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EDITED BY

PETER LASSMAN

University of Birmingham

AND

RONALD SPEIRS

University of Birmingham

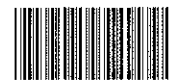
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Suffrage and Democracy in Germany¹

The complex and many-faceted problem of democracy will be dealt with in this paper only as it affects the situation at the present moment *here in Germany*. We shall go straight into the topic without further ado and without reflections of a general kind.

As is generally known, the present franchise for elections to the Reichstag was introduced by Bismarck for purely demagogic reasons in his famous ultimatum to the Frankfurt Federal Diet when he championed this principle in the face of grave reservations from the liberals of the time. His motives had to do partly with foreign policy objectives, and partly with the domestic political aim of realising his Caesarist ambitions in defiance of the (at that time) recalcitrant middle classes. Admittedly, his hopes that the masses would respond conservatively were disappointed, but the splitting of precisely those social strata which are so characteristic of the structure of modern society into two classes existing in close proximity and hence in hostility to one another (the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) later made it possible (as Prince Hohenlohe observed) to exploit the *cowardice* (Hohenlohe called it 'timidity') of the bourgeoisie in the face of 'democracy' and thereby preserve the rule of the bureaucracy.² This cowardice is still having its effects today. The fact that it was perfectly possible to be a democrat

and yet to reject Lassalle's³ enthusiasm for that form of franchise under the circumstances of the time, is evident, for example, from the position taken by Eduard Bernstein⁴ in his introduction to Lassalle's writings. Considered purely in terms of national politics (*staatspolitisch*), one could very well ask whether there was not some advantage for the internal and external consolidation of the new Reich during the first few decades of its existence in having voting arrangements which gave rather more privileges to those sections of society which were economically and socially prominent and (at that time) politically educated, more or less along the lines of the previous franchise arrangements in England. In particular, this might have made it easier to accustom people to responsible participation in the work of parliament. We do not wish to engage here in doctrinaire 'suffrage orthodoxy', but the example of Austria under Count Taaffe shows that all bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) parties kept in power solely by electoral privileges can no longer leave the weapon of threatening equal suffrage in the hands of officialdom, without this weapon being turned against those parties whenever there is a serious threat to bureaucratic power interests. The German middle-class parties would have experienced exactly the same thing at Bismarck's hands if they had rejected equal suffrage. And the example of Hungary teaches us that even where a politically astute ruling nationality has the most powerful interests in opposing equal suffrage this will not permanently prevent the competing political parties of that nationality from using the slogan of equal suffrage in their struggle with one another, thereby giving currency to the idea and ultimately leading to its introduction. It is not by chance that political opportunities keep presenting themselves at which the topic gets raised. However things may be elsewhere, there can be no doubt that in Germany since Bismarck's day no other form of suffrage can ever again be the *outcome* of disputes about suffrage. Whereas other questions of suffrage (e.g. proportional representation), although of great political importance, are felt to be 'technicalities', the issue of equal suffrage is felt, subjectively, to be such a purely political one that it *must* be settled once and for all if we are to avoid sterile conflicts. This alone is crucial as far as national politics are concerned. Yet 4 August 1914 and the

¹ *Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland* (Berlin-Schöneberg, 1917). This was first published in brochure form as the second in a series entitled 'Der deutsche Volksstaat. Schriften zur inneren Politik' ('German Democracy. Writings on domestic politics').

² A reference to a remark made by Prince Chlodwig zu Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst to Bismarck in 1878 concerning the draft of his anti-socialist legislation.

³ F. Lassalle (1825-64), one of the founders of German social democracy and of the labour movement.

⁴ E. Bernstein (1850-1932), a leader of the 'revisionist' wing in German socialism.

days that followed it also demonstrated that this form of suffrage will prove its worth when put to a decisive political test, provided people understand how to govern with it and have the good will to do so. It would function just as well *permanently* if equal voting rights imposed on the elected the responsibility of *persons with a real share and say in the power of the state*. Democratic parties which *share in government* are bearers of nationalism everywhere.

It is only natural that nationalism should be spreading amongst the masses in particular in an age that is becoming increasingly democratic in the way it provides access to the goods of national culture, the bearer of which is, after all, the *language* of the nation. Even the truly modest measure of actual, and precarious, participation conceded to the representatives of radical democracy in Germany during the war was sufficient to persuade them to place themselves at the service of objective (*sachlich*) national politics – in stark contrast to the plutocrats in the Prussian Diet who could actually think of nothing better to do in the third year of the war than to discuss a bill proposing the *ennoblement of war profits*.⁵ Instead of making available new agricultural land in the east of Germany – and we could supply the men for ten army corps from new peasant smallholdings – German soil was to be handed over, behind the backs of the fighting army, to feed the vanity of a new plutocracy grown rich from the war, by creating on it fee-entailed estates for men ambitious to attain the patent of nobility. This fact alone is sufficient criticism of the class-based franchise.⁶

The inner untenability of this form of franchise and of all those which operate in a similar manner is in any case perfectly obvious. If the Prussian three-class structure were to remain in operation the entire mass of the returning *fighting men* would find itself in the lowest class, bereft of influence, whereas membership of the privileged classes would fall to *those who stayed at home* – to those who had

⁵ Weber had argued against this proposal in his article 'Die Nobilitierung der Kriegsgewinne' (itself the second part of 'Deutschlands äußere und Preußens innere Politik'), published in the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, 1 March 1917 and reprinted in Weber, *Gesamtausgabe* 115, pp. 206–14.

⁶ A reference to the electoral system in operation for the Prussian House of Deputies since 1849. This divided the electorate into three classes on the basis of the amount of tax paid and distributed the suffrage accordingly, with each class electing one third of the delegates (*Wahlmänner*) for each electoral district. The intended result was to favour the interests of those with property. Given the dominant position of Prussia in the *Bundesrat* relative to other states, this arrangement had important consequences for the politics of the Reich.

meanwhile fallen heir to the jobs or clients of the fighting men, to those who had grown rich in or through the war or who had at least been spared by it, to those whose existing or newly acquired property had been defended with the blood of the men who had fought in the field and who had been politically declassed by the war. Certainly, politics is not an ethical business. But there does nevertheless exist a certain minimum of shame and obligation to behave decently which cannot be violated with impunity, even in politics.

What other form of suffrage could replace this class-based one? All manner of plural voting rights are very popular with the *littérateurs*. But which is it to be? Should people with families, say, be privileged by granting them additional votes? The lowest strata of the proletariat and peasants on the poorest soil, in fact all strata with the weakest economic prospects, marry earliest and have the greatest number of children. Or should 'education' – the fondest dream of the *littérateurs* – be the basis? There is no doubt that educational difference is nowadays the most important difference giving rise to true social '*estates*' (*Stände*), in contrast to the stratifying effect of possessions and economic function (which create differences of *class*). It is essentially the social prestige of education that enables the modern officer to assert his authority at the front or enables the modern official to do so within the social community. However much one may regret the fact, differences of 'education' are one of the very strongest social barriers which operate in a purely inward way. This is particularly true of Germany, where almost all privileged positions within and outside the public service are tied not only to a qualification in some *specialised* area of knowledge but also to 'general education' (*Bildung*), an objective served by the entire school and university system. All our examination diplomas attest above all to the fact that an individual is in possession of this important attribute of social *status*. Education could, then, be the basis for structuring the franchise. But which degree of education? Should political 'maturity' be attested by the university doctorate-factories or by the middle-school leaving certificate, or perhaps by the certificate reducing military service to just one year?⁷ The numerical differences involved in each of these cases would be enormous, and politically quite peculiar results

⁷ During the war it was possible to leave school with a leaving certificate after completing only part of the final course of study, provided one volunteered for one year's military service.

could flow from the third and numerically most significant option if it were used as the basis of an entitlement to multiple votes. Above all, however, we must ask whether further privileges ought really to be given to the *examination* diploma to which the bulk of all offices are handed over in any case, and thus to the stratum, with all its social pretensions, that is qualified thereby. Should power over the state be put in the hands of the certificated candidates for office with their hunger for prebends, whose numbers now greatly exceed demand thanks to competition amongst the universities for student numbers and the social ambitions of parents for their children? What does *political* 'maturity' have to do with a doctorate in physics or philosophy or philology? Every entrepreneur or trade union leader, men who are made acutely aware of the structure of the state every day through their participation in the free fight for economic life,⁸ knows more about politics than a man for whom the state is simply the payments-office from which, thanks to his educational qualifications, he receives a secure, pensionable income commensurate with his social status.

Or should we introduce a '*middle-class franchise*' – one of the favourite intellectual offspring of all short-sighted 'law and order philistines' by privileging, say, the proprietors of 'independent' businesses and the like. Quite apart from the fact that this too would put *those who stayed at home* at an advantage over the fighting men, what would it mean for the 'spirit' of German politics in the future?

At present, only *three* of the economic determinants of Germany's future can be predicted with any certainty. Firstly, there is a need for economic work to be enormously *intensified* and *rationalised* – not so as to make German life rich and glittering, but simply in order to make life at all *possible* for the masses in our country. In view of the iron-hard spring that peace will bring us, it is a crime for the *littérateurs*, of whatever persuasion, to claim that the German 'will to work' is the nation's original sin and to propose a more 'easy-going' way of life as an ideal for the future. These are the *parasitic ideals* of a stratum of prebendaries and *rentiers* who have the impertinence to judge the hard daily struggle of their fellow citizens who are engaged in physical and mental work against standards dreamed up at their

⁸ Weber is still using the Darwinian language of the 'struggle for existence' first found in his inaugural lecture (p. 2 above).

writing-desks. While these *littérateurs* may childishly imagine that Germany will enjoy as a fruit of the war the 'blessing' of a return to the contented work of the good old days, reality will look very different, as is clear from the second incontestable fact about the future, namely that the war will bestow on us *new rentiers* with capital amounting to 100,000 million marks. Even before the war the statistical rise in the relative numbers of pure *rentiers* had become worryingly large in a nation dependent on its ability to compete with the great working nations of the world. The citizens working in the economy will have to provide the unearned income for this enormously swollen stratum in society. In part, the transformation is evident from the growth of vast new paper fortunes, and partly from the way existing fortunes are being transformed by subscriptions to public bonds. For what does it *mean* when someone with a fortune now holds it in state securities in his bank deposit rather than in equities (that is shares in private enterprises)? Formally speaking, he is a '*rentier*' in both cases, someone whose income the banks provide when they snip off his dividend coupon. Formerly, however, when his income was produced by share certificates, it meant that hard, demanding *work* had been done somewhere, in a firm's accounts room or management office (places of intellectual work which is as good as, and often better than, that done in any academic's study), or in the machine-rooms of factories where commercial and technical managers, officer-workers, master-craftsmen and workmen are busy producing goods to satisfy an existing mass demand, creating men's pay and bread, all this as perfectly or imperfectly as the present economic order (which will be with us for a long time to come) permits. What the shares-dividend 'proves' is that men have fought and won a battle for a share of the market, a fight in which the managers' social and economic rank and power were at stake, as were the jobs at which the office and factory workers earned their bread. If, by contrast, the investor now receives his interest from state bonds this means that the tax-collector or exciseman or some such official has succeeded in extracting the money from the pockets of those obliged to pay taxes and has been paid for his efforts, and that the prescribed work in state offices has been duly performed in accordance with regulations and instructions. Of course *both* forms of work have to be done, work for the state and work in private industry. But it is as plain as can be that the whole economic and political future

of Germany, the basic living standards of the masses and the provision of the means for 'cultural needs' depend in the first instance on there being no reduction in the intensity of productive economic work in Germany, and on the German nation experiencing no further expansion than has already taken place of what one might call the *rentier-mentality*, the typical mental attitude to economic life of the petit bourgeois and peasant strata in France. For this would mean the economic paralysis of Germany and an even more rapid spread than at present of the two-child family. It would also give rise to another feature of conditions in France, namely dependence on the banks. The ignorance of the *littérateurs* who do not recognise the difference between the *unearned fortune* of the coupon-cutting investor and the *productive capital* of the entrepreneur, and who show as much *ressentiment* towards the latter as they do covetous benevolence towards the former, have heard something of the role played in France's parliamentary regime by 'finance capital', both in regulations of a material kind (taxes) and in the selection of ministers, and they think of course that this is a consequence of the 'parliamentarism' they fear. In truth, however, it results from the fact that France is a nation of *rentiers*, that the *credit-worthiness of whatever government is in power*, as expressed in the stock-market value of government bonds, is the single most important question for the millions of small and medium-sized investors in assessing the worth of ministers, and that *this* is the reason why the banks are so often involved in, or are even consulted about, the selection of ministers. Every government would be bound to take account of their views, regardless of whether it was monarchic or parliamentary or plebiscitarian, in exactly the same way as did a debtor state such as Tsarist Russia in 1905, which first wrote its 'constitution' and then carried out a 'coup d'état', and did so in each case because these things were demanded by the mood on the foreign stock-exchanges supplying the state with credit. Any progressive extension here of state-financed activities⁹ funded by issuing state bonds, and particularly any growth in the numbers of medium and small investors in such securities, would have exactly the same consequences here, regardless of whether we have 'democracy', 'parliamentarism' or 'monarchic' government. The relation of the *English*

⁹ The word used by Weber is *Verstaatlichung* which often equates to the English 'nationalisation'. Here, however, Weber is referring to the various arguments current at the time for state direction of industry rather than for socialism in the strict sense.

state to capitalism, by contrast, was primarily a relation with *entrepreneurial* capitalism (*Erwerbskapitalismus*) which served to spread England's power and people across the face of the earth. It is a weighty question in its own right to know which measures of financial policy could be introduced in Germany at present in order to shed the suffocating burden of *interest payments* on government issues while yet doing justice to the claims and expectations of subscribers. In the area of economic policy, at any rate, the maximum rationalisation of economic work, giving economic rewards to rational economies in production, in other words to 'progress' in this technical-economic sense – whether one loves it or hates it – is a question of vital importance, not only for the position of the nation in the world but simply to enable the nation to have any kind of tolerable existence at all. Thus it is a compelling political necessity for us to grant to those who are the bearers of this rational work at least that minimum level of political influence which only *equal* voting rights can give them. On this one essential issue, the *rationalisation* of the economy, the interests of the workers and those of the entrepreneurs occupying the *highest* organisational positions, despite all their social antagonisms, are identical; and both sets of interests are identical with the political interest in maintaining the nation's position in the world, if not in every detail then at least in principle, and they are diametrically opposed to the interests of all those strata in society who live from prebends and all those spokesmen for economic stagnation who share the same outlook. It seems to be high time for the influence of those strata to be brought to bear on something which has perhaps already been so fundamentally mismanaged as to cast a shadow over our future. For the third, completely certain prospect for the future is that our economy will be a 'transitional' one for years to come, with rationing of raw materials, the allocation of international currency, and possibly even of firms themselves and their clients. It is clear that this can be a unique opportunity *either* to *rationalise* the economy *or*, conversely, for a host of 'middle class' (*mittelständlerische*) experiments in the worst conceivable sense of this almost universally misused word. By using a system of state rationing and related devices it would be possible to subsidise all manner of 'independent' mendicant existences, a mass of beggarly but comfortable existences behind a *shop counter*, the ideal of every small capitalist. This would result in the very opposite of an intensified and rationalised economy. It would

breed parasites and layabouts, bearers of that 'leisurely' way of life which our *littérateurs* regard as the ideal for the future. What would this mean? It would mean the '*Austrianisation*' of Germany, and would do so precisely in relation to the very thing that the Austrians themselves regard as the main source of everything they call 'slovenliness' in their own country. For, though we can learn much from them in the areas of good taste and social education, we would not have the slightest reason to be grateful if we were to emulate their 'policy on the middle classes', the wondrous fruits of which can be studied in fat volumes recording decisions on questions such as whether putting nails into a chair is the work of an upholsterer or a joiner. The danger that something similar might happen here is not inconsiderable, for there are undoubtedly politicians in influential circles today who are incorrigibly of the opinion that the foundations of what they call 'monarchic convictions' (*Gesinnung*) could best be laid on the stinking swamp of laziness and slovenliness that such a policy would create, that beery complacency which would do nothing to challenge the power of the *bureaucracy* and the forces of economic reaction. If one imagines electoral privileges being granted to those strata which a policy of this kind would like to breed, the effects are easy to foresee: it would *paralyse* Germany, both politically and economically. If *anyone* wants to see this paralysis come about for some positive religious or ultimate metaphysical reason, let him confess it openly. One should *not*, however, want this simply out of craven *cowardice in the face of democracy*. Yet precisely this kind of cowardice, the fear that the legitimacy of existing property and social positions will be undermined, is the central motive for doing so at the moment.

To the amateurish pipe-dreams constantly being produced by the instincts of German *littérateurs* belong all those non-ideas which circulate under the label of an 'assembly based on *occupational corporations*' (*berufsständische Vertretung*).¹⁰ These ideas are connected with all sorts of confused notions about the future of our economic organ-

¹⁰ The idea of political representation based upon 'occupational corporations' (*berufsständische Vertretung*) as an alternative to parliamentary government had much support throughout the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century both in Germany and in other parts of Europe, where it often went under the name of 'corporatism'. Weber is probably referring to the contemporary ideas of, among others, W. Rathenau and W. von Moellendorf.

isation. It will be recalled that even the way accident insurance was organised in occupational cooperatives gave rise to (and partly originated in) the expectation amongst influential circles of *littérateurs* that this was the first step towards an 'organically structured' national economy; the reader may also be aware of what became of this. Today some people even expect that the economic organisations of the future, which will be mainly governed by considerations of finance and currency policy, will slay the dragon of '*capitalism*', the father of everything evil and source of all unrest. Some people are childish enough to imagine that the 'communal economy', the 'economy based on solidarity', the 'cooperative economy', and such-like slogans, which emerged during the war and from the compulsory organisations to which it gave rise, will be the forerunners of a fundamental change of 'economic principle' (*Wirtschaftsgesinnung*) in the future that will resurrect the lost 'economic morality' of the past at some higher, 'organic' stage of development. What makes anyone who is familiar with the reality of these matters so impatient with these *littérateurs* is, above all, their profound ignorance of the nature of capitalism. The least offensive example of this is their failure, in their blissful ignorance, to see any difference between the war profits of the Krupp concern and those of some little black-marketeer in malt, since both, as they say, are products of 'capitalism' after all. Much more significant is the fact that they have not the faintest idea of the gulf of difference separating the kind of capitalism which lives from some momentary, purely *political* conjuncture – from government contracts, financing wars, black-market profiteering, from all the opportunities for profit and robbery, the gains and risks involved in adventurism, all of which increased enormously during the war – and the calculation of profitability that is characteristic of the bourgeois *rational conduct of business* (*Betrieb*) in peacetime. As far as the *littérateurs* are concerned, what actually happens in the accounts office of this type of business is a book with seven seals. They do not know that the underlying 'principles' – or 'ethics', if this term is preferred – of these two different types of capitalism are as mutually opposed as it is possible for two mental and moral forces to be. They have not the slightest inkling that one of them, the 'robber capitalism' tied completely to politics, is as ancient as all the military states known to us, while the other is a specific product of modern European man.

If one *wants* to make ethical distinctions (and that is at least possible here), the peculiar situation is as follows: the brazen¹¹ casing (*Gehäuse*) which gives economic work its present stamp and fate was created and is maintained precisely by the – in terms of personal business *ethics* (*Geschäftsethik*) highest *rational* – capitalist *operational ethics* (*Betriebsethik*) of this second type of ‘capitalism’, the ethics of professional duty and professional honour, which, generally speaking, stand far above the average economic ethics which have *really* existed in *any* historical age (as opposed to those which have merely been *preached* by philosophers and *littérateurs*). Of course, the fate and character of economic life will be determined increasingly and irrevocably by this rigid casing if the *opposition* between state bureaucracy and the bureaucracy of private capitalism is replaced by a system of bringing firms under ‘communal control’ by a *unitary* bureaucracy to which the workers will be subordinated and which would no longer be counterbalanced by anything outside itself. Let us consider this opposition further. The bearer of the specifically modern form of capitalism as an *inescapable system* ruling the economy and thereby people’s everyday fate was *not* profits made on the infamous principle that, ‘you can’t make millions without your sleeve brushing against the prison wall’; rather, it was precisely that type of profitability which is achieved by adopting the maxim, ‘honesty is the best policy’.¹² Has any of those prolix ideologues who dream of an ethic of economic solidarity ever looked behind the curtains of our ‘communal wartime economy’ and seen what effect it actually had on the ‘instinct for gain’ it was supposedly going to stifle. A wild dance around the Golden Calf, gamblers grabbing at every chance opportunity escaping

through the pores of that bureaucratic system, the loss of every standard for *any* kind of business-ethical distinctions and inhibitions, and an iron compulsion forcing everybody, including even the most conscientious businessman, either to join in and howl with the hyenas on this unique Golgotha of *all* economic ethics – or else be punished with economic destruction. It was exactly as it has always been, although on a much more monstrous scale, whenever the chances of capitalist gain followed the footsteps of the god of war or of Blessed Saint Bureaucracy. It will take generations before the after-effects of this decay of the normal bourgeois-capitalist ethos have been *eradicated* – yet this is supposed to be the basis of a new economic ethics? It will take our best efforts to get back to the level of the *old* ethics before we do anything else! But all this is just an aside.

The war economy will be followed by the formation of massive, rational *single-purpose associations* (*Zweckverbände*).¹³ But we shall certainly not see relationships of community (*Gemeinschaft*)¹⁴ which have grown ‘organically’ on the soil of natural or primary *inward* human relations, nor shall we see social formations of that inward quality which, to varying degrees, was characteristic of the family, the clan, the parish, feudal relationships or those with the local landlord, or in guilds, corporations, even the fraternities of estates in the Middle Ages. Anyone still unaware of the difference between these things and *all* modern, rational purposive associations should learn his sociological ABC before troubling the book-market with the products of his vanity. The fact that individuals would be bound to belong not just to one but often to many such formations simultaneously would admittedly mean that any system of voting rights based on such groups could not have the character of a ‘popular assembly’ (*Volksvertretung*), but this would not in itself condemn this form of

¹¹ Here the metaphor of *Gehäuse* (see ‘Constitutional Democracy’, note 57) has been complicated by the addition of the adjective *chern*. As this means ‘made of bronze or brass’ or ‘made of iron’, it appears that *Gehäuse* is now being used in the sense of another kind of housing, that of the protective casing around a piece of machinery. Thus the metaphorical sense is that the rational conduct of modern business creates a rigid structure in which work is carried out in a mechanical fashion. Matters are complicated further by the fact that *chern*, in its metaphorical use, has a number of connotations. In the sense of ‘hard’, ‘unyielding’ or ‘merciless’, *chern* is frequently used in German in conjunction with *Gesetz* (‘law’), *Notwendigkeit* (‘necessity’) and *Schicksal* (‘fate’), while ‘das ehernen Zeitalter’ of ancient tradition (Hesiod, Aratos) marked a decline from the Golden and Silver Ages of mankind. Both sets of connotations accord with Weber’s analysis of the modern age as one in which rationality becomes men’s fate, obliging them to live in a ‘disenchanted’ world.

¹² ‘honesty is the best policy’ is in English.

¹³ *Zweckverbände* are organisations which bring together various groups or communities to undertake major projects such as transport planning or the building of schools or canals or to pursue common interests. The legislation governing such organisations was being extended in Germany from 1910 onwards.

¹⁴ Weber is ridiculing the idea of an emotionally cohesive national community and strongly integrated economy, the possibility of which was thought to have been demonstrated during the war. Weber mentions such terms as *Gemeinwirtschaft*, *Solidaritätswirtschaft*, and *Genossenschaftswirtschaft*. The classic locus for the formulation of the contrast between *Gemeinschaft* (irrationally or ‘organically’ founded community) and *Gesellschaft* (rationally or ‘mechanically’ constructed society) is the work of F. Tönnies, *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Abhandlung des Communismus und des Socialismus als empirischer Kulturformen* (Leipzig, 1887).

franchise to being sheer 'nonsense'. It would simply be an 'assembly representing interests' (*Interessenvertretung*); similar things have existed in the past. But you only have to begin to attempt a grouping of the typical figures of a modern economy along 'occupational' lines, such that the groups produced thereby could be used as electoral bodies for a general assembly representing the *people*, in order to find yourself face to face with complete nonsense. Firstly, there would simply be no room at all for the actual 'leaders' of the economic system. To which of the dozens of available 'occupations' should one assign Messrs Stinnes, Thyssen, Krupp von Bohlen, Count Henckel-Donnersmarck, von Mendelssohn and Rathenau, the members of the *Discontogesellschaft*¹⁵ who bear full personal liability – or should perhaps all of these people be brought together in a single electoral corporation of 'giant businessmen'? And what about general managers like Kirdorf, Hugenberg and the like – should they be distributed amongst the 'management officials' of the individual 'occupations', or what is to become of them? This is how things are from the very top of the capitalist system right down to the bottom. It is impossible to put into *materially* appropriate categories precisely those people who are really the most important helmsmen of economic life today, right down to the wholesaler and the works manager. One would have to find some universal, *formal* characteristic in order to draw dividing lines between the electoral corporations, which would however flatly contradict the material, economic *meaning* (*Sinn*) of the occupational position in question in hundreds of ways, given the economic conditions prevailing today. What distinguishes our modern economy from one tied to social 'estates' is precisely the fact that you can almost *never* deduce from the outward position a person holds the economic *function* he performs, so that not even the most detailed occupational statistics can tell us the slightest thing about the inner structure of the economy. Just as one cannot tell just by looking at a beautifully landscaped hereditary estate the extent to which it has been mortgaged, you cannot tell from appearances what the proprietor of a shop is in economic terms; he could be the owner of a shop which is a branch of a larger business, the employee or tied client of an economic power (such as a brewery), a genuinely independent

retailer or whatever. Nor can you tell whether an 'independent tradesman' is a homemaker, a sub-contractor, an independent small capitalist or a commissioned master craftsman. And these are just the simplest cases! It is sheer political infantilism for our *littérateurs* to keep indulging in the fond notion that this would be the way to give 'open' and hence 'honest' expression 'within the circle of one's professional colleagues'¹⁶ to the power of material interests which today exercise their influence 'covertly' in parliamentary elections. There are thousands of strings which capitalist powers could pull in order to make not just 'independent' small traders and craftsmen, but also the independent manufacturer dance to their tune at elections – quite apart from the fact that every such attempt at drawing dividing-lines between different occupations would have to be undertaken on the shifting sands of constantly changing operational units, trends in production and workforce, all of which are radically restructured in response to every new machine or market opening. For these purely economic reasons there is nothing objectively more untruthful than the attempt to create '*organic*' structures (in the sense of the old social estates) as electoral corporations in the political sphere in an age of constant technical and commercial restructuring and the progressive growth of economic and social ties based on *single-purpose associations*. Wherever suffrage experiments on the basis of occupational 'estates' have been attempted – in Austria recently and in Bulygin's franchise for the Russian Duma – it was necessary to create quite crude, formal categories. In Austria this resulted in a deeply corrupt parliament which can claim as its only honour to have been the first to invent procedural obstruction; in Russia it produced the buds of revolution. Yet in neither case was political influence given to the representatives of the truly important powers in the economic world today, and certainly not 'openly'. In addition to the fact that such an institution is not adapted to the constantly changing structure of the modern economy, purely political interests would cut across occupational interests. Supposedly realistic but misconceived projects such as those we have just been considering always fail utterly to recognise the autonomous operation of political interests. The result would not be to base parliamentary representation on the 'open' per-

¹⁵ The *Discontogesellschaft* was founded in 1851 in Berlin. It became an enormously powerful finance house supplying capital, often in conjunction with large banks, for the creation of new banks.

¹⁶ The term Weber uses, *Berufsgenossen*, is emotionally more loaded than its English equivalent and carries the suggestion of precisely that type of comradely solidarity which, he claims, is no longer characteristic of modern society.

ception of the 'natural' interests of the various occupations, internally united in solidarity; rather, the result would be to fracture professional solidarity even further by introducing party-political divisions. Even now we can see political parties struggling for power in municipal authorities, cooperatives, sickness insurance schemes, and so on – in other words, in every possible kind of social formation. This has often been regretted. We do not wish to include in our discussion the various aspects of this far from simple problem of organisational politics. But one thing is apparent: wherever one finds the rule of ballot slips and electioneering, the *political* parties as such are already predisposed to become the bearers of the struggle, for the simple reason that they have at their disposal the necessary political apparatus. If one now imagines these corporations based on occupational interests having to cast their votes via their delegates on questions of national politics and culture, it is clear what the outcome would be. If, by raising such associations to the status of bodies electing the parliament, political divisions were to be carried over into organised interest groups (whose proper function is to deal with *substantive* issues on which all the members of the association share the same interest), the first, inevitable consequence would be this: the struggle of purely economic interests would be bound to create for itself new organs *alongside* the framework (*Gehäuse*) of these electoral corporations. The boxes into which votes were counted would strive in vain to encompass the reality of economic life. Of course the struggle of economic interests would have an impact on these corporations, as on all other electoral bodies. But it would be directed much more towards naked *individual* relationships based on force (indebtedness, clientele), as opposed to long-term class relations, than is the case today when vested interests finance and influence the electoral contest between the parties. At the same time this influence would be much more hidden. For if such a complicated voting structure were to exist, who could trace the relationships of dependence between a formally 'independent' small trader or craftsman and some capitalist power, or track down the influence exercised by the pressure of such capitalist powers on the political attitudes of those dependent on them? The severity of dependency as such would increase, since those affected could now be checked up on very reliably by their *rivals* in the electoral corporations. When herded together in such electoral corporations, the supposed bearers of 'professional solidar-

ity' would be set at one another's throats by denunciations and boycotts. These occupational corporations would no longer only have *professional* interests to secure, for the result of electoral contests within the corporations would determine *how the prebends and offices of the state were to be filled*. Have the well-intentioned but technically incompetent people who advocate *this* system realised what the outcome would be? Enough of this. We have only mentioned these childish literary soap-bubbles here because they invite us to make clear our position on yet another general problem.

After all, organised interest groups as the bearers of rights of representation *already exist* at present, both here and elsewhere. Firstly, as advisers to the bureaucracy: agricultural, trade and craft chambers and in future probably workers' chambers,¹⁷ as well as railway boards and the like. But these very examples can teach us what a formal occupational organisation nowadays does *not* achieve. Or does anyone imagine that these official corporations could ever *replace* the 'League of Agriculturists', the 'Central Confederation of Industrialists', or even the employers' organisations or the trades unions? Where does one *really* find the pulsing 'life' of occupationally organised common interests? Equally, we already *have* within our legislative machinery corporations which are at least partially constituted along occupational lines – the 'Upper Chambers' (*Erste Kammern*). Predominantly it is the associations of landowners of a particular social stamp ('old established land-ownership') who send their representatives to them, as well as chambers of commerce, some particularly large municipalities and also universities; perhaps in the future even chambers of tradesmen and workers will also be represented there. This method of representing interests may be terribly rough-and-ready but it just about suffices for these political purposes. Our politically infantile *littérateurs* imagine that it must be possible, by increasing the numbers and specialisation of such rights of representation, to turn these upper houses into parliaments in which every citizen would be represented as a member of the organic circles in which he lives and works – as was (allegedly) once the case in the *Ständestaat*.¹⁸ We shall say

¹⁷ The 'chambers' referred to here were bodies elected by the members of some social group for its self-governance. A craft chamber, for example, supervised the apprenticeship system, organised examinations and maintained specialist training colleges.

¹⁸ The *Ständestaat* existed in German territories from the end of the Middle Ages until around 1800. It was based on a division of powers between the monarch and the 'estates' (clergy, nobility, burghers).

something about this *Ständestaat* later. At present the upper chambers, which we now want to consider briefly, are (in theory, but usually not in truth) places for the expression of the political views partly of notables, partly of those strata with interests which, for traditional reasons, are considered of particular importance purely from the point of view of national politics, and this means above all the views of propertied people and particular professions valued highly in society. Although this is not always the case in fact, the 'idea' is usually that such people are *not* selected in the light of party-political considerations. From this follows the crucial feature of the natural position of this kind of 'upper house' in the state. Wherever its position is correctly ordered in political terms, this body *lacks* at least the right to its own budget, this being the foundation on which the power of an assembly representing the *people* rests. In other respects its legal position, viewed politically, is as follows: it is an authority which may object to, criticise, return for further discussion, cancel and delay, or even amend decisions of the representatives of the people, but, regardless of whether it has the formal *right* to do so, it *cannot* permanently block the will of an unquestionably strong majority in the popular assembly on some important political question, on pain of losing its formal rights (as in England at present) or of an enlargement of the peerage (as in Prussia in 1873).¹⁹ This latter provision is a safety-valve which can never be removed without political risk, although all upper houses protest against it out of a desire for power, and the Prussian House of Lords will undoubtedly seize the opportunity provided by electoral reform to attempt to have this right of the Crown abolished and possibly claim the right to a budget. This would lead to the most severe crises and dangers, for it would mean the *continuance of the class system of suffrage*, except that it would now be divided between *two* bodies whose conflicts would expand into crises for the state. Let us hope that this is not attempted.

The influence of upper houses can be very significant, even if their formal rights are restricted, or indeed precisely because this is so. But however their membership is composed, they have absolutely nothing to do with a representative assembly of the people. In theory they provide a counterbalance to party rule. In practice one has to

¹⁹ Weber is referring to the Parliament Act of 1911 in England and to Bismarck's enlargement of the Prussian Upper House in 1873, designed to introduce to the peerage individuals more sympathetic to government policy.

admit that they are often of questionable political usefulness and lacking in intellectual distinction; the Prussian House of Lords is the only 'legislative' body that believes it needs a *criminal judge* to enforce the respect to which it lays claim. Upper houses nowadays could certainly be genuine forums for *individual* political eloquence. In fact they are all too often places of superfluous chatter. No doubt speeches in the Prussian House of Lords are much more polished and 'distinguished' pieces of oratory than one hears in the Reichstag, but who would want to spend his time reading those speeches? Yet a *council of state debating matters in public* – for this is what a properly constructed upper house is intended to do – could perform an undeniably valuable service, particularly in a parliamentary state, as a place where political thinking which is *not tied to any party*, and political intelligence which *holds no office* but has the experience of office behind it – the experience in office of *former statesmen* – address the party-political leadership of the day. Admittedly, very few such institutions in their present form actually fulfil this purpose.

In a democratic state (*Volksstaat*)²⁰ an upper chamber can either – as in the democracies overseas – be a body which is also elected on the basis of equal suffrage, but by a different electoral *procedure*, so that it acts as a corrective to the inevitable imperfections which all *electoral systems* have. Or it can be an assembly in which the *intelligentsia with proven abilities* in politics, administration, the economy, scholarship and technology are represented. In this case, however, it can only be a *consultative* body with powers to criticise and *cancel* legislation by means of a 'veto of suspension'. *Formally* it can therefore only be a chamber with *lesser* rights. It would be *politically* desirable for the representatives of occupational interest groups in any case only to have a place in such upper houses *alongside* the representatives, firstly of the *intelligentsia* in national political life and secondly of cultural political *education*. It would therefore include, for example, *all* retiring ministers and mayors of large cities, as well as the representatives of institutions which are important for cultural-political reasons (elected representatives of school teachers, university teachers, artists,²¹ journalists). At all events the question of the future composition of such bodies is not so unimportant as people here tend

²⁰ *Volksstaat*, meaning a state ruled by the people, is modelled on the Greek *demokratia*.

²¹ 'Artists' (*Künstler*) was added to this list in the second printing (1918). We have assumed that this and certain other small changes were made on Weber's authority.

to believe simply because, unfortunately, these bodies are mostly only constructed today to serve as a form of mechanical brake on the 'dangers' of democracy and in order to mollify cowardly philistines (*Spießbürger*) (whatever their social position).²² However, we do not want to be sidetracked into a discussion of this problem here.

Our present question is simply *why* the corporations of interests organised by the state, like the chambers of commerce which Eugen Richter used to attack so vehemently, and all bodies constructed on similar lines, in fact *fail* so completely to function as channels for the living stream of economic interests, when compared with the vitality of the real economic *interest groups* (*Interessenverbände*). On the other hand, why are they also, when compared with the *parties*, so utterly incapable of encapsulating political life? Is this fortuitous? It certainly does not come about by chance: it is the *consequence* of the fact that the parties on the one hand and the interest groups on the other are both *based* on the legally *free* recruitment of their adherents, whereas the bodies formed by the state are *not*. As a result of this structure the parties and interest groups are suitable organisations for *fighting* and *compromise*, whereas the state bodies, as a result of their structure are suited to the *expression* of expert opinion on matters of fact or to purely 'routine' peaceful administration. Unfortunately, however, the German enthusiasm for 'organisation' always understands by this word only compulsory organisation regulated by the police in the name of authority. Our littérateurs like to regard organisations founded on free, independent initiative ('voluntary' organisations) as being actually illegitimate, or at best as merely provisional arrangements, destined to be subsumed at some point in an organisation under police regulation, regardless of the possibility that the essential character of such organisations makes them capable only of being structured on a voluntary basis. That is their central error.

One of the congenital follies of our amateur political littérateurs is the desire to 'prepare a system with words', that is with the paragraphs of a statute to be drawn up by them, even if all the preconditions for such a system are absent. From a political point of view, the official organisations representing occupational groups – right up to any upper house composed of representatives of occupations – are forma-

tions intended to have their utterances – expert opinions or resolutions or debates – *weighed* and *not counted*. More or less weight will be attached to them, depending on the *substantive* (*sachlich*) content of their utterances. By contrast, *political parties* in the modern state are organisations which have as their starting point the (legally) '*free*' recruitment of supporters, while their goal is to determine policy through the *numbers* of their supporters. The *ultima ratio* of all modern party politics is the voting or ballot slip. Similarly, in a capitalist economy associations representing *economic* interests are based on (legally) '*free*' recruitment, their aim being to use the private economic power of their members, whether this takes the form of the ownership of goods, a market monopoly or a monopolistic union of economically indispensable workers, in order to force on others a *compromise* in line with their own interests regarding the conditions which determine the price of material goods or work. For both types of free formation the decisive, uniquely appropriate and hence 'organic' feature of their organisation is its characteristically '*voluntary*' basis. Any attempt to compel them to unite on the model of an official department of state would be a purely mechanical compulsion which would put an end to their inner life. It is not that they themselves are strangers to 'compulsion'. Quite the opposite. To achieve their purposes they employ boycott, outlawing and every material and mental means of enticement and force the human mind can devise on the basis of (formally) free recruitment – with the exception, however, of that form of force for maintaining the '*legitimate* outward order' of the state which is reserved exclusively and peculiarly to the apparatus of the state as a coercive association (*Zwangsverband*). For reasons of state it is also possible to lay down conditions governing party organisations which, depending on circumstance, can either protect the rights of the majority against a breach of trust by a minority clique, or, conversely, can protect the rights of a minority against coercion, as has happened in America. But this does not change their fundamentally voluntary character – a *membership* formed on the basis of legally free will. The same applies to government regulations on the conditions governing the foundation of trade unions. It is precisely the fact that the party leader depends on the formally *free* recruitment of his following that is the absolutely decisive feature distinguishing his position from the rule-governed promotion of officials. It is precisely the fact that the leaders of groups with shared

²² By the time Weber was writing, *Spießbürger* had become widened to refer to small-minded people generally rather than simply to a particular class.

economic interests are obliged to organise their following in a formally 'free' way that determines their character, and this fact in turn is determined by the structure of the modern economy. Under the conditions prevailing today this type of organisation is the irreconcilable antithesis of any amalgamation in this area carried out by the state's police. Anyone who has failed to understand these things has not yet grasped the most elementary facts of modern political and economic life. These things are not 'eternal' truths, but it is how things are today. Of course it is possible to construct on paper as many electoral corporations based on occupational representation as one likes. But even if one were to do so, the consequence, as we have said, would be that the political parties on the one hand and the economic interest groups on the other would carry on their *real* lives *behind* any such bodies.

That must suffice for the moment. We have only mentioned all these romantic fantasies, which no well-informed person will consider worth the honour of serious refutation, because these completely unhistorical constructions do harm by increasing the nervousness of the German philistines in all sections of society about taking the plunge into specifically *modern* problems, thereby putting our citizens even more out of touch with the real world and with politics. I wonder if any of these scribbling romantics has a clear perception of the true nature of the *real Ständestaat* of the past; a few brief observations on the topic are called for. Confused ideas about the 'articulation of society' according to the 'natural occupations' in 'communities of estates', about the bearers of 'a Christian fraternal ethic', and a 'hierarchical structure' with the spiritual monarch of the world at its apex, mask *total ignorance* of the realities behind an image drawn partly from the ideologies of philosophical literature and partly from very modern, rationalistic, organisational concepts. The underlying realities were different. What was truly characteristic of the so-called *Ständestaat* was not any 'organic' articulation of society according to 'natural economic occupational groups', nor indeed an economy built on the 'principle of solidarity'. What distinguished the economy of the *Ständestaat* from today's economy were features which are to be found throughout the world under the most varied political arrangements imaginable. Admittedly, these economic forms, in contrast to the economic situation today, made the *Ständestaat* possible, whereas this type of state is not possible today; but,

equally, the same economic forms created the preconditions elsewhere for quite different forms of state which are also not possible today. They did not, however, create the *Ständestaat*. Something else entirely was peculiar to the *Ständestaat* (which only developed fully in one part of Europe), namely the fact that individuals and corporations could acquire *political* rights in the same way as one acquires *private* ownership of material goods, and the fact that these *proprietors of privilege* (not always only them, but they were always the main constituents) came together in joint congresses for the purpose of ordering political matters by means of *compromise*. In those days individuals held as hereditary privileges the ownership of citadels and militarily or politically or financially important powers of every conceivable kind, all of which were owned in exactly the same way, whereas today only the king holds his crown in this way. The things we are now accustomed to regard as the content of the unified 'supreme authority' (*Staatsgewalt*) fell apart under that system into a bundle of individual entitlements in various hands. There was as yet no question of a 'state' in the modern sense of the word. Any political action necessitated agreement amongst these owners of prerogatives who were autonomous in principle, and it was the purpose of the assemblies of estates to produce just such a unified view. Originally and in principle, however, they did not take votes, nor did they have the concept of a decision which was binding even on those who disagreed with it. The form in which business was concluded was the 'settlement' (*Vergleich*, also known as *Recess* and *Abschied*),²³ which in today's language means compromise. This was a compromise not only between the different estates but also between each of the proprietors of privilege within the estate groupings. People should read the records of any of these assemblies and ask themselves whether a modern state could be governed in such forms. Yet these forms (however fluid they may have been on points of detail) are precisely the most fundamental elements of that type of formation, and it begins to change as soon as the ultima ratio of the *voting slip* (the most important, although not the only feature of the modern parliament) begins to find its way into the proceedings of such forma-

²³ *Recess*, *Vergleich*, *Abschied* are technical terms for different legal forms of recess (or ordinance), settlement and treaty. The *Landtagsabschied*, for example, was a summary of the legislation enacted during a legislative period and read out by the monarch at the closing ceremony of the Diet.

tions. Not until this happens does the modern, rational form of determining the will of the state (*Willensbildung*) come into being. Even in today's constitutional state there are crucial points (such as determining the budget) where state action still rests, legally and politically, on compromise. But this is not *legally* the case with elections, nor with the transactions of a parliamentary body, nor can it be the case without destroying their foundations. Only when compromise was the *legal* basis of political action did a structure of estates based on occupation inherently have a proper place. But there is no place for it where the voting slip rules – in parliamentary elections.

Furthermore, compromise is still, as it always was, the dominant form in which conflicts of *economic* interest are settled, particularly those between employers and workers. Inevitably, it is bound to be the only way of settling things conclusively in this area, and this very fact is one of the *essential* characteristics of all truly living bodies representing vested economic interests. Naturally, compromise also prevails in parliamentary politics, in inter-party relations, in the form of electoral compromise or compromises on legislative proposals. As we shall see, this latter possibility of compromise is one of the chief merits of the parliamentary system. *But*, it must be stressed, there is *always* the ultima ratio of the *voting slip* in the background. This means that, when compromises are reached, it is under pressure from the fact that, if no compromise is achieved, the subsequent election or ballot may well produce a result which is more or less equally undesirable for *all* concerned. There is no getting away from the fact that the real and approximate *counting* of votes is an integral and essential element both of modern electoral contests and the conduct of business in parliament. Our romantics, for all their horror of 'numbers', will not change this fact. Let them stay away from politics if 'counting' seems to them too prosaic a device. It is simply an extraordinary impertinence, however, to single out *equal* suffrage for slander as the 'democracy of numbers', as opposed to other elections such as those based on 'occupational groups'. For what is the role of numbers in these elections? In all of these projects any talk of an 'organically' meaningful structure based on occupation or other kinds of social grouping is mere window dressing. Anyone interested in reality, as opposed to mere rhetoric, should ignore such talk and should examine each of these proposals to see how the *number* of mandates and votes is to be *distributed* amongst these artfully con-

trived groups. Since the voting slip remains the ultima ratio in these elections too, only one thing matters in all these schemes, namely the fact that they are all purely and simply *electoral arithmetic*. The Royal Prussian Statistical Office is particularly well versed in this science. For the last thirty years every 'project for electoral reform' with which it has had to deal has been based on calculations of the number of votes which stood to be gained by the Conservatives, the Centre Party or the National Liberals if one particular mode of voting or another were adopted. To see in such conjuring with numbers something loftier than the 'democracy of numbers' is something we shall gladly leave to the phrase-mongers and litterateurs.

In purely political terms it is no mere coincidence that equal 'numbers suffrage' is on the advance everywhere, for the mechanical nature of *equal* voting rights corresponds to the essential nature of today's state. The modern state is the first to have the concept of the 'citizen of the state' (*Staatsbürger*). Equal voting rights means in the first instance simply this: at this point of social life the individual, for once, is *not*, as he is everywhere else, considered in terms of the particular professional and family position he occupies, nor in relation to differences of material and social situation, but purely and simply *as a citizen*. This expresses the political unity of the nation (*Staatsvolk*) rather than the dividing lines separating the various spheres of life. It has nothing at all to do with any theory of the natural 'equality' of human beings. On the contrary, its intended meaning and purpose (*Sinn*) is to create a certain counterbalance to the social *inequalities* which are *neither* rooted in natural differences nor created by natural qualities but are produced, rather, by social conditions (which are often severely at variance with nature) and above all, inevitably, by the *purse*. As long as anything resembling the prevailing social order persists – and it has a very stubborn hold on life – the inequality of the outward circumstances of life, particularly of *property*, may be mitigated, as may the relationships of social dependence which it produces, but it can never be eliminated altogether. Thus those who are privileged by it will never even come close to losing all their influence on national politics, which they exert to a far greater degree than their numbers warrant. Equally, the way the modern state and economy are organised ensures that a privileged position is permanently given to *specialised training* and thereby to 'education' (*Bildung*), which is not identical with specialised training but is promoted by it

for purely technical, educational reasons, this being one of the most powerful factors in status group (*ständisch*) differentiation in modern society. For this very reason there is good sense in making parliamentary suffrage into something of equivalent weight, so as to counterbalance these other factors by making the ruled in society (who have a numerical advantage) the equals of the privileged strata at least when it comes to electing the body which both exercises *control* and functions as the place where *leaders are selected*.

An authoritative institution (*Inстанz*) of this kind becomes even more indispensable if we assume that the wartime economy really is to be succeeded by the *permanent*, extensive 'organisation' of national economic life in interest groups (*Interessenverbänden*) in which *state officials participate*, in other words the regulation of the economy (or of certain of its more important branches) by occupational cooperatives which would be bureaucratically 'supervised' or 'co-administered', or which were otherwise linked to the agencies of the state on a firm and permanent basis. Have any of our childishy enthusiastic *littérateurs* ever thought what the *political* consequences would be if one did not create a counterweight to such an arrangement by enormously increasing the powers of a parliament *not* organised along occupational lines? They imagine that 'the state' would then be the wise regulator of the economy. The *reverse* would be the case! The bankers and capitalist entrepreneurs they hate so much would then have *unlimited and uncontrolled command over the state!* For *who on earth is the 'state'*, as distinct from this machinery of large and small capitalist *cartels* of every kind into which the economy is to be 'organised', if the formation of the state's own will (*Willensbildung*) is to be placed in the hands of precisely *these* 'co-operative' organisations? Even the participation of the state in the coal syndicate and in mining generally means in practice that the interest of the exchequer does *not* lie in supplying the nation with cheap coal in the best possible way, but in obtaining *high returns* from its mines. It means that private and public pits and private and public bureaucracy have an *identical* interest here, in relation both to the workers and to the consumers of coal. Every further advance in *state-run* cartelisation naturally means purely and simply the further spread of this state of affairs. Perhaps it is inevitable nevertheless – but that is not something I wish to consider here. It is, however, sheer naïveté on the part of our scribbling ideologues to believe that *this* is the way

to weaken or eliminate the rule of the 'profit motive' and the interest in producing goods 'for gain' which they so despise, and to replace them with a 'natural', 'communal economic' interest in providing good and as far as possible cheap commodities to the *people* who desire and consume them! What abysmal nonsense! The interest of the capitalist producers and profit-makers represented by these *cartels would itself then rule the state exclusively*, unless that organisation of producers' interests is confronted by a power strong enough to control and steer them as the *needs* of the population require. But an individual's *needs* are *not* determined by his position in the machinery of goods-production. The worker has exactly the *same needs* for bread, housing and clothing, regardless of the type of factory he works in. Thus if that method of organising the economy is imminent, it is absolutely imperative, *before* it begins to function – which means immediately – for us to have a parliament elected on the principle that the *needs* of the masses must be represented, and *not* one which represents the way an individual is employed in the production of goods – in other words a parliament of equal suffrage, wholly sovereign in its power, which can take an independent stand in relation to this type of economic organisation. Parliament must be much more sovereign in its powers than hitherto, for in the past its position of power has *not* sufficed to break the power of vested commercial interests nor the inevitable rule of fiscal interests in state-run industries. This is a *negative* reason for equal suffrage.

Considered purely in terms of national politics, however, the positive argument for equal suffrage consists in the fact that it is closely related to the equality of certain *fates* which the modern state as such creates. People are 'equal' before death. They are approximately equal in the most elementary requirements of physical existence. But precisely these most basic needs on the one hand and, on the other, that most solemn and lofty fact of all are encompassed by those equalities which the modern state offers all its citizens in a truly lasting and undoubted way: sheer physical security and the minimum for subsistence, but also the battlefield on which to die. All inequalities of political rights in the past ultimately derived from an economically determined inequality of *military* qualification which one does not find in the bureaucratised state and army. In the face of the levelling, inescapable rule of bureaucracy, which first brought the modern concept of the 'citizen of the state' into being, the ballot slip

is the *only* instrument of power which is at all *capable* of giving the people who are subject to bureaucratic rule a minimal right of co-determination in the affairs of the community for which they are obliged to give their lives.

In Germany it is the *Reich* which wages war, but of the individual states it is *Prussia* which, by virtue of its hegemonial position in the *Reich*, has an absolutely decisive say in the politics of the *Reich* as a whole. The individual citizen therefore expects the *Reich* to guarantee that this hegemonial state will fulfil its obligation to show at least the absolute minimum of political decency towards the soldiers returning from the war. It is in the interest of the *Reich* to ensure that none of these men is disadvantaged in his electoral rights in the decisive individual state *as compared with anyone who stayed at home*; any form of franchise other than equal suffrage would inevitably result in such inequitable treatment.[^] Equal suffrage is a demand of national politics; it is not a party-political demand. We do not know what the mood and political convictions of the returning soldiers will be. Perhaps it will be 'authoritarian'. Strong 'conservative' parties will always exist because there will always be people of conservative inclination. Let them then use their ballot papers to build the state in accordance with their ideals, and those of us who stayed at home will go about our daily work. The only thing I am attacking here is the shameless reluctance of the so-called 'fighters on the home front' to fulfil the elementary obligation of decency towards the returning soldiers. The ineluctable realities of the present will ensure that the antiquated, negative form of democracy, which demanded only freedom *from* the state, will not grow out of all proportion; the best way to ensure this would be for the leaders of the parties in parliament to share power *in* the state and to accept direct, personal responsibility for its exercise. Precisely the experiences of this war (including what is now happening in Russia) have demonstrated a point we have emphasised already, namely that *no* party, whatever its programme, can assume the *effective* direction of the state *without becoming national*. This would happen

[^] The apparently intended linkage of suffrage to *length of residence*, which would mean that the working class, presently in the third franchise class, would be *deprived* of the franchise (since it is forced to move from place to place frequently), would also *disenfranchise* those sections of the proletariat who are on active service! As a result of the major restructuring of the economy the *majority of all workers* might perhaps have to seek a new place of work at the next election, and thus *lose* the franchise!

in Germany just as surely as it has happened everywhere else. It was *because* socialist parties in other countries were not excluded from the government of the state that they were more 'national' than our Social Democrats (once) were.²⁴ Whatever the mood of the returning soldiers proves to be, they will at all events bring back with them experiences, impressions and discoveries which are *theirs alone*. What we believe we are entitled to expect of them is at least a relatively higher degree of *objectivity* (*Sachlichkeit*), for the tasks presented by modern warfare are objective in the highest degree. We also expect them to be more immune to the empty rhetoric of mere *littérateurs*, whatever political party they support. By contrast, the war years have revealed amongst those who stayed *at home*, particularly amongst the *littérateurs* and the wealthy, such a repulsive lack of objectivity, such a lack of political judgement and so much deliberately cultivated blindness to reality, that the time has come to say to them, 'Your ringing days are over, come down from the belfry'. At the very least, the franchise must be redefined while the war is still in progress. The returning soldiers must not be faced with the need to fight sterile domestic battles for electoral rights before they can acquire the instruments of power which will give them a decisive say in the running of the state they have defended. They must come back to find that purely formal political rights have *already* been so ordered that they can turn their hands immediately to the material reconstruction of the structure of the state. This is the decisive, purely practical argument for equal suffrage in Prussia and for its immediate introduction at this very moment, *before* the war is over.

We have heard all the empty phrases used by vested interests to frighten the philistines, and particularly the *littérateurs*, on this issue. Above all, the fear that 'democracy' will destroy our allegedly 'distinguished' (*vornehm*) and hence culturally productive 'traditions', as well as the supposedly unfathomable wisdom of the allegedly 'aristocratic' strata who rule the state. Let us go straight to the heart of these arguments, even if they initially lead us away from the question of suffrage as such.

²⁴ After considerable dissension, the German Social Democrats voted unanimously for the credits required to fight the war in 1914, although a minority gave their support only with reluctance. The issue of war credits later split the party in 1916, leading to the creation of the USPD (Independent Socialist Party) in 1917 which was internationalist and opposed to war. The 'patriotism' of Social Democrats was therefore an acute issue at the time Weber was writing this piece.

There is no doubt that a *true aristocracy* can stamp an entire nation with its own ideal of distinguished conduct, for the plebeian strata imitate the 'gesture' of the aristocracy. By combining the advantage of their 'small numbers' with the benefits of a stable tradition and wide social horizons, an aristocracy can achieve very great political successes in the leadership of a state. As far as national politics are concerned, rule by an aristocracy with political traditions has the further advantage over democratic forms of rule that it is less dependent on *emotional* factors. To put it another way, an aristocrat generally has a *cooler head* as a result of his consciously shaped conduct of life and an education directed at maintaining *contenance*.²⁵ The aristocrat regularly has the gift of *silent action* to a considerably higher degree than the democratic masses on the one hand and the non-parliamentary modern monarch on the other (a fact usually suppressed by sycophants although it is much more damaging in its consequences). *All* non-parliamentary modern monarchs are exposed to the danger of believing that they need to make *speeches* in order, as it were, to advertise their person, in the same way as democratic leaders in a class-state are forced to make speeches in order to recruit support for their party. Any nation can therefore thank heaven if its monarch *lacks* both the gift and the inclination to make personal speeches, for this is wholly unwelcome as far as national politics are concerned. Indeed, one of the strengths of the parliamentary system is the fact that it preserves the monarch from such self-exposure. An old political aristocracy is least likely to succumb to this danger, a merit which it combines with the gift of *cultured tastes*. 'Parvenu' democratic states, such as Italy, usually tend to be just as lacking in good taste as newly founded monarchies. The terrible barbarism of the 'impious' defacement of Rome, inspired as it was by an anti-clerical tendency to expunge 'embarrassing' (which means humiliating) 'memories', elicited from the great Italian poet Carducci the wish to see the Papal State restored for just one month so that it could sweep away the hollow theatricality and tastelessness of 'terza Roma'. Yet compared with Munich or Vienna, or even with other, smaller provincial capitals, Berlin today, now that it has been stripped of its austere simplicity and been given a wretched cathedral, the monstrous monument to Bismarck and other such things, is such an

²⁵ Weber uses the French word; it means 'bearing'.

example of banal monumentalism that one shudders to think what aesthetic judgement posterity will pass on this epoch in German history, and one thinks with shame both of the generation of artists who lent themselves to such a task and of the public who did nothing to oppose it. But at least this disfigurement proves that monarchy *as such* assuredly does not provide the slightest guarantee of artistic culture, indeed it can often represent a threat to it. The Bismarck memorial in Hamburg, on the other hand, the only truly valuable example of monumental art in Germany, will always do honour to the patricians of Hamburg, and can show our myopic littérateurs that 'capitalism' and 'art' do not necessarily live in the state of natural enmity which some attribute to them. The same has been demonstrated on behalf of democracy by trade union buildings in Italy or, generally, by cities like Zurich. A culture of high good taste such as one finds in an old, firmly established and self-assured aristocracy, or in a democracy imitating such traditions, is certainly not a matter of indifference as far as national politics are concerned. The prestige of France throughout the world rests on the store of treasure it has salvaged from its aristocratic past and which, despite the disgraceful decline in official care for the arts, is still being preserved and developed amongst small groups of creative artists and in the aesthetic shaping of the French character. Here democratisation has led, at least in part, to the spread of the old, exclusive culture; in a different way the same holds true for the Italian character, particularly amongst the lower social strata.

Let us consider how this problem affects Germany as a matter of principle, quite independently of the question of suffrage which we are discussing. One has to begin by asking *where the German aristocracy with its 'distinguished' tradition is to be found?* If such a thing existed, there would be something to discuss. Aside from a few *princely* courts (minor ones at that), however, *it simply does not exist*. For what does 'aristocracy' mean, or rather, what conditions must obtain if a social stratum, whether it be essentially feudal ('nobility') or bourgeois ('patricians'), is to function as an aristocracy in the *political* sense of the word and be put to political use? The chief requirement is a life untouched by economic storms. The most elementary precondition of all is that an aristocrat should be able to live *for* the state and should not have to live *from* it. What matters is not merely having the kind of income which makes it not too difficult to forego a ministerial

salary. Above all he needs to be 'economically dispensable' (*abkömmlich*), so that he is available for political purposes, both outwardly and, even more importantly, inwardly. This means that work in the service of a commercial *business* must not lay claim to his time and energies, or at least not exhaustively. Of all the ways of earning a living in the private sector which depend on intense, personal, intellectual work, the profession of the *advocate* is the one which most readily allows its practitioner to keep himself available for political purposes (by belonging to a group practice or by engaging people to deputise for him, and because there is no capital at risk). Also, because the advocate not only has an organised *office* at his disposal but also knowledge of the law and experience of the day-to-day requirements of life, his chances of a political career are particularly favourable in all democracies, and it is relatively easy for him to return to running his business if he experiences electoral defeat. People have inveighed a good deal against the importance of advocates in many democracies, and the low social esteem of the lawyer has been particularly responsible for this verdict here, together with the not infrequently justified accusation of 'formalism' in the way they deal with political problems. Yet, if arbitrariness is to be avoided, formalism is an essential part of legal training, including that of a judge or an administrative official. On the other hand, the work of an advocate, in contrast to that of a judge or official involves training in how to 'fight with words'; the great superiority of our enemies in recruiting support for their cause, and generally in using the important weapon of the word, results from the *lack* of training in advocacy (which can take place at a thoroughly distinguished level) that is so characteristic of *any* government run purely by officials, as opposed to the advocate-ministers who are to be found in democracies. Anyone seeking change here must therefore be prepared to accept the *means*, which is to increase the political influence of advocates by improving their political *chances*. Germans generally, and German *littérateurs* in particular, have no idea of the nature of the truly great vocation of the advocate, since their image of it is shaped by the magistrates' courts or divorce hearings or the minor daily annoyances which take them to an advocate. Anyone familiar with the profession knows that it is the crown not only of *all* legal work, but of all free positions of trust, and that it stands high above most legal work in the degree of intellectual intensity and *responsibility* it entails. Officialdom,

of course, *hates* the advocate as a tedious intermediary and troublemaker, but also because the official resents his earning capacity. It is certainly not desirable for parliaments and cabinets to be governed entirely by advocates. But a healthy admixture of distinguished advocacy is something desirable in any modern parliament. Admittedly, today's advocates are no longer an 'aristocracy', not even in England. They form a bourgeois occupational group (*bürgerlichen Erwerbsstand*), but one, it has to be said, which is available for political work.

The modern *entrepreneur*, by contrast, is never an 'aristocrat' in the *political* sense of the word. Unlike the advocate, he is specifically *indispensable* from his place of work, and the larger his business and the greater the demands it makes on him, the *less* is he available for other things. The old merchant patricians in the city republics were a stratum of *occasional* entrepreneurs, but otherwise they were *rentiers* and *this* was the basis of their political usefulness. A modern manufacturer, chained to the unremitting, intense, exhausting work of running his business, is, of all the representatives of the propertied strata, the type who is least able to make himself available for politics. This is the main reason for the fact that the members of this stratum, despite their economic importance and practical intelligence, are of relatively slight importance for political work and self-government. It is not, as the usual stupid moralising of the *littérateurs* would have it, due to any lack of 'willingness for self-sacrifice' or 'worship of mammon'; it results from the fact that such men are tied inwardly by their duty to the business and outwardly by the demands of the work inherent in running and making profits in a bourgeois-capitalist business. The seasonal character of *agriculture* leaves at least the winter months free for political work. But *all* strata directly involved as entrepreneurs in the struggle of economic interests lack something else, something more important, which one might call inner availability, *distance* from the everyday *conflicts* of interest in the private economic sphere. In contrast to the advocate, the modern entrepreneur, including the farmer, is an *interested party* who is too directly involved in this struggle to be politically useful.

Only the *grand rentier* has ever possessed sufficient distance from the conflict of economic interests. This applies above all to the very large landowner or hereditary lord (*Standesherr*), but also to anyone who owns a large fortune in investments. He alone is sufficiently

removed from the daily economic struggle which every entrepreneur constantly has to fight for his existence, his economic power, the survival of his business. The relatively much less embattled existence of the *grand rentier*, his much greater *distance* from the everyday business world (even if large enterprises are among the sources of his unearned income) – these factors free his energies, both inwardly and outwardly, for political interests, whether in the affairs of state or in the political-cultural sphere, for the life of a ‘man of the world’, for patronage and the acquisition of knowledge of the world in the grand manner. It is not that he lives in some kind of economically ‘disinterested’ sphere. No such thing exists. But he is not engaged in the daily struggle for the survival of his business, he is not the *organ* of such a business, nor the bearer of plutocratic *class* interests, since he is removed from the immediate *conflict* of interests. *Only* a stratum with *this* kind of structure could lay claim to the title of an ‘aristocracy’ today, in the sense of having a particular kind of *economic* qualification.

Even in small things the importance of this economic qualification is quite plain. To take an everyday instance, everyone knows what it means for the morale of a corps of officers to have a ‘nervous’ regimental commander. All other things being equal, such ‘nervousness’ usually arises from his economic situation, from the lack of a private fortune which means that the commander is faced with a shabby future – and a family accustomed to social pretensions – if he is dismissed. This oppresses and weighs him down in the performance of his duties and makes it infinitely more difficult for him, as compared with a wealthy commander, to stay calm and – a very important practical point – to defend the interests of his subordinates vigorously to his superiors. Every alert officer will have noticed this, and it hardly needs to be illustrated with individual examples. Things are similar in other areas. Many of our officials who have shown most character in the area of social policy – in the factory inspectorate, for example – were wealthy men who, for this very reason, did not need to bend before every breath from vested interests and who were prepared to resign their office if they were expected to do things which were incompatible with their conscience. Considering his fairly limited intellectual gifts, the importance of Paul Singer²⁶ and his position

²⁶ Paul Singer (1844–1911), industrialist and Social Democrat.

within the Social Democratic party were to a considerable extent a function of his wealth, since this allowed him to live *for* the party in the way he did, rather than having to live *from* it. ‘Political character’ is simply cheaper for the man of means, and no amount of moralising can change this fact. Nor is it simply a matter of showing character towards one’s superiors. The fact that the property-less masses, who must struggle daily for survival, are relatively more susceptible to all *emotional* motives in politics, to passions and momentary impressions of a sensational kind, as compared with the ‘cooler head’ of the man whose wealth raises him above such worries, makes it a matter of great urgency for democratic parties in particular to have people in secure economic circumstances occupying *leading* positions who can devote themselves to political work purely out of personal conviction, and thus to counterbalance these influences in ways which are not always open to the party *bureaucracy* as such. Admittedly, because the masses cannot intervene *directly* in politics, and because their behaviour is more readily forgotten, their emotional qualities are nothing like as dangerous as those of *monarchs* who can compromise the nation’s political position for decades to come by excited and incautious telegrams and speeches. But the masses, too, are with us and, all things being *equal*, it is *cheaper* for a man of property to show ‘political character’ and cool reflection in his dealings with them too. It is an important question for the future whether men of property, whose wealth gives them independence and who will be with us as long as the system of private property exists, enter the service of politics, and work politically for the *democratic* parties in particular. It is easy for the party official who works hard for his living and is dependent on his salary to feel *ressentiment* towards such people, but this should not prevent the parties from taking to heart the lessons of experience in this regard. On the other hand, the *ressentiment* of party and co-operative (*Genossenschaft*) officialdom is ideally suited as a counterbalance to any danger of the parties coming under ‘plutocratic’ leadership. The experiences of the Russian democratic parties, including those on the extreme left, in which the daughters of princes fought on the barricades and the wealthiest of patrons produced the funds for the popular movement, show that the economic self-interest of propertied ideologues leaves them *much* more scope for the idealistic pursuit of reliably ‘democratic’ *convictions* than is the case with a more plebeian (from a social point of view) stratum entangled dir-

ectly in the conflict of interests. This is because the economic situation of the wealthy does not necessarily dictate the direction of their political activity, whereas it *can* provide support for independent political convictions. In purely material terms, the prosaic share certificate performs this service for the person who owns it just as effectively as the possession of a hereditary lordly estate. Admittedly, an estate of this kind provides much more specific training for political activity (in the kind of large-scale tasks of management with which it confronts the owner and the sounding board of a lordly position) than can be acquired by cutting off share-coupons and a life spent in the purely consumerist household of a *rentier* living off paper investments.

Thus there can be no doubt that a stratum of landed nobility of the kind that existed in England, and similar to that which formed the core of the senatorial nobility in ancient Rome, is a bearer of political tradition, training and moderation, for which there is no substitute as far as national politics are concerned. *But where does it exist here?* How many hereditary lords of this kind exist in Germany, and more particularly in Prussia? Where is their political tradition? Politically they have virtually *no significance*, and *least of all in Prussia*. It is surely clear that it is impossible nowadays to have as an aim of state policy the breeding of such a truly aristocratic stratum of *grands rentiers*. Although it would be possible to use forest land, the only land-title qualified in socio-political terms for fee-entailment, so as to bring into being a number of new, large hereditary lordships, there is no possibility of producing numerically significant results by this means. The deepest inner dishonesty of the entailment bill discussed in Prussia at the beginning of 1917 was that it sought to extend to the 'Mittelstand' of average estate-owners east of the Elbe an institution of property appropriate to *hereditary lordships*, and thereby to *inflate* to the status of 'aristocrats' people who simply are not aristocrats and who cannot be aristocrats. Anyone who knows the much (and often unjustly) maligned and (equally unjustly) idolised Junker of the eastern provinces is bound to take delight in them on a purely personal level – when out hunting, drinking a drop of something decent, at the card-table, amidst the hospitality of the estate farm – in these areas everything about them is genuine. Everything becomes false only when one stylises as an 'aristocracy' this essentially 'bourgeois', entrepreneurial stratum, *economically dependent* as it is on agricultural

entrepreneurialism and the *conflict of interests*, a conflict of social and economic interests every bit as ruthless as that which any factory owner has to engage in. Ten minutes spent in such circles are enough to make one realise that they are *plebeians*, and that their virtues in particular are overwhelmingly plebeian in character. An estate in eastern Germany '*supports no lordly household today*', as Minister von Miquel once put it quite correctly (but in private!). If one tries to put the stamp of an 'aristocracy', with its feudal gestures and pretensions, onto a social stratum which depends nowadays on plain, bourgeois-capitalist work, the inevitable result will simply be to create *the physiognomy of the parvenu*. The parvenu aspects of the way we conduct ourselves in the world, both politically and in other respects, derive at least in part, although not entirely, from suggesting to sections of society who quite simply lack the qualification to do so that they should play the part of aristocrats.

Nor is *this stratum alone* in lacking the necessary qualification. Of course the physiognomy of the Junker is by no means the *only* reason for the absence here of the educational forms which distinguish the man of the world. Rather, the reason for their absence lies with the unmistakably bourgeois character of *all* those social strata which were the specific bearers of the Prussian state system during the years of its impoverished but glorious rise. The old officer families who preserve with honour the tradition of the old Prussian army, despite their own, often extremely exiguous circumstances, and the families of officials who do the same, are – regardless of whether or not they have titles of nobility – a *bourgeois middle class*, both economically and socially and in their mental horizons. Within their circle the social forms of the German officer corps are generally appropriate to the character of that stratum and, in their most important features, closely resemble those of officer corps in democracies (France, Italy). Outside that circle, however, these forms of behaviour immediately become caricatured when non-military circles treat them as a model for emulation, particularly when they enter a *mésalliance* with social forms originating in the undergraduate atmosphere of the *training colleges for officials*, as happens here.

As is generally known, the *student fraternities*²⁷ are the typical form of social education for the next generation of non-military officials,

²⁷ The term *Couleurnesen* refers to the German institution of (frequently political) student clubs or fraternities, the members of which wore distinctive coloured sashes and

prebendaries and the socially elevated 'free' professions. The 'academic freedom' to duel, to drink and to laze around dates from a time when no other freedoms of any kind existed in Germany, and when only this lettered stratum of prospective office-holders was *privileged* with these very freedoms. Even today it is not possible to eradicate the influence of the conventions originating in that atmosphere on the 'gesture' of the 'man with a degree', a type who has always been important in Germany and whose importance continues to grow. The colours worn by the students would be unlikely to disappear, even if the mortgages on the clubhouses and the need for the 'old boys' to pay the interest on them, were not in any case a sufficient guarantee of their economic immortality. On the contrary, the fraternity system is expanding steadily, for the simple reason that the fraternities' 'old boy network' is nowadays a specific form of *selecting officials*, and because the status of a reserve officer and the ability to offer 'satisfaction' which this presupposes (something visibly attested by the club ribbon) admit a man into 'society'. Admittedly, the compulsion to drink and the duelling rituals of the colour corps are being modified more and more to meet the needs of the weaker constitutions among the constantly growing numbers of those who aspire to the coloured ribbon for the sake of the connections it bestows; they say there are even teetotallers in some fraternities. What is crucial is the fact that the last few decades have seen the *intellectual incest* of these clubs *increase steadily* – the clubhouses with their own reading rooms, the special club newspapers which 'old boys' keep supplied with an unspeakably subaltern, petit bourgeois kind of well-meaning, 'patriotic' politics, the fact that contact with people of the same age but of different social or intellectual backgrounds is abhorred or at least made very difficult. At the same time, ever wider sections of society are being drawn into the networks of these fraternities. A clerk bent on acquiring the qualities of an officer of the reserve and the opportunity these afford of marrying into 'society' (the boss's daughter above all) attends one of those business schools which recruit a good number of their students precisely because of the activities of the fraternities. Whatever one's verdict on the intrinsic merit of all these student formations – and the criterion of morality

enjoyed certain privileges in law. Their members would acquire 'the ability to give satisfaction', meaning the ability to settle a matter of honour by duelling.

is not that of the politician – they certainly do *not* train the individual to be a *man of the world*; in fact the result produced by their undeniably banal, undergraduate atmosphere and their subaltern social forms is the very opposite. The most mindless English club offers more in this respect, however 'empty' one may find, for example, the sporting activity which is so often the be-all and end-all of their existence. The main reason for this is the fact that English clubs, although often highly selective, are always built on the principle that *all gentlemen are equal*, and not on the principle of *schoolboy subordination* which the bureaucracy prizes so highly in our colour corps as a *training for the discipline* of office, and which the clubs deliberately cultivate in order to ingratiate themselves in higher places.²⁸ At any rate, the ritualised conventions and undergraduate mentality of so-called 'academic freedom' which those aiming for an official post are obliged to submit to are becoming ever *less* a means of educating the aristocratic man of the world, the *more* they turn into a way of boasting about the wealth of one's *parents*, which inevitably happens wherever circumstances permit. A young person who ends up in this school has to be an unusually independent character and a very free spirit if he does not wish to acquire the disastrous features of a *varnished plebeian* which are so often to be observed even in the products of this system, however able they may be in other respects. For the interests cultivated in these communities are thoroughly *plebeian* and far removed from anything that is in any sense 'aristocratic'. Here again, the decisive point is that undergraduate antics which are essentially *plebeian* in character and harmless enough as a simple outlet for youthful exuberance are claiming to be a means of *aristocratic education* qualifying a man for leadership in the state. The heavy price to be paid for *this* quite incredible contradiction is the *physiognomy of the parvenu* it creates.

Let no one believe that these parvenu features in the face of Germany are quite irrelevant politically. To begin with an example: the practice of making 'moral conquests' of enemies (that is people with opposing interests) is a vain business, rightly scorned by Bismarck, but what about present or future *allies* or *federal partners*?²⁹ We and

²⁸ Here we have omitted a lengthy but unimportant footnote about drinking habits in student clubs.

²⁹ Here the term *Bundesgenossen* requires a double translation, since Weber is reminding his readers both that Prussia, however dominant its position, belongs to a federal

our Austrian allies are permanently dependent on one another *politically*. We and they are both aware of this fact. Unless major acts of stupidity are committed there is no danger of a break between us. They acknowledge without reserve or envy the German *achievement* – and would do so even if we were *not* always talking about it here; indeed the less we do so, the easier we make it for them. Yet not everyone here has a proper conception of the Austrians' objective difficulties, which Germany has been spared, and consequently there is insufficient appreciation here of *their* achievement. This is also the place to state plainly what the whole world knows, namely that the one thing neither they nor any other nation with whom we might wish to have friendly relations could tolerate is the kind of parvenu airs and graces which have recently been spreading here in an intolerable way. That sort of thing will be met with silent, polite but firm *rejection* from any nation which, like Austria, has a longstanding tradition of unquestionably good social education. Nobody wants to be governed by ill-bred parvenus. Every step beyond what is absolutely indispensable for foreign policy, in other words everything that 'Central Europe' (in the inner sense of the term)³⁰ might want (or which might be desirable in any future community of interests with other nations) – however one views the question of *economic rapprochement* – could fail politically for both parties because people are utterly determined *not* to accept the imposition of what has recently been declared, with boastful gesture, to be the 'Prussian spirit', and which is supposedly under threat from 'democracy', according to the frequent declarations of our phrase-mongering *littérateurs*. As we are all aware, such declamations have accompanied absolutely *every* step towards inner reform here for the last 110 years.³¹

The true 'Prussian spirit' is one of the finest expressions of the German national character (*Deutschtum*). Every line written by

Reich, and that Germany as a whole must respect the sensitivities of other countries with which it has alliances and with which it might conceivably enter into a wider confederation in the future.

³⁰ Here Weber is following the relatively common practice in Germany, particularly before, during and after the First World War, of treating *Mitteleuropa* as a metaphorical/spiritual concept rather than a merely geographical, political or economic one. The metaphorical sense is that Central Europe is both 'central' to an idea of Europe and a 'middle ground' between the extremes of East and West.

³¹ The administrative reforms of Freiherr von Stein (1757–1831) had taken place in Prussia 110 years earlier.

Scharnhorst, Gneisenau, Boyen, Moltke³² breathes this spirit, as do the words and deeds of the great Prussian reforming officials who do not even need to be mentioned by name (a good number of whom, admittedly, originated from outside Prussia). The same is true of Bismarck's eminent intellect, so miserably caricatured by the blinkered, philistine advocates of 'Realpolitik' today. It sometimes seems as if the old Prussian spirit flourishes more strongly today amongst the officials of *other* states in our federation than it does in Berlin, and the misuse of the term by the conservative demagogues we are hearing now is nothing short of impiety towards the great figures of the past.

To repeat the point, an *aristocracy* of adequate breadth and political tradition does not exist in Germany. Its most likely home was in the 'Free Conservative' Party and the Centre Party (although this had ceased to be the case there too), but not in the Conservative Party. Equally important is the fact that no *distinguished German social form* exists. Despite the occasional boasts of our *littérateurs*, it is quite untrue that 'individualism', in the sense of *freedom* from conventions, exists in Germany, in contrast, so it is alleged, to the conventions governing the 'gentleman' in English-speaking countries or salon life in the Latin countries. Nowhere are more rigid and binding conventions to be found than those of the 'colours student' which, directly or indirectly, rule the lives of as large a fraction of the next generation in Germany's ruling circles as do the conventions of any other country. Except where the conventions of the officer corps hold sway, *these are 'the German form'!* This is because the experiences in the colour-corps subsequently determine to a large extent the forms and conventions of the most influential sections of German society, namely the bureaucracy and all those who wish to be admitted into the 'society' that is dominated by it. However, one cannot call these forms 'distinguished'. What is more important as far as national politics are concerned is the fact that, in contrast to the conventions in England and the Latin countries, these conventions are wholly unsuited to serve as a *model* for the whole nation, right down to its lowest levels, and thus to make its gesture *uniformly* that of a self-assured 'nation of masters' (*Herrenvolk*), entirely confident in its out-

³² These men were all outstanding Prussian generals: G. von Scharnhorst (1755–1813), N. von Gneisenau (1760–1831), H. von Boyen (1771–1843) and H. von Moltke (1800–91).

ward manner, as has happened with the English and Latin conventions. It is a grave error to believe that 'race' is the decisive factor in the striking lack of grace and dignity³³ in the outward bearing of the Germans. Despite the fact that he is of the same race, the public demeanour of a German from Austria (whatever other weaknesses he may have) is not marred by *these* qualities, for it has been thoroughly moulded by a real aristocracy.

The forms governing the behaviour of people in the Latin countries, right down to the lowest strata, are produced by imitating the '*gesture of a cavalier*' as this evolved from the sixteenth century onwards. The conventions of English-speaking countries, which also shape the behaviour of society down to the lowest stratum, derive from the social habits of that section of society which set the tone from the seventeenth century onwards, a stratum which developed in the late Middle Ages from a peculiar mixture of rural and urban bourgeois notables – 'gentlemen'³⁴ who were the bearers of 'self-government'. The important thing was that in all these cases the decisive features of those conventions and gestures could be imitated readily by all, and were therefore capable of being *democratised*. By contrast, the conventions of prospective German officials with their academic diplomas, and of the strata influenced by them, particularly the habits inculcated by the colour corps, were and are, as we have said, patently *not* suitable for imitation by any circles outside those taking university examinations and certainly not by the broad mass of the public. They were therefore not capable of being 'democratised', despite the fact, or rather precisely *because*, they were in their essence profoundly plebeian and not the manners of the man of the world or aristocrat. The Latin code of honour, like the very different English one, was susceptible of being democratised to a great extent. The specifically German concept of 'being qualified to give satisfaction', on the other hand, cannot be democratised, as will be plain to anyone who thinks about it. Yet it is of very great political importance. What matters from a social and political point of view is not, as so many

³³ Weber's irony borders on the sarcastic as he claims that the Germans, despite the lip-service paid to the 'values of classical Weimar', fail in practice to live up to the ideals (*Ammut*, 'grace' or *Würde*, 'dignity') at the heart of Schiller's project of an aesthetic education for humanity. See Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, translated and edited by E. Wilkinson and L. A. Willoughby (Oxford, 1967), in which (fifteenth letter) Schiller pleads for a fusion of grace and dignity.

³⁴ 'Gentlemen' is in English.

believe, the validity of the so-called 'code of honour' in the strict sense within the *officer* corps, where it is quite properly at home. The politically important fact is that a *Prussian* district superintendent (*Landrat*) absolutely must be able to 'give satisfaction' in the sense understood by students if he is to *command the respect* necessary to carry out his function, as must any other administrative official who can easily be discharged or transferred, in contrast to the independent stipendiary judge (*Amtsrichter*), say, who is socially *declassed* in comparison with the *Landrat* precisely because of his independence. The concept of the ability to give satisfaction and all the other conventions and forms which are supported by the structure of the bureaucracy and by the honour of the German student which exercises so much influence on it, *formally* represent *caste conventions* because they are inherently not susceptible of democratisation. In *substance*, however, because they lack any kind of aesthetic dignity or distinction, their character is *plebeian* rather than aristocratic. It is this inner contradiction which makes them such a political liability and an object of scorn.

The Germans are a *plebeian people* – or, if people prefer the term, a bourgeois (*bürgerlich*) people, and this is the only basis on which a specifically 'German form' could grow.

Any democratisation of society resulting from or promoted by a change in our political arrangements, which is the topic under discussion here, would not find pre-existing aristocratic forms and values amongst us Germans (considered from a *social* point of view) which would either have to be destroyed or, conversely, be stripped of their exclusiveness and propagated throughout the nation, as happened to the formal values of the English and Latin aristocracies in the process of just such a social transformation. On the other hand, the formal values of the German university graduate who is entitled to give satisfaction do *not* give inner support even to the members of that social stratum because these values are not sufficiently those of a man of the world. As any test will show, they are not even adequate to disguise a real feeling of insecurity when dealing with foreigners who have been brought up to be men of the world, except possibly in the form of an 'arrogant' manner which generally stems from embarrassment and strikes others as ill-mannered.

Let us leave aside the question of whether *political* democratisation would really result in *social* democratisation. The absence of barriers in America's political 'democracy', for example, has not prevented

the gradual growth of an estate of 'aristocrats' alongside the crude plutocracy of property (as people here believe), and the slow, but generally overlooked growth of this 'aristocracy' is just as important for the history of American culture.

At any rate, the development of a truly distinguished 'German form' which would also match the *bourgeois* character of the leading social strata here is still only a possibility for the future. Political and economic developments since 1870 have not so far led to any further development of those specifically bourgeois conventions which first began to take shape in the cities of the Hanseatic League. As the present war is bestowing on Germany so many parvenus whose sons will busy themselves at university acquiring the usual conventions of the colour corps (which make no demands on any tradition of distinction) as an easy training by which to gain access to the ranks of the reserve officers, there is little hope of renewal in the immediate future. One thing at least is certain: if the process of 'democratisation' were to succeed in *doing away with* the social prestige of the university graduate – which is far from certain, for reasons that cannot be gone into here – this would *not* destroy any politically valuable social forms. It *could* then perhaps clear the way for the development of formal values which would be appropriate to our *middle class* social and economic structure and therefore be both 'genuine' and distinguished. Such values are as impossible to invent for oneself as a style, and there is just one, essentially negative and formal observation to be made about all of them, namely that they can only be developed on the basis of inner *distance* and *reserve* in a person's personal bearing. This prerequisite of all personal dignity has often been gravely lacking throughout the whole of German society. The latest breed of *littérateurs* with their need to prattle about their 'experiences' in word and print, be they erotic, 'religious' or whatever, are the enemies of all dignity. Various 'prophecies' produced under the influence of Nietzsche are based on a misconception, for 'distance' is certainly not to be achieved by standing on the pedestal of some 'aristocratic' contrast between oneself and the 'all too many'³⁵; indeed, on the

³⁵ Weber is referring to Nietzsche's concept of 'distance', as found, for example, in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 257 and *The Genealogy of Morals*, Section 24. The term 'the many-too-many' occurs, in particular, in 'Of The New Idol' in *Thus Spake Zarathustra*.

contrary, distance is always inauthentic if it needs this inner support nowadays. It may be that the need to maintain one's inner distance within a 'democratic' world will prove to be a valuable test of its genuineness.

All this shows yet again that in this, as in so many other respects, the German Fatherland is, as Alexander Herzen said so beautifully of Russia, *not* the land of its fathers but of its *children* and that this is how things must be.³⁶ This is particularly true of its *political* problems. These problems cannot be solved by distilling the 'German spirit' from works of the past, however great their value may have been. Let us pay all due respect to the great shades of our intellectual ancestors, and let us make use of their achievements to give formal training to our own minds. But as soon as the vanity of our *littérateurs*, simply because it is *their* vocation as writers to interpret the classic authors to the nation, claims that this function entitles them to lay down the future political shape of Germany with a *schoolmaster's* pointer, then *it is high time to throw the old tomes aside*.³⁷ There is *nothing* to be learnt from them on this question. Among other things, the German classics could teach us that the German people was able to be one of the leading cultural nations (*Kulturvolk*) in the world at a time of material poverty, political impotence and even foreign rule. The ideas of our classic writers originated in an *unpolitical* epoch, even where these ideas concern politics and economics. Inspired by the debates surrounding the French Revolution, these ideas were in part constructed in an atmosphere in which political and economic passions were lacking. The only kind of political passion which inspired them, other than angry rebellion against foreign rule, lay in their ideal enthusiasm for *moral* demands. Anything beyond that remained at the level of philosophical ideas which could stimulate us to adopt a position appropriate to *our* political realities and the demands of *today*, but they cannot serve as signposts to the future.

³⁶ We have found no source for this attribution in the works of Alexander Herzen, although it certainly accords with his sentiments.

³⁷ It is not entirely clear who are the targets of Weber's attack here, but it could well have been directed against the circle around the poet Stefan George which looked back on the classical past as a model for the future. In particular, the most prominent literary historian of the circle, Friedrich Gundolf, had attracted the attention of intellectual circles with the publication of his biography of Goethe (1916) just one year before Weber wrote this piece.

The modern problems of parliamentary rule and democracy, and indeed the essential nature of our modern state generally, lay wholly outside their field of vision.

To return to equal suffrage: it is alleged that this means the victory of the inarticulate political 'instincts of the masses' (which are supposedly inaccessible to political reflection) over well-considered political conviction, or the victory of the politics of emotion over the politics of reason. To deal with this latter question first: Germany's foreign policy – *this* certainly must be said here – proves that a monarchy ruling with a class-based suffrage (for German policy is and was dictated by the hegemony of *Prussia*) certainly holds the all-comers' record for a policy influenced by the purely personal and emotional moods of the leadership. For proof of this, one only needs to compare the ineffectual, zig-zag course of this kind of noisy politics here in Germany over the last few decades with the calm sense of direction in, say, English foreign policy. As far as the irrational 'instincts of the masses' are concerned, these only dominate politics where a compact mass *as such* exerts *pressure*, namely in large modern cities, particularly where the Latin style of city life prevails. Climatic conditions there, together with coffee-house civilisation, allow the politics of the 'street', as they have been aptly termed, to subject the country at large to violation from the capital city. The rule of the 'man in the street'³⁸ in England, on the other hand, is connected with very specific structural peculiarities of the urban 'masses' there (which are entirely absent here), while street politics in the Russian capital are linked to the secret societies there. All of these preconditions are absent in Germany, and the temperate nature of German life makes it quite unlikely that we will follow suit in succumbing to this *occasional* danger – for this is what it is, as compared with the source of influence which has been a *chronic* threat to *our* foreign policy. It is not the workforce tied to their places of work but the *layabouts* and coffee-house intellectuals in Rome and Paris who have manufactured the bellicose politics of the 'street', and who have done so, by the way, entirely in the service of the government and *only* to the extent desired or permitted by the government. What was *lacking* was the counterbalance of the industrial proletariat. The industrial proletariat, when it acts in solidarity, is undoubtedly a mighty force,

³⁸ Weber misquotes the idiom (in English) as 'men of the street'.

among other things in controlling the 'street'. Compared with those wholly irresponsible elements, however, it is a force which is at least *capable* of being ordered and led by its trusted representatives, which is to say by politicians who think rationally. As far as the politics of the state are concerned, the most important thing of all is to increase the power of these leaders – in our case the union leaders – over momentary instincts, and, beyond this, *generally* to increase the importance of *responsible* leaders, indeed of political leadership as such. One of the most powerful arguments *for* the creation of orderly, *responsible* political leadership by *parliamentary* leaders is that such an arrangement weakens, as far as this is possible, the impact of purely emotional influences both from 'above' and 'below'. 'The rule of the street' has *nothing* to do with 'equal suffrage'; Rome and Paris were ruled by the 'street' at a time when Italy had the most plutocratic form of suffrage in the world and when Napoleon III governed in Paris with his sham parliament. On the contrary, *only* the orderly *leadership* of the masses by responsible politicians is at all capable of breaking *unregulated* rule by the street and leadership by chance demagogues.

Only in the leading state in the federation, *Prussia*, is equal suffrage a problem which powerfully affects the political interests of the *Reich*. Thanks to the recently issued interpretation of the Easter Message,³⁹ the question now seems to have been settled there, at least in principle. In principle, but the route by which we are to arrive at that goal has not been settled. It is quite unlikely that the present class parliament will voluntarily give up its electoral privilege unless driven to do so by political circumstances. Or if it does so, then it will only be in the form of some apparent renunciation, for example, by linking equal suffrage to the existence of an upper house constructed with the aid of electoral arithmetic. The *legal* introduction of equal suffrage in *Prussia* is, however, a demand of the *Reich* in the interests of national politics, for the *Reich* must be able to call on its citizens to fight for their own existence and honour again in the future, should this prove

³⁹ The 'Easter Message' refers to the statement made by the Kaiser on 7 April 1917 in which he promised reform of the Prussian upper house and the introduction of the secret ballot and direct election (but not universal suffrage) as soon as the war ended. This promise of political reform as a reward for the sacrifices of the people came one day after the American declaration of war on Germany and in the wake of the radicalisation of Social Democracy produced by the Russian Revolution. An imperial proclamation in July 1917 'clarified' matters by promising equal suffrage.

necessary. It is not sufficient for this purpose to have supplies of munitions and other materials and the necessary official organs; what is also needed is the nation's *inner readiness* to defend this state as its state. We can see from events in the east what happens when this readiness is lacking.⁴⁰ One thing is certain: *the nation can never again be mobilised for war as it was on this occasion* if solemn assurances are rendered worthless by some superficially 'clever' piece of deception. That would never be forgotten. This is the *crucial* political reason why the *Reich* must ensure that equal suffrage is implemented everywhere, by coercion if necessary.

Finally, let me deal briefly with the relationship between *parliamentarisation* and *democratisation* as a question of principle. There are quite a number of very honest and indeed fanatical 'democrats' who regard 'parliamentarisation' as a corrupt system for careerists and parasites, leading to the perversion of democracy and to rule by a clique. 'Politics', in their view, may be fairly 'interesting' but in other respects it is a sterile activity for layabouts. The only thing that matters, particularly to the broad masses of the nation, is good 'administration', and this alone will guarantee the 'true' form of democracy which we in Germany, the country of the 'true notion of freedom', already possess in a superior version to that of other countries, or would be better able to create than other countries without any need for parliamentarisation. Naturally, the advocates of a bureaucracy free of all controls delight in playing one type of democracy off against another, claiming that 'true' democracy is only fully achieved where the 'pack' of advocates in parliament is unable to disturb the objective work of officials. This barefaced swindle – or in the case of our *littérateurs*, this self-deception stemming from a naive belief in empty phrases – has no difficulty in finding supporters in all camps, as does anything that serves the interest of the bureaucracy and the capitalist interests which are in league with it. It is as clear as can be that this is a swindle, and for two reasons. Firstly, *what organ would democracy have with which to control the administration by officials in turn*, if one imagines that parliamentary power did not exist? There is no answer to this. Secondly, *what would it put in place of rule by parliamentary 'cliques'?* Rule by much more hidden and – usually – smaller cliques whose influence would be even more inescapable. The system of

⁴⁰ Here the 'east' means, of course, Russia, where revolution had just broken out.

so-called direct democracy is technically possible only in a small state (canton). In all mass states democracy leads to bureaucratic administration and, without parliamentarisation, to pure *rule* by officials. Certainly, where the system of 'Caesarism' (in the wider sense of the word) operates, which is to say the direct, popular election of the head of state or a city, as in the United States and in some of its large cities, democracy can exist *without* a parliamentary system – which does not mean *entirely* without parliamentary power (this is not the place to go into the political and administrative strengths and weaknesses of that arrangement). But the full power of parliament is indispensable wherever *hereditary* organs of state – monarchs – are the (formal) heads of officialdom. Inevitably, the modern monarch is always just as much of an *amateur* as any member of parliament, and therefore quite incapable of controlling an administration. But there is this difference: a member of parliament can learn to weigh the *power of words* in party *conflict*, whereas the monarch is required to remain *outside* this struggle; furthermore, provided it has the right to hold *enquiries*, parliament is in a position to acquire the relevant facts on a subject (by cross-examining experts and witnesses under oath) and thus to control the actions of officials. How is this to be effected by the monarch or by a democracy without a parliament?

Quite generally, any nation which is under the impression that there is *nothing more* to the leadership of the state than 'administration', and that 'politics' is an occasional activity for amateurs or a side-line for officials, must be prepared to *abandon* all thoughts of participating in world politics and must accommodate itself in future to the role of a small state, like a Swiss canton or Denmark or Holland or Baden or Württemberg, all of them well enough administered polities. Otherwise it is bound to repeat our experience with the 'true freedom' preached in certain quarters, which is to say, it must face the consequences of an uncontrolled body of officials attempting to conduct high *politics*. Enthusiasm for 'democracy without parliamentary rule' was nourished during the war, of course, by the fact that – as in any serious war – in all countries without exception, in England, France, Russia and Germany, a political-military *dictatorship* of the most comprehensive kind actually replaced the normal form of government, whether this was called a 'monarchy' or a 'parliamentary republic' and this will undoubtedly cast its shadow far into peacetime. This type of rule operates everywhere with a specific kind of mass

demagoguery and shuts down all normal⁴¹ valves and controls, including control by parliament. These and other specific products of the war blind the eyes of amateur litterateurs whose minds are bent on the rapid and 'up-to-the-minute' production of books. Yet just as the war economy cannot serve as a model for a normal peacetime economy, these wartime political arrangements cannot be the pattern for a peacetime political structure.

What, we ask, is to replace the political functions of a parliament? Should referenda, say, cater for legislation? Firstly, there is no country in the world where the referendum has been introduced to carry out the most important task performed by regular parliamentary work, namely the *budget*. It is plain that this would simply be impossible. It is easy to predict what would be the fate of virtually any *taxation bill* if it were to be decided by popular referendum. In a mass state a referendum would mean a powerful mechanical brake on all progress, if applied to any at all complicated *laws* and ways of ordering the substance of the nation's culture (*Kultur*); at least this must be so in any geographically large state (the case of a canton is different). The simple, purely technical reason for this is that it *rules out party compromise*. The only questions which can be resolved by referendum in a politically and technically satisfying manner are those which can be answered by a simple 'yes' or 'no'. Otherwise the *variety* of conflicting objections to a proposal would prevent *anything at all* being achieved; and in a socially and geographically highly differentiated mass state there are bound to be incomparably more such objections than in one of the states of America or a Swiss canton. *This* is the specific function performed by parliament: to make it possible to achieve the 'best' solution (relatively speaking) by a process of negotiation and compromise. The price to be paid for this function is the same sacrifice as that made by the voter in a parliamentary election when he has to vote for the party which is *relatively* the most acceptable to him. Nothing else can replace this purely technical superiority of parliamentary legislation – which is not to say that there are no cases where the referendum might be a suitable corrective instrument. As far as the popular election of officials is concerned – unless it is restricted to the election of the *leader*, that is 'Caesarism' – it has to

⁴¹ Here the second printing has 'normal' where the first printing of the brochure (1917) had *erworben* ('inherited', 'acquired').

be said that it not only destroys the hierarchical discipline of office in any mass state, but also fosters corruption (to judge by the American experience) by eliminating the *responsibility* for appointment. In a monarchic state every attack on parliamentary rule in the name of 'democracy' means that, thanks to resentment and blindness, the interests of pure bureaucratic rule are being promoted, and in particular the interest of the bureaucracy in remaining free of control.

'Democratisation' in the sense that the structure of social estates is being levelled by the *state run by officials*, is a fact. There are only two choices: either the mass of citizens is left without freedom or rights in a bureaucratic, 'authoritarian state' which has only the appearance of parliamentary rule, and in which the citizens are 'administered' like a herd of cattle; or the citizens are integrated into the state by making them its *co-rulers*. A *nation of masters* (*Herrenvolk*)⁴² – and only such a nation can and may engage in 'world politics' – has *no* choice in this matter. Democratisation can certainly be obstructed – for the moment – because powerful interests, prejudices and cowardice are allied in opposing it. But it would soon emerge that the price to be paid for this would be the entire future of Germany. All the energies of the masses would then be engaged in a struggle *against* a state in which they are mere objects and in which they have no share. Certain circles may have an interest in the inevitable political consequences. The Fatherland certainly does not.

⁴² Weber's use of the term *Herrenvolk* ought not to be confused with the National Socialists' later misappropriation of Nietzschean vocabulary. Weber's usage does not have imperialist implications but rather conceives of a nation in which each individual is master of his own life and responsible for his own political fate.