ABSTRACT

According to the panel proposal, I would like to share a theoretical reflection over ethics and politics, a question at stake in a post-modern and secularized society. In that sense, I would like to rethink which kind of ethics is possible to be found attached to politics, in case, we considered the existence of a world, radically empty of an inherent meaning, and therefore opened to pluralism and contradictory ends. In that sense, in our paper we will return to Max Weber political ethics, and the frontal critics against him written by Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, in order to discover the main problems around this issue.

Weber’s reflection could be thought as the first radical attempt to think of political ethics without specifics contents and objective scopes, and therefore without certain –following Nietzsche influence- and, breaking the tradition, created by Aristotle, around commonwealth ethics. Weber went further, questioning even truth as an absolute value in politics, relating it with the possibility of negative consequences for the political community.

Voegelin and specially Strauss answers to Weber were focused mainly around recovering a political classical ethics, built over the possibility of searching and reaching a set of principal truths to guide political practice. Problems and tensions around an ethics, inspired by Weber proposal, and another one, as Voegelin and Strauss, debtor to classical ethics, will be the main point that will shape our discussion.

I. INTRODUCTION

Around the 1950’s, in a context characterized by totalitarian experiences and the crisis of classical political philosophy under the rise of positivist Political Science, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin discussed Max Weber conception around the relation between science, values and politics.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Weber broke with the classical concept of politics, which has been hegemonic western thought since Aristotle. Weber pointed out how the specific characteristic of politics is not close to persecuted ends, impossible to
be defined objectively, but by the means used to persecute them (Violence). Strauss and Voegelin took this expression into account as another contribution of the hegemonic positivism in about the second postwar period, due to its correlation with the impossibility of defining inherent values to politics. Therefore, against this point of view, they set out to re-establish classical notion of politics, joining what Weber had already split, truth and politics.

Following Strauss and Voegelin, Weber had failed in his attempt to build a free-values science, because he had been unable to prove the independency of modern reason from a transcendental order (Nature, God). According to Voegelin, also, weberian failure could be changed into a useful argument to build a “science of order”.

This controversy between Weber and Strauss and Voegelin put the concept of politics at stake, as knowledge, but also as activity; specifically, the question is centred around understanding politics as the achievement of some proper, external and previous ends, or as an activity, which starts creating ends, thanks to reason and to inspiration of will.

The first possibility, not taking into account power and violence of politics as activity, allows politics to be thought of as if it was an incarnation of ethics (well-being, good life). The second possibility, when politics is considered related to power and violence through which is ruled, drives to think that there is a specific political ethics, which will never be whole due to the presence of violence. Therefore, the main point of the dispute questions, asks if the world and the human beings are facts with an inherent moral sense or by contrary just a possible reality.

The meaning of an action by definition focussed on the third person, as political one, is completely affected by the conception of an environment full of inherent meaning or on contrary by emptiness without previous significance. Politics as knowledge is also touched by this discussion, since by one hand understanding is related to find an already existing sense, or by other hand it could be considered completely independent of any given sense, and therefore entirely open to create sense.

II. CONTEXT

Strauss and Voegelin critics are developed in two contexts, an immediate one, and another mediate. Both of them are linked, because the immediate is seen by those authors as the corollary of the mediate.

Immediate Context

The political attribute of immediate context is the following. We have been working on
the next main text, Strauss’s *Natural Right and History* (1953); and two conferences
dicted in the 1950s at Chicago University, “Progress or return” and “What is political
philosophy?” (1959); and also Voegelin’s *New political science*, a book including several
conferences dictated in 1951, covering the beginning of the Cold War, after the national-
socialist experiment in Germany, and the fascist one, in Italy. It is really important to
stress that both thinkers had to go into exile in United States, leaving Nazi regimen in
Germany.

Actually, Leo Strauss was an exiled Jewish German, who moved to United States. He
initially started working at Columbia Universitity, and after that, at New School for
Social Research ((New York; 1938-1948) moving later to Chicago University in 1949,
Maryland and California (1968-1973), and before passing away in 1973\(^2\).

Voegelin was born in Germany in 1901, and he also was obliged to leave Vienna, where
he had been living since his childhood. He had to move to Switzerland in 1938, after the
Anchluss, and from there to United States as an exile. His opposition against the
national-socialist regimen had already been exposed in two books published in 1933,
where he fought against racism in the Third Reich. Those books were forbidden and
burnt by the regime, but he also wrote another book in 1936, about the authoritarian
State, which provoked his persecution by Nazi regimen and later his exile. He died in
United States, in 1985, where he work as professor, first at Harvard University, and
later, due to his own will, at Louisiana State University, a centre without links with
migrant European intellectual. Between 1958 and 1969, when he finally retired, he
moved to Munich, where encouraged by the University he founded the Institute of
Political Science. Later, he came back to United States, and he worked for the rest of his
life until the end of his life, at Hoover Institute, in Standford\(^3\).

Therefore, their immediate context, in a political face, could be the Cold War but
interpreted as a conflict through Leo Strauss and Voegelin eyes, between Western
liberal democracies and soviet totalitarian regimen, but also by the experience of the
national-socialism rise to govern in Germany, and the Jew Holocaust. In fact, Leo
Strauss had said that Weber’s theory about the relation between science and values is
doomed to nihilism, which is close to the “shadow of Hitler”\(^4\).

The intellectual face of the immediate context is the triumph of positivism in Social
Sciences. This hegemony is, for Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, the final stage of a
trajectory started by occidental thought, since Renaissance by Machiavelli.

\(^2\) Vallespin, 1994.
\(^3\) Idem.
\(^4\) Strauss, 1953, 42.
The rise of positivism in Social Sciences

During 1950s, the consolidation of behaviourism as a hegemonic trend in Political Science\(^5\) gave shape to the epistemological change started in the last third of the 19\(^{th}\) century at the core of the discipline. Previously, it had been developed in the United States, where behaviourism already had a relevant presence in about the 1920s\(^6\).

If at the beginning, the tendency towards epistemological renewal of political theory was more visible in the ways of research (incipient formulation of typologies and laws, political theory divorce from Law, tendency to describe and explain rather than prescribe), with the advent of behaviourism, disapproval of the traditional philosophical approach became quite explicit.

Indeed, behaviourists criticised what is commonly known as classical political theory (with origins in Plato and Aristotle), as much for its subject of study as for its methodology, proposing then a renovation in both aspects in order to convert classical political theory into a Science.

But, what was the subject and the methodology in classical political theory? Why did they make this theory a philosophy rather than a science, at least for the behaviourists?

The subjects of study in classical political theory are legal-formal institutions and mechanisms\(^7\), basically and paradigmatically the State, comprehended as the locus of government. The question that classical political theory tries to solve is how the government should be, and, what is a good polity?\(^8\)

The premise underlying this question is the possibility to find one (and just only one) correct answer – in other words, there is only one good way of organising government and society from a political point of view. This form of organisation, proper to human characteristics, can be recognised through reasoning and hence brought into being.

Therefore, classical political theory focused on government ends, meaning on which values should be pursued and accomplished by the government.

The methodology of classical political theory is impressionist, based on the past more than in present. The attention paid to facts –historical rather than present- varies

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\(^5\) The Political System: an inquiry into the State of Political Science, by David Easton, was published in 1953 and it was taken as a kind of central treatise on behaviourism (Abellán, 1994). In 1945 a Committee on Political Behaviour had been set up at the Social Science Research Council. Undoubtedly, one of the factors responsible of the diffusion of behaviourism was the participation of social scientists in government activities as consultants during the Second World War (Pasquino, 1984).

\(^6\) The origins of behaviourist influence in Political Science could be referred to Charles E. Merriam paper, “The present state of the study of politics”, in 1921. Merriam was Chair of the Political Science Department, at Chicago University.

\(^7\) Pasquino, 1984.

\(^8\) This can lead to the construction of ideal republics (Thomas More and the utopia), or the rationalization of a possible or existing regime (e.g., Hobbes, Locke, Hegel) (Bobbio, 1984, 256).
according to author and epoch, but in any case, it always serves the question of ends, (which is ideal government?) so reflection is directed towards what ought to be (values), not what is (facts), that is, the prescription rather than the description. In this sense, the moments, when methodology was closer to empiricism would be Aristotle (who approached politics as a practical philosophy), Machiavelli, (who paid attention to contemporary political regimes and the way to conquer them and to share the power with them), Hobbes (who considered man as a mechanism bereft of social aims) and more recently, Tocqueville (who approached democracy in America as a field survey). In these cases, historical and current facts do count, but this does not make them scientific, in the sense of having a concern to explain what it is. Quite the contrary, facts are taken into account just in order to make a deduction (from nature or from history) of what should be. The facts are not interesting by themselves, and they serve merely as an objective justification of what ought to be.

The question around the good government was the leading one in political theory until the end of 19th century. Thereafter, a number of reflections began to emerge, trying to connect various sides of existing politics rather than what ought to exist. In this sense, the concept of politics will be in crisis due to this change, if classical political theory identified politics with ends (the good government), since that moment, politics will be mostly considered by its means, in other words, by the means it operates with (the monopoly of legitimate violence), whatever ends it pursues. Thinkers as Max Weber, Carl Schmitt, Gaetano Mosca, Robert Michels are, among others, the architects of this semantic change in the concept of politics.

Behaviourism brought with it the renewal of both, the subject of study and methodology. The subject of study was changed from institutions to behaviour. Classical political theory focussed its political enquiry on the legitimacy of the State, largely in the sense of a legal entity, and according to this end, they worked around the legal act of creating the State (contract) and the capacity of the latter to produce laws, once it was instituted. Behaviourism, on the other hand, would examine the conduct of individual or groups as political actors, and not only actions such as voting, participation in the life of a party, decision-making process or the quest for political clients, but also motivations, expectations, attitudes and demands. Behaviourism criticises the classic institutional analysis because this tells us what political actors ought to do rather than what they actually do. In a word, the focus shifted from institutions to men and from legal mechanisms to informal processes. The place of politics would no longer be exclusively the State but a political system, meaning a

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10 Bobbio, 1984; Pasquino, 1984.
system of interaction among individuals and groups whereby values are assigned to all of society.\textsuperscript{12}

Immediate context combines two elements for Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin. The political ingredient is the fight between two political orders, based on contrary values: the liberal democracy, headed by the United States, and the communist system, leaded by the Soviet Union. Also, the intellectual ingredient is the hegemonic distinction between facts and values, brought with positivism and the scientific occidental thought. United States, the country in which Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin were exiled is, at the same time, the core of liberal democracy and the place in which behaviourism approach became hegemonic.

This combination of democracy and positivism inspired the main problem of Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, how to disallow that an objectively superior order, as liberal democracy, due to a relativism tolerance, could be destroyed by another inferior one – the soviet totalitarian regimen. The point is to avoid the destruction of the liberal Occident, by a totalitarian regimen, as it happened with the Jews and the national-socialist power. The roots of this defencelessness are remote, because for the authors, Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, the origins of this specific trajectory are in the Renaissance. This is the mediate context of the Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin reflection.

\textit{Reflection about mediate context}

Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin are in agreeance in several central points: a) Modern thought symbolizes a progressive destruction trajectory of truth in Occident, mainly produced by classical philosophy and Christianity; b) Totalitarian regime experiences (national-socialism, fascism, and communism) are the corollary of modern decadency and, therefore, the beginning of its end, opening the doors to a renewal of the truth in Occident; c) Hegemonic positivism in Social Science is the conclusion of Modern thought, and, d) Weber’s values and science separation is the highest representation of leading positivism.

Modern destruction of occidental truth is caused because the thought is becoming progressively ground-based, moving away from any transcendental order, full of objective truths. It deals, in fact, with a process of secularization of thought, which Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin conceived through different approaches.

For both of them, secularization means to have distance of an objective and transcendental truth, consolidating an anthropocentrism supported by reason. But, for

\textsuperscript{12} Easton, 1965a.
Leo Strauss, this process is made through the primacy of a relativist and nihilist reason, while, on the contrary, Eric Voegelin considered secularization as a process in which reason tries to replace religion, due to the foundation of a new objectivity.

**Modern Thought by Eric Voegelin**

For Eric Voegelin, modern times are marked by the presence of political movements, trends of thought, and intellectuals that conceived history as the human exploration to carry paradise out on Earth, operating through knowledge and reason. The last purpose is to erase Evil from the world, identified as poverty, ill, death, employment effort, and sexual desire, following Hesiodo.

Thinkers as Moro, Hobbes, Kant, Condorcet, Comte and intellectual trends as Enlightenment, positivism, psychoanalyst, neo-positivism; and political movements as communism, fascism, and national-socialism are part of this tendency. Eric Voegelin named all of them “movements of Gnostic masses” and declared them as “succedaneous of religion”. They are considered as movement of masses because, pretending or not, their theories influenced million of people in Occident, saturating their language, even without knowing most times what is the origin of the terms they are using.

He called them “Gnostic” because they were inspired by this trend of the Ancient times, developed in the modernity by Joaquim de Fiore, at the end of 12th century, against San Agustin conception of the philosophy of history. The main features of Gnostics are the following, according to Eric Voegelin; their departure is discontent with the current situation of the world, based on an imperfect organization and not because of human defects. Thereby, they believed in the possibility of eradicating the evil of the earth, a process that will be placed throughout history, and by human acts. In that sense, human beings must obtain the methodical and formal knowledge in order to produce this transformation. The Gnostic being has the mission of “appearing as the prophet that notifies humanity its rescuer knowledge”.

Finally Eric Voegelin considered those movements as “succedaneous of religion” because they aspired to replace Christian religion, the only true one, according to Eric

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13 “Gnostic”, in general, is referred to trends, that believe in getting the salvation through the knowledge. Doctrines called Gnostic” were spread through Ancient times, especially since II century a.c. The Gnostic trend, during Antoninos times, is the classical Gnostic, whose more well-known followers are Basleides, Valentino y Ptolomeo. Some Gnostic trends survived and reappeared during medieval times, under different types of heresies. Later, with the Reform, mystics as Jacob Boehme and radical visionaries as George Fox, probably unknowing the Gnostic tradition, had similar interpretations of Gnostic religious experience.

Voegelin. And, for him, they accomplished this idea, denying the main feature of Christianity: the consideration of perfection, not as a grounded gift, unable to be reached just by human beings, although they have to gain it by good actions. Obviously, for Eric Voegelin perfection is only possible after death and by divine grace. Also, for the author, those movements also denied Christianity when they aspired to reach something that only religion is able to discern, the meaning and the structure of the world. Eric Voegelin affirmed that only human arrogance is able to believe in the possibility of reaching perfection in the earth, through knowledge.

The times of Gnostic modern rise is the scientific trend during XVII century. Gnostic and modernity combine material progress and spiritual decadency: the second is the charge of the first. This ambiguous development has a limit, as it is pointed by Voegelin, that occurs when “an activist sect organizing the Gnostic truth manage the civilization as an Empire under its leading. Totalitarian regime, defined as the existential norm of Gnostic activisms is the final shape of a progressive civilization” 15.

Modern thought, according to Leo Strauss16

Leo Strauss considered that Occidental history is formed by two great periods, according to its philosophical contents. The first one starts with the invention of classical Greek thought (Socrates), breaking with the mythical thought, searching for the truth since he only knows that he knows nothing. The rupture appeared when costume was not longer considered anymore as the truth or the best, but on the contrary when it was believed that a moral truth exists as an objective, eternal and transcendental entity, able to be reached and known by human beings through reason, in order to develop a good life and an optimum order.

Christian thought will be the main follower of this line, inaugurated by classical philosophy, progressing until the Renaissance, when a second period started in the history of Occident. Leo Strauss defined this first period related to Classical Nature Law, the main conquer and characteristic of the Occidental Civilization.

Main trends in classical natural law are the Socratic-platonic-stoic, the Aristotelian and the Thomist. All of them are based on a consensus about the meaning of politics: the reach of commonwealth, defined as the virtue development and the optimum order.

In Natural Law, moral is placed in a second, superior and transcendental level, where a human being can read it through rational intuition or revelation. Also, there is a kind of teleological consideration about human beings, dividing real and ideal, because exists

15 Voegelin, 1968b, 205.
the possibility of dismissing existing laws because of its injustice, or costume due to its immorality, although it is “our” law. Consensus around those concepts allows Leo Strauss to define all these trends, closed to Classical Natural Law, as “classical solution”.

This basic coincidence, able to engender Occidental civilization, is based nevertheless on a conflicting fight between two trends: Greek philosophy and Christian religion. Strauss symbolizes them with their paradigmatic cities, Athens and Jerusalem, respectively. The main difference between both trends is the way to reach the truth. If Athens obtains it through the autonomy of reason, Jerusalem uses reason and human understanding as a God gift, in order to be able to understand his truth and command, which means knowing from other people’s words, which are believed because of the action of faith. Here, therefore, there is no possible reconciliation, because according to Leo Strauss, for Christians the autonomous use of reason, developed by Athens, is a rebellion, because they would be appropriating a gift donated by God to human beings in order to be used with a specific end, and not at any way considered by people. On the other hand, for Athens, the method of discovering in Jerusalem implies a way of submission.

So, according to Leo Strauss, the relevant mutual death between Athens and Jerusalem is unable to be solved, because critics to Athens and Jerusalem are linked to theological or philosophical primacy, because both trends start from denying the other way of achieve the knowledge. However, the fight between them implies the constant vitality in Occident, which means its indestructibility.

The second period of Occidental history starts in the Renaissance and, according to Strauss will be current until the second postwar. The kind of thought developed during this period, although formed from several different trends, has a main feature. This is what is called by Strauss “the modern solution”, which meaning is the reverse of the classical solution: the lost of the notion about the existence of an objective and transcendental truth. On the contrary, in this period, the idea about a human being is able to create values and the meaning of the world is consolidated. The primacy of will over transcendental (God or Nature), leaves humans free of the necessity of searching and adopting universal moral actions and good values links naturally to their human condition. On the contrary, the modernity understands human beings as it were related to human desires and motives, without any aspiration to be shaped according to a transcendental order. In short, as a state/being, not as an end/ought to be.

Finally, the concept at stake here is the teleological notion of human nature, linked to classical solution. At the same time, this requirement implies at the same time, the loss of, in Strauss own words, “vertical control” over a person. That means, the loss of the
own will control exercised by this transcendental truth. Modern solution compares
virtue to liberty. In that sense, it is impossible to divide real from unreal, because at the
deal. Ideal is assimilated in real.
According to Strauss, all this characteristics of modern thought are the way to
relativism and nihilism. Relativism is a conception, in which there are no ends more
useful than others, because all of them can be scientifically proved. Nihilism considers
that all the values can be equally believed or not because none of them can affirm a
greater validity than others. Strauss considered that a subsequent notion of nihilism
and relativism is the indifference, which means to come out neutral in the face of
different ends, because of the impossibility of choosing among values.
In that sense, the author considers that modern thought trajectory has partially ended
in the Second World War, in other words, during the rise of national-socialism
totalitarian regime and the Holocaust. It has already been affirmed that Weber’s theory
should be studied, because behind its nihilism “Hitler’s shadow appeared”. Strauss is
not reducing modern occidental trajectory to Holocaust or Nazi warmongering, but
honestly he understand that being impossible to chose between values is the prologue
of totalitarianism, as much as “if God has died, everything is allowed”.

**Problem**

The problem cause by the mediate context for both authors, is not if it is possible to
show how occidental thought –defined as the sum of Greek-Latin and Jewish-Christian
traditions- has already reached a certain knowledge about good life values and
optimum order, what they considered already achieved. On the contrary, it is to
dismantle what was considered unquestionable: the impossibility of knowing a set of
objective values, denying the classical notion of a transcendental truth. The target is to
restore the reason subordination to transcendental, against modern confirmation of the
rational self-sufficiency.

In relation to the concepts of politics, this situation means that politics as knowledge
has abandoned the search of unique objective values, capable of guiding politics as
activity. Since values are considered unfounded, politics is not defined by ends, but by
the means it operates with.

And, therefore about the relation between ethics and politics, the division between
truth and politics breaks with the classical notion of politics as a branch of ethics,
defined as a set of certain values able to be universally applied, which is substituted by
a specific ethics of politics.
In Leo Strauss, this problem is seen as the triumph of relativism and nihilism over the classical solution and the authentic natural law. In Eric Voegelin, the problem is seen as a search of substituting the only true religion (Christianity) by an emancipated reason, oriented to ground and human perfection. But since Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin the world has a transcendental meaning, and it is a moral reality, those modern projects cannot get the triumph in the long run. Therefore, modern project is condemned to fail, what is at the same time, the beginning of the abandoned occidental truth restoration.

Critics to Max Weber’s theory on science and values is going to be the elected one to show how the maximum exponent of modern social sciences can not reach a free values science program, what is by itself the proof of vitality, rested in the occidental classical thought.

III. THE CRITICS OF LEO STRAUSS AND ERIC VOEGELIN TO MAX WEBER

Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin were critical with the main point on which Max Weber built all his theory about the relation between science and values: values are not objects to be studied by science, it is not possible to define an objective knowledge, about values, deductive as possible in natural sciences. Therefore, the aim of science is to formulate facts-judgments, not value judgments.

The general sense of Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin critics to Max Weber is the consideration of the impossibility of separating facts and values. For them, science should not be related only to verify facts-judgments, regretting any other value-judgment, unless the knowledge capability would be reduced.

Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin tried to show how Max Weber, in his own scientific researches is not able to apply his theory, revealing the existence of value-judgments behind what Max Weber considered only facts-judgments. For the authors, when Max Weber describes a phenomenon, in truth he is doing an evaluation. In that sense, even if he considers that is not possible to prove the superiority of a value, he finally prefers or recommends one over the other, using different methods. So, in a way, for Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, when values are sent away through the door, they finally enter through the window.

So, for Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, this situation is –in Eric Voegelin’s words- “a successful failure”, because it is the proof of their principal gnoseological shared thesis: in order to understand it is necessary to value, without valuating, there is no comprehension, or in other words, the one who does not value is because he has not

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understood the fact he is studying by him. Science, in fact, evaluates provides true knowledge about values, so the preference is not unfounded, on the contrary is possible to see the objective superiority of specific values.

The question of the founded values

Following Leo Strauss, Max Weber affirmed two contradictory points: a) ethics should not indicate how the optimum social order should be, and b) that the issue about how the social order should be is ethically relevant. According to Leo Strauss, Max Weber will conciliate this contradiction by converting ethics into a subjective issue. In that sense, Max Weber developed the concept of personality and individual liberty, considered as autonomy to elect fundamental values and means (action free of external forces and irresistible motions).

The resultant moral imperative would be “you should have preferences” or “follow God or your Evil”. This is a formal ethical imperative, which has not influenced any material contents of the election. Therefore, Leo Strauss inferred that having preferences or ideals would be the objective law, not the arbitrary one, the criteria to distinguish between the noble against the abject. However, through his informal imperative, Max Weber defines the good, as having preferences and a cause, and the bad as not having any or being indifferent to all of them. In that sense, the good and the worst are not linked to the contents of the chosen values, but with elect or not values. According to Leo Strauss, this shows how Max Weber is unable to sustain his values-free statement.

Also, Leo Strauss found more contradictions in Weber’s ethical theory. In fact, if according to Max Weber there is no possibility of preferring one value over the other, then Leo Strauss wondered why liberty and individuality are for Weber: a) to choose fundamental values, in other words, to have preferences/causes/ideals; b) to choose rationally means to achieve them, and 3) to become responsible of the consequences of the actions.

In that sense, Leo Strauss understood ethical weberian theory as if it was based on the consideration of the liberty and the superiority of individuality, and on having preferences, its foundation or vitality among them, and the rationality and the responsibility.

For Leo Strauss, Max Weber’s one is a noble nihilism, because it is not derived from a fundamental indifference about nobility but from a perception of the unfounded character of the noble.

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Eric Voegelin critics to Max Weber in this point is centred on what he calls “demonism”. Following Voegelin\(^9\), Weber gives a demoniac character to the value-elections, consisting in the impossibility of explaining this preference rationally. Values according to Weber, and following Voegelin, would be the result of unsubstantiated decisions, emerging from nowhere. Considering, then, this irrational content of a value-preference in Weber’s theory, only there would be possible – always following Voegelin- to displace the rational evaluation to the ground of consequences. Voegelin affirmed that if a reflection over consequences is possible, then a value preference is not demoniac. So, if science is able to think about the consequences, it will be also able to reflect specifically about the election of ends. So, in that point, Voegelin deduced that is possible to formulate a value-judgment or a scientific evaluation of values.

*The issue of a “free-value science” or centred on facts-judgments*

Leo Strauss\(^20\) is going to show how even Max Weber researches are marked by judgment when he characterized the phenomena he is studying. When Max Weber affirmed that the rationalized and bureaucratized future in Occident is marked by an alternative between “a spiritual renewal or else ‘mechanized petrification’, i.e., the extinction of every human possibility except that of ‘specialist without spirit or vision and voluptuaries without heart’”\(^21\), Leo Strauss considers that Weber is expressing his preference to an detailed kind of man, the one is considered the only individual, as much as he is able to choose and sustain vital values with autonomy. Another example useful for Leo Strauss is the weberian study on protestant ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism. Following Leo Strauss, as much as Max Weber did not want to value the follower’s interpretation of Calvino doctrine, he chose the historical perspective, which allows him to take as real what men in his epoch considered true. In that sense, he attributed to Calvinism, easily, the origins of the spirit of capitalism. According to Leo Strauss, Max Weber should have said that this apparition was able due to a tergiversation of Calvino’s predestination doctrine, prepared by some followers. Being unable to judge an interpretation as a tergiversation, and some followers as false followers, Max Weber could not understand the relation between Calvinism and the spirit of capitalism, according to Leo Strauss. Although, Leo Strauss recognized that this historical method used by Max Weber in order to study Calvinism is the only way, to avoid value-judgments, he kept saying that

\(^9\) Vid Voegelin 1968b, 27.  
\(^20\) Vid Strauss, 1953, cap. II.  
\(^21\) Strauss, 1953, 49.
this method exposed scientists to be lied to by actor confusions that are being studied, because this method does not allow critical reflections, leaving science without value. The only function that this method really accomplishes it to understand how societies are seen by themselves, what it could be useful as is auxiliary material for the historical labour, as material to prepare the evaluation, and as much as in order to judge is better to understand first how the actor reflected himself.

Max Weber come back to use this perspective, in order to classify legitimate governmental forms, classifying the types of authority (charismatic, rational-legal, and traditional) as they were seen by their followers, when in fact, “The sociologist [...] is forced to make a distinction between how a given group actually conceives of the authority in by which it is ruled and the true character of the authority in question”^{22}, writes Leo Strauss.

In spite of those last examples, Leo Strauss considered that in a situation in which you have to choose among not valuating, with the consequence of not understanding, and valuating in order to understand, Max Weber chose the second one.

Following this line, Leo Strauss gave an example about the prohibition of value-judgments, which would allow describing objectively the concentration camps and the implicated actors motivations, but would not allow to talk about “cruelty”, while any medium reader would see that what there is there is cruelty. So, the description would have become a satire, and ambiguous, and it would be an intellectual fraud.

On other hand, for Voegelin, Weber did not accomplish his own promise of not teaching values to his students, when he was provoking a reflection about the consequences linked to values. And, in a negative way, because, he was provoking a reflection about this consequences, considering the difficulty to keep supporting the preference of an specific value, Weber would be affirming the authentic values, or in Voegelin words, order science ones^{23}.

According to Voegelin, Max Weber is unable to implement his free-values science (and therefore a free-values teaching), because he reintroduced the rationality of values, which have been denied in the election, moving them to the consequences sphere. In that sense, Weber would be showing how specific values provoked negative consequences, denying the demoniac character of values, in other words, the impossibility of any rational argumentation about values, and therefore, the scientific capability to affirm which of them are human or not.

That is why, after all, Max Weber research is able to be recycled in order to build a new science of order, a new political science. Especially, this is the meaning of the Weber´

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^{22} Strauss, 1953, 56.
^{23} Voegelin, 1968b, 30.
greatness, his capability of showing how a free-value science is not an order science, or even than value-decisions are not demoniacs, as Eric Voegelin confirmed.

IV. THE ANALYSIS OF LEO STRAUSS AND ERIC VOEGELIN CRITICISM TO MAX WEBER

In this section the review produced by Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin in relation to weberian values and science theory will be analysed.

The unfounded values issue

An analysis of Leo Strauss´ critique

Around the unfounded values, when Leo Strauss categorized Max Weber as nihilist, positivist or relativist, beyond the contradictions on his portrayals, the core of the problem is that he gets founded preference (or foundation with preference) and objective foundation of values (and ends) completely mixed up.

In fact, Max Weber never confirms the impossibility of preferring one value over the other; instead what he says is related to the impossibility of doing it objectively. If Leo Strauss presents a dichotomy between scientific ethics and irrational exercise of judgment, Max Weber, on the contrary, thinks in a third option far from positivism or irrational judges: the scientific help during values elections. In that sense, Max Weber starts his analysis considering the incapability of science to answer which kind of values should guide our life, but without extracting any positivist conclusion about the impossibility of talking seriously and rationally about values. He neither extracts any other conclusion about the absence of science in the process of judge, or any nihilist or relativist one, although he affirm that all the values are similar, because any of them can not be objectively considered better than the other.

According to Max Weber, science helps to make a decision adding: a) consciousness, in order to know that we have to choose between unfounded, immeasurable and enharmonic values, in a world marked by an irrational ethics, in other words, a paradoxical relation between good and evil; b) coherence, analysing when an elected action is linked to a specific end and not to any other one, c) efficiency, in the sense of helping to analyse if actions starts to reach and specific end are able to carry out positives consequences according to this end and not to deny it or destroy it.

Scientific help has not the function of converting the election in the best election, as if a scientific election could help to choose the best or the true value against other worse or
false. Scientific help is not able to eliminate the unfounded characteristic of any value, or even his potential paradoxical consequences, but on the contrary it only allows a reflexive election, once you already know the existence of all those problems\(^\text{24}\).

In another point of his critique, Leo Strauss considered that Max Weber was unable to avoid the value-judgment and therefore he exchanges a moral imperative for a formal one. This criticism is based on a misunderstanding about Weber’s conception about ethics. Max Weber has no doubts about what is ethics in abstract terms, for every man, in every time and place. He is not looking for an imperative, as a general formula to be assumed as a mandate. On the contrary, his starting point is the analysis of occidental modern world face, in order to wonder what possibilities of ethical behaviour are offered for them. For Weber, the process of rationalization and demystification has helped to convert “the destiny of our times” in a world characterized by: a) polytheism, in other words, the end of the hegemonic conception about the existence of an inherent meaning attached to world. The classical Greek-Latin and Jewish-Christian perspective is just one among others, in an opened world opened to value-fight and individual human search of meaning; b) a world, opened to complexity and specialization due to the existence of different professional spheres, with different logics (i.e. science, politics, bureaucracy). A world like this one should disregard the possibility of having whole global explanations, because even if they keep existing (religion), they are not able to understand the new circumstances, due to the fact that they can not assume polytheism nor even consider it.

An individual who searches his ethical realization should start knowing what it is to act properly in those professional and life sphere of the modern world, and after he should analyse which of those goods, on one hand is ready to do, and on the other hand, able to do. Max Weber analyses mainly three main professions: scientific, politics, and bureaucratic. And the question around this issue is what kind of man is necessary to be, which kind of qualities are needed to follow the professional ethics of those activities.

The vocation for a profession is related to the possibility of being in accordance with each ethical requirement, in other words, to establish a link between personal interiority and the impersonal professional logic. That is why; Max Weber says that in order to know which vital and professional exigencies compose our vocation, we just need to attend to our spirit and follow it.

“Follow your spirit” is not a moral recommendation from who is thinking this is the good, nor the criteria to develop the true liberty or personality, but the analysis and the confirmation of ethical conditions and exigencies in a polytheist and demystified world.

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\(^{24}\) Weber, 1992b, 83.
His perspective is not: “who wants to act correctly should act according to”, but on the contrary is a sociological perspective more like: “whoever wants to reach the ethical plenitude in this context, will find those challenges and particular exigencies.”

Max Weber defines the socio-historical conditions in which ethics acts, not the ethical requirements to act (formal or material). He does not take into account preferences because they could be desirable or because he is doing normative theory, but because he considered them as a value, as far as they are facts of this secularized word.

However, Leo Strauss does not notice, as in the case related to the concentration camp, is that a value is able to be studied as a fact, without evaluating it. It is possible to study, and this is what Max Weber does, what is a political violence or a moral of dignity for a Christian, without implying a violence or moral evaluation, nor in that case the liberty or the personality.

This way it is not representing the Evil or the abject, as should be considered by Leo Strauss, but just what is attached to people unable to face the destiny of their epoch.

Other point, of Leo Strauss assessment is concerned with Weber’s use of value-judgment. Leo Strauss considers that if Weber affirms that there is no criteria to prefer one value on the top of the other, why should it be necessary to be reasonable with those chosen values, or in other words, to choose fundamental values, to choose rationally means according to ends, and to be responsible for the consequences.

Here there are several distinctions. Firstly, fundamental values are not elected because there are other non-fundamental values, on the contrary, in a world without objective and universal values, this absence can only be supplied by a subjective election, converting a value into the preferable. Secondly, rational election of means according to ends, is not a moral obligation, but a prudence criteria if you decide to be consequent with the chosen value, in an ethically irrational world. And thirdly, about being responsible of consequences, Max Weber does not affirm that this is a moral issue, but what he really said is that if someone desires to be coherent with the end pursued and to be conscious of his acts, he should notice that the relation between means and ends and its potential consequences are not determined by values in a ethically irrational world. Moreover the consequences could be completely contradictory with the end pursued.

Also, Max Weber says that responsibility is not evaluated in all cases, but mainly in the political activity, characterized by actions looking for ends in this world, and with responsibility over third persons. In actions related to ultraterrenal ends, or just related to personal responsibility, as the convictions ethics, the responsibility rests in God’s hands. This does not mean a less moral action, because its particularity is to be an

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action directed to ultraterrenal and exclusively individual, because it does not have any
direct impact on third persons, because it is pursuing just to save the soul. The
problem is not the responsibility or the conviction about it, but its coherence with the
pursued end by the actor.
Max Weber is not concerned about act if according to judgements it is good or moral,
but he starts from his interest in the fact, and the person responsible. Because he
considered that just an action based on the intention of actor's coherence,
consciousness and efficiency is able to be analysed by a social scientist. In a contrary
case, when some one who is acting is not pretending to be conscious, coherent and
efficient according to his act, this fact is not analyzable, simply because there is no
referential point to do it.

An analysis of Voegelin’s critique

In the case of Voegelin’s critique it is possible to say that the author gets demonism
and ignorance mixed up.
According to Weber, following our interpretation, demonism has two faces: it is able to
be found in the consequences of an action guided by values, as much as in the
preference of these values. But according to Voegelin, demonism in Weber is attached
exclusively to the unfounded preference of values; what he calls “demoniac fixation” of
values in an individual.
However, for us, weberian demonism brings the problem about defining what is
possible to know about values out. For him, value logic is demonist because it is not
possible to know the exact consequences that an action can carry out, nor even why we
prefer one value on the top of the other, or if it is preferable26.
Voegelin tries to show that is possible to access to this knowledge by eliminating
demonism. Following him, Weber initially denies this possibility, but all the way
through his reflection he will finally show –although not explicitly- that it is in fact
possible.
Is it –according to Weber- possible to eliminate demonism with the knowledge? For
him, talking about preferences, demonism is synonym of “faith”, because although it is
able to think rationally about the preference, finally it keeps being a radical subjective
inclination to a value. The preference is a radical, subjective action, not an objective
election. In the consequences sphere, demonism is a synonym of the irrationally ethics
in this world, or of the tragic character that all human actions used to be.

26 Although this question is shaped like this, it could not be coherent with Weber’s theory,
because it is closed to a rational-objective way to ask about preference. In that sense, what
would be coherent with demonism is to ask about why I prefer one value over the other.
Because of both reasons, demonism could not be eliminated by scientific knowledge. It could just be reduced when the election is helped by scientific knowledge. However, according to Voegelin, demonism is restricted to preference, and how to conceive a preference. Doing this reduction, Voegelin does not take consequences into account as part of demonism. And also, he considers demonism only as if it was a personality characteristic of an actor, a kind of “fanaticism”, defined as a narrow and exclusive commitment with a value, and therefore blocking any rational reflection about it.

In the course of these two operations, Voegelin conceives the root of demonism as a specific type of human being, leaving it able to be effectively eliminated by knowledge. Therefore, for Voegelin, the question is not the limits of values in order to be considered as an object to be studied, on the contrary, the personal features of the actor are the ones reducing the possibilities to study a specific value.

According to Weber, starting from experience, the ethical structure of the world is the one defining consequential demonism, and inside this structure politics, because it implies an action through violence, with responsibility over the third person and without certainty about the goodness of the chosen value, nor even about the consequences it could carry out. For Weber, politics is not able to stop being an Evil-agreement, in fact, what is at stake is if the person who is doing politics already knows it or not.27

In relation to preferential demonism, the structure would be the way in which irrational and rational are combined in a man, in order to determine the way to choose or to have reasons to choose, unable to be discovering by a scientific knowledge. As Voegelin does not take consequences into account as part of demonism, he is able to close his reflection, focussed on showing Weber’s successful failure. In fact, he understands that only some values, and not all of them, are correlated to consequential problems. Then, for him consequences are just negatives, not only unable to be thought.28 In that sense, Voegelin’s reflection seems as if he understood that Weber’s analysis of consequences only related to some values and not to all of them. He supposes that the main and last problem of Weber was the study of values, when in fact he is focussed on the ethical structure of the world, which determines the conditions and characters of human action.

This brings us to another problem in Voegelin’s analysis, his definition of the term consequences. It seems as if he understood it in terms of the consequences that a value possesses due to its attachment to man or humanity, while Weber is noticing about the

28 Voegelin takes only the negative part of the irrational, because he can not conceive than from an Evil act can derive a good fact. In that sense, the ethical structure of the world is not a problem.
consequences of an action guided by a value, with consequences in terms of this value by itself. Weber tries to show that when an actor decides to act in the name of a value, the consequences of his actions are able to deny the ends he was pursuing, in the context of this ethical structure of the world. In Max Weber reflection, this structure considers facts as facts, and not attached to the value, which has provoked or impelled it.

In that sense, Voegelin seems to project in Weber his own normative perspective, not perceiving Weber’s starting point: the division between facts and values. To Voegelin, demonism is defined as a group of values attached demonically to some actors. This fixation would show not only the irrationality of the value but also the supporter one’s.

The irrationality of the value because the unreasonable preference of this value is not possible to be rationally defended, because there are no arguments to show its goodness. And the actor’s one, because the actor would be seen as someone who does not want to see the reason, attached demonically to his values because the reason could show him that those values are negatives. Only when an actor holds bad values, unable to be rationally supported, then it is fanatic. The demonism is the exception, not the rule. According to Weber, demonism, as it was discuss before, has another meaning, it is an empirical date, and therefore the rule not the exception. This is the starting point to thinking about the problem around science and values relation.

For Voegelin, when some one is demonically attached to some values and therefore rejects to revise rationally his preference, even if someone is showing this value consequences, there is nothing to do.

Rationality is scientific knowledge about the truth of some values for humanity. For Voegelin, irrationality or demonism is quite the contrary. For him, the world is not irrational in terms of values, and since it is possible to know proper human values objectively, only the values considered bad for humans brings bad consequences, and therefore only those irrationsals or fanatics are able to support them, against all rational evidence.

However, the way of supporting or having experiences with a value has no sense about the value by itself, just about his supporter. For example, in politics if someone is guided by the responsibility ethics or by absolute convictions.

In conclusion of this section, it could be said that the insufficient interpretation of Weber’s theory made by Voegelin is based—according to our interpretation—on the problematic conception of demonism. Because, for Voegelin it is not the irrational ethical structure of the world, that is the one that explains how a value is chosen, or if it

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29 Weber, 1992a 149.
is able to decide if a value is susceptible to be studied or not. On the contrary, for him, this is can only be explained due to (bad) values, and supporters (fanatics). Voegelin’s reflection about consequences is formal, because for him the core of the problem is basically in value (only a bad value, irrationality, is able to bring bad consequences). In short, everything, has its origin in value, in its goodness or badness, and not in the structure of the world or in the man, as Weber conceives it. That is why, he thinks demonism is able to be eradicated through knowledge or in another sense demonism is simply caused by ignorance.

The free-value science issue

Around this issue, it is possible to say that Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin get characterization mixed up with valuating.

An analysis of Strauss’ point of view

In fact, Max Weber does not valuate but typify the future of Occident in the rationalization epoch, because around this phenomenon, he understands: 1) that it is probable that the specific bureaucratic ethics –as the administrative professional- will be spread all over social activities as the consequence of the bureaucratization process; 2) that due to all the social problems are not technical or bureaucratic ones, the spread of an obedience ethics centred on the election of some means without discussing the ends could provoke the ending of the fight for values, once this ethics would dominate all activities, including politics, characterized by the preferences of ends.

Another critique made by Leo Strauss in relation with the weberian notion of a free-values science is that, following him, Max Weber needed to use the historical method in order to avoid making valuations, which is the cause of his impossibility of understanding not only the relation between capitalism and Protestantism, but also the “legitimate government forms”. In this point, we can see the difference between objects of study in Max Weber and Leo Strauss. Weber is concerned with the historical reconstruction of actor’s meaning, not only about how some sects define the world, but also about what is related to the legitimacy of authorities. Weber is not interested in defining what the Calvinism is, or what a legitimate government is. For him, what is relevant is if Calvin’s followers change his doctrine or

30 Voegelin, 1968b, 35.
not, or the effects generated by this interpretation, in terms of the relation between ideas, ethics and social behaviour.

The problem here is that Leo Strauss does not understand what the specific objectives in weberian research are, and therefore he criticizes his incapability of reach some ends he was not interested in. Those ends, the main problem for Strauss, are centred to define what the truth is. Paradoxically, when Leo Strauss attributes Weber some ends, which are not the ones followed by the author of Economy and Society, he is not accomplishing his main methodological rule to study authors and trends, which is taking them in “their own terms”, “as well as they would have interpreted themselves”. Leo Strauss also criticizes the neutrality of values, when he affirms that it implies, for example, not to use the word “cruelty” in order to classify a concentration camp, because it would be as if it was accomplished a value-judgment. For Strauss, this point shows the incapability of a free-value science, its impotence to know what is not perceived immediately by a scientist.

In this point, Leo Strauss gets value-judgment and the description of some behaviour characteristics mixed up. In Weber, there is a similar example to the one used by Leo Strauss. Weber considered that Christian ethics, using a grounded perspective is indignity, although dignity is talking from a religious perspective. The value-judgment is not produced when the behaviour is analyzed, but when this way of acting is considered as good, bad, desirable or not. Max Weber starts from the fact that the word dignity is polysemous, because we are in a world plural in terms of values, so when we use a concept as dignity, it is not a value-judgment. Although, Leo Strauss starts from a notion that conceived that some specific behaviours imply always (per se) just one indisputable value-judgment what it does not let him see that even if it is used, it does not mean a valuation.

An analysis of Voegelin’s point of view

In relation to Voegelin’s interpretation of Max Weber’s perspective about the problem of a free-value teaching, Weber does not expect the revision of the values elected by his students, or even, by those who acts according to values, but on the contrary he wants them to reconsider the attitude towards their values, the way they think about them or conceived them. Basically, Weber tries to affirm that values are not absolute or unconditioned but they are relative and conditioned. They are relative because there is no way to prove objectively why a value should be considered over the other, nor to show that is possible to build a harmonic table with the elected values. And for Weber, they are conditioned because the ethical structure of the world does not leave to apply a
value freely, because one value consequences can make it become discrediting or even deny it. Therefore, Weber is not searching if someone could feel “shy” due to supporting a value, as Voegelin sustains- but just, in that sense, because of the way he is supporting it and applying. This is a confirmation than in Weber’s theory there is no rational reflection about a preference, but maybe only about the way of living or supporting the attachment to a value.

V. CONCLUSIONS

1. In the long historical trajectory of political conceptualization, Voegeling and Strauss critique to Weber means the attempt to restore classical Aristotelian concept. This concept had lost its hegemony. Politics as activity is the practical achievement of some true ends, external and previous ones, able to be known through politics as knowledge. This conceptualization is the return to identify –as Aristotle says- politics with good politics, what it is with what it ought to be, and politics with truth.

2. This conception erases all tension between ethics and politics, because politics needs to be ethical in order to be authentic. If politics is not ethical, it is not politics. The politics is the instrument to spread ethics all around community.

3. This embedded relation does not allow seeing power and violence as features of politics. Because if politics is instructing in the only way to be human, then there is no imposition of one specific wish over the other. Also, that classical relation between ethics and politics implies not seen that politics as knowledge is also related to violence, when it is considered just as a discovery of an already made world, as it ought to be, instead as a way to appropriate the world in order to shape it. Then, for example, power and violence are closed to corruption of politics, but not closed to politics.

4. Classical conception is unable to think of violence as the political way through which some values are spread, because they conceived the world and the human beings just as moral realities, with an inherent given meaning. Knowledge and political order are the way human beings are reconciled with themselves, not just a possibility among others.

5. The theoretical useful point in Weber’s conception is to locate power and politics as characteristic elements of politics. There is no value free of ethical tribute, because politics operates with violence, searching to obtain ends, also unfounded and required for the community, in an ethically irrational world.
6. This world emptied of inherent meaning is the starting point for Weber, as empirical evidence, having ambiguous consequences for the political ethics. On one hand, the strength to subjectively build ends and means. On the other hand, the reason of this strength is able to turn into the cause of the ending of every ethical and political limit. Because there is no place to go, out of the subjectivity, to invalidate ends and/or means, if they are considered immoral. Weber explicitly confirms that when he says scientific help, it depends on what an actor considers appreciated.

7. According to Max Weber, what is really objectively demonstrated in the political ethics sphere is if an actor has been incoherent with the values he has decided to defend, in other words, if he had not calculated the consequences. But it is impossible to prove that the elected value is wrong (or good), better or worse than others. And this point could end in a paradox: an action guided by some (generally accepted) good valued, as democracy, could be incompatible with the political ethics, if we could seen how consequences has not taken into account. And it can happen on the contrary sense too, for example, under a dictatorship.

8. The only way to escape of this paradox is the construction of a positive political and ethical sense around some values (democracy) and negative around others (dictatorship) and also around a way to live with them (ethics of responsibility). This means: as any value is absolute, not even the well considered, because not always the Good carries out the Good, we can only construct a political and ethical meaning. And with this meaning we could deliberate in each case in order to know how much Evil is possible to sustain in order to reach a good value, or just to avoid a worse Evil. As far as power operated with violence (legitimate), the price is always paid, and not only in some cases.

9. An interesting element of weberian reflection about ethics and politics is that violence is not attached to political power due to metaphysical reasons, properly related to the State Reason (nation are personalities searching for a place in the world and therefore with a predictable use of violence) or to trends as Protestantism (human beings are bad by nature, and therefore is necessary to discipline it avoiding the generalized chaos). Violence, on the contrary, has its roots in a society that recognizes a world empty of meaning: so the plurality of values is the reason why violence turned into necessary (legitimate) as the last resource to assure a political decision. It is not about man being Evil or Good, but about a man, being a creator of meaning.

10. Finally, if Max Weber joined politics and violence reducing this relation to the State sphere, a wider conception of politics (Carl Schmitt) does not eliminate the
relation between politics and violence. This relation is not determinate by the Nation-State hegemonic political form, but it is linked to politics as much as it is an activity related to the decision-making process, obligatory for all the members of the community in a pluralistic world. This let us think that nowadays, although Nation-State seems to be overcome by others ways of political organization, problems related to violence between politics and ethics will persist.

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