

***“An Age Where Lawyers Rule”:  
The Late-Modern Lawyer as True Politician in Weber’s Religiopolitical Framework***

**I. Introduction**

The political theory of Max Weber is at once provocative and sobering; on the one hand, he offers a unique perspective on the trajectory of human progress that breaks from the “state of nature” method that other theorists have developed while he, on the other hand, presents a view of late-modernity as limited, irrational, and technocratic. Within his presentation, Weber makes a number of bold claims, one of which is the notion that one social group – lawyers – are among the most qualified for late-modern political life. Weber’s statements on lawyers appear in seemingly haphazard places within his writings and a careless reading of these sections may yield the conclusion that Weber is simply saying that “lawyers make good politicians because they know the law.”

Yet, what is it about the nature of lawyering that makes Weber believe that a lawyer is in a good position to realize Weber’s expectations of the true politician? As I argue below, Weber’s statements about lawyers are perfectly justified within his broader political theory. I first summarize his statements about lawyers and give a careful reading of his language. I then provide an interpretation of what I call Weber’s “religiopolitical framework” from the *Sociology of Religion* to ground the discussion in how Weber views leadership and how he defines the “true politician.” With the religiopolitical framework in place, I then conclude with an interpretation of Weber’s language on lawyers by referencing his account of the ethics of responsibility and conviction.

**II. Literature Review**

Forthcoming

### III. Discussion

#### a. *A Summary of Weber's Discussion of Lawyers in Late-Modernity*

As a starting point, it is important to closely examine the language Weber uses to describe lawyers and to claim that they are in a good position to realize Weber's expectations of the true politician in late modernity. Although Weber regularly mentions the role of lawyers, there are two primary texts in which he offers his most substantive statements on the profession. The first is in his piece "Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order." In this article, Weber claims that "[t]he professional member of parliament is a man<sup>1</sup> who exercise his mandate in the Reichstag, not as an occasional and subsidiary duty, but as the main content of his life's work" (190). Although political institutions are filled with dedicated, hardworking, career-oriented individuals, there is a distinction between the run-of-the-mill professional politician and what Weber calls the "true" politician or the "politician of great stature." While the average career politician derives his livelihood *from* politics, the true politician lives *for* it (190). Weber appears to mean that former will obtain value *from* the status of politician, whether monetarily or otherwise, while the latter will infuse his own value *into* the calling of politician. To Weber, this necessarily means that the true politician comes "preprogrammed" or who has obtained value in some other way prior to ascending to the status of true politician (190-91). Surveying the field of extant social groups that may meet these requirements, Weber claims that lawyers and advocates most fully meet the prerequisites. A characteristic of late-modernity is its rule-based approach to institutions and laws. Consequently, the most successful true politician will be an advocate who already

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this paper, I use the "he/him" pronoun to describe lawyers, politicians, bureaucrats, laymen, prophets, and priests. I do this solely for convenience – since Weber uses the same pronoun – and not for any normative reasons. There is no reason why Weber's analysis should not be applicable to both genders.

“speaks the language” of late-modernity. In Weber’s words: “[i]n an age where lawyers rule, the great advocate is the only lawyer who, in contrast to the official, is trained (1) to fight and (2) to represent a case effectively by fighting” (191, numbers added). The lawyer in late-modernity will have already been trained in some other way to accomplish two things: to be able to fight and to represent a cause through fighting.

Weber returns to this theme later in the article by adding one additional component that makes lawyers qualified to be true politicians. He reiterates the fact that late-modernity favors one who possesses “knowledge of the law” and returns to his point that lawyering trains one to struggle (217). But in addition, he cites the pragmatic factors that lawyers have already operated within a world that bears striking resemblance to the world of late-modern politics: a world of desk jobs, secretaries, and office spaces. More importantly, the late-modern lawyer has been trained to “switch brains” from legal work to professional considerations; the lawyer has the (3) “inner requirements” of being able to hold different views – and potentially competing ones at that – while continuing to fulfill his professional duties (217). These three characteristics – the lawyer’s abilities to fight, to represent a case through fighting, and to entertain competing viewpoints – make the lawyer, for Weber, well-qualified to be a true late-modern politician.

The second source for Weber’s discussion of lawyers in late-modernity is in “Politics as a Vocation.” Here, Weber clarifies his more pragmatic points about the nature of lawyering. Because late-modernity requires full embrace of one’s calling, a social group that does not permit the independence to engage in politics will never be sufficient to create a true politician. For example, the business owner will never have sufficient time and resources to leave his business and embrace a political career *while remaining* a business owner. Other professions find themselves in similarly dependent circumstances. But because lawyers are oftentimes already engaged in the realm of law,

politics, and governance, a lawyer's professional life affords him ability to dedicate attention to being a true politician (41). Moreover, the primary characteristic of late-modern politics is its increasing reliance on rules, laws, and, most important, interests. As Weber recounts later in the article, Western legal history transitioned from Roman natural law and monarchical rule to constitutionalism built on legal rationalism (51-52). Because of this, party politics has emphasized the role of groups of people with shared interests in the outcomes of political decisions – interests that must be represented and advocated for. In this world, the lawyer-turned-true-politician flourishes and finds his calling. “[O]nly a lawyer has the skill to plead a cause that has intrinsically ‘powerful’ arguments in its favor and thus to handle a ‘good’ case ‘ably’” (53). It is the lawyer's ability to both *embrace principles* at root in the political argument, while at the same time being able to take the responsibility to *represent the interests* that underlie those principles that make the lawyer supremely qualified for true political life in late-modernity.

***b. Weber's Religiopolitical Framework***

All of this is obvious from Weber's writing; to this point, I have only summarized what Weber has said about lawyers and isolated the bold claims he has made about the lawyer as true late-modern politician. But none of this explains *why* Weber would make these claims nor is it obvious from these isolated statements how they fit into Weber's broader political theory. In order to fully grasp what Weber is saying about lawyers and why he can conclude that the lawyer is capable of being the true late-modern politician, it is helpful to orient Weber's discussion within the framework he uses to begin discussion politics in the first place. Weber's analysis of religious belief and the methods by which religions have come to dominant private life provides a useful framework of analogies for thinking about late-modern politics. Although a full discussion of Weber's views on religion are far beyond the scope of this paper, a portion of Weber's *The*

*Sociology of Religion* offers some insights into how Weber thinks of politics in late-modernity. In his chapter “Religious Congregation, Preaching, and Pastoral Care,” Weber discusses the roles of power, association, and stability for a would-be religious community made up of individuals who pre-date the founding of the religious community. In so doing, Weber exposes important principles that have a political overlap in the form of a religiopolitical framework. In revealing the religious community, Weber is revealing the political community.

First, Weber offers some crucial definitions in this section. While Weber has a working definition of a “prophet” throughout *The Sociology of Religion*, he expands on it slightly in this chapter and the analogues to politics are more apparent. At one level, the prophet is certainly a vessel of charisma that draws followers or “devotees” to him (60). But at another level, the prophet is a layman – a religiously non-technocratic individual with believably extraordinary powers and access to the divine (78). The layman prophet predates the founding of the religious community and acquires his prophetic skills *outside* of the religion, since it does not yet exist. Whether the prophet is *truly* supernatural does not matter, insofar as the masses and his devotees think him capable of accessing divine power (78).

To say that the prophet is a layman, however, is to imply that there is a different class of individuals who are *not* laymen and against whom the prophet may be contrasted. Prior to the founding of the religion by the prophet, this religiously technocratic class is known as “magicians” (74), or those claiming to have but lacking supernatural power; after the founding, this technocratic class is called “priests” (60-61). The distinction between the layman prophet and the technocratic priests is important. The prophet is a layman *precisely* because he has not held himself out as possessing divine powers before his calling. The magicians, however, have always claimed access

to supernatural power, have honed their skills, and routinely offer to demonstrate their skill to solve practical problems for the masses prior to the religious founding.

Once the prophet appears and the followers believe him truly capable of accessing the divine, these magicians shift their focus from being a prophetic competitor to an adherent. These priests may have preceded the layman prophet in existence, but the prophet's appearance reshapes the role of the magician-turned-priest. Once the prophet begins his charismatic mission to found the religion (60) and to systematize religion to simplify man's relationship with the world through a worldview (69), the priests take on the character of devotees who assist the prophet in his mission and support the prophet economically (60). In this way, there is a kind of symbiotic relationship with the prophet and priests. The prophet appears to seemingly upend the magician/priestly class by creating a new pattern of looking at the world. For the first time, believers need not turn to unreliable magicians and their technicalities, but can adopt a worldview that the prophet has announced from his calling. This would seem to destroy the world of the magicians; after all, a magician who's technical expertise has been in doubt by believers will now find himself having to account for his inabilities in the face of a prophet who actually or believably can do miracles and provide order to an irrational world. But the prophet's appearance provides an opportunity for the magicians to assimilate their technical expertise with the prophet's worldview. Using the established organization of the magicians, the magicians can rename themselves priests and co-opt the prophet's charisma for their own survival. In turn, they can provide the resources and support the prophet will need to spread his worldview to more adherents (60).

Moreover, Weber is careful to point out that there is no "community" or "congregation" until there is an introduction of believers and the routinization of religious life. The devoted priestly class who has co-opted the prophet must begin the onerous task of making the prophet's vision

permanent and viable even after the prophet's disappearance (60-61). *The* fundamental question for the religious community is indefinite stability, to ensure that the prophet's teachings are not lost. The charge to the priestly class is to morph the prophetic worldview into religious dogmas that can be codified into ethical behavior and calls to action (70). These dogmas must strike a balance between remaining true to the original worldview of the prophet, while being simple and practical enough for the believer to adopt in daily life. It is particularly challenging, however, because simultaneously with the introduction of dogma, the population of devotees expands to include purely laymen – individuals with no prophetic calling, on the one hand, nor magical/priestly expertise, on the other. Not only, then, must the worldview be preserved, but it must be taught. For that matter, there are threats to the system. There is the continual risk of yet more or different prophecy; should another prophet arise to undermine the effort of the priests to this point, the religion must be prepared to either overtly reject new prophecy or to assimilate it into existing dogma. There is also the risk that the laity will simply fall back to whatever traditions it espoused prior to the appearance of the prophet. And there is also the risk of competing worldviews from non-religious sources from other spheres of life, through science and philosophy. With the introduction of the laity, then, the challenge for the infant religious community is to balance the tripartite problems of new prophecy, traditionalism, and intellectualism, while upholding the prophet's worldview (65). While each of these threatens the religious community in various ways, they all relate back to the primary danger for the religious community: an absence of zeal that motivates the laity to commit to the religious worldview (71).

The religious community through the priestly class solves many of these problems in three critical ways. First, it closes itself off from the rest of the world through the priestly class's rationalization of religious dogma. Put another way, the priests use the foundation of the prophet

to create codes of conduct, scriptures, and sacred traditions that separate membership in the community from the rest of the universe of laymen (69). In this sense, dogma translates into real practice and outward manifestations of inward commitment. To generate the necessary zeal that the believers felt at the appearance of the prophet, the priests must offer daily observances that recreate the energy of the prophetic worldview. Moreover, by creating quasi-contractual membership through religious practice, the priestly class ensures that only “true” members are admitted to the community and any would-be member will feel the distinctive “honor” of membership as illustrated by daily practice (65).

Second, the priestly class employs preaching. Whereas the pre-prophetic magicians failed to live up to their own promises, the post-prophetic priestly class can draw upon charismatic interpretations of dogma to corral the laity. When the prophet first appeared, it was his charisma that drew people to him. Whether he was truly or believably supernatural is less important than the fact that his personality brooked no opposition. The magicians who are now priests never enjoyed this charismatic superiority and were forced to rely on technical expertise to explain the world to the laity. But with the appearance of the prophet and the priests’ co-opting of him, the priests now have the words of the prophet and the founding narrative as tools to conjure to mind the memory of the prophet’s charisma. By mimicking the supernatural charisma of the prophet, the priests can regularly recreate the religious community’s founding and cultivate nostalgic zeal for adherents (74-75).

Third, the priestly class focuses on pastoral care. The priests recognize that the hope for stability lies not in the preservation of the prophet and a continual eye toward new prophecy; this would leave the religious community in a constant state of flux (66). Prophets die or disappear, making their tenure brief, but poignant. New prophets are unreliable and may not appear with any

degree of predictability; for that matter, their new teaching may undermine the priestly mission. Rather than focus simply on the past, the priests instead turn their attention to caring for the laity, who will continue to exist long after the prophecy ends (75-77). Here, the priests are supremely qualified for their task as they can draw upon their technical expertise from before the founding. For this reason, pastoral care of the individual members begins to take on the magical quality that the pre-prophetic magicians used: sacred rites, holy vestments, and pseudo-supernatural intervention called down by the priest. The priests can then capitalize upon their pre-prophetic magical counterparts for inspiration in educating the laity and enforcing dogma, thereby ensuring that the religious community remains viable and that the laity's basic needs are met. Where the magicians may have helped in times past, priests can now both help the laity in the practical sense and root that care in the worldview of the prophet.

This framework overlaps seamlessly with Weber's view of political life. Weber has uncovered something profoundly important about the founding of any community, not just a religious one. The prophet, the pre-prophetic-magicians-turned-post-prophetic-priests, the laity, and the employment of dogma, preaching, and pastoral care all have political analogues. The prophet is nothing more than the true politician who rises from the ranks of the laity and earns his political skill through some non-political means. The true politician in late-modernity, however, does not exist in a vacuum; there are other officials and institutions that predate the appearance of the true politician. The bureaucracy exists prior to the true politician's appearance; it is an incontrovertible fact of life for Weber that the bureaucracy exists and will continue to exist in some form or another. Like the magicians prior to the prophet's appearance, the bureaucracy exists prior to the appearance of the true politician and endeavors to aid the community through technical

expertise, albeit incompletely. While this may satisfy some of the interests of the community, the charisma that is so necessary for zeal is missing from the bureaucracy.

With the sudden appearance of the true politician, however, the bureaucracy now has a choice to ignore the true politician or to co-opt him. The former decision would likely translate into the decay of the bureaucracy, while the latter provides a method for the bureaucracy to – like the priests – find a roundabout outlet for their technical expertise. Instead of turning against the true politician, the bureaucracy adopts the same symbiotic relationship that the magicians/priests adopt with regard to the prophet: they accept the true politician’s worldview, uphold his policies, and provide resources for his continued efforts, while at the same time creating an order whereby they can be the conduit through which the political charisma reaches the masses. When the true politician disappears – as he most certainly will, through death, retirement, or scandal – the bureaucracy will remain to recall to mind the true politician’s worldview.

Like the religious community, there will be threats to the system that can lead to its being undermined. The citizenry will almost certainly be the same sort of laymen that the religious community embraces; they will not have the technical expertise of the bureaucracy nor the charisma and worldview of the true politician. And, like the religious community, there will be three risks of instability: new politician’s and their worldviews, traditionalism, and intellectualism. Each of these will threaten to undermine the structure that the bureaucracy has created to enable the dissemination of the true politician’s worldview and, in turn, the existence of the bureaucracy itself. Like the priests, the technocratic bureaucrats will employ analogues to exclusive membership, preaching, and pastoral care in the form of patriotism/nationalism, political propaganda/civic education, and citizen benefits through a welfare state, tax breaks, or economic

stimulus. These three solutions will help to recreate the charisma of the original true politician and cultivate the nostalgia and zeal that the system so desperately needs to remain viable.

In summary, Weber has offered an illuminating religiopolitical framework for thinking about community organization in late-modernity and, most importantly, for thinking about the true politician. In both communities, there is the sudden appearance of a layman-turned-charismatic-leader surrounded by pre-existent technocrats hoping for their continued survival. In both communities, the primary concern of the technocrats is straightforward: how do we perpetuate a community founded on charisma and potentially drifting toward indifference? In both communities, there exists a pre-existent technocratic class co-opts the charismatic leader's vision to generate commitment by the unskilled and uncharismatic laity. And in both communities, the pre-existent technocratic class supports the prophet's/true politician's vision via three systemic tools that promote zeal. Any account of Weber's language about lawyer's must reference this framework in order to remain consistent with his broader narrative of politics.

*c. Lawyers within the Religiopolitical Framework*

With this framework in place, it is much more obvious what Weber likely has in mind when he claims that lawyers are in a good position to be a true politician in late-modernity. Based on this framework, I briefly offer a number of explanations of what Weber likely *does not* mean in his discussion of lawyers. I then turn to providing an interpretation of what Weber likely *does* mean using both this framework and Weber's discussion of the ethics of responsibility and conviction.

*i. What Weber likely does not mean*

At this stage, it is important to analyze and dismiss what Weber likely does not have in mind in his discussion of the lawyer turned true, late-modern politician. First, by saying that a

lawyer is supremely qualified to become a true politician, Weber is not necessarily referencing technocratic expertise. The true politician is to the political community what the prophet is to the religious community: a layman rising from the general populace and displaying atypical gifts of charisma. Were Weber focused primarily on the technical ability of lawyers to simply argue a case, then a lawyer in late-modernity would be no better than a magician in pre-prophetic society. Such a person might be able to translate his expertise into case-by-case solutions for individual problems, but would not be able to generate a committed following. If this were Weber's claim, then it would be an entirely inconsistent one; to say that technocratic expertise translates into real charisma is to be totally contrary to the rest of Weber's project. Instead, the late-modern lawyer must have – or must have the *potential* to have – something more than just technical expertise.

Second, Weber's references to "fighting" and "struggle" by the late-modern lawyer cannot simply be a reference to the ability of lawyers to exploit tensions in a preexisting system. Weber's language is far too extreme to suggest that lawyers just simply "find themselves at the right place, at the right time." Like the layman-turned-prophet, the late-modern lawyer-turned-true-politician might find a need in the community that must be filled; the magicians and the bureaucrats can only offer incomplete worldviews and inadequate solutions to personal problems through their expertise. But both the prophet and the lawyer draw upon something innate or natural to their station that helps them rally the zeal that a committed following will need in order to truly solve their problems in late-modernity. Weber is not just saying that lawyers are good community organizers or social problem solvers. He is saying more than that: a lawyer in late-modernity has a unique station to become something greater with far-reaching capability.

Third, and most importantly, Weber likely does not mean that lawyers as true politicians exist apart from their system. While both prophets and true politicians make a sudden appearance,

they do so within a system that is already in existence. In the case of the prophet, the magician class has already been endeavoring, albeit poorly, to create a worldview for the laity; in the case of the true politician, the bureaucracy has already been endeavoring, albeit poorly, to create a political worldview for the citizenry. In the case of the latter, “the system” in question is a legal regime built on rules and cases. The lawyer operates within this world, learning the language and practice of late-modern life and honing skills that the late-modern world values. When the lawyer becomes the true politician, he can draw upon this background to appeal to the bureaucrats, as well as to use his charisma to appeal to the citizenry starved for zeal in an irrational world. Taken alone, Weber’s discussion of lawyers as true politicians makes it appear that they suddenly come into being out of nothing. But Weber’s religiopolitical framework demonstrates that this is not totally accurate.

*ii. What Weber likely means – the Responsibility/Conviction Dialectic*

So much for what Weber does not mean. What, then, is an interpretation of Weber’s lawyer language that is both consistent with his broader framework discussed above while giving a fair reading to the bold claims he has made about lawyers in late-modernity? With the above framework in place and Weber’s lawyer language summarized, we can now turn to the characteristics of the true politician to see how they relate back to the status of the late-modern lawyer. To do so, I analyze Weber’s ethic of responsibility and ethic of conviction distinction in “Politics as a Vocation.”

Toward the end of his piece, Weber considers the question of what ethos should govern politics and offers two ethical positions that have been propounded by political actors. On the one hand, there is what one could call the “ethos of conviction,” a desire to commit to a principle, in whatever form, and ensure that all subsequent action is tied to the accomplishment or satisfaction

of that principle (78). Weber accepts as a given fact that human beings can and do commit to broad principles in the form of a variety of social, cultural, or religious goals (78). These deep-seated convictions serve as a substantial impetus to action and can provide the energy that one might need to engage in politics. But Weber points out that the adoption of this ethos will oftentimes lead to perverse conclusions in which the adherent will find himself having to tortuously justify behavior to fit within the accepted conviction (79). In private life, this will be bad enough, but in politics it can often prove disastrous; a politician, blinded by his own convictions, will believe that any costs, any injuries, and any losses will be acceptable so long as the plan of action matches the overall goal required by conviction (79-80). True, absolutist convictions do not permit half-hearted fidelity; one who adopts an ethos of conviction must accept it all (81). Both the pacifist and the just war advocate will ultimately be taking the same approach to politics: any action is justified so long as it upholds the spirit of one's convictions. To Weber, this position on its own is the wrong kind of ethos for politics.

On the other hand, there is what one could call the "ethos of responsibility." Weber says that this form of ethics looks toward the consequences of one's actions and *embraces* those consequences as a liability (83). This ethos demands that its adherents look to the future and see the results of a given plan of action, knowing and owning those results prior to implementation of the plan. While the ethos of conviction only makes the adherent responsible to the principles underlying the action, the ethos of responsibility looks to real-world results – the here and now impact that a particular action brings. In the context of politics, those who adopt the ethos of responsibility may be forced to make hard decisions, which will, in turn, produce a variety of results. Responsibility requires that the politician accept those results as necessary to a chosen plan of action and to reject other plans when the politician cannot accept the results. Because Weber

believes that actions and results are tied to one another, a defensible political ethos will take into account both. Moreover, the ethos of responsibility is much more pragmatic in the irrational world of late-modernity. Those who adopt the ethic of conviction will be unable to tolerate the “ethical irrationality” of the late-modern world and will seek for escape from it through other-worldly aspirations; rather than face the problems of today or near future, those who take an ethos of conviction will be forced to look to a distant future, real or imagined, in which their convictions are realized and all enemies are put down. The proponent of the ethic of responsibility, however, sees the reality of the world and faces it head on, here and now (85-86).

What is most fascinating about Weber’s discussion is the fact that he hints that the true politician will be capable of embracing both in the form of a dialectic. He says that both ethics have their value, but that for the average person they stand paradoxically apart from one another. The true politician will recognize that the two forms of ethics can, however, be reconciled. The true politician will start with the thesis of responsibility by feeling “the responsibility he bears for the consequences of his own actions.” He will then recognize the antithesis of conviction that calls on him to devote his whole soul to a cause; the responsibility for his consequences will be to him a kind of conviction that other-worldly beliefs are to absolutist politicians. The true politician will then reach a point of synthesis and declare “Here I stand, I can do no other.” Thus, actions taken by the true politician will be both consequence drive, but so rooted in his own soul that he can embrace his actions as convictions (92).

Here is where the prophet-true politician connection is on full display in Weber’s account. As he says, this true politician must be as supernatural or, at least, as believably supernatural as the prophet is to religious believers. The man who can synthesize an ethic of conviction and an ethic of responsibility into real practice “must be a leader, and not only that, he must also be a

hero—in a very literal sense.” The only person suitable for a calling in politics is “one who is certain that his spirit will not be broken if the world, when looked at from his point of view, proves too stupid or base to accept what he wishes to offer it, and who, when faced with all that obduracy, can still say ‘Nevertheless!’ despite everything” (93-94). In other words, the true politician must appear in a world of technocracy and irrationality to boldly offer a worldview to laymen in the same way that the prophet provides a worldview to the believers.

If this is the ultimate definition of the true politician, if these traits are what is required of him, and if he is the political analogue of the prophet in Weber’s religiopolitical framework, then Weber’s claims about lawyers make much more sense. The three characteristics that late-modern lawyer’s possess, as summarized above, make lawyers the likely social class of choice for the appearance of the heroic, true politician. First, the lawyer comes prepared to struggle and to fight, a trait that will require the lawyer to take responsibility of his own actions. Like the politician in late-modernity, the lawyer has already had to face the “satanic powers” of the world and take “responsibility for what may become of him under the pressure” of ethical paradox. This training in fighting is nothing more than training in an ethic of responsibility. A lawyer in late-modernity comes prepackaged with first step in the ethical dialectic that Weber assumes the true politician must resolve.

Second, the lawyer has been trained to fight in a certain way: to represent *a case*. In every instance in which Weber discusses the role of lawyers, he is careful to point out that lawyers are case-driven and that their ability to fight is tailored to specific causes. Thus, while the lawyer in late-modernity may be prepared to take responsibility for the consequences of any of his actions, he is particularly suited to embracing a cause that requires his whole soul. Standing in a fiduciary relationship with the interested parties that he represents, the lawyer is trained over and over again

to subordinate himself to the cause of the client and to treat that cause *as if* it were his own. Here again, this is nothing more than an ethic of conviction that is cultivated in lawyers in the daily grind of lawyering. A lawyer in late-modernity comes prepackaged to face the antithesis, with the ability to adopt and fight for a cause with all the zeal that an absolutist would display. Thus, the lawyer in late-modernity comes prepared to embrace convictions as a motivation.

Third, and most importantly, the lawyer has been trained to entertain competing viewpoints that may be at odds with one another. As summarized above, Weber believes that lawyers are forced to confront competing interests because they are representing a variety of interested parties, some of whose interests may be in opposition to one another or to the lawyer. In order to fully and zealously represent his client, the lawyer must embrace these interests *and* the consequences that stem from representing those interests. This requires the lawyer to synthesize both his ability to fight and his ability to fight for a cause, in the same way that the true politician must synthesize an ethic of responsibility and an ethic of conviction. Thus, the late-modern lawyer comes prepared to both take responsibility for results *while at the same time* taking on the interests of the parties he represents as if those interests were his own convictions. In other words, the lawyer can resolve the dialectic.

Granted, nothing about this means that a lawyer *will be* or *must be* a true politician. Weber is clear in his references to lawyers that they are not destined to all be true politicians. Rather, Weber's language indicates that lawyers are a unique social class of individuals who have cultivated the characteristics that would make a successful true politician. Like the layman-turned-prophet, the lawyer in late-modernity will have acquired these skills outside the realm of politics through the struggle that the daily grind of late-modern life imposes on all individuals. But like the layman-turned-prophet, a potential lawyer can translate the skills acquired elsewhere into traits

that will prove successful in political life. Other traits may be needed – overwhelming charisma, pragmatism, and so forth – but, at least in terms of natural ability, the lawyer will have an advantage that others will not. What is most important about all this, however, is that Weber’s language about lawyers is entirely consistent with his broader approach. Looking at Weber’s full political theory and his religiopolitical framework makes his references to lawyers much more significant.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

As I have discussed, Weber makes a number of bold claims about the qualification of lawyers for political life. Rather than simply being an observation on the practical abilities of lawyers, Weber’s claims are actually perfectly justified by his broader political theory. As I have argued, his religiopolitical framework provides a definition of the true politician as the political corollary of the religious prophet. When we couple this framework with his account of the ethics of responsibility and conviction, it becomes more obvious that the lawyers Weber has in mind are uniquely prepared to satisfy the demands of late-modern political life. As individuals with the ability to fight, to fight for a cause, and to hold competing views, a late-modern lawyer comes prepared to resolve a complex dialectic and to fill the calling of Weber’s true politician.

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