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The Parliamentary Model of Rhetorical Political Theory

The rhetorical principle that any motion or proposal can be properly understood only if it is confronted with opposed perspectives lies at the heart of this paper. Furthermore, the parliamentary procedure for conducting and regulating debates provides the historical model for a vision of knowledge which will be developed below. While such an idea also renders the research process inherently political, the point is to insist on the heuristic value of parliamentary procedures and debating practices for fair dealing with omnipresent scholarly controversies.

The rhetorical character genre of this essay can be described as a 'genealogy' of a cluster of arguments, which I call a 'parliamentary theory of knowledge'. Such view is strongly indebted to rhetorical styles of thought. The aim of my 'genealogy' is to illustrate, with some historical examples, how the parliamentary model of debating has can also provide a theoretical model of for knowledge.

A 'parliamentary' theory of knowledge and politics

Allow me to begin with an autobiographical reference to establish the context of this paper. I first make reference to Max Weber's 'parliamentary' theory of knowledge in my "Max Weber, Parliamentarism and the Rhetorical Culture of Politics" published in *Max Weber Studies* in 2004, based on the Uppsala symposium "Max Weber's Relevance as a Theorist of Politics" in May 2003.

There, I wrote:

For Weber expressions such as *Gesichtspunkte*, *Kampf* and *Auseinandersetzung* are not metaphors but indicators of the presence of a rhetorical and political dimension within

the research process itself. Weber's view on conceptual change is analogous to the alteration of government through shifting electoral or parliamentary majorities. With an *einseitige Steigerung* we could speak of Max Weber's 'parliamentary' view on the human sciences as an extension of the parliamentary politics of controversy. (Palonen 2004, 279)

At the end of the same article I summarised this the point:

What I have referred to as Weber's 'parliamentary theory of knowledge' rehabilitates the value of the competition and deliberation in the formation and assessment of knowledge. The parliamentary politician is an ideal typical figure who is competent to use such knowledge against the bureaucratic tendencies and toward monopoly and secrecy. (Palonen 2004, 289)

The last point alludes to my thesis on a conceptual link between Weber's perspectivistic concept of 'objectivity' from 1904 and his demand for the parliamentary control over the allegedly superior knowledge held by officials in his pamphlet *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland* from 1918.

Thus, in 2004 I already named the Weberian link between knowledge and politics, but spoke rather vaguely of a 'parliamentary theory of knowledge'. However, the article initiated a personal research track that resulted in the book *"Objektivität" als faires Spiel. Wissenschaft als Politik bei Max Weber* (Palonen 2010). This research led me to study the parliamentary and rhetorical origins of Weber's view of 'objectivity' as a fair procedure in connection with the history and interpretations of Westminster parliamentary procedure.

My intention with this essay is to recapitulate some of the landmarks in the conceptual genealogy of the parliamentary theory of knowledge and politics. I have intentionally built this narrative around quotes from those authors

included in to the genealogy of a parliamentary theory of knowledge. Lastly, I have left out of this essay some important examples, above all the tracts on British parliamentary procedure, with which I am dealing elsewhere (see Palonen 2014).

Renaissance rhetorical culture of disputing *in utramque partem*

Quentin Skinner's *Reason and Rhetoric in the Philosophy of Hobbes* (1996) and his other rhetorical writings since the 1990s provide another source of inspiration for this piece. The theses on the "Renaissance rhetorical culture" and on disputing *in utramque partem* are his most important points. In the introductory chapter, Skinner writes:

Finally, there is the still more rhetorically minded view associated with Renaissance humanism: that our watchword ought to be *audi alteram partem*, always listen to the other side. This commitment stems from the belief that, in moral and political debate, it will always be possible to speak *in utramque partem*, and will never be possible to couch our moral or political theories in deductive form. (Skinner 1996, 15)

Skinner attributes this idea to the Cicero and Quintilian (ibid, 98-99). The idea is already regularly presented in early tracts on Westminster parliamentary procedure as a part of dealing with items in a 'parliamentary' manner. Thomas Smith's *De republica anglorum* puts these points as follows: "For all that commeth in consultation either in the upper house or in the neather house, is put in writing first in paper, which being once read, he that will, riseth up and speaketh with it or against it: and so one after another so long as they shall thinke good." (Smith 1583, II.1) The tracts on procedure thus extend the principle to the entire parliamentary deliberation process with three readings and the contrast between plenum and committee rules of debating. In his *Rhetoric, Politics and Popularity in Pre-revolutionary England* Markku Peltonen has recently identified that arguing *in utramque partem* was

recognised in 1593 as a principle procedure for the House of Commons procedure (Peltonen 2013, 139).

Despite the decline of rhetoric in academia, the rhetorical mode of thinking survived in Parliament. However, among the eighteenth-century master speakers in parliamentary oratory, such as Lord Chatham, Edmund Burke, William Pitt jr. and Charles James Fox, only the last one has a reputation among of a formidable debate speakers which the school rhetoricians regarded as a lower oratorical genre (see e.g. Hazlitt 1809, Goodrich 1853).

Hamilton's *Parliamentary Logick*

The parliamentary culture of debating *pro et contra* received an explicit eighteenth-century formulation in a work describing the practices of parliamentary speech and debate. William Gerard Hamilton's (1728-1796) maxims were written down during his 42 years as a Member of Parliament and published under the name *Parliamentary Logick* by Edmund Malone in 1808. The former MP, Courtney S. Kenny, published a slightly reorganised edition of *Parliamentary Logic* with a new preface in 1927, which is the edition that I am using here.

For Hamilton, logic is a sub-genre of rhetoric, and referring to the *inventio* he understands the procedural organisation of the parliament on the principle of speaking *in utramque partem*. "The very nature of a disputable question is where some thing plausible or probable may be said on both sides" (Hamilton 1927, 15). 'Parliamentary logic' alludes to the at justification of debating as 'parliamentary reason' based on its operating systematically with opposed points of view as a condition of understanding the questions themselves.

The plurality of meanings is a major *topos* in Hamilton's maxims: "Consider if

a word has not different significations, and if you may not use it advantageously, sometimes in one sense and sometimes in another. Watch this artifice in others." (ibid, 58) This maxim renders an ordinary practice in parliamentary speaking more explicit for members. The parliamentarians were able to alter words' the meanings of words for political purposes "by a particular author upon a particular occasion or in a particular discourse" (ibid, 59).

In line with the sophistic thought, Hamilton defends a perspectivistic view of knowledge: "In the support of every principle and every measure there will be some excellences and some defects." (ibid, 60) He applies speaking *in utramque partem* to parliamentary debates by recognising that nothing remains outside contestation and some grounds may be found to defend almost everything. The conclusion Hamilton draws is: "[A]nd their comparative merit, not their perfection, is the real question" (ibid). Parliamentary debate is not searching for the best arguments but comparative grounds for and against a motion in order to enable a stand in the vote.

The parliamentary history and the specific Westminster procedural rules and practices are clearly present in these maxims, such as, for instance: "Take into view not only the measures of the session, but of the same men in other sessions" (ibid, 27). An important aspect, here, concerns the partisan agenda-setting and formulation of the question: "Watch the first setting off, and the manner of stating the question at the outset; *there*, is generally the fraud" (ibid, 32). This formula provides an oppositional device to limit the Speaker's scope to manipulate the agenda (cp. Campion 1953, 150).

Hamilton's *Logick* treats parliamentary speeches as interventions into debates, to be judged according to their persuasive force. In this sense his agenda corresponds to that of deliberative rhetoric.

Hamilton's maxims are written for to the use of members of parliament. The *Logick* does not offer an introduction to the rhetoric of parliamentary debates, and does not discuss any general criteria for debate or the singularity of Westminster parliamentary debates, but presumes them to be already well known to for the debaters. An awareness of actual perspectives, as well as being able to imagine possible opposed perspectives on the items on the agenda, are a necessary conditions for participating in parliamentary debates. Hamilton presupposes debating *pro et contra* as a condition of understanding a political question, but he never spells out this principle. His maxims aim at winning debates and votes, but the forms of parliamentary debating are never thematised in their own terms.

A note on George Grote

The work of George Grote (1794-1871), a banker and Benthamite radical as well as MP for the City of London in the reformed Parliament (1832-1841), is an indispensable source on the rehabilitation of the Sophists in the nineteenth-century. Following his career in parliamentary and banking, Grote became a historian of ancient Greece and the works of Plato and Aristotle. He was opposed to the dominant 'Tory' historiography of Mitford and he did much for recovering the legacy of Athenian democracy and the Sophists.

I shall not undertake an analysis of Grote's historical studies here but restrict my discussion to Grote the historian as seen by John Stuart Mill and Walter Bagehot, whom I discuss in the next two sessions. Mill quotes in 1846 from the second volume of Grote's *History of Greece*:

We are thus enabled to trace the employment of public speaking as the standing engine of government and the proximate cause of obedience, to the social infancy of the

nation. The power of speech in the direction of public affairs becomes more and more obvious, developed, and irresistible, as we advance towards the culminating period of Grecian history – the century preceding the battle of Chæroneia. ... The susceptibility of the multitude to this sort of guidance, their habit of requiring and enjoying the stimulus which it supplied, and the open discussion, combining regular forms with free opposition, of practical matters, political as well as judicial, are the creative causes which formed such conspicuous adepts in the art of persuasion. Nor was it only professed orators who were thus produced. ... Not only the oratory of Demosthenes and Pericles, and the colloquial magic of Socrates, but also the philosophical speculations of Plato, and the systematic politics, rhetoric, and logic of Aristotle, are traceable to the same general tendencies in the minds of the Grecian people; and we find the germ of these expansive forces in the senate and agora of their legendary government. (Mill 1846, 104-106)

Bagehot plausibly remarks in *Physics and Politics*: "Grote's history often reads like a report to Parliament" (Bagehot 1872, 124). In his obituary, Bagehot makes the same point that Grote's parliamentary experiences fruitfully shaped his reinterpretation of Athenian political struggles.:

Mr. Grote was not a mere literary man, and no mere literary man could have written his history. He was essentially a practical man of business, a banker trained in the City, a politician trained in Parliament, and every page in his writings bears witness that he was so. Just as in every sentence of Thucydides there lurks some trace of exercised sagacity fit for the considerate decision of weighty affairs, though by fate excluded from them, so in every page of Grote there is a flavour not exactly of this quality, but yet others only to be learned in the complex practical life of modern times, and equally necessary for it. (Bagehot 1871)

Mill wrote two reviews on Grote's *History* (1846, 1853) and one on his *Plato* (1866, during his membership of the House of Commons). Mill explicitly refers to how the Parliament is indebted to the ancient Greek views on deliberative politics:

Yet truth, in everything but mathematics, is not a single but a double question; not

what can be said for an opinion, but whether more can be said for it than against it. There is no knowledge, and no assurance of right belief, but with him who can both confute the opposite opinion, and successfully defend his own against confutation. But this, the principal lesson of Plato's writings, the world and many of its admired teachers have very imperfectly learned. We have to thank our free Parliament, and the publicity of our courts of justice, for whatever feeling we have of the value of debate. The Athenians, who were incessantly engaged in hearing both sides of every deliberative and judicial question, had a far stronger sense of it. (Mill, 1866)

Mill and Grote probably made of Plato a more 'deliberative' thinker than he really was. Nonetheless, Grote appears to have inspired both Mill and Bagehot to defend the parliamentary theory of knowledge. Without his exercise of parliamentary judgment this would hardly have been the case. If Hamilton's exposition of parliamentary debating *in utramque partem* was largely an extension of ancient and Renaissance rhetorical ideas to Westminster, the case of with Grote was precisely the other way around: his knowledge of Westminster procedures and rhetorical practices heuristically served his reinterpretation of Athenian political and academic controversies.

Mill's parliamentary model of liberty

John Stuart Mill (1806-1873) was a life-long *homo politicus* as well as being and MP for Westminster from 1865 to 1868). Signs of what I call a parliamentary theory of knowledge can be found early in his work. The young Mill became angry with the 'Tory historiography' in Walter Scott's *Life of Napoleon*. While admitting Scott's arguments against the French revolutionary parliamentarians, Mill accuses him of for not even trying to understand their original arguments:

It was surely very foolish in the Assembly to waste so much time and labour in anxious deliberation on points which our author settles so perfectly at his ease. Nothing can be more conclusive than the case he can always make out against them; nothing more

completely satisfactory than the reasons he gives, to prove them always in the wrong; and the chief impression which is made upon the reader, is one of astonishment, that a set of persons should have been found so perversely blind to considerations so obviously dictated by sound policy and common sense. But when we examine the original authorities, we find that these considerations were no more unknown or unheeded by the Assembly than by our author himself. The difference in point of knowledge between them and him consisted chiefly in this, that they likewise knew the reasons which made for the other side of the question, and might therefore be pardoned if, being thus burthened with arguments on both sides, they were slower to decide, and sometimes came to a different decision from that which, as long as we confine ourselves to one, appears so eminently reasonable. (Mill 1828)

Mill maintains that Scott adopts his stand too easily, without considering that the 'losers in history' might also have had a point or that the results of debates cannot be known in advance. Here, already, Mill regards the parliamentary debate *pro et contra* as a heuristic tool for historical interpretation.

In the second chapter of *On Liberty*, 'Of liberty of thought and discussion', Mill extends this parliamentary model from history to philosophy. He refers to Cicero's legal practice of arguing *in utramque partem*.

[H]e always studied his adversary's case with as great, if not with still greater, intensity than even his own. What Cicero practised as the means of forensic success, requires to be imitated by all who study any subject in order to arrive at the truth. He who knows only his own side of the case, knows little of that. His reasons may be good, and no one may have been able to refute them. But if he is equally unable to refute the reasons on the opposite side; if he does not so much as know what they are, he has no ground for preferring either opinion. (Mill 1859, 38)

This view parallels the point made by Hamilton, that it is always important to listen to the opposite side and to reconstruct their argument. Mill, however, goes further in claiming that we cannot speak of 'knowledge' at all without submitting setting it into the process of debating:

Their conclusion may be true, but it might be false for anything they know: they have never thrown themselves into the mental position of those who think differently from them, and considered what such persons may have to say; and consequently they do not, in any proper sense of the word, know the doctrine which they themselves profess. They do not know those parts of it which explain and justify the remainder; the considerations which show that a fact which seemingly conflicts with another is reconcilable with it, or that, of two apparently strong reasons, one and not the other ought to be preferred. All that part of the truth which turns the scale, and decides the judgment of a completely informed mind, they are strangers to; nor is it ever really known, but to those who have attended equally and impartially to both sides, and endeavoured to see the reasons of both in the strongest light. So essential is this discipline to a real understanding of moral and human subjects, that if opponents of all important truths do not exist, it is indispensable to imagine them, and supply them with the strongest arguments which the most skilful devil's advocate can conjure up. (ibid, 39)

In other words, if dissenting voices are absent, we still have to imagine, what these could be. This corresponds to the parliamentary procedure of submitting all thinkable objections to every motion. 'Knowledge' requires a confrontation with opposite views. "On any other subject no one's opinions deserve the name of knowledge, except so far as he has either had forced upon him by others, or gone through of himself, the same mental process which would have been required of him in carrying on an active controversy with opponents." (ibid, 46)

In *On Liberty* Mill practises thought experiments, in which an extreme situation is imagined, as in this initial point.

If all mankind minus one, were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person, than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind. ... But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human

race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. (Mill 1859, 20)

In other words, Mill has to a remarkable degree constructed what Max Weber later calls ideal types, the latter being necessary conditions for understanding the more 'regular' cases. The parliamentary procedure of deliberating offers a true paradigm of such an ideal type, which is not only applied more or less consistently in existing parliaments but also to analogical situations beyond parliaments, including scholarly controversies.

Bagehot: discussion and progress

Walter Bagehot (1826-1877) in his book *The English Constitution* (1867) defends the cabinet government not merely as a technique of revising the relations between parliament and government but also one that inspires a broad culture of parliamentary debating in and beyond parliaments, whereas, in contrast, the US type presidential system restrains such debating. Later, in *Physics and Politics* (1872), he also presents a philosophy of history as a support for the debating culture.

In the chapter, "The Age of Discussion," Bagehot opposes the old Eastern and customary regimes to the new Western and "changeable civilisations" based on choice and discussion. "It is that the change from the age of status to the age of choice was first made in states where the government was to a great and a growing extent a government by discussion, and where the subjects of that discussion were in some degree abstract, or, as we should say, matters of principle." (ibid, 115) The point that matters is the form of government, and its 'principle' of is deliberation, both in the form of debate and choice in the

parliamentary sense. With a reference to Grote he claims that this transition to “government by discussion” was made in the ancient Greek and Italian republics.

But a government by discussion, ... at once breaks down the yoke of fixed custom. ... As far as it goes, the mere putting up of a subject to discussion, with the object of being guided by that discussion, is a clear admission that that subject is in no degree settled by established rule, and that men are free to choose in it. (ibid, 117-118)

In Britain, Bagehot's 'government by discussion' refers to the parliamentary sovereignty over the Common Law, based on customs and precedents. The choice of a 'government by discussion' is not analogous to a vote, but the very presence of deliberation on the form of government makes the difference: there is no return to custom. The politicisation of government cannot be simply taken back or forgotten, and a decision to prevent discussion is also a form of choice. Even so, to discuss politics freely requires habitually practising it, and which itself is for Bagehot, is itself the mark of civilising progress (ibid, 118).

Furthermore, for Bagehot, discussion is opposed to direct or immediate action: “If you want to stop instant and immediate action, always make it a condition that the action shall not begin till a considerable number of persons have talked over it, and have agreed on it” (ibid, 140). The parliamentary procedure of reserving time for debating in several stages provides the historical paradigm for thorough reflection. “But for the purpose now in hand – that of preventing hasty action, and ensuring elaborate consideration – there is no device like a polity of discussion.” (ibid.)

The contemporary adversary of Bagehot's contemporary adversary was Thomas Carlyle, whose 'direct action' contains dictatorial implications.

Their great enemy is Parliamentary government; they call it, after Mr. Carlyle, the “national palaver”; they add up the hours that are consumed in it, and the speeches which are made in it, and they sigh for a time when England might again be ruled, as it once was, by a Cromwell – that is, when an eager, absolute man might do exactly what other eager men wished, and do it immediately. (ibid.)

Bagehot illustrates how the parliamentary vision of politics requires time and, therefore, enough of it should be provided. Time is an inherent part of both discussion and action, as manifested in the structure of parliamentary procedure as a multi-stage and multi-level process of deliberation. He is turns vehemently opposed to against making rapid decisions: “it is to the incessant prevalence of detective discussion that our doubts are due; and much of that discussion is due to the long existence of a government requiring constant debates, written and oral” (ibid, 142).

Parliamentary government is based on debating, spending enough time, limiting violence and numerical power, while it at the same time it activates the criticism of customs and conventions, including also among the citizens. A choice without debating the alternatives is no real choice.

James De Mille and the singularity of parliamentary debating

The Canadian professor James De Mille (1833-1880) explicitly defends the parliamentary theory of knowledge from a rhetorical perspective. His *Elements of Rhetoric* is among the first studies that distinguishes between oratory and debate as forms of rhetoric. “Oratory is the discussion of a subject by one; debate is the discussion of a subject by more than one. Oratory considers the subject from one point of view; debate considers the subject from two or more opposed points of view.” (De Mille 1878, 471)

De Mille further divides debates between 'controversial' and 'parliamentary'.

The former unites deliberative and negotiating aspects of rhetoric in controversies in which the parties are not swayed from their position, do not seek for compromises, or mediation, but aim at victory. The criterion of parliamentary debate is its procedural and formal character: "The peculiarity of parliamentary debate is that the subject to be examined is presented in a formal statement, called a resolution, or question, to which alone the discussion must refer" (ibid, 472).

The Westminster Parliament has in historically been exemplary in proceduralising its debates. For De Mille, the 'parliamentary' qualifier of a genre of debate does not depend on the *locus* where that it is delivered, while conversely, not all historical parliaments necessarily conduct their debates in a 'parliamentary' manner.

Unlike Bagehot, De Mille separates debate from mere discussion, in which the viewpoints are not 'contrary' but merely 'different'. In contrast: "The aim of parliamentary debate is to investigate the subject from many points of view which are presented from two contrary sides. In no other way can a subject be so exhaustively considered." (ibid. 473)

This paragraph expresses precisely the conceptual and historical link between parliament and rhetoric, between the political form of parliamentary debate and a rhetorical view of knowledge. The formula contains three aspects, namely a perspectivistic investigation of the issue on the agenda, a division of the parliament into two sides – i.e. between members with contrary points of view – as well as a thorough consideration of the items on the agenda.

A parliamentary debate, when carried on by able men, is one of the finest exhibitions of the powers of the human mind that can be witnessed. We see well-informed and well-trained intellects turning all their powers to the discussion of a subject from many

points of view, in which two opposite forces struggle for the victory. In such a struggle all the highest intellectual forces are put forth. We encounter broad and deep knowledge, quick apprehension, argumentative power, great command of language, together with all the resources of wit, humor, and pathos; the sharpness of epigrammatic statement, the vehemence of denunciation, the keenness of the quick retort, sharp repartee, or biting sarcasm. (ibid.)

With this description, The parliamentary debate reaches here an ideal typical status for expressing and practising civilised dissensus. As such, it may serve as a measure for judging the activities of existing parliaments and other assemblies: how far and in which respects they do deviate from the ideal type. A parliamentary view of knowledge also indicates the political reevaluation of debate and dissensus

Most nineteenth -century professional rhetoric scholars had difficulties recognising that the rhetoric of debate must be judged by different criteria than the oratory of separate speeches. De Mille is here close here to Mill or Bagehot, but seems to insist more on the role of the procedure as a mark of distinction. For him, the dissensus between perspectives is no mere instrument for debating but a condition for a parliamentary vision of knowledge and politics.

A remark on Nietzsche

So far my argument has been restricted to the Westminster Parliament. This does not mean that other sources have not given rise to similar ideas. As an example, I quote a long passage on rethinking the concept of 'objectivity' in Friedrich Nietzsche's *Zur Genealogie der Moral* from 1887.

Seien wir zuletzt, gerade als Erkennende, nicht undankbar gegen solche resolute Umkehrungen der gewohnten Perspektiven und Werthungen, mit denen der Geist

allzu lange scheinbar freventlich und nutzlos gegen sich selbst gewüthet hat: dergestalt einmal anders sehn, anders-sehn-wollen ist keine kleine Zucht und Vorbereitung des Intellekts zu seiner einmaligen 'Objektivität', – letztere nicht als 'interesselose Anschauung' verstanden (als welche ein Unbegriff und Widersinn ist), sondern als das Vermögen, sein Für und Wider in der Gewalt zu haben und aus- und einzuhängen: so dass man sich gerade die Verschiedenheit der Perspektiven und der Affekt- Interpretationen für die Erkenntniss nutzbar zu machen weiss. Hüten wir uns nämlich, meine Herrn Philosophen, von nun an besser vor der gefährlichen alten Begriffs- Fabelei, welche ein 'reines, willenloses, schmerzloses, zeitloses Subjekt der Erkenntniss' angesetzt hat, hüten wir uns vor den Fangarmen solcher contradiktorischen Begriffe wie 'reine Vernunft', 'absolute Geistigkeit', 'Erkenntniss an sich': – hier wird immer ein Auge zu denken verlangt, das gar nicht gedacht werden kann, ein Auge, das durchaus keine Richtung haben soll, bei dem die aktiven und interpretirenden Kräfte unterbunden sein sollen, fehlen sollen, durch die doch Sehen erst ein Etwas-Sehen wird, hier wird also immer ein Widersinn und Unbegriff von Auge verlangt. Es giebt nur ein perspektivisches Sehen, nur ein perspektivisches 'Erkennen'; und je mehr Affekte wir über eine Sache zu Worte kommen lassen, je mehr Augen, verschiedene Augen wir uns für dieselbe Sache einzusetzen wissen, um so vollständiger wird unser 'Begriff' dieser Sache, unsre 'Objektivität' sein (Nietzsche 1887, 860–861).

Nietzsche argues takes stand for a perspectivistic reorientation of the concept of 'objectivity'. It is easy to see that with this move he wants to transcend philosophy and science with rhetoric. He re-conceptualises 'objectivity' – in quotation marks – as “das Vermögen, sein Für und Wider in der Gewalt zu haben und aus- und einzuhängen“, that is, as to the ability to influence positions for and against. So, it would seem that Nietzsche takes parliamentary as a point of reference after all. This was explicitly the case with Immanuel Kant, who in *Der Streit der Fakultäten* speaks of the legitimate (*rechtmäßig*) disputes between faculties “in der Parlaments der Gelehrtheit” (Kant 1798, 42).

Nietzsche had read Grote and made an interesting remark: “Die Taktik Grote’s zur Verteidigung der Sophisten ist falsch: er will sie zu Ehrenmännern

und Moral-Standarten erheben – aber ihre Ehre war, keinen Schwindel mit großen Worten und Tugenden zu treiben...” (NF-1888, 14[147] – *Nachgelassene Fragmente Frühjahr 1888*). For Nietzsche, the sophists practised a provocative *Umwertung der Werte*, but not a fair debate in the British parliamentary style, as Grote seems to attribute to them.

Even if Nietzsche barely followed everyday parliamentary debates, they may still have inspired him at this stage of his perspectivistic view on knowledge while . Or, there were scholars inspired by Nietzsche’s perspectivistic vision of knowledge but who were more *homines politici* than he was. The most prominent figure among them is, of course, Max Weber.

Weber’s revaluation of scholarly controversies

In the introduction to of my “*Objektivität“ als faires Spiel. Wissenschaft als Politik bei Max Weber* (Palonen 2010) I present three quotes from Weber’s 1904 essay, which I shall repeat here and situate in the current narrative. Weber's reconceptualisation of 'objectivity' can be understood as the result of an unexpected combination of two strains of thought, Nietzsche’s concept of 'objectivity' and British parliamentary procedure.

The first quote includes an obvious link to the Nietzschean perspectivism:

Es gibt keine schlechthin 'objektive' wissenschaftliche Analyse des Kulturlebens oder – was vielleicht etwas Engeres, für unsern Zweck aber sicher nichts wesentlich anderes bedeutet – der 'sozialen Erscheinungen' unabhängig von speziellen und 'einseitigen' Gesichtspunkten, nach denen sie – ausdrücklich oder stillschweigend, bewußt oder unbewußt – als Forschungsobjekt ausgewählt, analysiert und darstellend gegliedert werden (Weber 1904, 170).

This quote contains several points. For Weber no 'facts' independent of

interpretative perspectives can exist because as the perspective changes so to the 'facts' become different, and we have no grounds to assume the existence of some perspective-independent 'hard facts'. Secondly, there cannot be any 'total' or 'comprehensive' views, as all perspectives are necessarily one-sided and the point is to oppose them to each other, to judge their strengths and weaknesses, even if the criteria for judgement are liable to change in the course of the debate. It is obvious that, in addition to Nietzsche, this Weberian perspectivism is indebted to rhetorical and sophistic styles of thinking.

The second quote illustrates the necessity and heuristic value of the confrontation between research perspectives:

Das Kennzeichen des sozialpolitischen Charakters eines Problems ist es ja geradezu, daß es nicht auf Grund bloß technischer Erwägungen aus feststehenden Zwecken heraus zu erledigen ist, daß um die regulativen Wertmaßstäbe selbst gestritten werden kann und *muß*, weil das Problem in die Region der allgemeinen Kulturfragen hineinragt (Weber 1904, 153).

For Weber, political cum cultural questions are controversial in principle. For scholars such 'controversies' are omnipresent and are also, for Weber, heuristically valuable in to rendering different viewpoints explicit. Such a practice would also systematically use confrontation in a manner that leaves the judgement about stronger and weaker arguments to be decided by the audience. In the academic milieu of Weber's time this clearly was not the case, in particular not in his own discipline of political economy as we can see from the my third quote:

Daß das Problem als solches besteht und hier nicht spintisierend geschaffen wird, kann niemandem entgehen, der den Kampf um Methode, 'Grundbegriffe' und Voraussetzungen, den steten Wechsel der 'Gesichtspunkte' und die stete Neubestimmung der 'Begriffe', die verwendet werden, beobachtet und sieht, wi

theoretische und historische Betrachtungsform noch immer durch eine scheinbar unüberbrückbare Kluft getrennt sind: 'zwei Nationalökonomien', wie ein verzweifelnder Wiener Examinand seinerzeit jammernd klagte. Was heißt hier Objektivität? Lediglich diese Frage wollen die nachfolgenden Ausführungen erörtern (Weber 1904, 160–161).

Here, Weber here not only asks, what should we mean by 'objectivity' in the humanities, but also provides an answer to it, at least implicitly. Struggles regarding methods, concepts, presuppositions and viewpoints are permanent, not only between the two schools of political economy at the time, but in the human sciences (*Kulturwissenschaften*) in general. Weber suggests not to 'resolve' such struggles in favour of some specific approaches, but to arrange a fair regulation of the controversies between them. Here lies his reinterpretation of the very concept of 'objectivity'.

In 'ordinary' politics at the time the omnipresence of these struggles was widely recognised, in particular in Britain. My thesis is that Weber suggests using the Westminster procedural regulations as a model for fair regulation of scholarly controversies, after he reinterprets 'objectivity' itself as a procedural concept aiming at the fair regulation of scholarly controversies.

This view can be illustrated by knowledge claims that are presented as being beyond dispute. For Weber, the purest examples of such knowledge claims can be found among state officials in imperial Germany, when ministers were also officials and no parliamentary control over of the rule of officialdom (*Beamtenherrschaft*) was available. Weber deals with such knowledge claims in his pamphlet *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland*, published as book in the winter of 1918.

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Weber distinguishes three levels of knowledge claims among these officials: *Fachwissen*, *Dienstwissen*, *Geheimwissen*, or factual competence, aspects of

service as officials, and the requirement of official secrecy. He does not dispute the superior knowledge of officials over parliamentarians, but rather regards it as indispensable to construct devices enabling parliamentarians to question the validity, range and relevance of such knowledge. Here Weber proposes three main instruments: the cross-examination of officials before parliamentarians, the possibility for MPs to conduct on the spot inspections of the sources of knowledge provided by the officials, and the introduction of parliamentary examination commissions. All of these have their model in the parliamentary committees of Westminster (Weber 1918, esp. 236-237, see my discussion in Palonen 2010, ch. 8).

Weber's broader target concerns views of knowledge that are present in parliamentary politics. German officials at the time regarded themselves (à la Hegel) as incarnations of the general interest in contradistinction to particularistic politicians. With his perspectivistic vision of knowledge and 'objectivity' Weber militantly opposes all claims for a 'total view' of knowledge and thus excludes the possibility of officials embodying the representation of the 'general interest'. Rather, the relatively superior knowledge held by official is an empirical matter due to their position in the system of bureaucracy, and which also includes, by necessity, the one-sided perspectives mentioned earlier. Such one-sided superiority can be controlled only by confronting the work of officials with that of others, both of those working in other offices with different perspectives and of the parliamentarians who have learnt to deliberate between opposed points of view and invent alternative perspectives, including when none seems to exist. This procedure is analogous to Mill's thought experiments.

In other words, the parliamentarians' experiences with procedural rules and rhetorical practices of debating *pro et contra* are important factor in controlling or mediating the alleged omniscience of officialdom and its monopolistic

claims over knowledge. Weber's view on the tendency to bureaucratisation tendencies makes visible the rise of similar dangers outside the state administration, such as in business, parties and trade unions, as well as in the universities (see his comparison of bureaucratisation in German and US universities, Weber 1911).

Weber does not share the strong belief in progress which underpins the viewpoints of Mill and Bagehot. In his *Der Sinn der 'Wertfreiheit' in sozialen und ökonomischen Wissenschaften* (1917) Weber deconstructs the language of progress and evolution, which cannot itself be outside of beyond a conception of knowledge given by rhetorical conceptual controversies. This is due to Weber's interpretation of bureaucratisation being the historically dominant tendency of the age and requiring the counterweight of parliament (esp. Weber 1918, 222-223). He is suspicious of all teleological figures of change, against which he sets the proceduralism of parliamentary politics which also provides a model regarding knowledge claims and their control and confrontation with each other.

With his views on 'objectivity', Max Weber was engaged in a struggle on two fronts. He fought governmentalist tendencies in German universities, in particular in Gustav Schmoller's neocameralist economics. At the same time he militantly rejected politicians' willingness to follow or even hide behind the authority of 'science' in questions that depend on debates and decisions for their very intelligibility, and in which 'science' (*Wissenschaft*) could claim no authority. Weber's point is that parliamentary procedures for conducting deliberations can also provide a model for the reconceptualisation of 'objectivity' and 'value freedom' (*Wertfreiheit*, as interpreted by Weber in his 1917 essay). As a life-long *homo politicus* Weber was not burdened by any of the typical academic objections to learning from the practices of politicians.

The link between his 'objectivity' essay and the parliamentary control of claims to knowledge by officials is seldom recognised. Many of the introductory courses to the methodology of human sciences presented in our universities hardly have little, if any, idea of Weber's conceptual radicalism, and : few people have really understood how militantly he turns against the religion of science in all its forms.

A contemporary case: Quentin Skinner

I have not followed the 'genealogy' of a parliamentary theory of knowledge beyond Max Weber. Views resembling Weber can be found in the writings of others who defend the necessity and value of professional politicians (a number of them are discussed in Palonen 2012). However, to further illustrate my argument for the presence of a parliamentary theory of knowledge today I would like to end this paper by quoting one scholar who was also particularly indebted to Max Weber.

In an interview in January 2008, Quentin Skinner said: "I now say to my students on Hobbes's *Leviathan*...think of it as a speech in Parliament; all of these great works of political philosophy are recognizably contributions to a debate" (Skinner 2008).

Skinner's view actualises another aspect of the parliamentary theory of knowledge. When scholarly works are contributions to debates, this allows us to read academic debates in terms analogical to parliamentary controversies. In this sense, Skinner's suggestion resembles the works cited in this essay. His proposal could be carried further in more systematically applying the Westminster procedural vocabulary and constructing analogies to such moves as committing, amending, adjourning or raising the question or order.

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