Politics as Art of Translation - Max Weber's Political Ethic in Light of Ludwig Wittgenstein's and Norbert Elias's Theories of Language

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*"Wittgenstein hat gesagt: wovon man nicht
sprechen kann, davon muss man schweigen.
Ich glaube, man könnte mit dem gleichen Recht sagen:
Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, danach muss man suchen."*
(Norbert Elias)

Abstract: Max Weber's concept of the ethic of responsibility is frequently treated as a relic of previous stages in the development of political sphere, which has allegedly entered the phase of postmodern and postpolitical transformation. In this text I argue that Weber's distinction between the ethic of responsibility and ethic of ultimate means can still be applicable in contemporary political philosophy provided that it is adjusted to the multicultural reality of our societies. This may be achieved by enriching Weber's perspective by elements of philosophy of language. I propose drawing on Ludwig Wittgenstein's description of language socialization based on following a rule as well as trial and error in order to explain in linguistic terms the diversity of separate value worlds envisaged by Weber under the term "polytheism". I also refer to Norbert Elias's theory of language as a symbolic activity combining thinking, speaking, memorizing and knowing related to external world, in which elements of objective accuracy and fantasy are always interwoven. This allows me to conclude that politics of responsibility in a multicultural world is an art of translation between closed linguistic worlds, which may only be performed by sifting the matter-of-fact contents of human imagery from its fantastic correlate.

Introduction

Max Weber's concept "ethic of responsibility" is probably one of the most influential in the social sciences, although it is very difficult to see why this should be the case. A term obviously embedded in the then flourishing Neokantian doctrine which would become

obsolete but two generations later, advanced by a thinker whose huge authority, rigorous methodological stance and profound insight were not always matched by the aptness of his political choices, ethic of responsibility was not an obvious candidate for best-seller on the market of ideas. Nevertheless, it did survive and has continued to shape our thinking in the sphere of political and social theory for almost a hundred years now, thus proving beyond any doubt that the news of Weber's prompt demise were greatly exaggerated.

One reason for the ongoing charm of this Weberian concept is, of course, purely historical. The world has gone through two world wars, including the greatest scientifically planned homicide ever launched by a democratically elected government, only to face an era of cold war Western *Realpolitik* and Eastern travesty of 19 th-century political ideals. This in turn was followed by a rising tide of technocratic rule, religious as well as ethnic fanaticism and intolerance, leading to globalization of risk society. In such circumstances the dangers that come with a deficit of responsible politicians are not easily forgotten. But there must be more in Weber's ideal which still appeals to our imagination, even though modernity, of which this ideal used to be a part, is said to be declining. There must be a vision of politics that is not only normative, but also descriptive of something central to its social meaning, which does not change over time and which is in itself an ever-inspiring puzzle. In this text I am going to argue that the core of the political activity which Weber managed to imply, but failed fully to grasp was its linguistic nature, which can be summarized as follows: political activity is a continuous translation. However, in order to examine the Weberian category in terms of the linguistic dimension of human action, we need to step beyond Weber's conceptual world in search for appropriate analytical tools. These will be provided in this article by the later philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein, notably his concepts of the "form of life" and "following a rule" which I believe can be successfully applied to a Weberian view of the political sphere.

In this text I am going to discuss the ethic of responsibility from philosophical and linguistic perspectives: I commence with a summary of what I call the sociological narrative of modernity, against the backdrop of which I shortly recapitulate the key tenets of Weber's *Politik als Beruf*. Next, I point out the linguistic aspects of Weberian politics and transpose them into Wittgenstein's conceptual framework. I conclude with a few questions based on my theoretical construction. They could in my opinion lead to enriching the empirical research agenda in contemporary politics attempting to correctly translate between interests, beliefs and habituses the multitude of which makes the tower of Babel look like an undergraduate exercise in ethnomethodological estrangement.

Under one god

The famous contention in Weber's *Politik als Beruf* is that people always prefer serving gods over objectivity and rationality; this readiness to follow a god is therefore one of the basic features of human nature. In order to properly assess the consequences of this view, we must consider the meaning of the phrase "to serve a god" in Weberian anthropology.

The "god" is a synecdoche for a system of values, which has one main characteristic: it is well centered and unequivocally hierarchical, which makes it consistent, both internally (as a set of normative statements derived from values) and externally (as an entirety of behavior to which these statements are applied and/or evaluations based of them)[1]. The god is, therefore, not a single value – it would be simplistic to think that serving a god can be equaled with following any values whatsoever. Serving a god is a metaphysical principle of unification subordinating all values and all action to one, so to say, supervalue, which prevails in case of any misgivings about the right conduct in a situation of choice, thus eliminating all moral and pragmatic dilemmas (although most probably leading to a good many emotional and intellectual ones). A person wholeheartedly serving a god knows all the answers, even though they may bring about some – euphemistically speaking – unpleasant consequences. A priori answers to all questions come at a high price, which is probably the reason why serving a god, while being a very attractive metaphor, is very seldom exemplified by an actual social action and should only be treated as an ideal type in the Weberian sense of the term.[2]

As far as the worldview and the habitus of a person serving a god are concerned, he or she would probably be a very predictable partner in social interaction, applying a consistent set of norms throughout his or her life. Jürgen Habermas describes this property of god-serving people as "methodic living," the most renowned example of which are Weberian Puritans, although the Jainists whom Weber discusses in the second volume of *Die Wirtschaftsethik der Weltreligionen* would probably provide an even more accurate illustration. On the other hand, a society composed of god-serving people would in all probability follow an equally methodical and consistent path, which would not exclude change and development, but would rather guarantee their linear character and monistic logic, presumably restricting rapid dynamic fluctuations. Individual worldview and culture in such a society would be perfectly congruent, well organized, relatively stable and closed-ended. Order and method would be the watchwords of social life; change and development would only come as by-products, as in *The Protestant Ethic*.

The model for such a society in the sociological narrative is of course so-called medieval society. The Middle Ages seem to function as a general model for the god-serving community, most probably due to their allegedly monolithic ideological landscape. Far as this vision may be from the reality of medieval (or, in all probability, any other historical society), it is entertained in a surprising number of respectable sociological publications. The rationale behind that is not the plausibility of this image, but the perfect contrast it presents to the only society in which we are, so to say, really interested, namely our own capitalist society of late modernity. This is the climax of the sociological narrative of modernity – our own scientific origin myth.

Sociological narrative of modernity

According to theories coined by social science, modernity is marked by what Habermas called "decentration of the worldview." As an effect of a complex set of factors which can all be attributed to the rise of capitalism, the metaphysical unity of worldview and culture was replaced by a conglomerate of values unrelated to one another and not organized into

any unified system. The most moving picture of such a social situation is the decomposition of the "habits of heart" in American society by Robert Bellah and his colleagues.[3]

This situation brings forth a perverse feature which values possess: if not tamed by the principle of metaphysical unity they all strive to become the One, the only god whom an individual serves. Therefore, modernity really gives a deflected picture of serving god: instead of having one (as in Weber's famous saying), we suddenly face a multitude of them, each claiming the unique status of the Only. This feature of contemporary culture and worldviews is sometimes referred to as "henotheism," typical of postmodernity, but born out of the modern pace of structural change, growing complexity of interaction chains and intense production of knowledge, all prerequisite to capitalist economy.[4]

The strategy adopted by the culture in such conditions is a "disinterested pluralism" – a strategy captured well by the Polish saying "*Panu Bogu ?wieczk? i diab?u ogarek*" ("to light a candle to God and a stump to the devil").[5] Individuals try to serve all the gods in question: personal happiness and professional career, great sex and happy marriage, health and pleasure, saving the rainforests and broadening one's horizons by extensive travels, respect for other cultures and disrespect for intolerance.[6] The result is, of course, rather confusing to a dedicated worldview researcher. However, this picture does not completely resemble the Durkheimian anomia, because there are rules and values. It is just that they happen to be applied over periods much shorter than a lifetime, or in spheres not covering the entirety of person's activities, and, last but not least, not consistently by all of society.

The above situation leads us to three separate problems, each of them covered by social theory, and all of them usually perceived as typical traits of late modern reality. The first is the "corrosion of character," forcefully described if not too convincingly documented by Richard Sennett.[7] The second is the rise of irrationality resulting in self-indulgence and hypocrisy, pointed out by many authors, including Ralf Dahrendorf, Francis Fukuyama, Jürgen Habermas, Peter Sloterdijk, Giorgio Agamben and Michel Maffesoli. The third is the decomposition of social unity and the consequences of modern pluralism. I shall only focus on the latter, but it should be borne in mind that all the three are interrelated and can be traced to what Weber described as the routinization of the protestant ethic.

Decentration of social unity

As stated in the Gospel, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other" (Matthew 6: 24). In the world, in which a plurality of values exists, each of them claiming to be the Only god in the pantheon, one of the crucial lines of social division will be between groups serving – at any given moment – the same god. These groups may be ephemeral (like Michel Maffesoli's "neotribes"), or well-established (then they could be the "sects", "subcultures," or "minorities" described by Arjun Appadurai).[8] One thing all such social formations have in common is that they do not share any cultural universe with other groups in the society or the society as a whole. If, on the other hand, the society as a whole

is composed of such god-serving communities (their sizes declining as the axiological pluralism grows), to speak of a "society as a whole" becomes a gross misunderstanding; there is no longer any society over the closed bubbles of god-serving social units.

However, the coexistence of these units still depends on certain conditions which bring to the fore the practical aspect of serving a god. This service is usually subject to an ethics that Weber calls the "ethics of ultimate ends" or "ethics of conviction" (*Gesinnungsethik*) and which could be roughly summarized by the maxim: "Do your god's bidding until the end, notwithstanding the consequences." Among the scholarship on the ethics of convictions since Weber's time, one observation seems crucial as far as the subject of social decomposition is concerned: a person who acts by taking such an ethical stand does not consider the results of his or her actions (including those concerning other people) as relevant in the evaluation and choice of conduct. Of course, the convictions may be of a kind in which the consequences of action are recognized as an ethically relevant issue, but this would be contingent on the contents of ethical convictions. It is not difficult to spot a potential problem here, if we consider a case of an agglomeration of people, with each of them serving his or her gods and following an ethics of convictions, having at the same time a common Earth to share with others. The necessity of sharing the Earth might be narrowed down to the contention that there are certain rare material resources to be distributed or (as the case may be) redistributed among the members of the agglomeration. Nevertheless, the problem stands even in this minimalist version, provided that we do not admit sheer violence as a technique of reproduction.

This economic dimension of social life, which in Weber's view could not be reduced to cultural projection and creation (as is often the case in contemporary constructionist approaches), underpins the idea of politics. The latter is understood as a sphere of activity which requires its own kind of ethics in order to preserve the minimum of social unity indispensible to cater for economic needs of individuals. This is achieved by coordinating their actions to a degree ensuring their cooperation, despite the fact that they may have virtually nothing in common on a cultural – or: axiological – level.[9]

Linguistic aspect of responsibility in a multilingual world

The goal of politics is therefore to give people in general (those who live under the regime of convictions) what they cannot procure for themselves: safe surroundings in which to serve their gods. In order to fulfill this task, a politician must take a distanced stance towards his own god and try to follow *Verantwortungsethik*, i.e. an ethic of responsibility for the consequences of his or her actions taken *qua* politician. The scope of this responsibility is disputed, but it is generally agreed that its main feature is the readiness to account ethically for the effects of actions which under in the light of the agent's convictions would be justified.[10] This requires, of course, a measure applicable to the effects independent of the agent's convictions – which is precisely the point in which the Weberian idea of political ethics reveals its strong affiliation with formal rationality. That said, I would like to put this issue aside as it is too complex to be discussed in a mere parentheses.

Politics is the art of finding a way to survive as a society in the polytheist (or henotheist) world. That is why among the characteristics of a responsible politician we find virtues such as matter-of-factness, the gift of anticipation, temperance and the ability to seek compromises[11]. Such are the qualities of a good negotiator.

Nevertheless, negotiations are conducted in a language – and this is one single issue which Weber underestimates in his reflections on both politics and its ethics. There are no instruments in Weberian thought to account for the fact that the diversity of values if reflected by the multiplicity of idioms in which adherents of various gods communicate. This multilingualism makes their consensus unlikely on the practical level of social cooperation. This is, of course, an additional legitimization for politics, if we consider that in those spheres of social life where no language (in the broadest sense possible) seems to present itself as a tool for mutual understanding, violence is bound to take the upper hand.[12] Responsible politics, defined as struggle for power over a state holding a monopoly over legitimate use of violence, is therefore also a straight jacket put on the society which is losing its communicational unity. One insight absent in Weber's analysis is that this safeguarding is mediated by language. Weber's lack of interest in language is perfectly understandable when we take into account that the linguistic turn in social sciences, which would only come over a generation after Weber's premature death, was to an extent a direct result of the saturation of the paradigm elaborated largely on the basis of Weberian ideas.

Politics after the linguistic turn: a Wittgensteinian approach

The linguistic aspect of political life is anything but undervalued in contemporary scholarship.[13] Nevertheless, what I would like to discuss here is not an analysis of the linguistic aspect of politics taken as communicational activity (or even: the communicational activity par excellence, as in Habermas's or Hannah Arendt's interpretations), but rather the linguistic background of politics, shaping its character in multilingual world. To examine this issue I am using the conceptual framework proposed by Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Wittgenstein once wrote: "If language is to be a means of communication there must be agreement not only in definitions but also (queer as this may sound) in judgments," explaining, "this is not agreement in opinions but in form of life."[14] Thus he introduces the mysterious notion of "form of life" which, although very seldom used in the *Philosophical Investigations,* became one of the most influential philosophical ideas in its day.

A form of life is a set of practices shared and transmitted from generation to generation by a community of people using the same language as well as knowledge used in these practices and the inarticulate assumptions of these practices, including ontological and epistemological ones.[15] The form of life is learned together with the language and covers an individual's entire field of cognition. Things, which cannot be expressed in a language, do not come into the cognitive field of its user, which makes them inexistent in a weak, but meaningful sort of way. This idea of language as the source of limitations of human

cognition survived the turn in Wittgenstein's thinking from the philosophy of formal language towards the philosophy of everyday language. A Freudian perspective has frequently been evoked in order to account for the nature of those things beneath the surface of language which can nevertheless influence the life of its users (like an unnamed disease or a disguised domination).[16] However, apart from that tension between language and the extralinguistic world, which suggests the unintelligible nature of the latter, within the form of life there are also areas of the unknown and unconscious. The nature of language in Wittgenstein's later philosophy of Wittgenstein is far from a logical lucidity of his earlier works.

Two mechanisms are said to shape the nature of our language practices: following a rule and the method of trial and error. Both of them are in fact learning strategies adopted by individuals and both are described by Wittgenstein in order to get a grasp of the genesis and function of rules in social life. All rules have a linguistic aspect, because social life as such becomes a linguistic activity as a consequence of language predetermination of the cognitive horizon. Trial and error lead to a distinction of two classes of actions: those which have been tried out and proved to be wrong and those which have not. Such a classification seems to overlook the class of actions already "tried out" and not proved wrong, which would, therefore, be presumed right. However, Wittgenstein argues that the ultimate test of an action's correctness is the reaction of the agent's social surroundings. Therefore, in every case an action is tried out afresh – there is no appeal from a negative reaction of others. This leads to an idea of following a rule as a process in which rules are reconstructed *a posteriori* based on current data from social life, which in itself is irrational and uncodified. No matter how far we move ourselves from this pattern in designing predefined sets of rules for various social interactions, the basic model is still based on the idea that we are doing our best to anticipate the others' reaction when we make a move in any social game. A trial is the only way of knowing these reactions, which makes the social life a domain of irrationality and uncertainty, no matter how much support we may get from inductive reasoning and the so-called probability laws. The reason for us not to realize this fully in our everyday life is, firstly, the deep correspondence of our language practices and ontological assumptions (as set forth by linguistic predetermination of our cognition), and secondly, the force of habit, transforming into habitus. A form of life can be treated as a habitus insofar as this concept refers to a set of practices based on cognitive mechanisms determined by a position of an individual (as in Norbert Elias's approach) or its social class (in the theory of Pierre Bourdieu). The prevalence of sociological theories of habitus in contemporary social sciences often leads us to overlook the classical roots of both this term and concept, which need to be traced as far as the Greek *hexis*.

Hexis is a concept related to the idea of the political which precedes and predefines the social. The idea of *hexis* as presented in classical Greek philosophy and most noted for its use in Aristotle's political theory adds an important if somewhat obscure ethical aspect to our contemporary concept of habitus, pointing to the fact that all ideas about the social world are enrooted in an ethical vision of human community constituted by a common polity (*politeia*) and cherishing a common set of ethical virtues. It should be noted that in Aristotle's view (and long afterwards, until the idea first came to be disputed in the period

of *Methodenstreit*) the dianoetical virtues, pertaining to knowing the world of *physis* and leading to *episteme* understood as unsituated knowledge would not fall into the field of influence of socially determined *hexis*. Nevertheless, from Karl Mannheim to Bruno Latour and Karin Knorr-Cetina we have moved the borders of circumstantially contingent knowledge far into the realm of science. Our evaluations are also derived from our form of life and if it is their nature to stimulate and direct our actions so effectively, it is due to their communal character, which makes it so hard to deviate from any of them.

Thus, our form of life also determines the gods we follow. This deification of language has certain interesting consequences for the activities of a politician who instead of struggling with a society that is pluralist in terms of values, finds him- or herself facing what is in fact an unconscious multilingualism.

Translation as the fate of the *Kulturmensch*

Weber believed that political life was the proper locus for the human fate to be accomplished, demonstrating the force of the tragic, Faustian motif of human existence. [17] This Faustian ambivalence of being can in fact be reduced to incommensurability of translation. The task of a politician becomes an unrealizable one: in order to translate between different dominions in which various god-serving communities are closed by their forms of life, we would have to connect what is separate by definition and by nature. Wittgenstein's reasoning will not help us find a way out from this dilemma, we need another ally, who shares Wittgenstein's premises but draws different conclusions.

Norbert Elias is not typically perceived as an author connected with the Wittgensteinian trend in the sociology of knowledge. In fact, to the best of my knowledge he hardly ever referred to Wittgenstein in his published work – except in the poem I chose as a motto to this paper. Nevertheless, it seems that he shared most of Wittgenstein's views from the later period, including the one according to which speaking, thinking, remembering and knowing were in fact diverse aspects of the same process, the core of which was human ability to use arbitrarily created symbols in communication.[18] The linguistic determination of all evaluative views would follow from this assumption. As opposed to Wittgenstein's deliberately maieutic and open-ended reasoning, Elias (whose way of thinking was not particularly discursive) proposes to focus on the tension between external world and its symbolic representation in order to answer the question regarding the sources of both reproduction and innovation of human knowledge. He thereby comes to claim that humans communicate in order to refer to external (non-social, non-human) objects defined as meaningful for social practices as well as to perform meta-level operations on symbols already in place.

By combining utilitarianism with a culturalist approach to the *Lebenswelt* problem Elias provided for extra-linguistic, non-constructed reference source for the language, but at the same time allows for differences in its conceptualization in different symbolic universes. This has one important consequence for our thinking about knowledge: it need not be true in the classical sense of the term (a fact accepted by most sociologists of knowledge), but it must refer to the objective non-linguistic reality, although via the

medium of language. Therefore knowledge always consists of two subsets of judgments: true ones (again, in the classical sense of descriptive adequacy) and untrue ones (including those purely fantastic), which are devised and introduced to communication essentially in order to remedy the lack of true knowledge.[19] We only know (think, speak and remember) what is worth knowing, and the limit to our arbitrariness in choosing the things we find worth knowing as a society is our embeddedness in our objective surroundings.

This situation gives certain advantage to a politician interested in translating between the knowledges and languages of various social units. If Wittgenstein helped us define the reasons for their separation, Elias can indicate the way to bring them together. This way, however, is hardly satisfying to a philosopher of politics.

Ethic of political translation

Political translation would be meaningful as long as it would be founded on an utilitarian approach to common social issues. If there is a common objective ground to all languages, it means not only that they share the same social space (e.g. institutions and networks) but that they must also have some common reference to this objective reality or, at least – following Elias's idea – such reference may be traced in their languages.

The task of a politician making such an assumption does not become any easier, but its focus shifts from persuasion to a sort of hermeneutics – or debunking, and so does the description of the politician's professional ethic. As a translator he or she is required, firstly, to discover the use of symbols in languages used by others. The aim is to find the games which are most promising for building connections to other social units and to establish the link between them on the level of reference to what can be spotted as true (matter-of-fact) aspects of their representations. The latter, it should be noted, is no longer a task of pure translation – it is creative work on the language, a way of superimposing a semantics of politics onto a variety of social references. Political translation cannot do without an inventive approach to existing languages. A politician construes a meta-language as an instrument of referring to those languages present in the society in order to assess their relationship to one another and to issues taken in a matter-of-fact, objective manner.

A politician constructs matter-of-fact world of references, but then he needs to check the plausibility of this construction by coming back to communicating with members of social units. In political translation we notice that the Wittgensteinian mechanism of trial and error (i.e., mechanisms of corrections by others, who are equal language users) are replaced by corrections coming from beyond the sphere of politics. A political translation is normally corrected by people who are not translators. Trial and error are applied in the relationship between the politician and the society in general; the rules of this political meta-language are not negotiated and made by the politicians themselves, but between them and the social units between which they are translating. This, of course, means that matter-of-factness would become the prevalent characteristic of the politician, but it would be understood as an ability to notice factual problems, but not to speak about them.

The meta-language of politics need not be more adequate to reality as it is, neither does it need to be more true. It only needs to be an effective tool of conveying ideas between various idioms.

In all probability politics consisting of this kind of translation would be largely reduced to practical matters at hand. Moreover, it would mean a radical limitation of the sphere of political activity to those issues which are not deemed purely fantastic in Elias's terms. Values, ideas, metaphors, virtues – all these are products of fantasy, which cannot be derived from objective reality (in this aspect Elias remains a true disciple of Alfred Weber). Therefore, none of them would be proper subjects of politics, which would have to focus on more mundane pursuits. This tendency of politics to transfer its attention to more and more practical matters of administration, harm reduction, social dialogue, participation and deliberation could, to an extent, be viewed as a triumph of translation ethics, even though certain thinkers of loftier spirit judge it as a mark of postpolitical decline. However, even if this is a pauperization of politics and abandoning its great philosophical and – much lesser – practical heritage, it is the only way politics may exist in a multilingual, disparate, god-serving world of postmodern tribes.

Conclusion: a few questions to follow

Having represented politics as an art of translation, we remain left with many questions. Apart from those general queries which may never be answered in any but an arbitrary way (who defines what a fact is? How can fantasy be distinguished from adequate knowledge? Are there any judgments without evaluative content?), there are also certain specific issues calling for our attention.

Firstly, is there a form of life corresponding to political meta-language? This is a practical question worth considering, especially in the light of contemporary debate about the crisis of the political class, which is said to have lost its ethos (if it ever had one, as this can also be disputed). But it is also a philosophical issue of the generative potential of translation: can translation develop into a fully-fledged language having a corollary habitus? If this be the case, the political form of life would constitute a sort of second-order form of life, in a way supervening upon the forms of life of non-politicians. The alternative is that there is no political habitus and the politicians are just universal translators, postmodern *Menschen ohne Eigenschaften,* which would reduce them to pure translating intellects. This, of course, also pertains to motivations of political activity. Either they are related to a political form of life of some kind or not. If so, it means that there is a set of values on which a less formal ethic of politics than the Weberian one could be based. If, on the other hand, the politicians are externally motivated, it means that in the extra-political part of a politician's self there is a place for something which makes her or him engage in political translation. This of course opens a large field for debunking, but apart from that it gives us a certain hint as to the fundamental deficiency of politics: it is subsidiary to life. In a way, this is a variation on Machiavelli's old difficulty: whether the desire for glory can in itself provide a source of energy for political action. It is, however, a question which would lead us to Machiavellian anthropology and far enough from the subject of this paper.

Another practical question regards violence. In Max Weber's view one of the purposes of politics was to limit the scope of application of direct physical violence in social life – a thesis which would be elaborated on by Alfred Weber and Norbert Elias. Nevertheless, both Max Weber and Elias came to the conclusion that violence (as a form of non-symbolic communication) is ready to interfere in the social as soon as symbolic communication fails. Moreover, theories of symbolic violence, anteceded in Elias's thought and developed in France in the second half of 20 th century, draw our attention to forms of violence which were obscure to Weber. The greater the differentiation of society, the more urgent the need for mechanisms of control. In a society without a linguistic consensus, in which politicians fail, could supervision and punishment do better? As most academics agree that violence is a means of oppression — despite all discrepancies in their opinions as to the chances of lifting it, especially in its symbolic form – the possibility that failure of the political translation may introduce violence used to coordinate social action would probably disquiet most of them. On the other hand, political translation might also be an act of symbolic violence consisting in imposing politically generated grammar on first level languages and changing the meanings behind the words. This might be of particular relevance for minorities and socially disadvantaged groups, whose vital interests might be lost in translation.

The issue of how much is lost in political translation is another important question in its own right. This text is of course written from the perspective according to which a translation is not absolutely undetermined. Nevertheless, the Quinean difficulty of the contextual contents of the speech act still applies: how much do we need to take for granted in order to spot the matter-of-fact, objectivity-related contents in what is being said? Is what we find really what is being said or do we miss the fact that the relation to reality is also construed by the systemic context of the language? This would be closer to Wittgenstein than to Elias, of course, but we may weaken the radicalism of this question by limiting it in terms of degree and scope: just how much exactly is ordinarily lost in politics?

The latter question would expand Weber's view in a different direction: what other social groups and categories could take up the function of translators? Weber explicitly excluded scientists from the political sphere, but the field remains open for other professions. Media people, writers, artists, show business, teachers seem obvious candidates for translating posts (preachers being excluded by virtue of their too ostentatiously god-serving persuasion). Therefore, a Foucauldian question arises: does every translator become a politician? This could only be answered if we considered the matter-of-fact element in the activities of every aforementioned vocation and examined it versus the proportion of devotion to god, be it the Golden Calf or any other god: liberal education, Beauty, self-expression, Truth or freedom of speech. If a god-serving attitude prevails, the ethic of responsibility does not apply to an extent sufficient in order to guarantee a good quality of translation.

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Notes:

1. I have written more on this subject in Marta Bucholc, „Estetyka przekona? politycznych", in: _Dawne idee – nowa rzeczywisto??_, ed. Pawe? ?piewak (Warszawa: Wydawnictwa UW 2010); Marta Bucholc, „Requiem dla etyki protestanckiej", _Res Publica Nowa_ vol. 7 (2009), 158-162 .

2. Max Weber, "Die 'Objektivität' sozialwissenschaftlicher und sozialpolitischer Erkenntnis," in _Gesammelte Werke,_ Digitale Bibliothek v. 58 (Berlin: Directmedia 2004), 4494.

3. Robert N. Bellah et al., _Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life_ (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

4. Michel Maffesoli, _Le temps de tribus_ (Paris: Le Livre de Poche, 1991), 92; see also Marta Bucholc, "De la politique neotribale", _Sociétés. Revue des Sciences Humaines et Sociales_, vol. 2 (2011), 17-27.

5. Cf. Charles Taylor, _The Ethics of Authenticity_ (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 24ff.

6. See Dinesh D'Souza, _Illiberal Education: The Politics of Race and Sex on Campus_ (New York: Free Press, 1991), pp. 59ff; Taylor, _Ethics_, 42ff.

7. Richard Sennett, _The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences Of Work in the New Capitalism_ (New York: Norton, 1998).

8. Maffesoli, _Le temps de tribus_; Arjun Appadurai, _Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger_ (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

9. Such contemporary approaches include Bruno Latour, _Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy,_ trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).

10. Zdzis?aw Krasnod?bski, foreword to _Polityka jako zawód i powo?anie_ by Max Weber, trans. Andrzej Kopacki, Pawe? Dybel (Kraków: Znak, 1998), 28.

11. Charles Turner, _Modernity and Politics in the Work of Max Weber_ (London: Routledge,1992), 150ff.

12. See Giorgio Agamben, _Homo sacer.Sovereign Power and Bare Life_, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

13. See for example _Language and Politics_, ed. Michael Shapiro (Oxford: Blackwell 1984); _Language, Symbolism and Politics_, ed. Richard M. Merelman, San Francisko: Westview Press 1992.

14. Ludwig Wittgenstein, _Philosophical Investigations_, trans. Elisabeth Anscombe (London: Blackwell Publishing, 2001), §242, §241.

15. Rush Rhees, *Discussions of Wittgenstein* (Routledge & K. Paul: London,1996), 64.

16. Alessandra Tanesini, *Wittgenstein: A Feminist Interpretation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 33.

17. Turner, *Modernity and Politics*, 149; see also Pawe? Marczewski, " Szlachetny nihilizm a klasyczne pytanie filozofii polityki," *Civitas* 10 (2007): 204-232.

18. Norbert Elias, *Symboltheorie*, trans. Reiner Ansen (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp , 2001), 37.

19. Ibid., 92, 151, 169.

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