

Leo Strauss, Natural Right and History, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.

Max WEber (pp 36-80)

pS Gesammelte politische Schriften

W Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Wissenschaftslehre

S-W Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sozial- und Wirtschaftsgeschichte

Rs Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie

Slp Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Soziologie und Sozialpolitik

WG Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft

SEO The Theory of Social and Economic Organization OUP 1947 = WG

Strauss:

42: .. supplied by a statement of Weber about the prospects of Western civilization. He saw this alternative: either a spiritual renewal ("wholly new prophets or a powerful renaissance of old thoughts and ideals") or else "mechanized ~~and~~ petrification, varnished by a kind of convulsive sense of self-importance," i.e., the extinction of every human possibility but that of "specialists without spirit or vision and voluptuaries without heart." Confronted with this alternative, Weber felt that the decision in favor of either ~~or~~ possibility would be a judgement of faith, and hence beyond the competence of reason (compare Rs I 294 with W 469-70 and 150-51). This amounts to an admission that the way of life of "specialists without spirit or vision and voluptuaries without heart" is as defensible as the ways of life recommended by ~~the~~ Amos and Socrates. Cf. 47.

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64: At any rate, Weber's whole notion of the scope and function of social sciences rests on the allegedly demonstrable premise that the conflict between ultimate values cannot be resolved by human reason. The question is whether that premise has really been demonstrated, or whether it has merely been postulated under the impulse of a specific moral preference.

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... AS he indicated at the beginning of his discussion of the subject, his thesis was only the generalized version of an older and more common view, namely, the conflict between ethics and politics is insoluble: political action is sometimes impossible without incurring moral guilt. It seems then that it was the spirit of power politics that begot Weber's position....

65: If peace is incompatible with human life or with a truly human life, the moral problem would seem to allow of a clear solution: the nature of things requires a warrior ethics as the basis of a power politics that is guided exclusively by considerations of national interest; or "the most naked Machiavellianism [would have to be] regarded as a matter of course in every respect, and as wholly unobjectionable from an ethical point of view."

70: The ethics of intention, which Weber imputed to syndicalism, is, in reality, an ethics alien to all this-worldly social or political movements. As he stated on another occasion, within the dimension of social action proper "the ethics of intention and the ethics of responsibility are not absolute opposites but supplement each other: both united constitute the genuine human being." That ethics of intention that is incompatible with what Weber once called the ethics of a genuine human being is a certain interpretation of Christian ethics or, more generally expressed, a strictly otherworldly ethics. What Weber really meant when speaking of the insoluble conflict between the ethics of intention and the ethics of responsibility was, then, that the conflict between this-worldly ethics and otherworldly ethics is insoluble by human reason (long footnote).

71: As Weber himself pointed out, social science attempts to understand social life from a this-worldly point of view... The insights and solutions at which it arrives might be questioned on the basis of superhuman knowledge or of divine revelation. But, as Weber ~~indicated~~ indicated, social science as such cannot take notice of such questionings, because they are based on presuppositions that cannot be evident to unassisted human reason... Weber had no compunction in saying that every belief in revelation is ultimately belief in the absurd. (many references)

75: But he (Weber) was certain that all devotion to causes or ideals has its roots in religious faith and, therefore, that the // 74 // decline of religious faith will ultimately lead to the extinction of all causes or ideals. He tended to see before him the alternative of either complete spiritual emptiness or religious revival. He despaired of the modern this-worldly irreligious experiment, and yet he remained attached to it because he was fated to believe in science as he understood it. ~~The~~ The result

of this conflict, which he could not resolve, was his belief that the conflict between ~~h~~ values cannot be resolved by human reason. (W 546 f, 551-55; Rs I 204 523)

81-119: ORIGIN OF THE IDEA OF NATURAL RIGHT