

Analytical Paper #1, 560 words

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In Politics as Vocation, Max Weber says, "Politics is a strong and slow boring of hard boards. It takes both passion and perspective". In a short paper, explain why Weber says this, and how it demonstrates his overarching argument concerning who should take up politics?

Arguably the most famous quote from *Politics as Vocation*, the provided excerpt makes clear the type of person Max Weber believes should be involved in politics; someone who is neither purely idealist or power-hungry, and who possesses perseverance, ethical responsibility, and a clear view of reality. Weber, in the wake of the most destructive war the world had ever seen, attempts to provide guidance to the shattered people of the Weimar Republic by delivering his vision for the ideal politician. Immediately after delivering the very famous aforementioned metaphor, Weber exclaims that "Certainly, all historical experience confirms the truth that man would not have attained the possible unless time and again he had reached out for the impossible". Here he contrasts the balance the politician must strike between realism (the boring of hard boards) and idealism (reaching for the impossible). A leader will be ineffective if they only pursue lofty goals with no plan to achieve them, as well as if they concentrate exclusively on the mundane without an open mind to the extraordinary. Weber develops this idea further with the following quote: "The politician must make compromises with the realities of the world. Hence, above all, the politician needs to have: passion, a sense of responsibility, and a sense of proportion". Here he expands on his ideal politician, now discussing the qualities they ought to have. Foremost, he claims is perseverance, or passion. In the same way a woodworker must be able to visualize the final product when completing the tedious task of drilling a hole in a piece of hardwood, so must the politician have the ability to continue on and refuse to be halted by the smaller problems in the path towards a noble goal. He also uses the metaphor to illustrate what he means by "perspective"; when the politician encounters obstacles he must be able to see the bigger picture and make the right decision, similar to woodworking, where drilling one hole is a minute but important part of the larger work. Finally, Weber claims the politician must have a "sense of responsibility". He extrapolates this later in the text, saying that "He who seeks the salvation of the soul, of his own and of others, should not seek it along the avenue of politics, whose tasks can only be solved by the use of force". This sentiment harkens back to the idea that the politician must not be too idealistic, but willing to get down in the trenches and do the hard work. Conversely, later in the text Weber illustrates the danger of vanity in politics. "The sin against the lofty spirit of his vocation, the sin of vanity, consists precisely in the fact that the politician lacks distance to himself and to the cause, hence, that he overestimates the effect of his action and finally looks upon the world with an eye to the reflection he sees of himself in the mirror of history." This leads Weber to his conclusion: "He who wants to engage in politics at all, and especially in politics as a vocation, has to realize these ethical paradoxes. He must know that he is responsible for what may become of himself under the impact of these paradoxes." Politics is the art of riding a fine line between ideas and reality, morality and power, as paradoxical as that is, it is necessary for the vocational politician.