From Max Weber to Public Sociology

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Growing up in a political as well as an intellectual environment, Max Weber not only sought to comprehend the world but also to change it. Arguably, he took Karl Marx's 11th. Thesis on Feuerbach that "philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point, however, is to *change* it," far more seriously than its author. Marx, after all, did not reflect, in any systematic fashion, on the place of intellectuals and their ideas in history. Equally, Emile Durkheim – perhaps because he saw sociology as a deeply moral science, devoted to deriving what ought to be from what is – did not seriously concern himself with political engagement. Among these three founding figures of sociology, it was only Weber, who paid sustained attention to science and politics both in his life and in his writing. He strove to fathom the relation between sociology *of* society and sociology *in* society, between theory and practice. Although the notion of public sociology was absent from his conceptual armory, of the three Weber offers the greatest contribution, albeit indirectly, to the meaning, challenges and possibilities of public sociology. In, thus, filling out Weber's reflexive sociology with the notion of public sociology, I show the continuing relevance of his framework for the problems facing sociology and society today.

Instrumental and Value Rationality

One hundred years ago the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie (German Sociological Society, DGS for short) held its inaugural meeting in Frankfurt. Max Weber had been a driving force behind its foundation. At the time sociology barely existed as a distinct discipline and its practitioners – most famously Sombart, Tonnies, Michels and Simmel – were all well versed in other fields. Weber took the initiative in outlining a series of ambitious research projects for the nascent German sociology, including the study of journalism, voluntary associations, the relation between culture and technology. These were all projects of great contemporary significance but they should be studied, he insisted, in a 'value free' fashion.

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Indeed, Weber had plunged into the organization of the DGS as a reaction to what he had found so infuriating in the German Association for Social Policy – the mixing up of value commitments on the one side and science on the other. Thus, he was determined that the statutes of the association enshrine the principle of value freedom (*Wertfreiheit*), which should regulate empirical research and intellectual discussions. Yet, in the DGS congresses of 1910 and 1912, he continually found himself under mocking attack from those who considered his obsession with value freedom as infeasible, undesirable and even absurd. Despairing of the association he resigns in 1913 and writes to Marianne Weber.

> "Frankly, I took such an active part in the founding of this organization only because I hoped to find there a place for value neutral scholarly work and discussion (…). At the Berlin convention of 1912, with one exception – all official speakers violated the same statutory principle – and this is constantly held up to me as "proof" of its unfeasibility (…). Will these gentlemen, not one of whom can stifle the impulse (for that's just it!) to bother me with his subjective "valuations", all infinitely uninteresting to me, kindly stay in their own circle. I am sick and tired of appearing time and again as a Don Quixote of an allegedly unfeasible principle and of provoking embarrassing "scenes"" (Marianne Weber 1926[1988]: 424-5).

The embarrassing scenes refer to his attempts to call attention to the value judgments made by his colleagues, and the way they, in turn, would turn the tables on him, and, in a playful way, publicly hold his own statements accountable to the same principle (Kemple 2005).

Weber's commitment to value freedom had a second significance. Expunging value judgments from research was not only important to avoid the arbitrary interference of values in the scientific endeavor, but also to clarify the value foundations of social science. He concluded a speech he gave at the Association for Social policy as follows:

> "The reason why I take every opportunity (…) to attack in such extremely emphatic terms the jumbling of what ought to be with what exists is not that I underestimate the question of what ought to be. On the contrary, it is because I cannot bear it if problems of world shaking importance – in a certain sense the most exalted problems that can move the human heart – are here changed into technical-economic problem of production and made the subject of a scholarly discussion. We know of no *scientifically* demonstrable ideals" (Marianne Weber 1926[1988]: 418).

We see here Weber's double commitment to value freedom *and* value relevance, in fact a commitment to the first stems from the unavoidability of the second.

Therefore, the pursuit of science and, as we shall see, politics calls for a distinction between an *instrumental rationality* concerned with the orientation of means to ends (dedicated pursuit of esoteric problems under strict specialization in the hope of enticing a new idea), and *value rationality* concerned with the clarification, discussion and organization of values (the foundational claims of any scientific pursuit). Instrumental and value rationalities are separate and irreducible, but neverthe-

less interdependent. On the one hand, values cannot be derived from the practice of science. At most science can tell you the consequences of and conditions for the realization of values, but it cannot adjudicate among values. In a 'polytheistic world' we face the 'warring of the gods' and the choice among values becomes an act of faith that may be influenced by science but can have no scientific justification. On the other hand, value commitments are necessary for social science, for without their guiding light we cannot begin to make sense of the infinite manifold that is reality.

> "Order is brought into this chaos only on the condition that in every case only a *part* of concrete reality is interesting and *significant* to us, because only it is related to the *cultural values* with which we approach reality. Only certain ideas of the infinitely complex concrete phenomenon, namely those to which we attribute a general *cultural significance* – are therefore worthwhile knowing" (Weber 1904[1949]: 78).

Without values the world is chaos or blur. Hence the dilemma: Values are necessary to any social science but they mustn't distort the pursuit of truth. They are the ladders that enable us to get to the roof, but once on the roof we must follow the regulatory principle of value freedom.

Science and Politics

The modern world is not only polytheistic, calling for the distinction between instrumental and value rationality, but it is also made of differentiated value spheres. Among these are science and politics. In the two essays, "Science as a Vocation" and "Politics as a Vocation," published toward the end of his life, Max Weber gives an extraordinary account of these two spheres. The essays are structured in parallel fashion, beginning with the *institutional framework* that defines each sphere, followed by an account of the *actors at play* within those institutions, and finally the type of *committed action* they call forth.

The essay on science begins with a comparison of the organization of universities in Germany and the US, the conditions of work and career possibilities of graduate students and assistant professors, before delving into the meaning of science as a vocation. He writes of the necessity of the disciplined passion, the detailed research in pursuit of esoteric puzzles.

> "A really definitive and good accomplishment is today always a specialized accomplishment. And whoever lacks the capacity to put on blinders, so to speak, and to come up to the idea that the fate of his soul depends upon whether or not he makes the correct conjecture at this passage of this manuscript may as well stay away from science. He will never have what one may call the 'personal experience' of science" (Weber 1917[1946]: 135).

If the scientist is lucky enough to make a discovery, and of this there is no guarantee, then he or she is destined to be superseded, displaced by subsequent discoveries. Unlike the successful artist the scientist's destiny is obscurity. Consonant with this scientific ethos of value freedom, he prescribes the university as a place of specialized learning, and not of broad citizen education. Above all, the lecture hall is not a political pulpit.

In parallel fashion he presents the different structure of the political realm in the US, Britain and Germany, pointing to the ways in which the British parliamentary system generates great leaders, how the American system is more egalitarian if also overrun by corrupt bosses, and how the German system is weighed down by bureaucracy and stunted by the lack of political leadership. He examines the compatibility of political action with several occupations: clergy, educated literati, court nobility, gentry, lawyers, genuine officials, demagogues, journalists, party official, distinguishing between those who live for and those who live off politics. His third move, once again, is to turn to the meaning of politics as a vocation, balancing passion, responsibility and sense of proportions. As in science the disciplined and patient pursuit of goals is essential, "the slow and strong boring of hard boards" (Weber 1919[1946]: 128) and, as in science, there are all manner of self-defeating consequences of one's actions.

The focus in both essays is on instrumental rationality, but it is an instrumental rationality that is deeply imbued with value rationality – that, indeed, is the meaning of 'vocation', the source of the passion that inspires the discipline. This is most obvious in the essay on politics where Weber (1919[1946]) distinguishes between an 'ethic of responsibility' and an 'ethic of conviction'. The former takes into account the consequences of one's action, of seeking to realize values, while the latter defends the pursuit of values irrespective of their consequences. The essay on science has no such bifurcated rationality, but rather there is the claim that the passionate pursuit of detail and the fascination with obscurity is driven by the ethos of science, that is the belief in the value of scientific progress. Weber here suppresses the conflict that was at the heart of the controversies within the DGS. It only appears in his discussion of teaching where he says that value positions should be kept out of the lecture hall as far as possible, most critical of those who would mask value judgments behind claims about the self-evidence of the world. If value judgments cannot be kept out of the lecture hall then all value perspectives should be represented in open debate. The necessity of value foundations for the pursuit of social science haunts the essay without ever coming out in the open.

Within both spheres, therefore, instrumental rationality and value rationality coexist in antagonistic interdependence. The tension between the two is resolved in two ways: Either instrumental rationality dominates values rationality or, the opposite, value rationality dominates instrumental rationality. On the one hand, we have the pursuit of social science on the basis of values that are so taken-for-granted

values that they are noticed only under unusual circumstances. The scientist is focused on the puzzles of the paradigm, or the anomalies and contradiction of the research program whose assumptions, the so-called negative heuristic, are rarely interrogated. In this world of the *professional* scientist the condition of doing science is an amnesis of its foundations. On the other hand, alongside and in tension with the professional is the *critical* theorist for whom values prevail over but never exclude scholarly research. Critical theorists are immersed precisely in examining and problematizing the foundations repressed by the professional. They are so many thorns in the flesh of the professional, demystifying claims of value freedom that are genuinely essential for science to advance. When critical theorists partake in what Weber calls value discussion, they necessarily appeal to scientific findings that help understand the implications of adopting one set of values rather than another.

Similarly in the political realm we find an antagonistic interdependence between instrumental and value rationality, the ethic of responsibility and ethic of conviction. While Weber appears to support the ethic of responsibility in the final analysis he admires the politician who, after struggling with the consequences of action, in the end has to take a principled stand. Equally, Weber recognizes that the pursuit of any politics requires some sort of value commitment, so that the two ethics and the two rationalities cannot be separated.

> "In so far as this is true, an ethic of ultimate ends and an ethic of responsibility are not absolute contrasts but rather supplements, which only in unison constitute the genuine man – a man who can have the 'calling for politics'" (Weber 1919[1946]: 127).

They may be supplementary, yet asymmetrically so. The world of value realization, resting on what I call *policy* knowledge, is one in which the examination of consequences, instrumental rationality, prevails whereas the world of value discussion through *public* debate is one in which value rationality dominates but never to the exclusion of a concern for consequences.

Table 1: The Disciplinary Division Knowledge

	Science	**Politics**
Instrumental Rationality	PROFESSIONAL Scholarship guided by values	POLICY Ethic of Responsibility guided by Ethic of Conviction
Value Rationality	CRITICAL Value discussion qualified by scholarship	PUBLIC Ethic of Conviction qualified by Ethic of Responsibility

Source: Author.

The result is an ideal-type which conceives of a discipline as combining four types of knowledge. In formulating Weber in this way, I draw attention to what Weber pushes to one side, namely the *relation* between science and politics. In the two essays, Weber presents politics and science as two separate homologous spheres, thereby avoiding their relations of domination, of inter-penetration and of inter-action. Weber insists that science is not religion and cannot supply values, and it is not the appropriate place for political debate, but he does not examine the actual relation between spheres. The ideal type of a 'discipline' also draws attention to the antinomy between instrumental and value rationality which is also left implicit in these essays. I will now try to show that this ideal type better captures the real dilemmas Max Weber describes in his various accounts of the politics and science of his time. We, thus, move from the ideal type to the light it sheds on the empirical field within which Weber operated.

We will move anti-clockwise around the table, starting from policy sociology, and then advancing through professional and critical sociology until we come finally to public sociology. In each case I have chosen relevant writings from Weber that illustrate the way the nascent sociological field is embedded in the world of politics as well as science.

Policy Sociology: From the Freiburg Address to the Objectivity Essay

One of Max Weber's earliest interventions into politics actually came from the lectern, violating his later prescriptions. It was his controversial 1895 inaugural address at Freiburg University, "The Nation State and Economic Policy", marking his assumption of the chair of political economy at the tender age of 31. He begins the address with an account of his extensive research into East German agriculture where Polish seasonal laborers and Polish peasants were displacing their German counterparts, not because the former were more efficient or productive but because they could sustain a lower stand of living. With their 'lower cultural level', Poles accepted conditions that Germans with their 'higher cultural standards' would not. As Weber saw it, the root of the problem lay with the backwardness of the German landed classes, the feudalistic Junkers, whose ability to compete with cheaper foreign food based on capitalist production depended on labor repressive policies. Rather than prop up the Junker class with protective tariffs, Weber proposed that the border with Poland be closed to stem the 'tide of Slavs', and that the state buy up the Junker lands for redistribution to independent German farmers.

We see here how Weber's detailed research laid the basis for consideration of alternative policies, but at the same time how it was shot through with arbitrary judgments. Underlying an 'ethic of responsibility', attending to the conditions and

consequences of different policies, is an 'ethic of conviction', the supreme value of the interests of the nation-state and national economic growth.

> "The science of political economy is a *political* science. It is a servant of politics, not day-to-day politics of the persons and classes who happen to be ruling at any given time, but the enduring power-political interests of the nation" (Weber 1895[1994]: 16-17).

Weber regarded the Junker landed classes as the impediment to the 'power-political interests of the nation', which, in his mind, lay with the leadership of a national bourgeoisie that would command the support of the working class. But how could one create such a leadership in a political structure that shackled parliament – the breeding ground of leadership – with a towering bureaucracy? Weber lamented the absence of an effective bourgeois party or political leader that could execute policies necessary to sustain Germany's imperial interests, its preeminence in a capitalist world.

Weber could be rather brash and sweeping in his own policy proposals, supporting a balance that leaned more in the direction of an ethic of conviction rather than ethic of responsibility, but when it came to general principles of policy intervention he was far more modest. In his famous essay, "'Objectivity' in Social Science and Social Policy", written in 1904 when Weber became editor of the *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, he now sees the social scientist as a servant of power in a more narrow sense. He is at pains to argue that social science cannot itself provide the ends, it can only subject such ends, supplied by clients, to technical criticism. Social science can examine the feasibility of a particular end, i.e. whether the necessary means are available; and it can examine the consequences of adopting particular means for a given end, i.e. the costs of its realization. The scientist can also assess different values for their internal consistency and mutual compatibility, helping clients toward self-clarification, but it is not possible to scientifically determine what values to follow. As an editor of a scientific journal, he avers, it is important not to espouse any particular ideals of one's own, but instead be open to the examination of the conditions and consequences of all values.

Policy science, therefore, faces in two directions. On the one hand, it depends on desired but taken-for-granted ends that may or may not be those of the scientist, while on the other hand, it depends on the scientific analysis of social causality. In the first direction we are led toward a 'public sociology' in which values are publicly debated while in the second direction we are led toward a professional sociology in which values are given exogenously. We will begin with Weber's notion of professional sociology, before turning to critical sociology in order to finally arrive at public sociology.

Professional Sociology: From Value Freedom to Academic Autonomy

Weber's principled position on value freedom stems, paradoxically, from the centrality of values to any social science. Whereas the natural sciences simplify reality by inducing general laws, the social sciences simplify reality by adopting values as a torch that shines light on a particular patch within a world of infinite complexity. Once they have shown the way, values have to be suspended as the social scientist goes about interpreting and explaining phenomena of cultural significance.

The ideal type is precisely a value-based conceptualization used as a template to examine reality – it is, in other words, the sociologist's torch, illuminating the empirical world to be studied.

> "Substantively, this construct in itself is like a *utopia* which has been arrived at by analytical accentuation of certain elements of reality (…). An ideal type is formed by the on-sided *accentuation* of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent *concrete individual* phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (*Gedankenbild*). In its conceptual purity, this mental construct (*Gedankenbild*) cannot be found empirically anywhere in reality. It is a *utopia*" (Weber 1904[1949]: 90).

For example, Weber was of the view that the expansion and rigidity of public bureaucracies was the heavy weight dragging down German politics, stifling the possibility of effective leadership. His ideal type notion of bureaucracy was propelled by this concern, leading him to explore its origins, its permanence, the nature of and interests of officials who occupied its offices, its relation to the broader political and economic context, its consequences for class formation and so forth. Although informed by the German context of his time, the ideal type was formulated in abstract terms so that by laying it over reality, the latter comes prominently into view as a departure from or conformity to the ideal type. This is Weber's methodological strategy to combine both value freedom and value relevance without compromising either, so that any two social scientists working with this same tool could come to the same assessment of a given empirical reality.

To be sure, there are methodological reasons for purging value judgments from professional research and discussions, but there are also political ones. After all his Freiburg Address of 1895 was anything but shy in announcing his own commitment to the power-interests of the state, so why now in 1904 and beyond the obsession with value freedom? In the period of the formation of the DGS, it was especially important to promote value freedom as it competed for a place among more developed sciences. Its legitimacy among its constituencies, especially policy makers, depended on the appearance of 'objectivity' or 'neutrality' with respect to values – that values are exogenous to the scientific process.

But there may have been other, even more immediate political reasons for Weber's adamant defense of 'value freedom'. Between 1908 and 1911, in the period of the founding of the DGS, Weber was also involved in the defense of academic freedom and university autonomy. He was one of the few professors of his time to publicly protest state interference in university life, especially as regards appointments and promotions of faculty.[2] Under the Althoff system the German Minister of Education had the final say on appointments which threatened principles of academic freedom. On the one hand, Weber was dismayed by the state's appointment of professors because they supported specific government policies (the 'Bernhard Affair'). On the other hand, he was equally angered by discrimination against such eminent scholars as Sombart (because of his early syndicalist sympathies), Robert Michels (because of his ties to the Social Democratic Party), Georg Simmel (because he was Jewish). In each case Weber was adamant that selection and promotion on the basis of such extra-academic criteria compromised the intellectual integrity of the university. Through political campaigns in German newspapers, Weber struggled to defend his colleagues and the autonomy of the university. This was reason enough to keep values out of science, namely to give no justification for state interference with academic freedom on the grounds that the university was a political entity. He was fighting a political battle on two fronts – against external state interference and internal subversion by colleagues.

These examples, taken from Weber's own life, reflect the inescapable interpenetration and mutual influence of science and politics. Within the university, as he writes in "Science as a Vocation", non-academic criteria are continually and inevitably brought to bear on academic decisions, resulting in the rise of mediocrity, the subjection to the tyranny of student enrollments, and more broadly the threat posed by democratic practices to "intellectual aristocracy" (Weber 1917[1946]: 131-4), all of which are shaped by the political world beyond. Academic life is precarious and its protection requires continual vigilance both within the university and beyond, including engagement in the sphere of politics. In short, these are not two separate homologous spheres, but deeply interwoven and interactive fields, so that we have to recognize the autonomous and heteronomous poles within the scientific field as in the table above. As we shall now see we also have to recognize the twin dimensions of value rationality and instrumental rationality.

2 The following account of Weber's intervention in the politics of university appointments is taken from the essays translated and brought together by Edward Shils (1974).

Critical Sociology: From Methodology to Value Discussion

The distinction between scientific research and its underlying value commitments serves two functions: to purge the practice of research of extraneous and arbitrary influences, and to distill the values upon which our projects are founded, that is, to make conscious the driving impetus behind scholarly research, to recognize that science is and can be built upon different value foundations, so long as they do not undermine the ethos of science and the autonomy it requires. Value freedom is not only a matter of freeing science of values but equally important of freeing values for interrogation. Weber says bringing those values out in the open, subjecting them to discussion is an important process of self-clarification.

Science can help us understand the implications of adopting one set of values or another. It can point to the indispensable means for realizing values and even the repercussions of their enactment, but that does not provide any imperative for their acceptance or rejection. The "really consistent" syndicalist, says Weber (1917[1949]: 24), remains a syndicalist even when science demonstrates that the realization of that world can only come at enormous cost. Social science might *influence* the adoption of values, but there is no logical or empirical road from science to values.[3]

In his Freiburg Address Weber takes political economists, in particular, to task for refusing to recognize the exogeneity of value foundations:

> "They think that political economy is able to derive ideals of its 'own' from its subject matter. The notion that there are such things as independent economic or 'socio-political' ideals shows itself clearly to be an optical illusion as soon as one tries to discover from the literature produced by our science just what its 'own' bases for evaluation are (…). The truth is that the ideals we introduce into the subject matter of our science are *not* peculiar to it, nor are they produced by this science itself; rather they are *the old, general types of human ideals* (…). We in particular succumb readily to a special type of illusion, namely that we are able to *refrain entirely* from making conscious value judgments of our own. As anyone can easily verify for himself, the result is, of course, that we do not remain true to any intention we may have of acting in accordance with this principle. Rather, we fall prey to unexamined instincts, sympathies and antipathies" (Weber 1895[1994]: 18-19).

If we left the world to economists – and "in every sphere we find that the economic way of looking at things is on the advance" (ibid.: 17) – then, he warned, we would be worshipping material well-being and distributive justice which would offer no guarantee of the higher value of human beings.

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3 In this, of course, he was fundamentally at odds with Durkheim who saw sociology as the study of social facts, first to distill the meaning of the good society, then to diagnose society's pathologies before advocating treatment.

In his essay on "The Meaning of 'Ethical Neutrality'", Weber remonstrated against inferring what ought to be from what is, against claiming the present as natural and inevitable and therefore 'good', and against viewing progress as though it possessed inherent value. Weber rails against "spuriously 'ethically neutral' tendentiousness, which (in our discipline) is manifested in the obstinate and deliberate partisanship of powerful interest groups" (1917[1949]: 6). Weber is here undertaking a critical examination of the way values are arbitrarily hitched to social science.

We, thus, see that Weber's methodology essays, themselves, exemplify the best of critical sociology – critical sociology not in the sense of a critique of society which is built into Weber's theory of rationalization that infuses his sociologies of religion, domination and the economy – as they problematize many of the conventional claims of social science, such as notions of causality and laws, of the relationship between explanation and interpretation, values and scholarship, etc. But critical sociology is not limited to an examination of the philosophical and methodological foundations of social science but extends to what Weber calls "value discussion."

> "The real significance of a discussion of evaluations lies in its contribution to the understanding of what one's opponent – or one's self – really means – i.e., in understanding the evaluations which really and not merely allegedly separate the discussants and consequently in enabling one to take up a position with reference to this value. We are far removed, then, from the view that the demand for the exclusion of value-judgments in empirical analysis implies that discussions of evaluations are sterile or meaningless" (Weber 1917[1949]: 14).

In the pursuit of social science it is easy to lose sight of the importance of clarifying its value foundations, raising to a level of explicit consciousness the very meaning and purpose of the scientific endeavor. Critical sociology is continually disrupting professional sociology by calling attention to what is and, indeed, has to be taken for granted in the practice of scientific research.

This is important not only because the plurality of coexisting values but because values also shift over time. Thus, Weber ends the 'objectivity' essay as follows:

> "All research in the cultural sciences in an age of specialization, once it is oriented towards a given subject matter through particular settings of problems and has established its methodological principles, will consider the analysis of data as an end in itself. It will discontinue assessing the value of the individual facts in terms of their relationships to ultimate value-ideas. Indeed, it will lose it's awareness of its ultimate rootedness in value-ideas in general. And it is well that should be so. But there comes a time when that atmosphere changes. The significance of the unreflectively utilized viewpoints becomes uncertain and the road is lost in the twilight. The light of the great cultural problems moves on. Then science too prepares to change its standpoint and its analytical apparatus and to view the streams of events from the heights of thought. It follows those stars which alone are able to give meaning and direction to its labors" (Weber 1904[1949]: 112).

In the day to day practice of social science it may be necessary to suspend value foundations, but they must not be eclipsed. In times of social change social science must reorient itself to new cultural problems, reconnect to its value foundations. In short, value discussion may not be a part of the everyday practice of social research (professional sociology), but it also cannot be dislocated from social research. Weber devoted a great deal of time to incorporating values into science without letting them interfere with science, but he had far less to say on how we arrive at values, how and where we conduct value discussion. That is the concern of public sociology.

Public Sociology: From Mass Society to a Limited Public Sphere

For all its importance, Weber tells us neither where nor among whom value discussion takes place. Nor does Weber tell us where values come from. They seem to be attached to individuals who must decide alone, which of the 'warring gods' to serve alone. Even then it appears that the only people to seriously reflect on and disseminate values are academics or political leaders.

There is no sense of a public sphere in which the goals of society are subject to open debate. Instead of a general public or competent citizens Weber saw an 'incoherent mass', subject to 'irrational sentiments', and easily manipulated by demagogic leaders in search of power.

> The *danger* which mass democracy presents to national politics consists principally in the possibility that *emotional* elements will become predominant in politics. The 'mass' as such (no matter which social strata it happens to be composed of) 'thinks only as far as the day after tomorrow'. As we know from experience, the mass is always exposed to momentary, purely emotional and irrational influences" (Weber 1917[1994]: 230).

Weber concludes, therefore, that the 'mass' should participate in politics only in a passive and indirect manner through the exercise of suffrage. In a conversation with Ludendorff Weber is famously reported to have said:

> "In a democracy people choose a leader in whom they trust. Then the chosen leader says, 'Now shut up and obey me.' People and party are no longer free to interfere in his business" (Gerth/ Mills 1946: 42).

According to Weber, direct participation in decisions that affect their lives, that is, active democracy, was not only infeasible given the scale of modern society, but it was also undesirable in that it gave a wide berth to the irresponsible leader. When toward the end of his life, following Germany's defeat in World War I, Weber reentered politics it was to contribute to the debate about the Constitution for the

new order. Weber proposed what Wolfgang Mommsen (1974) has called a plebiscitary leadership democracy, in which the function of parliament was two-fold: to oversee and constrain bureaucracy and to bring forth political leaders, which for Weber meant charismatic leaders. Once again citizens are bystanders or followers, only allowed to participate in occasional voting.

While Weber may not have had any *theory* of a public sphere, he certainly acted as though there was one, or at least a limited one. Some of his most famous essays were delivered as public lectures of one form or another. The Freiburg Address was an inaugural university lecture but its message spread much further. His lecture on the dangers and misconceptions of socialism was delivered to Austro-Hungarian Officers in 1918, whereas his two famous essays – "Science as a Vocation" (1917) and "Politics as a Vocation" (1919) – were delivered as public lectures at the behest of students in Munich (Schluchter 1996: chapters 1 and 2). Not only public lectures, but Weber also contributed many pieces to newspapers, such as the five essays on the New Political Order, published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* during 1917.

While his plans for the post-war Constitution did not include the idea of a public sphere and focused on establishing the precondition for effective political leadership, nonetheless the very act of proposing such a Constitution presumed there did exist a space – albeit limited – for public debate. Perhaps he did not think the arena of political debate was worthy of being called a public sphere, dominated as it was by 'literati' – dilettante journalists and intellectuals for whom Weber only had contempt. In Weber's view their interventions were shallow, ignorant and opportunistic. In contrast, we should not lose sight of the wide dissemination of Weber's *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. One of the all time best selling sociological classics, it continues to generate debate about the nature and origins of modernity.

Still there were definite limits to Weber's public sociology. His public interventions were political in that for the most part he was trying to persuade elites of problems as he saw them and the actions they should take. In intent it was policy sociology, although one in which he (rather than the client) took the initiative, even if in the process he succeeded in generating public debate. Whatever his practice, one is hard pressed to discover public sociology – a sociology that self-consciously generates public dialogue – within his political analysis, or his methodological framework.

How then should we understand the absence of public sociology in Weber's framework, given the opening within the ideal type we developed above? What historical circumstances might explain its absence then and its presence now? Weber's mass society overlooked the emergent civil society of the late 19th century, the institutional foundation upon which rises the public sphere, the sphere of public debate and discussion. While it is true that Alexis de Tocqueville had formulated its

importance long ago, civil society has experienced a rocky history disappearing and reappearing with changing political orders. It has also had a fragile presence in sociology. Thus, Pierre Bourdieu and C. Wright Mills, both outstanding public sociologists of their era, gave no significant place to 'civil society' in their theory. Like Weber, both were more at home with the notion of mass society, manipulated and indoctrinated by political leaders with whom they competed for influence over 'public opinion'. Still, civil society has a well-documented presence, not just in the global north but in much of the south too and grounds the possibility of a public sociology, organically connected to society.

A second historical development lies in the changing character and significance of the production of knowledge. Especially, in the second half of the 20th century, starting with the academic revolution in the United States, we have witnessed the expansion of university education, but also increasingly the proliferation of competing centers of knowledge production outside the university. Within this proliferation we have seen the spread and consolidation of the social sciences, especially economics, to take a prominent place in the steering of society. The centering of such knowledge production creates a second foundation for public debate, a potentiality which has been threatened by the regulation and commodification of knowledge and its dissemination.

Rationalization and the Social Sciences

I began by cross-classifying the distinction between value and instrumental rationalities against the separate spheres of politics and economics to generate four types of knowledge. I showed how in Weber's political practice these four types are intimately connected to one another, both interdependent upon each other but also antagonistic. The antagonistic interdependence of science and politics, instrumental and value rationality may be underdeveloped in Weber's writings but it definitely present, concealed in the notion of 'rationalization'.

> "The fate of our times is characterized by rationalization and intellectualization and, above all, by the 'disenchantment of the world.' Precisely the ultimate and most sublime values have retreated from public life either into the transcendental realm of mystic life or into the brotherliness of direct and personal human relations" (Weber 1917[1946]: 155).

Here Weber laments the way instrumental rationality has eclipsed value rationality – science has lost contact with values, the ethic of responsibility has lost touch with the ethic of conviction. We read here the cry of the Frankfurt School – the *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, *Eros and Civilization*, *One Dimensional Man*, *The Eclipse of Reason* – and the suppression of Habermas's communicative action, the colonization of life world by the system world.

The rationalization of different life spheres into coherent projects that expel reflection on their value foundations, goes along with a second dimension of domination, namely the ways in which politics 'instrumentalizes' or 'colonizes' science, and, of course, not just politics but economics too. On the one side, you have the development of new forms of auditing instigated by the state, the demand for policy research accountable to the state. On the other side, you have the withdrawal of the state from public funding, forcing the university to be economically self-sufficient which has the effect of subordinating it to corporate imperatives – increasing fees, commodification of knowledge that threatens the humanities and social sciences.

You might say there is a double rationalization in which instrumental logics dominates value discussion and politics dominates science wherein the only way to conceive of resistance is for the university to redefine its public character – building connections to constituencies around the public discussion about the fundamental direction of society. Weber already foresaw many of these trends but today a century later they have become part of our everyday life.

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