

Max Weber and some Intellectual Consequences of the War

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The paper:

How might intellectual historians approach the consequences of complex events such as the First World War? This paper addresses this broader question by revisiting Weber's *Vocation* lectures in the context of his war work. Along with his practice of global and comparative historical sociology, Weber's demand for a 'value-free' academic ethics is often associated with a stance of political agnosticism. Yet during the First World War, a retreat into the world 'Republic of Letters', a tactic that seemed possible in the Belle Epoque of Wilhelmine national science, was no longer an option. Weber's work and recent critical and biographical studies of Weber can be used to reflect not only on the effects of the conflict on academic work, but also on the social conditions of intellectual creativity in wartime. The main theme I concentrate on is the new 'orality' of the postwar situation, which ranged from settings such as the proclamation of republics and the signing of peace, to the exchange of jointly authored petitions and the delivery of wartime lectures to wider audiences. The question of the rhetorical strategy behind wartime reflections on canonical plots and texts, as well as their defamiliarisation, serves as an invitation to consider Weber as a theorist of transitional societies and stateless peoples, rather than as a philosopher of stable institutions. The last part of the paper places Weber's *Politics as a Vocation* in relation to the report of a wartime lecture in Vienna on the 'Sociology of the state', in which he developed a fourth, later abandoned, conception of legitimation rooted in the structure of cities.

The author:

I have a BA in History, an MPhil in Political Thought and Intellectual History, and a PhD from the University of Cambridge. After a Harper-Schmidt fellowship at the University of Chicago (2009-11), I took up a Leverhulme fellowship at UCL and subsequently taught at Queen Mary University of London. I joined the History Department at the University of Sheffield in September 2015.

My work in intellectual history has centred on the relationship between republicanism, ideas of Europe, and global thought, mostly in relation to twentieth-century German intellectual milieus. My forthcoming book, *European Elites and Ideas of Empire, 1917-57*, explores the connections between ideas of Europe and imperial memory in elite and transnational intellectual contexts. In terms of approach, my interests in political thought lie at the intersection between intellectual and cultural history, including problems such as emotional contagion and the circulation of memory in multilingual intellectual communities. Looking at periodicals and correspondence networks as repositories of past conversations, I am interested in the emergence of joint and pseudonymous authorship, as well as multilingual and non-textual representations of political ideas and emotions, including the writing of, and about, works of music and

the visual arts as acts of political thought. Aside from thinkers such as Ernst Cassirer, Oswald Spengler, Norbert Elias, Max Weber, and the Frankfurt School, I therefore pay considerable attention to the minor authors of this period.

My new project deals with mid-twentieth century European thought on citizenship and social status, and the experience of denationalisation during the two World Wars. The discussion of Weber is related to the first stage of research, which involves studying wartime representations of imperial decline and denationalisation among social theorists of German, Austrian, and Jewish background. One of the larger themes in this regard is the significance of expired, suspended, and diminished forms citizenship as a problem for wartime democracies in contexts comprising various postwar settlements, intergovernmental population exchanges, and the internment of 'enemy aliens'.

Selected bibliography:

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'Jazz anxiety and the European fear of cultural change. Towards a transnational history of a political emotion', in *Cultural History* (forthcoming, April 2016).

'The Prophet as a perfume: Spenglerianism in European and American modernism' [in German, 'Der Prophet als Parfum: Das Spenglersche am europäischen und amerikanischen Modernismus'], *Zeitschrift für Weltgeschichte [Journal of World History]*, Issue 2 (2014).

'Noble Continent? German-speaking nobles as theorists of European identity in the interwar period', in Mark Hewitson and Matthew D'Auria (Eds.), *European Crisis. Intellectuals and the European Idea, 1917-1957* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn, 2012).

'Concepts of culture and technology in Germany, 1916 - 1933: Ernst Cassirer and Oswald Spengler', in *Journal of European Studies*, 36 (March 2006).