In respect of this admitted subjectivity, Weber repeats, the objectivity of his accounts of modern bureaucratic domination cannot transcend the latter's nihilistic tendencies. His insights are incapable of formulating ultimate—in the sense of unambiguous and incontrovertible—norms that could in turn crystallize and guarantee political obligations. Simply stated, his discussions of bureaucracy admit their own irrelevance to those for whom inquiries into bureaucracy have no value. Weber's inquiries thus cast themselves in the role of advocate. Their belief that objective knowledge of the bureaucratization process is worth attaining necessarily presents itself in the form of recommendations.100

Despite their acknowledged dependence upon the interest and concern of others, Weber considers his inquiries to be of great potential importance to the contemporary world. This potential derives from the capacity of these inquiries to clarify, for themselves and for others concerned, the significance of the processes of bureaucratization in accordance with which our actions are increasingly structured. It is Weber's conviction that the cultural-scientific task of clarifying the significance of bureaucratic rationality is made urgent by the growing fetich of technical calculation and the corresponding reliance upon common sense as the arbiter of ethical commitment. Contradicting this technicity and ethical ignorance, cultural-scientific inquiry serves as a "critique of concept formation and conceptual schemes." Above all, it is concerned with the more ambitious task of educating judgment concerning bureaucracy and its irrational consequences. In an age confident of its capacity to administer all situations bureaucratically, cultural-scientific knowledge is concerned with generating "inconvenient insights." Its strategy of clarification and defiance relies upon a fundamental analytic distinction, that between the categories "means" and "ends." Weber proposes that actors struggle either for goals that are valued for their own sakes or for goals that are desired as a means of achieving other, more highly valued goals.101

Under the influence of this abolishment distinction, it is true that Weber's objective inquiries claim to eschew passing judgment upon those who pursue certain goals desired for their own sake. The choice and pursuit of such goals, Weber typically declares, is ultimately the responsibility of actors themselves.102 Granting this caveat, the scientific analysis of modern bureaucratic can nevertheless clarify the appropriateness of bureaucratic means for the realization of various desired ends.11 Weber's discussion of the substantively irrational consequences of bureaucratic domination are of course precise examples of this clarification process at work. As we have seen, these discussions propose informed estimates of the probability of successfully realizing various goals (communism, particular needs within capitalist society) given the (indispensable) reliance upon the presently available bureaucratic means. The utilized bureaucratic means, in other words, are judged to be appropriate or insufficient for the attainment of these goals. Conversely, such goals are themselves indirectly criticized or defended by Weber as capable of realization, that is, as practicable given the choice to utilize bureaucratic means. On scientific grounds, Weber's discussions disavow any capacity to indicate what actors should do. They are nevertheless capable of making explicit the ultimate axioms or value standards (for example, those of Protestant asceticism) for which actors strive. In addition, these analyses are capable of clarifying the likelihood that actors can or cannot achieve these value standards and, therefore, the degree to which these standards are internally consistent. Finally, and in accordance with these means-ends analyses, Weber's theses on bureaucracy speculate about the range of possible consequences (nihilism, abstractionism) attending the utilization of bureaucratic means. Those concerned are thus provided with greater objective insight into the desirable and undesirable outcomes that necessarily attend the decision to depend upon rational bureaucratic means.

The fate of democracy

Despite his anxiety about the substantively irrational consequences of bureaucracy, Weber is in general convinced of its indispensability. This conviction that bureaucracy is necessary forms one of the most striking features of his analyses. He is persuaded that, once established, bureaucratic domination cannot easily be shattered. By virtue of its indispensability as a technical means, "bureaucracy is among those social structures which are the hardest to destroy."112 Weber does of course admit that the generalized substitution of democratic, decentralized, and less formally rational organization for bureaucracy is thinkable. Yet such a rupture with the continuum of modern bureaucratic domination would in his view assume the form of a regression: Within the spheres of state and society, it would result in a drastic reduction of technical efficiency and, therefore, of current levels of material prosperity, legal order, and administrative capacity. The renunciation of the visionary struggle for democratic public life therefore becomes imperative. The governed cannot nowadays dispense with bureaucratic apparatuses and their rational, calculating mode of operation. The reliance of the governed upon the strictly organized, virtuosolike mastery of complex problems and situations makes the revolutionary creation of entirely new and democratic forms of power impossible. "More and more," Weber maintains, "the material fate of the masses depends upon the steady and correct functioning of the increasingly bureaucratic organization of private capitalism. The idea of eliminating these organizations becomes more and more utopian."113 Indeed, the hierarchical division of labor and power within both private and public bureaucracies is beyond reconstruction. Even for brief periods, Weber emphasizes, the industrial entrepreneur has come to be as little dispensable as the medical doctor.114

In view of this "iron necessity" of bureaucratic command, Weber recommends that its irrational effects be tempered or overcome through the expansion and principled deployment of nation-state power. In respect of this admonition, Löwith's claim that Weber offers only a resigned diagnosis of contemporary events is misleading.115 Weber continually argues that an immense "labor of political education (politiache Erziehungsarbeit)" is to be performed in the face of the present. Convinced of the necessity of impersonal, task-oriented bureaucratic organization, Weber urges that such organization is now in need of direction by the struggle to defend and enhance the sovereignty of the nation and its power.
nourished from feeling. Here Weber's ethical relativism resurfaces (and jeopardizes his insistence on the primacy of the goals of the nation-state): The inner strength necessary for the serving of a cause can only be based on faith. Though leaders may serve "national, humanitarian, social, ethical, cultural, worldly, or religious ends," they must choose and faithfully pursue one or more of these.

Nevertheless, secondly, passion must not succumb to "sterile excitation" (Weber invokes Simmel's expression). Authentic leaders must cultivate a sense of their objective responsibilities. Their goal-structured strivings for the means of power must avoid "self-intoxication," seeking in all matters, on the contrary, to further the cause responsibly. Their struggle for power must be synonymous with the servicing of a definite goal, for whose realization, effects, and unintended consequences they are personally accountable. Acting on their own convictions, leaders are to bear the sole responsibility for their actions; they are not the mandated representatives of their masters, the electors. In turn (and thirdly), this presupposes that leaders' actions must embody a "cool sense of proportion": the ability to grant due weight to realities, to take them soberly and calmly into account. Weber's recommendations display a quasi-positivist deference to realities. Genuine, passionate, and experienced leaders must be relentless in "viewing the realities of life," and must have "the ability to face such realities and...measure up to them inwardly." Effective leadership is synonymous with neither mere demagoguery nor the worship of power for its own sake. Passionate and responsible leaders will shun any uncompromising ethic of ultimate ends. Those who rely upon this ethic are blind to the chronic tensions between means and ends; such blindness, he notes sarcastically, "does rightly and leaves the results with the Lord." Political infancy is in fact synonymous with the untrammelled pursuit of ultimate values; such infantilism forgets that, however the content of these concepts is understood, evil is not necessarily a product of evil alone, and that good does not follow only from good. Prudent and mature leaders, by contrast, must be guided by an ethic of responsibility. Recognizing the average deficiencies of people, they must continually strive to take account of the foreseeable effects of particular actions that aim to realize particular goals through the reliance upon particular means. They must engage in action in which both means and ends are adjusted and coordinated responsibly in accordance with their possible outcomes and unintended consequences. Ethically responsible leaders must therefore incorporate into their actions an anguish that fact: in numerous situations, they must acknowledge that the attainment of good ends is dependent upon (and therefore jeopardized by) the use of ethically doubtful or (in the case of violence) even dangerous means.

According to Weber's last writings, the demand for ethically responsible leadership is no idle hope. Certainly, charismatic leadership has emerged in all places and in every historical epoch. Under contemporary conditions, however, the possibility of mature leadership is systematically confirmed by the Caesarian, charismatic elements that more and more appear in the increasing power of bureaucratic parties-political organizations vis-à-vis legislatures. This development, which Weber thought to be most clearly evident under the U.S. presidential system, increases the likelihood that leaderless party machines will follow, even
over the heads of legislatures, a charismatic leader. Party machines will submit to this leadership, in return for certain benefits. Amid electoral battles, for example, the competent leader (the "dictator of the battlefield of elections") who fights with the spoken word could actually enhance the legitimacy of the party and therefore the career prospects of individual party members. In turn, the party machines would become the means facilitating leaders' seduction of the masses. Paradoxically, then, bureaucratization within the sphere of the state would facilitate the emergence of committed, responsible, and experienced individuals who could put their shoulders to the wheels of the present; plebiscitary leader democracy would thereby in part compensate, or so Weber insisted, for the substantive irrationalism of bureaucratic domination. Even as Caesarean leadership would restrain and guide the routinizing forces of bureaucracy, efficient, technically rational bureaucratic organizations would moderate and rationalize the creative forces of individual leadership.

The forward progress of bureaucracy?

It is a commonplace among liberal scholars that one of the central difficulties of Weber's political theory is his failure to distinguish between two forms of leadership: the genuine charisma of responsible democratic leaders (such as Gladstone or Roosevelt) and the pernicious charismatic domination effected through the crafty and ruthless demagogues (such as Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin) who rose to power after his death. To be sure, Weber was aware that already in his time the political process within industrial capitalist countries increasingly resembled a "dictatorship resting on the exploitation of mass emotionality." This administrative deployment of demagogic speech and action, he also recognized, differed from (for example) Cobden's intellectual mode of discourse or Gladstone's consistent resort to "letting sober facts speak for themselves." Weber proposed, furthermore, that political orders could be evaluated according to the type of leadership that they generated. He recognized, finally, that even authentic leaders could succumb to vanity. The genuine leader is "constantly in danger of becoming an actor as well as taking lightly the responsibility for the outcome of his actions and of being concerned merely with the impression he makes." In spite of these various observations, Weber is nevertheless charged with unwittingly holding to the naive assumption that charismatic leadership in its various forms could resist these dangers and would therefore be the repository of political understanding, maturity, and wisdom. It is alleged, not incorrectly, that he seriously conflated different types of charismatic leadership - the elected warlord, the great demagogue, the plebiscitarian ruler, the modern political party leader whose career is made in party bureaucracies.

This form of indictment of Weber is nevertheless highly incomplete, if only because it remains ensnared within the limited boundaries of the so-called elitist theory of equilibrium democracy. Viewed from beyond these restrictive boundaries, Weber's legacy is in fact much more profound. It consists in a challenge to all dissident political thought in general and, in particular, a censure of the possibility of a democratic, socialist theory of bureaucratic domination.

The legacy of Max Weber

This challenge is summarized by Weber in a well-known 1908 letter to Robert Michels: "Such concepts as 'will of the people', 'genuine will of the people,' lie in the air, no longer exist for me; they are fictitious. All ideas aiming at abolishing the dominance of humans over others are 'Utopian.'" It should be emphasized that to speak in this way of the legacy of Weber's challenge is to avoid a positivist critique of his theses. It has become almost customary, for example, to stress that Weber's account of bureaucracy is descriptively inaccurate, that it must be rejected — or at least amended — because it is out of tune with the actual realities of bureaucratic organization, and so on. Precisely because of their descriptive assumptions, such allegations expose themselves to an obvious countercharge: Weber's account of modern bureaucratic organization and its irrational effects is ideal-typical. Weber persistently (and correctly) emphasized that descriptive analyses of the elements of modern bureaucratic reality can never be exhaustive. Everywhere and always the quantitative and qualitative influences upon the events that constitute this reality are infinite. Accordingly, attempts at capturing the concrete reality of bureaucratic organization exhaustively are disingenuous, because impossible. Definitive and exhaustive scientific knowledge of the "laws of motion" of bureaucratic processes is unachievable. All knowledge of the stream of historically-cultural events, Weber rightly insists, is knowledge from particular points of view. Such knowledge is conditioned by judgments about which aspects of these events are of general significance; in turn, these judgments or evaluative ideas are those which dominate or inform the historical period in which investigators conduct their inquiries. Weber's account of bureaucratic domination thus takes the form of a more refined or dogmatic accentuations of certain of its highly diffuse and discrete aspects by means of ideal-typical concepts. Inasmuch as they exclude an infinity of events that for the purposes of inquiry are deemed irrelevant, these concepts are not mere descriptions of a preexistent bureaucratic reality. They are not identical, true, and faithful reproductions of the empirical characteristics of bureaucracy. These concepts necessarily and explicitly exclude consideration of a rich variety of both particular and general aspects of bureaucratic organization. Weber's theories on bureaucracy take the form of a series of conceptual reconstructions of aspects of modern life that, in ideal, pure form, are seldom, if ever, to be found within this historical reality. These reconstructions are derived from experience that is intensified and condensed through imaginative processes of thought, in order to facilitate further analyses of the empirical manifold.

These analyses, in short, never exhaust the objective meaning of bureaucracy: incompleteness is a logical property of the methodology of Weber's inquiries into bureaucracy. By virtue of the fact that concepts and objects of concepts are in a perpetual state of flux, these inquiries are necessarily provisional, "endowed with eternal youth." They are continuously the objects of their own stated concern not to "make compromises nor cloak any 'nonsense.'"

It is precisely in respect of their admitted failure to enclose their object - an admission typically overlooked by Weber's positivist critics - that Weber's ideal-typical descriptions can be analyzed and inexorably criticized as utopian. Unable to construct a closed and universally valid system of categories that would