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## CONCLUSION: THE IDEAS OF 1914

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Within three months the third Balkan war had embroiled the bulk of the world's three most populous continents, Europe, Africa, and Asia. It had, moreover, embraced two more, Australia and—via Canada—North America. 'The war', Alfred Baudrillart, wrote in his diary on 31 October 1914, 'is extending to the whole universe.'<sup>1</sup>

Baudrillart's hyperbole reflected the global status of the European powers. Africans found themselves fighting because they were the subjects of Britain, France, Germany, or Belgium, not because they were Africans. Furthermore, London's primacy as the world's financial capital and Paris's status as an international lender meant that even those nations that were formally independent could not remain untouched by the war's outbreak in 1914. Neutrality in the political sense did not result in immunity from the war's effects in every other sense. Neither the United States nor China became formal belligerents until 1917, but their domestic politics, their diplomacy, and their wealth were all contingent on the war from its very outset.

To contend that the war was truly global throughout its duration is, of course, not the same as also saying that its purposes were commensurate with its scale. Indeed, it has been the presumption of hindsight that they were not. The Great War has often been portrayed not as a world war but as a European civil war, a squabble between brothers, united—if only they had realized it—by more than divided them, a struggle where the means were massively disproportionate given the ends.

The now-considerable literature on war aims reinforces this approach, because it states the objectives of each power in geographical or economic

<sup>1</sup> Baudrillart, *Carnets*, 92.

terms. Being drawn up as agendas for peace settlements, war aims—however extensive—rested on the presumption that negotiation would become possible. Their implication is some form of limitation, even if those limits tended to be set far beyond the bounds of acceptability for the enemy and, often, for allies. War aims were a retrospective effort to give shape to something bigger. They did not cause the war. Even those of Germany were developed during the conflict, not before it. The powers of Europe entered the war without clearly defined geographical objectives; if they had, the First World War might indeed have been nearer to the ‘cabinet wars’ of Bismarck or even of the eighteenth century than it was. When the war broke out, it was not a fight for the control of Alsace-Lorraine or Poland or Galicia. It was, as Bethmann Hollweg melodramatically anticipated in 1913, ‘a battle for existence.’<sup>2</sup>

Big ideas, however rhetorical, shaped the war’s purpose more immediately and completely than did more definable objectives. ‘The War of 1914’, an Oxford classics don, Alfred Zimmern, told an audience from the Workers’ Educational Association at its summer school that year, ‘is not simply a war between the Dual Alliance and the Triple Entente: it is . . . a war of ideas—a conflict between two different and irreconcilable conceptions of government, society and progress.’<sup>3</sup> Later that year H. G. Wells published *The war that will end war*. ‘We fight’, he declared, ‘not to destroy a nation, but to kill a nest of ideas . . . Our business is to kill ideas. The ultimate purpose of this war is propaganda, the destruction of certain beliefs and the creation of others.’<sup>4</sup>

Wells was no more a militarist than Zimmern was a Germanophobe. For all Wells’s use of the word ‘propaganda’, his book was not propaganda in the narrowly defined sense: neither he nor Zimmern held the views they did because they were mouthpieces for the British government. In due course the ideas with which they were concerned did indeed become the meat of official propaganda; but their emotional charge derived precisely from the personal conviction that underpinned them. The issues were moral and, ultimately, religious.

In a sectarian sense, the Thirty Years War was the last great European war of religion. Thereafter notions of just war atrophied, and vindications for the recourse to arms were couched in political and national terms. In the First World War neither alliance was shaped by a clearly defined creed. Muslim and Christian, Catholic and Protestant, were to be found on both sides of the line. Germany stressed its Lutheran credentials within Europe, but became—by virtue of its pact with Turkey—the spokesman for Catholicism in the Holy Land. The same alliance also made it the protector of the Jews. In this case, however, the function was replicated rather than reversed within Europe itself:

<sup>2</sup> Schulte, *Vor dem Kriegsausbruch*, 116.

<sup>3</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 318.

<sup>4</sup> Marrin, *Last crusade*, 98.

France, the persecutor of Dreyfus, and Russia, the architect of anti-Semitic pogroms, were Germany's enemies. Zionism, however, found its advocate in Britain. In confessional terms Britain and Germany should have been aligned. The fact that they were not shattered German theologians like Adolf von Harnack. Their disillusionment was deepened by Britain's readiness to ally with Shinto Japan and to deploy Hindu troops in Europe. Ernst Troeltsch described the consequences for international Christianity, 'the religion of the white race', as 'a downright catastrophe'.<sup>5</sup>

Troeltsch's despair went further. The destruction and hatred which the war unleashed seemed to make Christianity itself 'an alien message from an alien world'. This was not a new lament: its origins were both pre-war and domestic. Church-state relations in many of the belligerent countries were increasingly fraught. Societies had become sufficiently secularized in their pursuit of material progress for church leaders to be tempted to see the war's advent as divine retribution. For them, the war could be welcomed as a necessary and God-given process of cleansing and rejuvenation.

Paradoxically, therefore, optimism trod hard on the heels of pessimism. The response of many on mobilization was to turn to religion for guidance and comfort. In Hamburg church attendance rose 125 per cent in August. In Orcival, in France, 4,115 people received communion in 1913 but 14,480 did so in 1914.<sup>6</sup> Much of what moved congregations was spiritual and mystical. In a sermon delivered in October 1914 Pastor L. Jacobsköller saw the war as a new Whitsun, the coming of the Holy Ghost 'like a mighty, rushing wind'.<sup>7</sup> God acquired a fresh immediacy, awesome and judging as well as loving and compassionate. Ernst Barlach's lithograph for *Kriegszeit*, a weekly magazine, entitled *Holy War*, showed a robed figure, his identity obscured, with sword poised.<sup>8</sup> Its message was ambiguous. Was this a vengeful God, purging the world of decadence and unbelief, or could it be a more partial God, punishing only His chosen people's foes?

Much of the rhetoric of holy war delivered from the pulpits of Europe in 1914 opted for the second interpretation. The *Solingen Tageblatt* on 5 August declared that this is 'a holy war': 'Germany can and is not allowed to lose . . . if she loses so, too, does the world lose its light, its home of justice.'<sup>9</sup> In Britain, the bishop of London, Arthur Winnington-Ingram, was of the view that 'the Church can best help the nation first of all by making it realise that it is engaged in a Holy War, and not be afraid of saying so'.<sup>10</sup> The cellist Maurice Maréchal, then a 22-year-

<sup>5</sup> Rubanowice, *Crisis in consciousness*, 101; also Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 128–30; Huber, *Kirche und Öffentlichkeit*, 171–3, 181–2.

<sup>6</sup> Hope, *German and Scandinavian protestantism*, 591; Becker, *Great War and the French people*, 188.

<sup>7</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 17–18; also 188–91.

<sup>8</sup> Cork, *Bitter truth*, 47.

<sup>9</sup> Verhey, 'The "spirit" of 1914', 273.

<sup>10</sup> Marrin, *Last crusade*, 139.

old music student, wrote to his mother on 2 August 1914 in terms that were more emotive and romantic. He had that day passed Rouen cathedral on his way back home: the building was saying, 'I am the Glory, I am the Faith, I am France. I love my children, who have given me life, and I protect them.'<sup>11</sup>

The crux of such pronouncements was their identification of church with state. Nowhere was this more evident than in the only formal declaration of holy war, that made in Constantinople and issued in the name of a spiritual leader, the Caliph, who, as Sultan, was also a temporal ruler. In Russia the Orthodox church fused its own proselytization with the Russification of the empire's ethnic communities. Under the leadership of the minister of religion, the church used the opportunity of the war not only to intensify its persecution of Jews and Muslims but also to root out Lutherans in the Baltic states, Catholics in Poland, and above all, Uniates (or Greek Catholics) in the Ukraine.<sup>12</sup> In a series of fourteen lithographs entitled *Mystical Images of War* Natalia Goncharova subscribed to this fusion of Russia's history with its religion, her final print showing the spirit of St Alexander Nevsky, who routed the Teutonic knights in 1242.<sup>13</sup> Significantly, the *lubok*, a traditional form of popular broadside, was revived in Russia in 1914–15. Although the *lubki* rarely referred to the church, they used iconic elements to emphasize the holiness of the struggle, with the Entente as the Trinity and Russia and the Russian soldier as mother and child.<sup>14</sup>

In western Europe the fact that Catholics were committed to both sides reduced the Vatican to virtual silence. But the German invasion of Belgium and northern France acquired the trappings of a holy war with almost immediate effect. The German army was heir to two traditions. The first, forged by the French army in the Vendée and in the Peninsular War, saw Catholic priests as the orchestrators of local guerrillas and resistance movements. The second was Bismarck's anti-Catholic *Kulturkampf*. The stories of German atrocities often had priests and nuns as their victims. If they accepted the accusations, German soldiers excused their actions as responses to 'conspiratorial Catholicism';<sup>15</sup> if they denied them, their prosecutors cited as evidence the physical destruction suffered by churches, notably at Louvain and Reims.

For the Catholics themselves, their sufferings were an opportunity to re-establish the links between church and state. In Belgium Cardinal Mercier, archbishop of Malines, became a symbol of resistance. In his 1914 Christmas message he told his flock that, 'The religion of Christ makes patriotism a law:

<sup>11</sup> Guéno and Laplume, *Paroles de poilus*, 11.

<sup>12</sup> Pares, *Fall of the Russian monarchy*, 64–5; Rauchensteiner, *Tod des Doppeladlers*, 29; Zeman, *Break-up of Habsburg empire*, 5–6.

<sup>13</sup> Cork, *Bitter truth*, 48.

<sup>14</sup> Jahn, *Patriotic culture in Russia*, 24, 28.

<sup>15</sup> Horne and Kramer, *Journal of Modern History*, LXVI (1994), 24.

there is no perfect Christian who is not a perfect patriot.<sup>16</sup> In occupied France the mobilization of teachers and then the severance from Paris could leave the curé as the most important local figure. Indeed, the Germans' victimization and even execution of the clergy may have reflected the latter's exercise of secular rather than spiritual leadership. The archbishop of Verdun told Baudrillart of one curé who had been stripped and flogged in front of his parishioners, and of another who had been clothed in his vestments and then forced to watch the rape of his maid.<sup>17</sup> However much exaggerated by French and British propaganda, such stories were almost certainly not without some foundation.<sup>18</sup> More importantly, they were believed at the time. Baudrillart established a Catholic committee to produce anti-German propaganda, and in April 1915 it published *La Guerre allemande et le catholicisme*. Thus the war provided the opportunity for France's Catholics both to challenge republican aspersions on their loyalty, and to win back Frenchmen for Rome.

In 1429 Joan of Arc had passed through Auxerre on her way to raise the siege of Orléans. In 1914 the city's cathedral church of St Étienne commissioned a stained glass depiction of the maid directing operations: it carried the words attributed to Joan—'I have been sent by God the King of Heaven to drive you out of all France.' The ambiguity as to whom her words were addressed proved helpful. A declaration directed at the English in 1429 could in 1914 be targeted at the Germans. Before the First World War's outbreak the cult of Joan of Arc promoted political division more than patriotic unity. The campaign for her canonization and for her appropriation as a national symbol was orchestrated by the Catholic right. But there existed another image of Joan, not of the church militant or of martial success, of Joan clad not in armour but in a dress; this was a peasant girl betrayed by the king whose coronation she had achieved and burned at the stake by the church which she had served. Both images carried patriotic overtones, even if the second was of a revolutionary France rather than a royalist one. The outbreak of the war, and particularly the bombardment of Reims cathedral, where Charles VII had been crowned under a standard held aloft by Joan, permitted these divergent interpretations to be integrated. At one level, therefore, the iconography of Joan in late 1914 was simply further evidence of the *union sacrée* and its capacity for reconciliation. But it carried a further message. The posters and postcards bore a legend that was both a reminder and a promise: 'Dieu protège la France.'<sup>19</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Stengers, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, 179 (July 1995), 31.

<sup>17</sup> Baudrillart, *Carnets*, 100.

<sup>18</sup> The subject of atrocities and also of their relationship to propaganda will be dealt with in a subsequent volume. Trevor Wilson challenged the evidence of atrocities in Belgium used by the British, *Journal of Contemporary History*, XIV (1979), 369–83; John Horne and Alan Kramer are exploring the truth—see *Journal of Modern History*, LXVI (1994), 1–33.

<sup>19</sup> The Auxerre window is by Edmond Socard, from a painting by Paul Louzier. See also Krumeich, *Jeanne d'Arc*, esp. 10–12, 187–99, 216–18.

Catholicism was hardly the monopoly of the Entente. Austrian fealty to the Vatican contrasted strongly with the anticlericalism of the Third Republic. And the latter made France an even greater threat in the adjacent territories of Catholic south Germany. Efforts were made to render Freiburg's cathedral as symbolic as those of Reims or Louvain. *Illustrierte Zeitung*, a Leipzig journal, highlighted its vulnerability with a picture of a French air raid over the city on 13 December 1914. Alsatian priests were not martyrs but traitors; the number reported by the German press as having been executed for treason proved to be double the number actually in orders. Thus, the themes of allied propaganda and the accusations of Entente Catholics were turned. The fact that Germany's propaganda in neutral states was entrusted to the leader of the Catholic Centre party, Matthias Erzberger, reinforced the specifically Catholic dimension to the German riposte. The charges levelled by Baudrillart's committee received a point-by-point rebuttal in a volume written by A. J. Rosenberg at Erzberger's request, and Georg Pfeilschifter presided over a collaborative volume, *Deutsche Kultur, Katholizismus und Weltkrieg* (German culture, Catholicism, and world war). Significantly Pfeilschifter's contributors, like Rosenberg himself, were predominantly academic theologians rather than clerics. The Vatican had asked Erzberger to keep the episcopate out of the controversy.<sup>20</sup>

The Germans were portrayed not merely as anti-Catholic but frequently also as anti-Christian. The root of this second charge was liberal theology. In Germany biblical scholarship had neglected faith in favour of research, religion in favour of rationality, and so removed the moral force from Christian teaching. The invasion of Belgium was cited as evidence, the act of a society which denied the natural law of the civilized world. Adolf von Harnack and Ernst von Dryander, the primate of the German Evangelical church, rejected these allegations. In late August the first of a succession of manifestos was drawn up under their aegis, and addressed to Evangelical churches abroad—particularly in the United States. Its distribution was entrusted to the Deutsche Evangelische Missions-Hilfe, created in December 1913 to promote missionary work in the German colonies. The fusion of Evangelism and propaganda, the broadening in focus from Germany's own overseas possessions to the world as a whole, helped redefine the church's mission in political and cultural as well as religious terms.<sup>21</sup>

The result was a new theology. The war enabled orthodox Lutherans and liberal theologians to converge. Both saw victory as the means to the application of the kingdom of God within an ethical community; Protestantism could be confirmed as the religious bedrock of the German cultural state.<sup>22</sup> The

<sup>20</sup> Geinitz, *Kriegsfurcht und Kampfbereitschaft*, 280, 398; Epstein, *Erzberger*, 101–2; Erzberger, *Erlebnisse*, 11–18; Pfeilschifter (ed.), *Deutsche Kultur, Katholizismus und der Weltkrieg*.

<sup>21</sup> Andresen, *Dryander*, 313–16, 331–3, 346–8; Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 108–18.

<sup>22</sup> Huber, *Kirche und Öffentlichkeit*, 145, 168–9.

Lutheran church's evangelism, therefore, embraced the spirit of 1914 as an opportunity to relaunch itself not only in the wider world but also at home. Preachers did not move from their texts to contemporary life, but vice versa, addressing their parishioners' immediate experiences and using the Bible to reinforce the message. The Old Testament acquired a fresh relevance—evidence of God's use of war as judgement, and of his endorsement of a chosen people seeking a political and cultural independence.<sup>23</sup>

Luther himself became a hero—the fusion, like Joan of Arc in France, of religion, nationality, and historical identity. The Reformation joined the wars of unification in the historical foundations of the German state. The early Protestant church had relied on the secular powers for its survival, and was thus prey to state intervention from the outset of its existence.<sup>24</sup> Luther had recognized the dangers by propounding his doctrine of the two kingdoms. But, in seeking to separate the spiritual from the temporal, he had curtailed the church's role in national life while not preventing its appropriation for the purposes of nationalism. The Pan-German League and, particularly, the Army League were overwhelmingly Protestant in composition.<sup>25</sup>

God, therefore, became an active participant in the historical process. His nature in these circumstances was not determined by the needs of private morality but of public. The crowds on 1 August 1914 sang Luther's great hymn, 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott', a song that was at once both national and religious. Ernst Troeltsch moved under the impact of the war from theology to history, because the German form of Christianity was Lutheranism and the German state embodied the best form of Lutheranism in political practice. Patriotism, therefore, became both a source of faith and a Christian duty.<sup>26</sup>

On the occasion of the opening of the Reichstag on 4 August 1914 Ernst von Dryander preached in Berlin cathedral. The Kaiser was in the congregation. Dryander was entirely persuaded of the significance of this marriage of church and state. As he was later to say, 'I owe the best that I have to my fatherland not *in spite of*, but *because of*, my being a Christian—the best not only in time, strength and wealth, but also in the marrow of my strength, my relationship to God and to my faith.'<sup>27</sup> His text on 4 August was St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chapter 8, verse 3: 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' His assumptions were cultural, in his rejection of materialism and his hopes of national regeneration, and they were historical. He cited Treitschke, and he summoned up Luther and 'the old heroes of 1813'. 'We march to the fight for our culture against unculture, for German morality against barbarity, for the free, German, God-fearing person

<sup>23</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 35–44; Doehring, *Ein feste Burg*, ii. 363–5.

<sup>24</sup> Marrin, *Last crusade*, 109–18.

<sup>25</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of war*, 18.

<sup>26</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 75–6, 176, 202–4; Rubanowice, *Crisis in consciousness*, 102–3, 107–9.

<sup>27</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 203.

against the instincts of the uncontrolled mass . . . We know that we fight not only for our existence but also for the existence of the most holy of possessions that we have to perpetuate.' The key issue, he concluded, was not 'whether God is with us, but whether we are with God'.<sup>28</sup>

Dryander explored themes which became central to Germany's sense of purpose, whether expressed by believers or agnostics. Bernhardt, the military publicist, wrote in *Internationale Monatsschrift* in November 1914: 'God reveals himself in victory by which He makes truth defeat appearance. It is God's law that condemns the vanquished, and it is, therefore, His will that the conqueror should dictate such peace terms as shall display his inner strength by his external power and greatness.'<sup>29</sup> The philosopher and, in due course, founding father of sociology Max Scheler, who was the son of a Protestant and a Jew, but who later converted to Catholicism, contended that the war was a holy war precisely because it was about fundamental issues associated with the existence of the nation. War was the moment when God passed judgement, and the mobilization of the state's resources as it put its fate in God's hands in itself made the war a just one.<sup>30</sup>

For thinkers in France and Britain the Nietzschean spin in this sort of thought—'the religion of valour, the religion of might is right', in the words of *The Times* on 10 September 1914<sup>31</sup>—suggested not a reworked Christianity but a departure from it. Baudrillart's Institut Catholique saw the root of the problem as Kant, Nietzsche's logical predecessor. In asserting that God was beyond human comprehension and that man could know only himself, Kant had, in the eyes of French Catholics, elevated man and with him the law and the moral authority of the state. For republicans, socialists, and anti-Catholics in France, Kant's emphasis on rationality was of course right and Catholicism superstitious and wrong. Conveniently too, Kant had written about perpetual peace.<sup>32</sup>

The divisions in French approaches to Kant highlighted not only the split between church and state in the republic but also the pre-war French conviction that there were two Germanies. Kant personified the cerebral, spiritual, and reasoned Germany; Hegel the materialist, militarist, and nationalist. During the war itself this division would find another, more practical interpretation, that of a German people (presumably Kantian) being guided, gulled, and misled by a German leadership (presumably Hegelian). In due course much Entente propaganda came to rest on the conviction that the

<sup>28</sup> Doehring, *Ein feste Burg*, i. 14–18; see also Andresen, *Dryander*, 319–20.

<sup>29</sup> Verhey, 'The "spirit" of 1914', 289; see also Lange, *Marneschlacht und deutsche Öffentlichkeit*, 113–16.

<sup>30</sup> Scheler, *Der Genius des Krieges* (first published in article form in October 1914, and as a book in 1915), 55, 86–8.

<sup>31</sup> Martin, *Times Literary Supplement*, 5 Aug. 1994, 11–12.

<sup>32</sup> Hanna, *Mobilization of intellect*, 108–18, and for what follows 9–10.



German masses were fundamentally liberal and rational. But the corollary of such a belief was that the allied purpose was itself revolutionary. Its task was not only to clear the Germans out of France and Belgium but also to overthrow the Kaiser and establish a German republic. Guided by their hopes of internationalism and perpetual peace, French socialists were as intellectually committed to the dismemberment of Germany—and therefore to a big war for big ideas—as were French Catholics and German Protestants.<sup>33</sup>

For many French intellectuals the notion of the two Germanies was scuppered by the manifesto of ninety-three German university teachers published by the *Berliner Tageblatt* and other major newspapers on 4 October 1914. Provocatively addressed 'An der Kulturwelt' (to the world of culture), it made clear that the unity of orthodox Lutherans and academic theologians which underpinned the August manifesto had now been extended. The ideas embraced by the church were endorsed by professors from throughout the Reich, of all religions and of all disciplines. Most claimed to be apolitical in the sense of being above party, but all parties bar the SPD were represented.

The signatories had international reputations as well as international contacts. Their pre-war assumptions were neither insular nor chauvinist. One of the most distinguished was the classicist Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf. Wilamowitz orchestrated the preparation of a further manifesto published on 16 October 1914 in English, French, Italian, and Spanish as well as German. Thanks to the efforts of Dietrich Schäfer, professor of history, pupil of Treitschke, and pre-war stalwart of the Army League, virtually the entire German academic profession—over 4,000 names, including almost every professor at every German university—endorsed the declaration. Numbered among them were closet socialists, future pacifists, and sceptics, including Max Weber and Albert Einstein. The professors rejected the accusations that Germany had caused the war, had broken international law in its invasion of Belgium, and had committed atrocities against the civilian populations of that country and of France. Their list of denials concluded with two assertions: first, that the future of European culture rested on the victory of German so-called 'militarism'; and secondly, that in defining this militarism there was no distinction to be made between Prussia and the rest of Germany, or between the German army and the German nation: 'both are one.'<sup>34</sup>

A third manifesto, emanating from the University of Tübingen and entitled 'Appel au monde civilisé', was published on 17 October. In the long run their combined effects were counter-productive: they disseminated the charges

<sup>33</sup> Robert, *Les Ouvriers*, 28–30; also Milner, *Dilemmas of Internationalism*, 214.

<sup>34</sup> Brocke, 'Wissenschaft und Militarismus', 649–64; Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*, 22–4; I have not been able to consult Jürgen Ungern-Sternberg von Pürkel and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg, *Der Aufruf an der Kulturwelt. Das Manifest der 93 und die Anfänge der Kriegspropaganda im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Stuttgart, 1996).

against Germany by repeating them. But the immediate consequences arose from their association of German *Kultur* with German militarism.

The world of scholarship and the arts fragmented into national components. Sigmund Freud, writing in the spring of 1915, mourned science's loss of 'her passionless impartiality'.<sup>35</sup> The Institut de France dismissed from its honorary membership all those German professors who had signed the manifesto, and on 3 November 100 members of the French literary and artistic world countered with their own declaration. The signatories, who included representatives of the left like Georges Clemenceau, and of the right like Maurice Barrès, as well as Debussy, Gide, Matisse, and Monet, declared that 'the intellectual and moral richness of humanity is created by the natural variety and independence of all nations' gifts'. The Académie des Sciences replied on the same day in terms which were both more chauvinistic and more questionable: 'Latin and Anglo-Saxon civilisations are those which have produced the majority of the great discoveries in the mathematical, physical and natural sciences in the last three centuries.' It was left to historians like Ernest Lavisse, director of the École Normale Supérieure, to explain the roots of pan-Germanism and to work out the implications of German culture for the German 'theory and practice of war'.<sup>36</sup>

On 12 December 1914 Henri Bergson, the doyen of French philosophy, delivered his presidential address to the Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques. For Bergson the union of the two Germanies had been effected not in 1914 but in 1871. Germany had opted not for an organic, natural unification, but for a mechanical and artificial form derived from Prussia. The basis of Germany's victories was material prosperity, and the ideas that followed did so as an effect of unification, not as its cause. Germany's philosophy was 'a translation into intellectual terms of her brutality, her appetites, and her vices'. German atrocities, and the belief of German academics that the ends justified such means, were evidence of 'barbarism reinforced by civilisation'.<sup>37</sup>

For Bergson individually, and for French academics collectively, herein was the key to the war's purpose. The defence of France was transformed into the defence of civilization. Once again the Huns were at the gates, and this time the threat was far greater because they had harnessed to the cause of barbarity the machinery of the state and the material advantages of industrialization. For those on the left the civilization which they were protecting was the legacy of 1789, equality and fraternity, principles of universal application. For those on the right the sources lay further back, with Charles Martel and Charlemagne. Common ground was a recovery of classicism. Athenian republicanism appealed to the left, the reinvigoration of Latin teaching favoured the

<sup>35</sup> Freud, 'Thoughts for the times', 275.

<sup>36</sup> Hanna, *Mobilization of intellect*, 78–90; Brocke, 'Wissenschaft und Militarismus', 667–8.

<sup>37</sup> Bergson, *Meaning of war*, 18–20, 29–33.

church. Both saw in the classics an enduring and international definition of civilization which endorsed France's mission.<sup>38</sup>

Bergson's lecture on the meaning of the war was published in English in 1915, and reprinted several times. But British philosophers were hesitant about following his example, for two reasons. The first was the uncertainty of some about making the leap from academic to public life. The war promoted emotion and instinct to the detriment of reason and law, and herein lay the second difficulty. The former qualities were more characteristic of the European philosophical tradition, which included not only Nietzsche but also, as the liberal and would-be neutral L. T. Hobhouse, pointed out, Bergson himself.<sup>39</sup>

More representative of the British academic profession as a whole than Hobhouse's doubts about public involvement was an initial reluctance to nationalize the world of learning. A group of nine scholars, mostly from Cambridge, wrote to *The Times* on 1 August 1914 to protest against a war with Germany, which was 'leading the way in Arts and Sciences', on behalf of Serbia and Russia, which most certainly were not. Six weeks later fifty-three writers, including G. K. Chesterton, Arthur Conan Doyle, Rudyard Kipling, and H. G. Wells, were prompted by the government to address the editor of the same newspaper in order to condemn Germany's appropriation of 'brute force to impose its culture upon other nations', but they still confessed their high regard for that same culture. Even on 21 October 1914 117 British academics prefaced their reply to the German professors' manifesto with an expression of their deep admiration for German scholarship and science, and an affirmation of their 'ties with Germany, ties of comradeship, of respect, and of affection'.<sup>40</sup>

The sequence of letters shows a conversion that marches in step with, but not ahead of, the pattern of popular recruiting. Its significance lies less in the fact that British intellectuals, like those of Germany, came to endorse the government line, and more in their determination, again as in Germany, to forsake reflection and research for action. The Oxford History School produced a succession of pamphlets concerning the causes of the war from mid-September 1914. Like the manifestos of the German professors, these publications became the foundation for more officially directed propaganda. But the dons insisted that their reaction was spontaneous: the initiative was their own.

Like those of France, the scholars of Britain were clear that the cause on which their country had embarked was a universal one. The assumption of this burden was a consequence of empire because, in the words of Alfred Zimmern, 'Of the Great Powers which between them control the destinies of civilisation

<sup>38</sup> Hanna, *Mobilization of intellect*, 142–5, 155–6, 166, 174; also Raithel, *Das 'Wunder' der inneren Einheit*, 379–80.

<sup>39</sup> Wallace, *War and the image of Germany*, 48.

<sup>40</sup> Brocke, 'Wissenschaft und Militarismus', 670; Wallace, *War and the image of Germany*, 24–5.

Great Britain is at once the freest, the largest, and most various'.<sup>41</sup> Britain, therefore, supported France not because it now finally felt able to endorse the claim of the ideas of the French Revolution to universality, but out of respect for France's own evolution to democracy: France, as another Oxford man, the historian Ernest Barker, said, is 'one of the great seed-beds of liberal thought and ideas'.<sup>42</sup>

Civilization, a key word in France, was also a central concept in Britain. However, Alfred Zimmern was clear that its meaning was different in Britain: 'it stands for something moral and social and political. It means, in the first place, the establishment and enforcement of the Rule of Law...and, secondly... the task of making men fit for free institutions.' Britain was fighting for 'Law, Justice, Responsibility, Liberty, Citizenship', concepts which 'belong to civilised humanity as a whole'.<sup>43</sup> The Oxford historians agreed. In their first pamphlet, *Why we are at war: Great Britain's case*, they said that Britain was fighting for 'the public law of Europe'.<sup>44</sup>

Law in this case meant the natural law to which the church too subscribed, and which Christianity had appropriated from the Greeks. It meant less international law in a legal sense and more a common morality; it implied that treaties had a sanctity which derived not merely from the honour of those who signed them but also from a Christian world order. 'If', G. W. Prothero wrote, 'international morality is regarded as of no account, a heavy blow is dealt at commercial and private morality as well. The Reign of Law, the greatest mark of civilization is maintained in all its parts.' Law was, therefore, indivisible: the law which regulated international relations was in principle the same as that which upheld the rights of property, the sanctity of marriage, and the workings of credit.<sup>45</sup>

The problem was that of giving such academic concepts immediacy. The Oxford historians tried: 'We are a people in whose blood the cause of law is the vital element.' Alfred Zimmern went further. As the author of *The Greek commonwealth*, he was appalled that Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, whose scholarship he admired, could regard Prussia as superior to Athens because Prussia was a monarchy. Zimmern therefore spurned any constitutional definitions of democracy for something much more organic: 'Democracy is a spirit and an atmosphere, and its essence is trust in the moral instincts of the people.' He sidestepped the troubling issues of empire, crown, and franchise to emphasize the responsibility which British democracy cast on the individual citizen.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 371.

<sup>42</sup> Wallace, *War and the image of Germany*, 62.

<sup>43</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 363–4.

<sup>44</sup> Oxford Faculty of Modern History, *Why we are at war*, 115–16.

<sup>45</sup> Gullace, *American Historical Review*, CII (1997), 722–3.

<sup>46</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 1–2.

Bethmann-Hollweg helped. His contemptuous reference to the Belgian guarantee as 'a scrap of paper' gave a force to what was otherwise in danger of being either theory or rhetoric. The Belgians became the personification of ideas. Hensley Henson, the dean of Durham, likened them to the Israelites in their sufferings under the tyrannies of Egypt and Babylon.<sup>47</sup> 'A democracy armed with faith is not merely strong,' Zimmern explained: 'it is invincible; for its cause will live on, in defeat and disaster, in the breast of every one of its citizens. Belgium is a living testimony to that great truth.'<sup>48</sup> Walter Sickert gave these words visual expression. His own opposition to violence was first undermined by the emotional jingoism of the music halls which he painted so well. But it was Belgium that rationalized the shift: in October 1914 he painted *The soldiers of King Albert the Ready*, based on the defence of Liège, and in January 1915 he exhibited *The integrity of Belgium*.<sup>49</sup>

Thanks to Belgium, the Asquith cabinet had been able to rally round the rights of small nations and the sovereignty of international law. Thereafter Asquith was able to invert the sequence. Britain fought not for Belgium, but for what Belgium represented. In a speech on 19 September the prime minister defined Britain's reasons for entering the war as threefold: first, to uphold 'the public law of Europe'; secondly, 'to enforce the independence of free states'; and thirdly, 'to withstand . . . the arrogant claim of a single Power to dominate the development of the destinies of Europe'.<sup>50</sup> By elevating the principles over the principality, Asquith evaded the knotty issues of Belgium's pre-war record as a colonial power. The good ousted the bad. For Germany the opposite was the case. Monolithic and militarist, its crime was the assumption that its culture, a product of the state, was appropriate to peoples whose languages and traditions were different. In the circumstances, the notion of there being two Germanies was a difficult one to sustain.

Surprisingly, Lloyd George tried to do so. In a speech in Bangor on 28 February 1915 he expressed his admiration for German music, German science, and 'the Germany of a virile philosophy that helped to break the shackles of superstition in Europe'. Even now he saw the issue of which Germany would dominate as unresolved, comparing it to a Wagnerian struggle 'between the good and the evil spirit for the possession of the man's soul'. The outcome would depend on who won the war. If Germany was victorious, then 'we shall be vassals, not to the best Germans', but 'to a Germany that talks through the vacuous voice of Krupp's artillery'.<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Marrin, *Last crusade*, 129.

<sup>48</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Cork, *Bitter truth*, 54–7; also *The Times Review*, 14 Nov. 1992, pp. 38–9.

<sup>50</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 239.

<sup>51</sup> Grigg, *Lloyd George*, 216; also 161–6.

A few others could still see the distinction. Dean Inge took Nietzsche on his own terms, highlighting his praise of individualism and stressing that his writings justified neither militarism nor racism.<sup>52</sup> Alfred Zimmern resisted the temptation to cull extracts from 'Treitschke's brilliant and careful work', or to forget that 'Nietzsche, like many other prophets, wrote in allegory'.<sup>53</sup> But they were increasingly isolated, Zimmern even within his own university. Sir Walter Raleigh, Oxford's professor of English literature, was delighted to have the excuse 'to be rid of the German incubus... It has done no good, for many years, to scholarship;—indeed, it has produced a kind of slave-scholarship'.<sup>54</sup> Even Zimmern's fellow classicist Gilbert Murray, a Liberal, a would-be neutral before the war and an ardent internationalist after it, saw the opportunity to reassert a specifically British approach to learning, based on 'feeling and understanding' rather than research for its own sake: 'we are always aiming at culture in Arnold's sense not Bernhardi's'.<sup>55</sup>

Whether Murray read Bernhardi may be doubted; unlike some other British academics, he had never studied at a German university. Ignorance, not least of the German language, underpinned many of the portrayals of German ideology. In France, Bergson's idea that German philosophy had become the pawn of an alliance between militarism and industrialism was vital to his optimism concerning the war's outcome: material resources could be exhausted, those of the spirit could not. But Bergson's interpretation was flawed. It rested on his memories of 1870, and of France's awareness ever since of its growing inferiority, both demographically and economically. In 1914 Britain's entry into the war ensured that collectively the Entente had a combined national income 60 per cent greater than that of the Central Powers.<sup>56</sup> Not Germany but France now stood to gain from a war of materialism.

Germany's awareness of its economic inferiority directed its thinking on war along routes very different from those which Bergson—or for that matter Murray—imagined. Despite his place in Entente demonology, Bernhardi perhaps matters least as an indicator of military thought, since he was at odds with much of the prevailing ethos in the general staff. But it is nonetheless worth pointing out that, according to *Germany and the next war*, war was not to be undertaken lightly, it should be fought according to moral conventions, and it should be limited in its objectives.<sup>57</sup> Effectively, Bernhardi gave himself little choice, since he was highly critical of 'material prosperity, commerce and money-making',<sup>58</sup> the very means which would enable the war to be fought at

<sup>52</sup> Marrin, *Last crusade*, 103.

<sup>53</sup> Seton-Watson *et al.*, *War and democracy*, 350.

<sup>54</sup> Wallace, *War and the image of Germany*, 36.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* 38; see also 105.

<sup>56</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of war*, 248.

<sup>57</sup> Marrin, *Last crusade*, 108 (citing Bernhardi, *Germany and the next war*, 18–19, 45, 48, 79, 85–7).

<sup>58</sup> Offer, *Politics and society*, XXIII (1995), 216.

greater intensity and for more grandiose aims. In this respect at least, Bernhardt aligned himself with the German army collectively. It feared economic progress as a threat to its warlike and warrior qualities.<sup>59</sup> Material and demographic inferiority in 1914 confirmed its predisposition to trust in alternative strengths. As the year ebbed away, Moltke pinned his hopes of ultimate German victory not on superior armament or even on greater military efficiency but on 'the high idealism of the German people'.<sup>60</sup>

Things of the spirit were the key: *Geist* was the catchword. Moltke himself was an anthroposophist; in private he admitted, 'I live entirely in the arts'.<sup>61</sup> On the eastern front one of his army commanders, August von Mackensen, put his faith in 'our inner strength'.<sup>62</sup> This was not the vocabulary of professionalism or modernism, let alone materialism. Moreover, these soldiers were expressing themselves in terms similar to those used by academics. In *Die Nationen und ihre Philosophie* (1915), Wilhelm Wundt rejected the British idea that individual progress was linked to industrial development. He condemned British ethics, which harnessed economic growth to utilitarianism and materialism to positivism, as the path to shallowness and mediocrity.<sup>63</sup> The sociologist Werner Sombart produced the most extreme version of this thesis. In *Händler und Helden* (Traders and heroes) (1915) he described man as living two lives on earth, one superficial and the other spiritual: life itself was a continuing effort to pass from one to the other. The struggle was essentially a personal one, but war gave it transcendent qualities. In these circumstances the free response to duty's call and the willingness to sacrifice self characterized Sombart's 'hero'. Therefore, the significance of war for the state lay not in social Darwinism, not in terms of the state's standing in relation to its neighbours, but in the nation's ability to elevate the spirit and will of its people. War found the state at its acme. 'The sword and the spirit', Max Scheler wrote, 'can create a beautiful, worthy marriage.' Its fertility was proved for him by the link between the Persian wars and Greek philosophy and between the Napoleonic wars and Hegel. 'The war of 1914', Sombart concluded, 'is the war of Nietzsche'.<sup>64</sup>

Both Sombart and Scheler, born in 1863 and 1874 respectively, belonged to that younger generation which had come to maturity in Wilhelmine Germany after Bismarck's fall. By contrast, Rudolf Eucken was already 20 when 1866 had inaugurated a promise that he felt had not yet been fulfilled. Before unification Germany had found its identity not in politics but in philosophy, literature, and music. Since then Germans had worked hard to improve their material lot, but in so doing had lost their vocation. Eucken, a Nobel prizewinner and the dominant figure in German philosophy,

<sup>59</sup> Echevarria, *War & Society*, XIII (1995), 23–40.

<sup>60</sup> Verhey, 'The "spirit" of 1914', 311.

<sup>61</sup> Eksteins, *Rites of spring*, 89.

<sup>62</sup> Schwarzmüller, *Zwischen Kaiser und 'Führer'*, 98.

<sup>63</sup> Ringer, *Decline of German mandarins*, 185.

<sup>64</sup> Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 53, 61–5; Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 34–5, 94–5.

particularly in spiritual existentialism, hankered for his subject's return to the centre of national life. The outbreak of the First World War provided him with the opportunity to fulfil his aspirations. Like Sombart, Scheler, and the leaders of the church, he celebrated war's power to reinvigorate the moral health of the individual. And he went as far or even further in pursuing its collective implications. His 1914 publication, on 'the world historical significance of the German spirit', asserted that Germany could not be defeated while it remained truly united and stood fast in its inner strength.<sup>65</sup>

If *Geist* was a word that concerned the feelings of the individual but could be extended to the community, *Kultur* embraced concepts that began with the community but were defined nationally. Sombart quoted Novalis to the effect that 'all culture derives from the relationship of a man with the state.'<sup>66</sup> *Kultur* was shaped by language and history, but its vitality rested also on the civic virtues to which *Geist* gave rise—idealism, heroism, subordination to the community.<sup>67</sup> Thus, the German professors declared in their October manifesto that 'Our belief is that the salvation of all European culture depends on the victory for which German "militarism" is fighting, the discipline, the loyalty, the spirit of sacrifice of the united free German people.'<sup>68</sup>

*Kultur's* opponent was 'civilization'. There was, of course, a paradox here. Germany was civilized, in the sense that it had benefited as much as any state from the advances in science and technology so fundamental to Europe's primacy in the world at the beginning of the twentieth century. Even Eucken acknowledged this: the distinction of Germans as technicians, traders, and industrialists meant that 'today people are in the habit of calling us the Americans of Europe.'<sup>69</sup> But the civilization which Thomas Mann saw as the opposite of *Kultur* was itself more cultural than technological.<sup>70</sup> In part it was materialistic, and hence damaging to the heroic spirit; in part it was egalitarian, a fruit of 1789. Civilization, according to another philosopher, Paul Natorp, was the culture of society, and that meant a levelling down of the best to conform with the average. It could make a man a slave. *Kultur*, on the other hand, was liberating. The contrast was Kant's, but the context in 1914 was no longer moral but political.<sup>71</sup>

The clash between civilization and culture took German thought back to its late-eighteenth-century roots. In condemning civilization, the philosophers of 1914 were reflecting the rationality of the Enlightenment and the consequences of the French Revolution. They argued that, following what was essentially an alien, French track, philosophy had elevated the rule of law and the rights of

<sup>65</sup> Lübke, *Politische Philosophie*, 176–84; see, in English, Mommsen, *Imperial Germany*, 206–14.

<sup>66</sup> Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 74–7. <sup>67</sup> Chickering, *Imperial Germany*, 135.

<sup>68</sup> Kruse, 'Kriegsbegeisterung', 85. <sup>69</sup> Sieferle, 'Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz', 159.

<sup>70</sup> Mann, 'Gedanken im Kriege', 7.

<sup>71</sup> Lübke, *Politische Philosophie*, 190–1; Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 50.



the individual, and so had promoted selfishness and materialism. At one level, therefore, the summons of 1914 was a call to rediscover the ideas of the *Aufklärung* and to refurbish the memory of 1813. More important even than Kant or Hegel in the nationalist context was Fichte. Fichte's *Reden an die deutsche Nation* (Speeches to the German nation) (1808) symbolized the engagement of the philosopher with the life of the state, and his endowment of the nation with its own identity and his subordination of the individual to the nation connected the themes of the war of liberation with those of 1914. Between 1890 and 1900 Fichte's philosophy was the subject of only ten noteworthy studies; between 1900 and 1920 over 200 appeared. The context of Fichte's writing, the defeat at Jena in 1806, and the long path from there to liberation, ensured that his relevance did not dwindle as the adversities of the war multiplied.<sup>72</sup>

Although France was home to the Enlightenment and to the alleged triumph of its ideas in politics, France was not, in 1914, Germany's principal ideological foe. As Paul Natorp was prepared to concede, Germany had derived from revolutionary France both its sense of nationalism and the idea of the nation in arms.<sup>73</sup> For writers like Sombart and Scheler, the clashes between Germany and France, or even between Germany and Russia, were second-order issues tacked onto the war of real significance for world history, that between Germany and Britain. The enemy was capitalism, because this was the true threat to the spirit.

Sombart, like Wundt, characterized British philosophy as preoccupied with economics. It had neglected matters of the spirit for practical problems, and the consequences had permeated British life. The elevation of trade resulted in the pursuit of economic self-interest and the subordination of the state. The latter was seen as no more than a necessary evil. War, which for Scheler found the state in its highest form, was for the British superfluous. In their ideal world it would not exist, and when they did fight they did so for economic objectives and, very often, by economic means. The aristocracy was motivated by commerce rather than by honour, and the army and navy were no more than instruments for armed trade and colonial plunder. But the British practised cultural as well as economic imperialism. Their empire swamped alternative languages and traditions. Its aim, J. A. Cramb was quoted as saying, was 'to give all men within its bounds an English mind'. The ideal of gentlemanly self-restraint curbed the dynamic effects of personality and character. Even in international relations Britain, by the use of balance-of-power theory, elevated weak powers at the expense of the strong. Its own credentials as a democracy were doubtful: it was a colonial power abroad and a centralized state (rather than a federal one, like Germany) at home. Britain nonetheless

<sup>72</sup> Lübke, *Politische Philosophie*, 194–201.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* 188.

was bent on persuading the rest of the world that freedom should be defined solely in political terms. The fear, above all, was that the 'cant' of capitalism and its political expression, liberalism, was sapping even German culture of its own identity.<sup>74</sup> The greatest danger to Germany, in the view of Max Weber's brother Alfred, was 'Anglicization'.<sup>75</sup>

Implicit in Weber's formulation was his recognition that the threat was insidious. Even in late July 1914 Germany had preferred to see itself as the guardian of the civilization of western Europe against Russia. Animosity towards Britain was moderated by the common inheritance of Protestantism. But by the same token, Britain's decision to side with the enemy required more explanation. Its entry into the war was construed as a massive betrayal. Within days, Britain had replaced Russia as the focus for German hatred. Friedrich-Wilhelm Foerster rationalized Britain's behaviour in terms of a dualism not unlike that used by British commentators in regard to Germany. In 1914 the evil, imperialist side of Britain had triumphed over its better, peace-loving aspect. Others were less forgiving: Britain's decision was selfish and exploitative. The war did not confront Britain itself with any direct threat, and its effects could not be morally uplifting when Britain had no intention of committing itself wholeheartedly to its conduct. War, by definition, could not be a source of spiritual elevation when its motivation was economic gain. The clash of philosophies was rendered in popular terms. Britain's decision to side with France and Russia was evidence of its perfidy, and its determination to do so was driven by its pursuit of mammon. Neither honour nor spirit was part of its conceptual vocabulary.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, the outbreak of the war itself marked a change in patterns of thought. Ernst Troeltsch saw it as evidence that ideas stemmed from events, not events from ideas.<sup>77</sup> The reworking of the legacies of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution was not simply a means by which Germany rediscovered its cultural roots; it also helped put a shape on time. The long nineteenth century, which began in 1789, had ended in 1914. If the first date marked the French Revolution, the second marked the German one. The 'ideas of 1914', however much they tapped into the thought of Kant, Hegel, or Fichte, were essentially a new departure. In *Die Ideen von 1914* (The ideas of 1914) (1915), Rudolf Kjellen, a Swedish economist, associated the French Revolution with freedom and the ongoing German revolution with its replacement by order and responsibility. Johann Plenge picked up these points in 1916 with *1789 und 1914. Die*

<sup>74</sup> Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, esp. 4–43; Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 25–31, 53–4; Kjellen, *Politischen Probleme*, 130–4.

<sup>75</sup> Siefertle, 'Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz', 142.

<sup>76</sup> Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*, 27–8; Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 128–30; Raitel, *Das 'Wunder' der inneren Einheit*, 102–4, 215; Horn (ed.), *Stumpf*, 26–7; Kennedy, *Anglo-German antagonism*, does of course trace deeper roots.

<sup>77</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 20.

*symbolischen Jahre in der Geschichte des politischen Geistes* (1789 and 1914. The symbolic years in the history of the political spirit).

Germany's mission, according to Kjellen, was 'leadership without domination'. World powers had followed one of two models—the Roman, with its tendency to centralize and dominate in a political sense, and the Greek, with its patriarchal presumption of superior values. Britain had veered to the latter, but had not abandoned the former. Germany's task was to promote a third way.<sup>78</sup> 'German freedom', Ernst Troeltsch explained, 'has no craving for world domination, either materially or spiritually. Germany wants freedom of co-existence for various peoples and not the extermination of different possibilities of development nor stereotyping in the name of some alleged law.'<sup>79</sup> Herein were the intellectual foundations for the national liberation movements which Germany sponsored for India, Persia, Tunisia, Egypt, Ireland, and elsewhere. The challenge was to relate means to ends. To beat the British, it had first to join them. Germany's ability to implement the new order was predicated on its achieving world-power status through victory on the battlefield.<sup>80</sup>

Britain was a declining power, as Gerhart von Schulz-Gaevernitz had argued in 1906.<sup>81</sup> It therefore had a vested interest in the status quo, because only thus could it buttress a position which it could no longer sustain by other means. Germany, on the other hand, was in the ascendant, a young nation with a young Kaiser, prepared to embrace innovation in the sciences and the arts. The world's need to advance forced it to fight: progress was impossible without Germany's acceptance of its role as a revisionist power. The idea that Germany went to war as an escape from its domestic dilemma, as a way of resolving the challenge to its conservative elites and of evading pressure for constitutional change, assumes a mood of cultural despair. But many of the Kaiser's own generation saw doors opening, not closing. Adolf von Harnack, the first president of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, expected the marriage of traditionalism and modernism to lead 'to an unprecedented increase in the vitality of the German organism'.<sup>82</sup> Karl Helfferich, banker not Junker, born in 1872, likened Wilhelm's reign to the Renaissance. In *Deutschlands Volkswohlstand 1888–1913* (Germany's national wealth, 1888–1913), published in 1913, he believed that Germany's economic development was proving Marxism wrong.<sup>83</sup> For many Germans the example of France suggested that full-blown parliamentary government implied atrophy, decay, and disorder. The war intensified Germany's responsibility for renewal. 'The German eagle', Paul Natorp wrote in *Krieg und Friede* (War and peace) in 1915, 'is not like the bird of Minerva,

<sup>78</sup> Kjellen, *Politischen Probleme*, 134.

<sup>79</sup> Rubanowice, *Crisis in consciousness*, 112.

<sup>80</sup> Ringer, *Decline of the German mandarins*, 186; Huber, *Kirche und Öffentlichkeit*, 151; Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*, 112.

<sup>81</sup> Siefert, 'Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz', 144.

<sup>82</sup> Johnson, *Kaiser's chemists*, 16.

<sup>83</sup> Williamson, *Helfferich*, pp. v–vi, 111–14.

which, according to Hegel, first begins its flight at dusk. We signify the morning chorus of a new day not only for Germany, but also for mankind.<sup>84</sup>

The so-called failure of German liberals and social democrats to remain true to their beliefs in 1914 becomes more comprehensible when set against the rhetoric of reform rather than reaction. During August 1914 the SPD press was ready to redirect its ire from Russian tsarism to the British bourgeoisie.<sup>85</sup> In *Die Sozialdemokratie* (1915) Paul Lensch used Hegel to argue that Britain had fulfilled its world-historical role, that individualism and liberalism, the British way, had been absorbed, and that now it was Germany's turn to pioneer the nationalization of social democracy.<sup>86</sup> For the liberals, national survival and national identity were sufficiently central to make the appeals of 1914 not uncongenial. Friedrich Naumann argued that British liberalism was inappropriate to Germany, with its different traditions and its greater deference to order and authority. Neither he nor Max Weber could embrace full-blooded parliamentary government with the enthusiasm of a Gladstonian. While their suspicions of the popular will would not have been unfamiliar to mid-nineteenth-century British liberals, their articulation of the alternatives carried collectivist overtones that sprang from very different roots. The people and the state should be united in terms which clearly tapped into the ideas of *Kultur*. The state itself would implement social reform on the worker's behalf but without itself being fully democratic. Instead, a dualism of democracy and monarchy, *soziale Volksherrschaft*, would represent a new synthesis.<sup>87</sup>

The immediate effect of the war was to solidify the intellectual underpinnings of the monarchy rather than undermine them. The balance of the Bismarckian constitution provided a security against the irrational excesses of the masses, while the unity provided by the crown eliminated the divisions and instability characteristic of republican France. 'We Germans,' Kalweit, the chairman of the Danzig church consistory explained, 'are born monarchists.' That did not mean blind allegiance to princes, but that they saw the value in the embodiment of the idea of the state's unity and will in a living person. The words 'monarchy' and 'democracy' too easily suggested an antithesis, Kalweit argued. He preferred to use *Kaiserherrlichkeit* and *Volksmacht*, which not only linked abstractions to people but also—more debatably—implied convergence.<sup>88</sup>

Therefore, for many liberals and even some socialists German freedom was distinct from the freedoms of revolutionary France or liberal Britain. In December 1915 Kurt Riezler tried to define these opposing conceptions of

<sup>84</sup> Lübke, *Politische Philosophie*, 186.

<sup>85</sup> Kruse, *Krieg und nationale Integration*, 70–6, 92–3, 124–30.

<sup>86</sup> Siefert, 'Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz', 149–55.

<sup>87</sup> Sheehan, *German liberalism*, 267–78; also Naumann, 'Deutscher Liberalismus', in *Werke*, iv, 316–20; Mai, *Ende des Kaiserreichs*, 33; Struve, *Elites against democracy*.

<sup>88</sup> Doehring, *Ein feste Burg*, ii. 370.

freedom. The west European powers practised ‘freedom without regulation, with the fewest possible concessions by the individual to the state, freedom through equality, the formula of the French Revolution’. German freedom, on the other hand, had evolved out of its reaction to the ideas of 1789, and had been defined by Fichte as freedom through the state, an organization set above the individual. The latter was ‘ready to concede to the state in all respects, as the state’s strengths should be the function of a freedom in which every man is ranked according to his own strengths, but not valued equally’.<sup>89</sup> One gain for the individual was the sense of meaning which arose from sharing in a common endeavour. But more important was the freedom for the spirit which order bestowed. Ernst Troeltsch, who before the war had written on the significance of Protestantism for the modern world, was the key figure in linking this balance between public duty and inner life to Lutheranism. In *Die deutsche Freiheit* (The German freedom) (1915) he emphasized that the ‘progress in the idea of freedom’ which 1914 signified ‘in the first place must be a thing of feeling and life style, but then also the clearly recognisable spirit of our public arrangements’.<sup>90</sup>

The war, therefore, conferred on Germany the opportunity to propagate ‘a third way’ in political thought as well as in international relations, a path between capitalism and Marxism, individualism and collectivism. Johann Plenge’s celebration of the ‘ideas of 1914’ argued that ‘under the necessity of war socialist ideas have been driven into German economic life, its organization has grown together into a new spirit, and so the assertion of our nation for mankind has given birth to the idea of 1914, the idea of German organization, the national unity of state socialism’.<sup>91</sup> Rathenau, who through the KRA had tried to apply the principles of corporatism to public life, was therefore both putting the *Burgfrieden* into practice and testing the principles of ‘the new economy’ for possible post-war application. Reflecting later in the war on what had been achieved, he was more hesitant than Plenge in referring to socialism. ‘The new economy’ was not so much a creation of the state as an organic growth, established through the resolve of citizens, enabled by the intermediary of the state freely to unite to overcome rivalry between themselves and to co-ordinate their different achievements and qualities. The key words were rationalization and responsibility rather than self-interest and profit: the result would be—and here Rathenau used the title of Wichard von Moellendorff’s 1916 publication—a *Gemeinwirtschaft*.<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> Diary entry, 4 Dec. 1915, Riezler, *Tagebücher*, 317–18; see also 325.

<sup>90</sup> Lübke, *Politische Philosophie*, 227–30.

<sup>91</sup> Michalka, ‘Kriegsrohstoffbewirtschaftung, Walther Rathenau, und die “kommende Wirtschaft”’, in id. *Der Erste Weltkrieg*, 497.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. 494–5; also Michalka, ‘Kriegswirtschaft und Wirtschaftskrieg’, in Böhme and Kallenberg (eds.), *Deutschland und der Erste Weltkrieg*, 189–90.

For Paul Lensch, one of the advocates of state socialism, it was the primacy of the community which defined Germany as a modern state, just as it was the principle of individualism which now characterized Britain as backward. Lensch saw Germany's lead over Britain as manifested in three fundamental attributes—universal compulsory education, universal suffrage, and universal military service.<sup>93</sup> Militarism and socialism were therefore not in tension, but were supporting attributes of the new state. The pre-war argument of the right, that the army was the school of the nation by virtue of its ability to inculcate subordination and service to the community, was now assimilated further to the left. Scheler saw militarism in the sense of conscription as evidence not of barbarism but of a form of higher state development. This admiration for the close links between army and society in Germany was increasingly couched not in the Rousseauesque vocabulary of the nation in arms or of the citizen soldier, but in metaphysical exuberance. For Troeltsch, the *Volksheer*, 'an army of the people', was 'flesh from our flesh and spirit from our spirit'.<sup>94</sup> For Scheler, war was a manly activity which elevated honour and nobility, while subordinating the individual to the state. The experience of war made the collective personalities of nations self-aware: it realized the nation as a 'spiritual total person'.<sup>95</sup> Militarism in this sense not only gave meaning to the community, it also elevated *Kultur* over civilization. Nachum Goldmann, in *Die Geist des Militarismus* (The spirit of militarism) (1915), described the military spirit as the means to human progress because it combined equality of opportunity with the virtues of a meritocracy.<sup>96</sup> A state which honoured the achievements of soldiers over all others also rewarded obedience, courage, self-confidence, and discipline: 'order inside and order outside', as Sombart put it. But in linking militarism back to spirit and to culture Sombart was moved to some of his more excessive statements. Militarism was 'the manifestation of German heroism', the union of Potsdam and Weimar: 'It is *Faust* and *Zarathustra* and Beethoven scores in the trenches. Then the *Eroica* and the *Egmont* overture are also the most real militarism.'<sup>97</sup>

Sombart's hyperbole, its reference to Goethe as well as Nietzsche, encapsulated the core of Entente objections to the German ideologies of 1914. Both Goethe and Nietzsche described themselves as Europeans who happened to be Germans. The presumption in Sombart's writing was the opposite, that the rest of Europe needed to be Germanized. He saw the German people as the chosen people of the twentieth century; they were as much an elect as the Greeks and the Jews had been. Such a status imposed on Germany hard obligations.<sup>98</sup> Ultimately it might have to fight the world to save the world. The messianic implications—and Gotthilf Herzog likened Germany's burden

<sup>93</sup> Siefertle, 'Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz', 153.

<sup>94</sup> Rubanowice, *Crisis in consciousness*, 103.

<sup>95</sup> Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 34, 81, 91.

<sup>96</sup> Siefertle, 'Der deutsch-englische Gegensatz', 146.

<sup>97</sup> Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 84–6.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.* 136–43.

to that of Christ<sup>99</sup>—incorporated the sense of mission developed by the war theology of the Lutheran church. Religion and nation became indistinguishable. In a sermon delivered in 1915 in celebration of the Reformation, Friedrich Rittelmeyer asserted that, ‘The German ability for understanding makes us particularly suited to be the nation to bring other, non-Christian nations to Christendom, the German capacity for honesty makes us especially suited to fight the fight between religion and natural science, and the German spiritual sense makes us particularly fitted to fight today’s battle against superficiality and shallowness, against the entire culture of materialist ostentation, which will invade mankind.’<sup>100</sup>

One German soldier wrote in August 1914: ‘Our victory enables Europe’s survival with an infusion into German culture of fresh blood. The victory will not come easily for us. But if there is any sense of right and of God’s direction in history. . . then the victory must be ours, sooner or later.’<sup>101</sup> Eucken argued that it was this sense of mission which made Germany invincible.<sup>102</sup> Germany *could* not lose, because ‘the defeat of Germanness would signify the collapse of mankind’,<sup>103</sup> and it *would* not lose because defeat was impossible for a nation of believers. The longer the war lasted, the more Dryander and others harped on these aims. The very duration of the conflict became a test of faith and of spiritual resolve.<sup>104</sup>

Sombart was at pains to stress that the aim was not German expansion in a territorial sense: ‘we have more important things to do. We have our own spiritual existence to unfold, the German soul to keep pure.’<sup>105</sup> For some commentators, including Paul Lensch on the left and Oswald Spengler on the right, it was this very characteristic of the First World War—that it was about ideas and principles, and their claims to universality—which likened it to a civil war. And that carried for them not the pejorative connotations of later generations, of brother fighting brother, but the devastation, intensity, and length of the Thirty Years War. Such conflicts were about the issues that really mattered, not about territory or treasury. The difference between civil war as traditionally defined and the world war as they defined it was that now nations rather than classes or social groups appropriated the monopolies in ideas, social structures, and economic organization. In this sense the *Weltkrieg* was a *Weltbürgerkrieg*.<sup>106</sup>

For Scheler, what determined whether a war was just was the commitment of those fighting it to the ideas that were at stake. The quality of those beliefs mattered less than the depth of conviction itself.<sup>107</sup> Many of the ‘ideas of 1914’ were as subjective as Scheler’s definition implied; they represented sloppy

<sup>99</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 165.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>101</sup> Rürup, ‘Der “Geist” von 1914’, 4.

<sup>102</sup> Lübke, *Polische Philosophie*, 183.

<sup>103</sup> Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 120.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. 217–19; Andresen, *Dryander*, 328–9, 341.

<sup>105</sup> Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 143.

<sup>106</sup> Sieferle, ‘Der deutschen–englische Gegensatz’, 153–4, 160.

<sup>107</sup> Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 101.

thinking by academics anxious to integrate their disciplines with the currents of the day. Lumping was more important than splitting, connections more significant than divisions. The results were unscientific. Historians were happy to collude in history as spirit rather than as objective reality; philosophers sought to make politics moral, but instead politicized morality. By late 1915 some, not least in Germany, began to have second thoughts. A minority of German academics, including Troeltsch, recognized the need for an eventual accommodation, particularly with liberalism and the west. Max Weber and Hans Delbrück were both patriots, but were contemptuous of patriotic emotion. Delbrück was one of the few professors who had refused to sign the manifestos of October 1914, and he continued to emphasize more traditional definitions of militarism, with the consequent need for the army and the conduct of war to be subordinated to political direction.<sup>108</sup> In 1917 the historian Friedrich Meinecke, who charted a course from enthusiasm to moderation, called for the demobilization of the intellect as a precondition for peace.<sup>109</sup> But for most the war's very nature confirmed and deepened the ideas first hatched in 1914. Its duration and intensity, its geographical extension, its effects on the state and its relationship with its citizens, endorsed rather than undermined the idea that 'the war', as the Kaiser wrote to Houston Stewart Chamberlain on 15 January 1917, 'is the battle between two world views.'<sup>110</sup>

The Kaiser's conclusion was that such polarities could never be resolved by reconciliation or negotiation: 'One must *win*, the other must *go down!*' On his enemy's side, J. W. Carliol saw the war in very similar terms, albeit much closer to its outbreak: 'Underneath, and at the root of this Titanic conflict, antagonistic principles and powers, irreconcilable ideas and ideals, the ideals of faith and the ideals of force are contending. These are the sap of the contention: the very breath of its nostrils and the source of its vigour. But for them this war, with its world-encompassing issues, would never have come into being; and until one of them has been utterly vanquished it cannot reach its end.'<sup>111</sup>

Of course, an assessment of the impact of the 'ideas of 1914' requires some quantification of the transfer from published page to public thought. How successful were the intellectuals in shaping their contemporaries' views of the war? By September 1915 the eighty-seven pamphlets so far published as a result of the initiative of the Oxford History School had a total print-run of 500,000 copies.<sup>112</sup> Most of the German pamphlets appeared in a comparable series, *Der deutsche Krieg*. The absorption of this output in officially directed propaganda

<sup>108</sup> Brocke, 'Wissenschaft und Militarismus', 682–3; Ringer, *Decline of the German mandarins*, 193–7; Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*, 24–5, 32–3, 49, 55; Huber, *Kirche und Öffentlichkeit*, 179.

<sup>109</sup> Verhey, 'The "spirit" of 1914', 301.

<sup>110</sup> Harmut Zelinsky, 'Kaiser Wilhelm II, der Werk-Idee Richard Wagners und der Weltkampf', in Röhl (ed.), *Der Or Kaiser Wilhelms II*, 303.

<sup>111</sup> Pick, *War machine*, 141–2.

<sup>112</sup> Ferguson, *Pity of war*, 235–6.



confirms at one level that what these economists, historians, and sociologists were doing was no more than saying what their governments wanted them to say. On the other hand, the effectiveness of propaganda is measured not by the nature of its message but by the degree of receptivity it encounters. On this reckoning, the determination of the belligerent states to appropriate the 'ideas of 1914' suggests that they were also what the people wanted to hear. Soldiers' letters, not only of 1914 but later in the war, frequently mouthed the phrases and ambitions of the academics' outpourings.<sup>113</sup>

This should not be surprising, for many of the ideas flowed in the opposite direction from that which normally preoccupies historians. Anxious to illustrate the influence, or lack of it, of intellectuals, they labour over inadequate evidence in order to show transfers from high culture to popular thought. But in 1914 the experiences of August prompted the intellectuals to assimilate the pre-war nostrums of the populists. Many of the ideas embraced and developed by Troeltsch, Scheler, Sombart, and others in Germany were already common currency in the publications directed at, and produced on behalf of, the veterans' organizations before the war.<sup>114</sup> The responses of the intellectuals were frequently uninhibited and altruistic. But their openness to ideas from below was also a recognition of the opportunity which the war conferred for internal reintegration. Britain became the vehicle for Germany's worries about its own culture; internal threats were externalized, and so could be attacked; the process of unification from below could be completed by defence against the danger from without. The maintenance of the *Burgfrieden*, or of the *union sacrée*, itself became a condition for victory. In this sense war aims were domestic: Troeltsch told his readers 'to become more German than we were'.<sup>115</sup>

The assimilation of the 'ideas of 1914' had two consequences. First, it removed any effective limits on the objectives of the war very soon after its onset. The ideas applied a vocabulary of absolutes which justified all that followed. Indeed, they could rationalize even defeat, both because it was only material and because its consequences need only be temporary. Secondly, it meant that final victory could not be achieved until one side had reversed the process, most probably by absorbing the ideas of the other. The advocates of 'state socialism' in Germany, like Lensch and Plenge, saw constitutional reform and the abolition of the Prussian three-class franchise as the most important step required of Germany in its role as modernizer. But that was also an objective of the Entente, not because liberals wished to install state socialism

<sup>113</sup> See, for Germany, Witkop, *Kriegsbriefe gefallenen Studenten*; for Britain, Hynes, *War imagined*, 119; for France, Hanna, *Mobilization of intellect*, 24, 211–16, and Audoin-Rouzeau, *À travers leurs journaux*, 203.

<sup>114</sup> Rohkrämer, *Militarismus der 'kleinen Leute'*, 178–258.

<sup>115</sup> Rubanowice, *Crisis in consciousness*, 107; see also Schwabe, *Wissenschaft und Kriegsmoral*, 13; Ringer, *Decline of the German mandarins*, 187; Pressel, *Kriegspredigt*, 23.

in Germany but because they saw democratization as a check to militarism. Thus, for a general like August von Mackensen the enemy was parliamentary government, whether without or within.<sup>116</sup>

The effect of enshrining the war as a conflict between liberalism and militarism, between individualism and community, between anarchy and order, between capitalism and state socialism, was to make its immediate focus the Anglo-German antagonism. But the values which Britain claimed to defend in 1914 were as deeply, or more deeply, etched in the United States of America. Furthermore, as the exigencies of the war forced Britain to modify its liberalism in the pursuit of greater military effectiveness—to conscript, to curb free trade, to control profits—so its ideological differences seemed much less striking to Germans than did those of the United States. The Entente's ease of access to American markets, and America's condoning of the blockade which denied Germany comparable status, confirmed that the sin of perfidy and the pursuit of mammon were even more firmly entrenched across the Atlantic than across the Channel. The consequence of the 'ideas of 1914' was the extension of the war, not only ideologically but ultimately geographically.

<sup>116</sup> Schwarzmüller, *Zwischen Kaiser und 'Führer'*, 150.