of the anti-political politician and the personality who shines because of the media spotlight. This trend is now culminating with the election of Donald Trump and the rise of European populist leaders with their anti-elitist rhetoric.

What happens when the relationship between citizens and their leaders is so displaced from normal competitive party politics remains to be seen. The objective conditions of the press and media is that they know no remorse but only feed on further sensationalism. Weber's political sociology has been roundly critiqued for his insufficiently normative account of democracy. Democratic politics, we now see, is not immune to the machinations of power. In his day he opposed demagogues and their windy appeal to the 'will of the people', which for him was a 'fiction' — as Andreas Anter documents in his *Staatsrechtslehre* book (reviewed below, p. 107).

Duncan Kelly introduces a review, first published in 1926, by Carl Schmitt of Friedrich Meinecke's *Machiavellism. The Doctrine of Raison d'état and its Place in Modern History*. Schmitt's arguments have an uncomfortable resonance today. Meinecke was the academic mandarin par excellence, the voice and conscience of German historiography. He was a senior to whom Weber was deferential. Schmitt was younger than Weber, attended his lectures in Munich and was a jurist and political theorist. It is not completely out of proportion to sandwich Weber between the two of them.

All three had to come up with an answer to the Kaiserreich crashing out of history in November 1918. For Meinecke it was the failure to balance Germany's tempestuous rise to world power status in the 19th century with ethical statehood. The latter included the attributes of the Rechtsstaat, the democratic constitutional state. Weber had increasingly pushed that reform agenda as the First World War regressed to industrial slaughter and stalemate, and, after he recovered his temper in the face of the humiliation of Versailles, he supported and participated in the democratic Weimar state. Eberhard

Demm (p. 82) recounts the episode where Weber was booed off the stage by rightwing extremists when speaking for the Progressive People's Party. Schmitt was a reminder of the younger Weber who in the 1890s saw the survival and emergence of the German national state as the overriding priority and one to be achieved by power alone if challenged. Schmitt was done with Meinecke's dualism of power and ethics and, as Anter shows (p. 106), his support of liberalism and parliamentarism; there needed to be a return to the old Machiavellian tradition of the survival of the state; politics as the maintenance of sovereign power alone was what counted.

Are we in a similar situation today? Duncan Kelly comments: 'If the idea of a single world-state or universal monarchy remains the basic representation of tyranny now, just as it was then, the puzzle of how to constrain the potentially belligerent forms of economic and political competition that exist between globally inter-connected nation-states that structured Meinecke's updating of German history, and Schmitt's powerful conceptual criticism of it, remain very much our own questions too.'

Schmitt (and to a lesser extent Weber) greatly resented the hegemony of Anglo-Saxon civilization that determined the world order after 1919. Schmitt opposed Germany's participation in the League of Nations and he did so as a jurist who decisively opposed those international treaties that might hamper in any way German sovereign power. His geopolitical writings (e.g., *Land and Sea*) convinced him that the future of geopolitics would be decided by the disposition of the major land armies and navies. The Wilsonian vision of a world of mutually respecting national states was a fiction disguising American/ Anglo-Saxon hegemony. Since the onset of the post-Cold War era, engagements with his ideas have in some ways validated this analysis as a response to our current international order. Yet in recent years, the return of powerful nativist movements in populous states across the globe from the US to Russia, Turkey, Iran, India, China and elsewhere obliges commentators at the same time to treat transnational legal norms with due care and in the full meaning of their integrity.

Schmitt's geopolitical belligerence was matched by his cynical take on domestic politics. 'In the era of "cabinet politics" [prior to 19th century] politics has a different 'reason', a different meaning and style to that of a democratic era, whose form of politics is at least half the technology of public opinion' (p. 62 below). For Weber the technology of public opinion was an objective condition and one open to

manipulation. Weber stood for a dynamic internal politics with a free press enabling public opinion, whereas Schmitt saw a normatively ordered internal politics as a restriction on the dynamic of inter-state politics.

The changing forms of American conservatism continue to bewilder the rest of the world and it might well be astute to attribute a Schmittian worldview to President Trump, or at least the murky world of his advisors and ideologues. It is possible to see how such a scenario could play out in a 'subverted world'. But it does not make much sense in terms of the rational pursuit of national interest or, more generally, the immanent development of a sense of self (explored by Schluchter below in his discussion of Charles Taylor and Weber) within a cosmopolitan world. America, even as a slightly weakened hegemon, still benefits from a rule-based international order. And the robustness of townhall democracy is unlikely to be rolled over by the dark arts of celebrity politics.

In Weberian terms we should be asking what are the adequate causes for this Schmittian make-over, and what are the forces that will resist it. This issue of *Max Weber Studies* posts some arguments for and against a Schmittian analysis. Scaff offers a Simmelian reading. 'The entire technical apparatus of instantaneous communication and dissemination of visual imagery, and so on, a Simmelian compression of time and space—has created an opening for a new kind of demagogue, a media personality, a creature of the new media who thrives on the sensational, exaggerated and aggressive language, attention-grabbing theatrical performance, and who valorizes and legitimates in the audience the strongest of the emotions: anger, fear, and resentment (p. 21).' The same argument can be deployed to explain the recent United Kingdom referendum on leaving the European Union.

Keith Tribe's *The Economy of the Word* (reviewed below) reminds us that Max Weber was the pre-eminent theorist of capitalism within the German debates on the subject. Victor Strazzeri in his review of the Weber *Briefe 1895–1902* (expertly edited by Rita Aldenhoff-Hübinger) notes Weber's support of commodity and futures trading on the German stock exchanges, and more generally Guenther Roth has characterised Weber as cosmopolitan bourgeois. Today's populism can be directly linked to economic liberalism's indifference to national borders and disregard of working communities. This is in part the voter base of platforms that tap into long-held traditions of grievance among small businesses, small

property-holders and farmers toward big business. Weber, Sombart and Jaffé's *Archiv für Sozialpolitik und Sozialwissenschaft* was in its own way a variant on Marxist revisionism, that policy could intervene to ameliorate the worst of capitalist exploitation. Tribe argues that reformism à la Marx may be a misreading of economic ideas, and that Walras – crucial to economic thinking on markets – offered in his idea of general equilibrium a model of commutative justice. Walras inserted a notion of 'fairness' in the exchanges made by market participants. There is then a third way possible between crude economic liberalism and socialist and communist projects of redistribution.

The debates in the pages of the *Archiv* are explored by Gangolf Hübinger's essays on engaged academics (*Engagierte Beobachter der Moderne*). As an intellectual historian Hübinger decries the tendency to forget history. The remarkable volume by Gottfried Heuer on Otto Gross emphasizes that intellectual history (here psychoanalytic) is not just remembering that which is deliberately forgotten and marginalised. When we recover the actual story and its situational constituents history thereby becomes a form of redemption. Whether all such figures are redemptive has to remain open to debate, particularly with any renewal of Schmittian politics.