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Othmar Spann and the Ideology
of the
Austrian Corporate State

by

John J. Haag

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John J. Haag

Abstract



The Austrian scholar and social theorist Othmar Spann (1878-1950) was a major figure in the "conservative revolution" that fired the imagination of many Central European intellectuals after World War I. Born in the Habsburg monarchy as it was disintegrating under the pressures of nationalism and industrialization, Spann seemed destined for a conventional academic career until war, revolution, and economic collapse destroyed the social and ideological foundations of the old order in 1918. A series of lectures delivered at the University of Vienna soon after the war quickly made Spann a major spokesman for the "war generation"--young men whose rough-hewn idealism found few outlets in the grim world of postwar Central Europe. Published in Germany in 1921 under the title of Der wahre Staat (The True State), the ideas which Spann had previously outlined in articles and lectures soon became major ideological weapons for Rightist forces in Germany and Austria. A prolific writer and publicist as well as a gifted lecturer and teacher, Spann had by the late 1920's assembled a circle of dedicated disciples who enthusiastically spread his doctrines throughout German-speaking Central Europe.

Spann's conservative view of society can be traced back to the ideas of the early nineteenth century German and Austrian political Romanticists who viewed man and his social destiny in essentially aesthetic and organic categories. In more technically philosophical terms, Spann owed much to Platonism and medieval Realism, both of which claimed that an ideal world of essences existed as such. Spann's ideal

corporative society was to be based on autonomous social and economic units that would fuse to form a society infinitely more harmonious than the secular, urban, and industrialized chaos that confronted sensitive conservative intellectuals after 1918. The "true" society's ultimate rationale would be to provide meaningful social goals for both the broad masses of producers and the small elite of thinkers, planners, and dreamers who were to be the heart, mind, and soul of the new "organic" society.

Particularly receptive to Spann's ideas were the disillusioned people who accepted neither the conservative and monarchist values of the past nor the Socialist, Bolshevik, or Nazi radicalism of the present. Spann's social philosophy of "universalism" was for them a viable amalgam of historicism and dynamism. Corporative ideas in general and Spann's thought in particular were popular during these years and found expression in such diverse manifestations as the political thought of Ignaz Seipel, the ambitions of Kurt von Schleicher, and the elitism of the Sudeten Germans who belonged to the Kameradschaftsbund. Denounced by the Nazis as "reactionary" and "theocratic" ideas by the Nazis in the 1930's, Spann's corporative doctrines failed to gain a foothold in prosperous and democratic post-1945 Western Europe.

Above all, Spann represented the quest for social unity which had led many European intellectuals to abandon the values of knowledge for the values of action. Leaving the tranquil world of ideas, Spann came to grief in the often brutal world of political conflict.

Preface

In this essay I will attempt to examine the ideological milieu and historical impact of the thought of Othmar Spann, who endeavored to deal with the basic problems of his times both as an intellectual and as a man of action. It is clear that more questions have been raised than answered concerning Spann's role in the great "conservative revolution" of the 1920's and 1930's. Much work still remains to be done on the often desperate and reckless attempts of twentieth century intellectuals to turn aesthetic leadership into political leadership. Their rejection of many aspects of the modern world makes the ideas and actions of these tormented and frustrated thinkers major areas for detailed research by intellectual historians. This work is only a preliminary sketch of what the author hopes eventually to turn into a study in depth of the ideas, life, and times of Othmar Spann.

Above all, I wish to thank my thesis director, Professor R. John Rath, for the guidance which he has given me during all stages of this study. Both professionally and personally, he has offered advice and encouragement when they were badly needed. Professors Floyd S. Lear and Gerald M. Straka should also be thanked for willingly serving on my thesis committee. Gratitude for the understanding and kindness that he has always shown me, both professionally and personally, must be given to Professor Andrew G. Whiteside, of Queens College of the University of the City of New York. As a scholar and as a friend, he has helped me in more ways than can be enumerated here or anywhere else. Of my many friends at Rice University, I wish to single out

W. Robert Houston and Robert J. Gentry as persons who especially typify Southwestern hospitality in practice.

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John Haag

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Chapter I: The Setting--Spann Viewed in the Broad Spectrum
of Austrian Conservative Thought

In the years between the two world wars, vigorous, indeed violent and bitter criticisms of the democratic-liberal society that had its roots in the eighteenth century Enlightenment were heard in Europe. In the main, these voices of "cultural despair" were the loudest and most articulate in Germany and Austria.¹ Seeing their country reduced to the German-speaking territories of the Habsburg empire after 1918, the inhabitants of the First Austrian Republic felt that their political and cultural destiny was indissolubly linked with that of Germany, their country's partner in defeat. Rather than being separate nations during the two interwar decades, Germany and Austria can be looked upon as a single cultural and intellectual unit of historical study, a German-speaking Central European civilization. These cultural criticisms must be seen in the general context of the climate of opinion (the Zeitgeist) of these years of commingled hope and despair.²

The systematic critical examination of the complex of ideas and institutions that make up modern secular and urban civilization, both in Austria and elsewhere, can be traced to the eighteenth century. Montesquieu, as was Marx in the next century, was a

¹An excellent study of the "pathology of cultural criticism" can be found in Fritz Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair. A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), passim.

²Franklin L. Baumer, "Intellectual History and Its Problems," The Journal of Modern History, Vol. XXI, No. 3 (September, 1949), 192-193.

universal social theorist who attempted to explain the over-all structure of society, as well as to point out certain goals toward which society would, or should, move.³ It was Rousseau who saw the reconciliation of the individual with the community as the basic problem of social life and placed a Platonic emphasis on the unifying spirit of community existence. For Rousseau, the social goal of the reconciliation of the basic and valid interests of both the individual and the community would be realized when the general will--a spirit of the collective good which is more than the sum-total of private wills--comes into being. The individual exists only in relation to all the other members of the entire body of the community. Rousseau rediscovered the healing spirit of the community; disturbed by partisan political bickering in his native city of Geneva, he urged unity in the state and society as a prime goal to be achieved.⁴

Political conservatism as a conscious philosophy of social cohesion and tradition can be traced to the speeches and pamphlets of

³Karl Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia. An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge (London and New York: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd.; Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936), 226.

⁴Charles Edwyn Vaughan (ed.), The Political Writings of Jean Jacques Rousseau (2 vols., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1915), passim; Alfred Cobban, Rousseau and the Modern State (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1934), passim. There are "several" Rousseaus, including the thinker whose anti-feudal and atomistic assumptions underlay the French revolutionary legislation of 1791 that abolished all guilds and private combinations. The demise of these intermediate bodies allowed the free citizen to confront the state as an autonomous individual. See John William Chapman, Rousseau--Totalitarian or Liberal? (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956); and Ernst Cassirer, The Question of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, edited and translated by Peter Gay (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954).

Edmund Burke, who reacted to the turmoil of the French revolution with a remarkable display of intellectual vigor. As Burke saw it, conservatism was based on an appreciation of the infinite wisdom and complexity of traditional social arrangements, a respect for the established institutions of religion and private property, and an acceptance of the relative impotence of individual will and reason to change long-range historical continuities.⁵ Burke's emphasis on the non-rational factors of social existence--traditions, morals and instincts--as well as his general love for past centuries, influenced Adam Heinrich Müller, the most influential theorist of Austrian political Romanticism. Müller, influenced by Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790), as translated into German by Friedrich Gentz,⁶ turned the Englishman's love of the past into veneration of the middle ages and transformed social pluralism into a concept of authoritarian corporative monarchy. Influenced by Fichte and the German early Romanticist writers, Müller was often vague, poetically mystical, and contradictory in his writings.⁷ In fact, Müller was often so incomprehensible

⁵ Alfred Cobban, Edmund Burke and the Revolt Against the Eighteenth Century (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1929), passim.

⁶ Jakob Baxa, Einführung in die romantische Staatswissenschaft (2nd ed., Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1931), 46; Golo Mann, Secretary of Europe. The Life of Friedrich Gentz, Enemy of Napoleon, translated by William H. Woglom (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1946), 20-23; Frieda Braune, Edmund Burke in Deutschland. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des historisch-politischen Denkens (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Verlag, 1917), passim.

⁷ Friedrich Meinecke, Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat. Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaates (6th rev'd. ed., Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1922), 133; Reinhold Aris, History of Political Thought in Germany from 1789 to 1815 (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1936), 309.

that Metternich felt his ideas were of very little value to him in helping to consolidate the post-Napoleonic European conservative governments.⁸

Nineteenth century Austrian conservative political thought was intimately linked to Catholic views on the nature of the state and the individual's relation to political power. Austrian Catholic social theorists, who in the nineteenth century were almost without exception ultra-conservatives, continued in the tradition established by Adam Müller by attacking the conceptions of the modern state that came into being during the years of the French revolution. They opposed both the liberal republican laissez-faire "Girondist Nachwächterstaat" that allowed complete social and economic freedom and the essentially totalitarian and centralized state of the Jacobin dictatorship. Both state forms, reasoned Catholic social theorists, had destroyed the autonomy of such "natural" social organs as education, voluntary charity, and, above all, the Catholic Church. The idea of the social contract was felt to be a totally relativistic concept that would open the door to a never-ending series of claims for the preservation of individual "rights" that, once put into actual practice, would quickly destroy the "natural" and "necessary" hierarchies of society.⁹

⁸Hans Siegbert Reiss (ed.), The Political Thought of the German Romantics 1793-1815 (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), 143.

⁹Alfred Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic. Democracy, Capitalism, and the Social Order, 1918-1934 (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1960), 7.

Well aware that "ideas have consequences," Metternich felt that under certain circumstances ideas can bring on revolutions. In his "Political Profession of Faith" he passionately exclaimed that once there is general "talk of social contract], then] the revolution is a fact!"¹⁰ For Metternich, society had to be governed according to an eternally valid concept of God and man, both of whose natures are immutable. He stressed the primacy of the "social principle," i.e., that of the family, the principle of preservation and continuity. At least in theory, Metternich's policies were based on adherence to the spirit of universal laws that, if heeded, would guarantee peace for the "social body." Metternich saw great dangers in vesting ultimate political power in assemblies and elected bodies that were not bound, as he saw it, by the very principles of their existence to respect any spiritual or material inheritance. On the other hand, he believed in the limitation of political power; even the sovereign should have limits on his power, should not establish absolutist rule, and should respect such autonomous social bodies as universities and professional and institutional bodies. The "dissatisfied classes" that Metternich feared most were groups who at times fancied themselves to be intellectuals, that is to say, men of letters, civil servants, "foolish professors" and lawyers.¹¹ Metternich felt that all history was a

¹⁰Bela Menczer (ed.), Catholic Political Thought 1789-1848 (South Bend, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1962), 145.

¹¹Ibid., 138, 141, 149; Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, Metternich. Der Staatsmann und der Mensch (3 vols., Munich: F. Bruckmann Verlag, 1925, 1954), Vol. I, 414-420.

contained cyclical process that could not be changed by the intervention of stray individuals who had specific discontents. The social body for Metternich did not move inexorably forward on a path of linear progress like that outlined by Condorcet and other Enlightenment thinkers; instead, it moved in a circle, always returning to the place of origin, history being an unchanging organic unity with already existing truths that were absolutes.¹² In effect, Metternich believed that absolute and unchanging external laws governed social forces, that this principle was universal, for individuals as well as for states, and that this "common law"--as long as it was in accord with the eternal principles of conservatism--should be exalted.¹³

For all the acceptance of Metternich's rather static social theories by a small bureaucratic elite, it would be wrong to assume that Austrian Catholic conservatism produced a monolithic ideology in the nineteenth century. Despite the fact that the basic assumptions of conservative thinkers were much more alike than they were different, a surprisingly rich and varied ideological harvest was gathered as the nineteenth century wore on.

¹²Richard Metternich-Winneburg and Alfons von Klinkowström (eds.), Aus Metternichs nachgelassenen Papieren (8 vols., Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Verlag, 1880-84), Vol. VIII (In der Ruhezeit. 1848-1859), 164.

¹³Richard Metternich-Winneburg (ed.), Memoirs of Prince Metternich (5 vols., London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1880-82), Vol. IV, 226-227; Friedrich Engel-Janosi, "Die Theorie vom Staat im deutschen Osterreich, 1815-1848," Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht, Vol. II (1921), 360-394.

Although it displayed many strongly unifying trends, Austrian Catholic social theory also evidenced much diversity in its views of the modern state, society and economy.¹⁴ As late as the 1840's, some Catholic intellectuals still ignored the basic problems of social transformation that had been brought to the fore by industrialization and urbanization.¹⁵ However, as the industrial revolution penetrated more and more into Central Europe, and as the problems created by it came to be referred to simply as the "social problem," these issues could no longer, in good conscience, be either ignored or explained away. As a consequence, two schools of thought that attempted to formulate social responses to the challenges of the social problem developed. One, called Sozialreform, demanded a total rejection of the existing social order in favor of a restoration of the old "organic" society. The other school of thought, Sozialpolitik, sought gradual reforms within the existing society, and worked for piecemeal amelioration of the most glaring inequalities of society. Sozialreform can be thought of as a form of political Romanticism, while Sozialpolitik can be described as a type of reformist gradualism based on accommodation with existing political and social realities.¹⁶

¹⁴ Heinrich Rommen, The State in Catholic Thought. A Treatise in Political Philosophy (St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1950), 16-19.

¹⁵ Ludwig Bergsträsser (ed.), Der politische Katholizismus in Deutschland. Dokumente seiner Entwicklung (2 vols., Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921-23), Vol. I, 78.

¹⁶ Paul Jostock, Der deutsche Katholizismus und die Überwindung des Kapitalismus. Eine Ideengeschichtliche Skizze (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 1932), 138-144.

The social problems raised by the French and industrial revolutions were met head-on in the spirit of political Romanticism by Baron Karl von Vogelsang. Vogelsang came into prominence as a social theorist after the Vienna stock market crash of 1873, which marked the beginning of a prolonged industrial depression in Central Europe. Lasting in its first phase until 1879, the economic crisis transformed political parties and ideologies. The "pre-capitalist" classes, for years threatened by competition from factory production, became increasingly belligerent toward "mobile capital." Economic individualism was assailed by artisans and shopkeepers who began to agitate for state intervention that would radically curtail freedom of trade.¹⁷ The Liberal party groupings and politicians were made the scapegoats for the stock market crash and the ensuing economic depression. Prominent Liberal parliamentarians were indicted as leading and often fraudulent promoters who had acted in close alliance with speculators who were often Jewish. By the 1870's a pronounced shift in political issues from the idealistic nationalistic issues of several decades earlier to a crude emphasis on economic objectives had taken place. As political life became more and

¹⁷Hans Rosenberg, "Political and Social Consequences of the Great Depression of 1873-1896 in Central Europe," The Economic History Review, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1-2 (1943), 61-64; Gustav Kolmer, Parlament und Verfassung in Osterreich, 1848-1904 (8 vols., Vienna and Leipzig: Carl Fromme Verlag, 1902-14), Vol. II, 270, 279-282, 308, 473; Vol. III, 47, 62, 223; Richard Charnatz, Deutsch-osterreichische Politik. Studien über den Liberalismus und über die auswärtige Politik Osterreichs (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot Verlag, 1907), 45-47.

more a mass activity of organized parties, economic security rather than political freedom became the main focus of public discord. The end of idealism as a force to be reckoned with in politics was accompanied by a general decline of religion and its values as a vital force in society.¹⁸

Deeply disturbed by the economic and social abuses of the 1860's and 1870's, Vogelsang launched vigorous attacks on the modern state and its basic ideological assumptions. As he saw it, the liberal state violated the fundamental principles of Catholic doctrines of social harmony and justice. The great suffering that was experienced by the Austrian industrial working class after the financial debacle of 1873 made a mockery of the Liberal minister of the interior's statement of 1868 that there was "no social question in Austria."¹⁹ Vogelsang regarded the establishment of a market economy based on finance capitalism as the cause of the social crisis of the 1870's. He believed that the substitution of the law of supply and demand for the old organic order's emphasis on family and occupational ties had led to great social inequalities. Free and unrestricted economic activity had been detrimental to society as a whole, for it had allowed a few capitalists to

¹⁸Bergsträsser, Der politische Katholizismus in Deutschland, Vol. II, 86-94, 121; Wilhelm Lütgert, Das Ende des Idealismus im Zeitalter Bismarcks (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1930), passim.

¹⁹Arthur J. May, The Hapsburg Monarchy 1867-1914 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951), 66-69; Ludwig Brügel, Soziale Gesetzgebung in Österreich von 1848 bis 1918. Eine geschichtliche Darstellung (Vienna: Franz Deuticke Verlag, 1919), 58.

exploit the economically impotent workers in the cities.²⁰ For Vogelsang, the fatal error of Liberalism was that it was based on the idea of the equality and freedom of all men, "while arbitrarily closing its eyes to the natural inequalities that exist."²¹ Freedom only existed when duties as well as rights were emphasized within the structure of the state; Vogelsang saw "true freedom" as being, in essence, the individual's submission to the "divine moral law."²²

Vogelsang and the school of corporative thought that grew up among his personal followers demanded a complete break with Liberal society, which, as they saw it, had separated society as a whole from politics in particular. They insisted that state and society must once again fuse into a unified whole and that the "public sector" must once again become paramount. Such a form of society could only be brought about in a "Christian social state, that is to say, social monarchy."²³ Vogelsang realized that the actual medieval institutions that he admired could not be brought back to life in the building of the desired "Christian social state" any more than could medieval customs or

²⁰Andrew Whiteside, "Austria," in Hans Rogger and Eugen Weber (eds.), The European Right. A Historical Profile (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1965), 322.

²¹Wiard von Klopp (ed.), Die sozialen Lehren des Freiherrn Karl von Vogelsang. Grundzüge einer katholischen Gesellschafts- und Volkswirtschaftslehre nach Vogelsangs Schriften (2nd rev'd. ed., Vienna: Reinhold Verlag, 1938), 69.

²²Ibid., 81.

²³Ibid., 242.

modes of dress be revived in modern times.²⁴ As Vogelsang saw the problem, the spiritual "essence" of unity that had united medieval civilization into an organic whole had to be re-discovered for a spiritually ill modern age, for in its deepest core the social problem was essentially a spiritual issue. The "bare and shallow materialism" of the times had disintegrated "natural, historic human organizations" to the extent that society was becoming more and more fragmented and "dissolved."²⁵ The increasing urbanization and proletarianization of "the vast majority of our people" had turned the old organic social order into little more than "a herd, a crowd, . . . a mob."²⁶

Vogelsang rejected the view of some Catholic social theorists that the social question was entirely an economic one. As he saw it, the pressing issues of his time were not to be exorcised simply by regarding them as a crudely economic question, a "Magenfrage."²⁷ Society had to have an underlying spiritual basis that infused all segments of economic and cultural life. Bismarck's programs of social reform, which had originally been held in high regard by Vogelsang, were ultimately regarded by him as little

²⁴"Osterreichische Monatsschrift für Gesellschaftswissenschaft und Volkswirtschaft, Vol. IX (1887), 360; Vol. X (1888), 650. From 1879 until his death in 1890 Vogelsang was the editor and guiding spirit of this periodical, which was later called Monatsschrift für Sozialreform.

²⁵Von Klopp, Die sozialen Lehren des Freiherrn Karl von Vogelsang, 108 and 167-168.

²⁶Ibid., 152 and 167-168.

²⁷Ibid., 180.

more than a smoke-screen that sanctioned most aspects of Liberal exploitation and was in reality a materialistic rather than spiritual "keystone of the temple of capitalist idols."²⁸

The death of Vogelsang in 1890 and the publication of the Papal social encyclical Rerum novarum in 1891 led to a weakening of the political Romanticist tradition in Austrian conservative thought. The radical reconstruction of society was no longer held to be the ultimate goal. Instead, theorists like Franz Martin Schindler more and more came over to the view that gradual reforms in a free society were preferable to the spinning of vast and grandiose Romanticist patterns of total social reconstruction that were essentially Utopian. During the decade or two before 1914 the reformist wing of Austrian Catholic social thought was clearly on the ascendancy over the social Romanticism of the Vogelsang school. German Catholics, who by the turn of the century had generally accepted the idea of accommodation to modern industrial society--while at the same time making serious criticisms of, and initiating piecemeal reforms in, the existing society--became a model for the reformist thinkers of Austrian Catholic social thought.²⁹

²⁸Österreichische Monatsschrift für Gesellschaftswissenschaft und Volkswirtschaft, Vol. XII (1890), 453.

²⁹Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 63-64; Friedrich Funder, Aufbruch zur christlichen Sozialreform. Franz M. Schindler und seine Zeit (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1953), passim. See also Franz Martin Schindler, Die soziale Frage der Gegenwart, vom Standpunkte des Christentums beleuchtet (2nd ed., Vienna: Buchhandlung "Reichspost," 1906).

These ideas developed in the context of a society in the throes of a generalized political and social crisis. For some time before 1914 parliamentary government had been in a state of turmoil in the Dual Monarchy. The Ausgleich of 1867 had not solved the nationality problem. Industrialization in Bohemia and parts of Austria proper had caused serious social tension and dislocation. Parliamentary life was often at a standstill.³⁰ Many German-speaking subjects in the monarchy at times despaired of parliamentary rule--a despair which was often reflected in the near-bedlam that increasingly characterized the sessions of the Reichsrat.³¹ By 1914 Austrian political groupings had crystallized into several "camps" with diametrically opposed points of view. Of these, the most important were the Social Democrats (Austro-Marxists) and the Christian Socials (clerical-conservatives).³²

The industrial workers of Vienna and the provincial industrial centers gave the Social Democrats their mass strength.³³ Austrian

³⁰Robert A. Kann, The Multinational Empire. Nationalism and National Reform in the Habsburg Monarchy 1848-1918 (2 vols., New York: Columbia University Press, 1950), passim. For some of the political repercussions of industrialization see Andrew G. Whiteside, Austrian National Socialism Before 1918 (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962).

³¹Wolf von Schierbrand, Austria-Hungary: The Polyglot Empire (New York: Stokes, 1917), 115-120.

³²Adam Wandruszka, "Österreichs politische Struktur. Die Entwicklung der Parteien und politischen „Bewegungen," in Heinrich Benedikt, (ed.), Geschichte der Republik Österreich (Vienna: Verlag für Geschichte und Politik, 1954), 289-304.

³³Rudolf Schlesinger, Central European Democracy and its Background: Economic and Political Group Organization (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1953), 178-180.

Socialism was much more than just partisan politics. It was a total way of life that "shaped the lives and thoughts of its active members" and gave their lives meaning and fulfillment "as strong and as enduring as a religious tie."³⁴ The municipal administration of Vienna under the Social Democrats instituted social welfare programs that gave the workers the cradle-to-grave security they had agitated for through most of the nineteenth century. In transcending the society of individualistic market capitalism, "red" Vienna became a working example of humane Socialist collectivism.³⁵

Opposed to the Social Democratic "consumers of the city" were the Christian Social "producers of the country," whose political party drew its popular support from artisans, shopkeepers, a percentage of the white-collar work force, and, above all, from the conservative peasantry.³⁶ Their ideological and organizational support came from the Catholic clergy, and much of their financial support from leaders of finance and industry who feared the repeated demands made by the Social Democrats for

³⁴Joseph Buttinger, In the Twilight of Socialism. A History of the Revolutionary Socialists of Austria (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1953), 20-22. Austrian Socialism has been given a sympathetic and definitive treatment in Charles A. Gulick, Austria from Habsburg to Hitler (2 vols., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948).

³⁵Karl Polanyi, The Great Transformation (New York and Toronto: Rinehart & Company, 1944), 287-288; Jérôme Tharaud, Vienne la Rouge (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1934), 103.

³⁶Otto Bauer, Die "österreichische Revolution (Vienna: Verlag der Wiener Volksbuchhandlung, 1923), 183.

the nationalization of the basic means of production. The close ties which had existed between throne and altar before 1918-- "different expressions of the same Catholic idea, each moving in its own manner toward a common goal"-- continued in the First Austrian Republic between the church hierarchy and the leadership of the Christian Social party.³⁷

Both the Christian Socials and the Social Democrats claimed to offer, and in fact gave, their members much more than a narrow political and economic program. Both groupings had become effective mass parties by the first decade of the twentieth century. Each one had developed distinct patterns of thought and looked at almost all aspects of social reality in their own way. The fact that the two major ideological camps of twentieth century Austria, one secular and the other religious in orientation, were distinct ways of life led to major communication problems. Ignaz Seipel, the priest-chancellor of the 1920's, had this lack of a working political dialogue in mind when he pointed out that Austrian political life was more often than not a confrontation "not merely with differences of opinion on matters of constitutional law or party programs, but with a fundamental cleavage of world views and ideologies."³⁸ Because both points of view were in effect

³⁷Aemilian Schöpfer, "Katholizismus und Politik," in Alois Hudal (ed.), Der Katholizismus in Österreich. Sein Wirken, Kämpfen und Hoffen (Innsbruck: Verlagsanstalt Tyrolia, 1931), 448-449; Josef Lehl, "Der Katholizismus als Bildungsmacht in Österreich," in Friedrich Schneider (ed.), Bildungskräfte im Katholizismus der Welt (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder & Co., 1936), 65-66.

³⁸Ignaz Seipel, Der Kampf um die österreichische Verfassung (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Verlag, 1930), 96.

philosophical Weltanschauungen rather than flexible political outlines, ideological "purity" was always at a premium. Because of the doctrinaire nature of the ideology-bound politics of the major political camps, which in their inflexibility resembled secular religions, there was no political consensus, and Austria, disunited and unwanted, almost totally lacked a "vital, unified national idea."³⁹ Neither political camp genuinely accepted the fundamental idea of compromise, and the operational totalitarianism of both parties, with their emphasis on unity in the face of the opponent, goes far to explain the bipolarization that characterized Austrian political life from 1918 to 1934.

The state created in 1918, which was known as German Austria (Deutschösterreich), was an impoverished fragment of an empire that only four years earlier had been almost a model of economic integration between agricultural and industrial regions combining to form a "natural" regional unit. Once the privileged "state people" (Staatsvolk) of the empire, the German Austrians were now reduced to penury. Postwar Vienna was little more than a "huge city of starving and freezing beggars."⁴⁰ The new

³⁹George Maria von Alexich, "A Study of the Political Parties in Austria, 1918-1938" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, 1948), 2 and 19; Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic 78-80; P.T. Lux [pseud., Georges Frederic Walz], Osterreich 1918-1938: Eine Demokratie? Betrachtungen eines Neutra-len (Graz and Vienna: Leykam Verlag, 1947), 3 and 76. See also Hellmut Andics, Der Staat, den keiner wollte. Osterreich 1918-1938 (Vienna: Verlag Herder, 1962), passim.

⁴⁰Julius Braunthal, The Tragedy of Austria (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1948), 43.

republican government faced "almost insuperable" tasks that included defending the national boundaries, drafting a workable constitution, working out satisfactory political and economic relationships with her new neighbors, rehabilitating the war-shattered economy, creating jobs for unemployed soldiers and civil servants, and preventing famine and civil war. The basic task of Austrian foreign policy in the early months of republican government was to sign a tolerable peace with the victorious Allied powers.⁴¹ At best, most of these goals were only partly achieved during the fifteen years of democratic government that Austria experienced from 1918 to 1933.

The Central Europe of 1918 in many ways bore little resemblance to the Europe of 1914. During the war millions of men had been killed, millions more had been maimed, and the survivors came out of the experience with often radically changed personalities. As a direct consequence of the war thrones were toppled, entire social systems were transformed, and old values and beliefs were severely shaken. A distinct group of men, the "war generation," had emerged from four years of shared violence and heroism, experiences that had created bonds of fellowship among strangers. The return of these hardened and embittered men added several thousand "uprooted and reckless men habituated to hatred and violence" to the population. There was a "mood of readiness for action" among these desperate men, and the fact "that they had no program and that their problems

⁴¹Whiteside, "Austria," 327.

were beyond solution by armed force made no difference to them."⁴² At the outset, the war had seemed to unify the nation. The German internal political truce (Burgfrieden) of 1914, which temporarily ended partisan politics, was seen by some intellectuals as the start of a new era of social unity. They viewed the war as an event of "cosmic nature," creating "the face of our era." Writing of the war as the "total mobilization" of national energies and aspirations, the German intellectual Ernst Jünger insisted that it had brought about the radical destruction of the "always questionable concept of individual freedom."⁴³

The unifying experience of the war found a counterpart in the ideals of the youth movement in Germany and Austria. Although the "politicization" of life in Austria divided youth groups into the two opposing political camps of "reds" and "blacks," the idea of an autonomous youth movement that would

⁴²Koppel S. Pinson, Modern Germany: Its History and Civilization (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1954), 350-391; Whiteside, "Austria," 329-330.

⁴³Ernst Jünger, "Die totale Mobilmachung," in Ernst Jünger (ed.), Krieg und Krieger (Berlin: Junker and Dünhaupt Verlag, 1930), 9-11; Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, The War and German Society. The Testament of a Liberal (New Haven and London: Yale University Press; Oxford University Press, 1937), passim; George N. Shuster, "Foreword," in William K. Pfeiler, War and the German Mind. The Testimony of Men of Fiction Who Fought at the Front (New York: Columbia University Press, 1941), vii and xiii; Gunther Lutz, Die Front-Gemeinschaft. Das Gemeinschaftserlebnis in der deutschen Kriegsliteratur (Greifswald: Hans Adler Verlag, 1936), passim. The "uprooted and reckless men" of post-1918 Central Europe are analyzed in Robert G.L. Waite, Vanguard of Nazism. The Free Corps Movement in Postwar Germany 1918-1923 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1952).

transcend party ideologies and eventually the parties themselves found favor among many young conservative intellectuals.⁴⁴ The "bündisch" principle of strong, charismatic leadership that characterized the youth groups was regarded as an alternative to individualistic capitalism and collectivistic socialism, both of which were rejected on account of their emphasis on rationalism and materialism. The word "bündisch" carries with it untranslatable overtones that connote a deep spirit of intuitive "belonging." One writer has insisted that the word cannot be translated because it symbolizes the central position between East and West (between Communism and Liberalism) occupied by German thought.⁴⁵ Catholics in the youth movement felt that the state could once more become a "whole and total entity" if alien, modern Western rational thought were excluded from Central Europe. From the font of social wisdom that was the youth movement for them, they hoped to send to the "cold and heartless" big cities their members, whose souls and personalities had been infused with the most profound truths of Germanic social solidarity. The youth movement, which had become a clear manifestation of dissatisfaction with the aridity and increasing mechanization of

⁴⁴Hans Hartmann, Die junge Generation in Europa (Berlin: Der Neue Geist Verlag, 1930), 59; Karl Otto Paetel, Jugendbewegung und Politik. Randbemerkungen (Bad Godesberg: Voggenreiter Verlag, 1961), 100-101; Heinz Steinbrink, Das kommende Abendland und der Geist der neuen Jugend. Versuch zur Verständnis unserer Zeit (Rudolstadt: Greifenverlag, 1922), 79.

⁴⁵Friedrich Baerwald, Das Erlebnis des Staates in der deutschen Jugendbewegung (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Geschichte, 1921), 16-19; Hartmann, Die junge Generation in Europa, 12.

life before 1914, emerged from the wartime Waffenbrüderschaft experience numerically weakened but ideologically more dissatisfied than ever before. The "front generation" was clearly looking for a big idea to attach itself to.⁴⁶

The shattering of Europe's pre-1914 "golden age of security"⁴⁷ during four years of traumatic bloodletting had almost immediate intellectual consequences. Political theories grew like mushrooms after a gentle rain. On the one hand, the Marxist theory of proletarian dictatorship had its first practical test in Leninist Russia. On the other extreme, conservative theories of various shadings appeared with such vigor and passion that they soon merited the adjective "conservative-revolutionary." What was seen as the continuing crisis of democratic government--class struggles, civil strife, corruption and general weakness--was met with various ideas of strong and authoritarian leadership. The names of some of these thinkers are well-known, and others are relatively obscure. What they had in common was a belief that the values of the nineteenth century were no longer valid for dealing with the problems of the twentieth and that both a

⁴⁶Walter Z. Laqueur, Young Germany. A History of the German Youth Movement (New York: Basic Books, 1962), 141, 150, 157; Harry Pross, Jugend, Eros, Politik. Die Geschichte der deutschen Jugendverbände (Vienna, Munich and Berne: Scherz Verlag, 1964), 262; Harry Pross (ed.), Die Zerstörung der deutschen Politik. Dokumente 1871-1933 (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer-Bücherei, 1959), 153. See also Howard Becker, German Youth: Bond or Free (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1946).

⁴⁷Stefan Zweig, The World of Yesterday. An Autobiography (New York: The Viking Press, 1943), 1.

new ideology and a new society had to be built on the ruins of unbelieving, materialistic nineteenth century European industrial civilization.⁴⁸ The sacrifices and heroism of the war kindled in many idealistic young men the desire to implant into civilian society after the war the white-hot intensity of comradeship that they had known at the front. These unifying experiences were ideals to be recaptured in the essentially irrational mystique of the conservative revolution of the 1920's and early 1930's.⁴⁹

The almost total rejection of the material and ideological heritage of industrial society and the concomitant call for a more "genuine" basis of social unity that characterized the European Right after 1918 has been given the general name of "conservative revolution."⁵⁰ This radical and conscious break with many generations of historical development was characterized in 1927 by the Austrian poet Hugo von Hofmannsthal as "a process which is nothing less than a conservative revolution of a dimension which surpasses anything that European history has seen so

⁴⁸Emil Franzel, 1870-1950. Geschichte unserer Zeit (3rd ed., Munich: Verlag von R. Oldenbourg, 1952), 295-296; Hans Freyer, Revolution von rechts (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1931), 19-20, 25.

⁴⁹Klaus Hornung, Der Jungdeutsche Orden (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1958), 14-16 and passim.

⁵⁰One of the earliest known uses of this phrase is in Thomas Mann's essay on "Russische Anthologie" (1921). See Thomas Mann, Gesammelte Werke. Reden und Aussätze. II (12 vols., Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1960), Vol. X, 598.

far. Its goal is to achieve a form, a new German reality in which the entire nation can participate and share." Continuing his description of the attack on modern civilization, Von Hofmannsthal spoke of those "solitary and alienated" German and Austrians who, cut off from the beliefs of their fathers, sought and struggled to bring to reality a new sense of "total" experience. This spiritual unity of the national community was to be based not on "freedom but on communal bonds /Bindung/." This process began as "an inner movement of opposition to the two great spiritual and intellectual upheavals of the sixteenth century, the Renaissance and the Reformation." The reaction against Western ideas and ideals was a "fervent and . . . tenacious . . . German fight for freedom, a fight for true coercion /Zwang/," a "refusal to surrender to a coercion that was not coercive enough."⁵¹

The cultural criticism of the nineteenth century Romanticists was mainly an aesthetic reaction against the accelerating processes of political centralization, industrialization, and urbanization. The Romanticist intellectuals were particularly disturbed by what they felt was the increasing "mechanization" and de-Christianization of life.⁵²

⁵¹Hugo von Hofmannsthal, "Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation. Rede, gehalten im Auditorium maximum der Universität München am 19. Januar 1927," in Hugo von Hofmannsthal, Gesammelte Werke (6 vols. in 15, Stockholm; Bermann-Fischer Verlag A.B.; Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 1947-59), Prosa, Vol. IV, 409-413.

⁵²Hans Georg Schenk, Die Kulturkritik der europäischen Romantik (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1956), 12 and 25.

Under the influence of Nietzsche and other enemies of liberalism, democracy and rationalism, Central European intellectuals brought the cultural criticism of early nineteenth century literary Romanticism up to date in what amounted to a generalized "war against the West."⁵³ As these ideas more and more became part of consciously conservative-revolutionary thought, a definite body of concepts and attitudes began to accumulate. A shift from aesthetics to political and social criticism, what has been described as a distinct "leap from cultural to political criticism," took place in the last years of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ This process, already obvious by 1914, received a great impetus from the social catastrophes that accompanied World War I.

In Austria one of the leading theorists of conservative-revolutionary thinking in the period between the two world wars was a university professor named Othmar Spann. The first four decades of Spann's life followed a rather conventional course, and there is little indication that he would have become a major

⁵³For studies of the post-1918 conservative revolution see Klemens von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism. Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957); Aurel Kolnai, The War Against the West (New York: The Viking Press, 1938); Armin Mohler, Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932. Grundriss ihrer Weltanschauungen (Stuttgart: Friedrich Vorwerk Verlag, 1950); Kurt Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik. Die politischen Ideen des deutschen Nationalismus zwischen 1918 und 1933 (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1962); and Edmond Vermeil, Doctrinaires de la Révolution allemande (1918-1938) (Paris: F. Sorlot, 1938).

⁵⁴Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, xix. See also H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society. The Reorientation of European Social Thought, 1890-1930 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958).

figure on the Austrian Right had both material and cultural circumstances not been conducive to his ideas being favorably received by conservative intellectual circles.⁵⁵ The interaction between ideas and specific historical conditions was in this instance quite clear; Spann's intellectual impact was directly related to specific cultural and social circumstances. There is little reason to believe that Spann's ideas would have had the impact that they did had the First Austrian Republic not been plagued with social and economic distress, as well as with the division of the citizenry into two almost air-tight political and ideological units, each sufficient unto itself and each desiring the demise of the other in one form or another.

Othmar Spann was born the son of a paper manufacturer on October 1, 1878, in Altmannsdorf, at the time a suburb of Vienna, and studied at the Universities of Vienna, Zürich, Berne, and Tübingen. His fields of concentration were political economy, sociology, and philosophy, and received a doctorate summa cum laude in political science at Tübingen in 1903. His dissertation topic covered a broadly philosophical area, being an examination of the basic sociological concepts of society. After receiving his degree, Spann worked at a social welfare agency in Frankfurt am Main. By 1907 his writings had qualified him for

⁵⁵Hans Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 280. Weber makes it clear that both "material and ideal interests directly govern men's conduct." He does not suggest criteria that specify which cluster of interests is more important in a specific situation.

recognition as an academic lecturer, and he took a position at the Brunn/Brno Technische Hochschule. After a promotion in 1909, he received a professorship in 1911. In 1919 he was called to the University of Vienna and given the position of professor of political economy and sociology.⁵⁶

Although he had already established a successful academic career for himself and had sketched the intellectual basis of his later thought, in 1919 Spann was, however, still unknown to the general public. Up until this time Spann had been known mainly for his writings, which, while giving evidence of solid scholarship, were, nevertheless, not so extraordinarily profound or provocative as to have made him known outside a small circle of fellow scholars. His fundamental idea in these early economic and sociological writings was that economic processes had to be seen in relation to the entire growth of social inter-relationships; "mechanistic and mathematical" empiricism and materialism in economics had to be discarded so as to be able to intuitively grasp at the very essences of social reality.⁵⁷

⁵⁶Walter Heinrich, "Othmar Spann--heute. Aus Anlass der fünfzigsten: Wiederkehr seines Todestages," Die Furche, Vol. XXI, No. 27 (July 3, 1965), 9. See also Christian Jasper Klumker and Othmar Spann, Die Bedeutung der Berufsvormundschaft für den Schutz der unehelichen Kinder. Eine Denkschrift für den internationalen Kongress für Erziehung und Kinderschutz in Lüttich (Dresden: O.V. Böhmert Verlag, 1905). During these years Spann was looked upon as a noted authority on the problem of illegitimacy.

⁵⁷Othmar Spann, "Die mechanisch-mathematische Analogie in der Volkswirtschaftslehre," Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik, Vol. XXX (1910), 786-824. This article is critical of Schumpeter's methodology.

It was with these basic ideas that Spann came to Vienna in 1919. It was a city of misery and alienation. Famine and Communist attempts to seize power plagued the provisional government. Radicalism of the Right and Left grew among the young and alienated, who lived in a dreamland of expectation in the first months after the end of the war. During the summer semester of 1920 Professor Spann gave a series of lectures at the University of Vienna on the "demolition and reconstruction of society," a cosmic theme that interested the war generation, young men who were waiting for "something" to happen.⁵⁸ Published as a book in 1921, with the title Der wahre Staat,⁵⁹ Spann's lectures soon became popular with many intellectuals of the Right.

Spann's fundamental ideas had been in the process of development and refinement for over a decade. As early as 1905 he had developed certain of the basic assumptions of his philosophical system. Holding society to be the core and essence of human life, he flatly denied the basic principle of individualism. Only as a member of society, he insisted, could the individual

⁵⁸Von Klemperer, Germany's New Conservatism, 76-80; David Falls Strong, Austria, 1918-1919 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939), passim. A fascinating picture of student life in turbulent post-war Vienna is given in Arthur Koestler, Arrow in the Blue. An Autobiography (New York: Macmillan, 1952).

⁵⁹Othmar Spann, Der wahre Staat. Vorlesungen über Abbruch und Neubau der Gesellschaft (Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer Verlag, 1921). A revised second edition was published in 1923, a third in 1931, and a fourth in 1938. Unless otherwise indicated, citations from Der wahre Staat are from the second edition of 1923.

become a "real" entity and truly develop his spirituality to its utmost limits.⁶⁰ During his years at Brünn Spann developed the idea that social phenomena could be regarded in two fundamentally different ways: "genetically" or "functionally." The genetical view classified phenomena according to their origin, while the functional approach did so according to their consequences in society.⁶¹ The classifications led him to make the distinction between the "individualistic" and "universalistic" theories of society. This distinction is central to the entire social science methodology of Spann.

In all his writings Spann contended that human society could only be organized according to one or another basic principle: either that of individualism or that of universalism. Individualism turned society into little more than a "pile of loose rocks."⁶² For Spann, a society based on individualistic assumptions was nothing more than a conglomerate of isolated individuals, seeking personal autonomy in the pursuit of their own selfish ends. Based on the principles of the exact sciences, the doctrine of individualism considers society to be of secondary value to the individual. Individualism holds that the individual,

⁶⁰Othmar Spann, "Zur Logik der sozialwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung," in Festgaben für Friedrich Julius Neumann zum siebzigsten Wiederkehr seines Geburtstages (Tübingen: Verlag der H. Laupp'schen Buchhandlung, 1905), 161-178.

⁶¹Othmar Spann, Kategorienlehre (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1924), 6.

⁶²Spann, Der wahre Staat, 11.

existing by himself, is all-important, and that the free individual can reach his highest level of development without interference from specific human or general societal forces. The individualistic social philosophy insists that the rights of the autonomous individual can, and ought to be, safeguarded by an absolute minimum of social controls.

Spann distinguished three forms in which individualism had appeared on the stage of political history: Machiavellianism, anarchism, and natural law (social contract) theory. As Spann saw it, Machiavellianism had at least had the virtue of establishing a ruler-ruled hierarchy, and, therefore, provided a basis for political and social order. Anarchy, which is not a workable form of human organization, was for Spann quite simply the extreme logical conclusion of individualism. Existing in two forms, authoritarianism and representative government, the natural law or social contact theory was for Spann essentially unworkable because it sooner or later produced complete social atomization. The first form was the Hobbesian system of a strong ruler. In the second, the people retained power, but for practical reasons they delegated it to elected officials. In both instances, individuals have given up a degree of their freedom in order to secure a greater chance of enjoying peace and prosperity. This gives society a utilitarian function--that of creating the conditions in which the individual can flourish in freedom. These seventeenth century ideas, which in many respects can be traced

⁶³Ibid., 23 and 69-70.

back to the Sophists, are the basis for the political theory of modern liberalism and democratic government.⁶⁴

Spann proceeded to attack individualism and liberalism as philosophical principles, methodological concepts in the social sciences, and philosophies of social organization. Individualism committed a "fundamental mistake" in assuming the existence of an "absolute" individual who was morally and intellectually autonomous. The "radical freedom" of the individual who denied any reality other than the inviolability of his own unique and total individuality was condemned by Spann, who insisted that the source of "original truths" was not to be found in the individual but in society, which as a supra-individual entity created and molded the individual. Individualism also made the mistake of giving the individual the impression of having total control over his material and social environment, when in fact he was often confused, helpless, and isolated from his fellow human beings.⁶⁵

In contrast to individualism, Spann held that universalism recognized the individual as an indispensable member of society. Universalism sees society as "a totality (Ganzheit) whose parts are not independent, but are members of this totality."⁶⁶ Only

⁶⁴Bartholomew Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society of Othmar Spann and His School," in Harry Elmer Barnes (ed.), An Introduction to the History of Sociology (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1948), 388.

⁶⁵Spann, Der wahre Staat, 17, 44-45 and 68-70.

⁶⁶Ibid., 11.

in a spiritual community with others, in mutuality or polarity (Gezweiung) can the human being develop his full potentialities. He cannot develop himself only out of his own resources. The universalistic society is to be an organic whole in which groups and individuals are not isolated atoms but parts of a greater unity. The idea of Gezweiung holds that nothing exists without being related to something else, that the final cause in society is purpose rather than seeming blind chance, and that the world, when properly understood and analyzed, is an intelligible whole. In the final analysis society is to be seen as a spiritual community. The universalistic theory of society conceived of the role of the individual as that of being in a constant state of close interaction with other individuals; this was in sharp contrast to the individualistic theory of society, which Spann insisted accepted the existence of other individuals, and of the idea of society itself, only as a "mere accident."⁶⁷

The universalistic theory of categories was the core of Spann's system and the ideological basis for his theory of a corporative state, society, and economy.⁶⁸ The validity of universalism is based on the idea that the "whole" is prior and superior to the "part." The basic principle of the theory of categories is that the whole does not exist "as such," for it exists only in its members. The totality of society comes

⁶⁷Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 389.

⁶⁸Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 133 n.

before the members that comprise it, not necessarily in time, but logically. Because it is not merely the sum-total of its individual members, the whole of society is in the final analysis the source of the members' very existence. Just as the whole exists before its component parts, society per se comes before the individual member of society, who exists only as he has been constituted, formed, and articulated by society. Society, which Spann defines as "spiritual and acting totality,"⁶⁹ exists only through the life of its member-parts. Only because the parts have life is it possible for the whole to exist, since the whole always inheres in the part, and the part exists only by participating in the whole. The emergence and expression of society takes place in such "partial wholes" as art, religion, philosophy and science. The spiritual totality is thus manifested in the various partial wholes or subtotalities. Spann's final category is totality itself; the essence of this category is "spirituality." The final "substance" in the theory of categories is spirituality itself.⁷⁰

Universalism bears a strong resemblance to the Platonic conception of the state. Spann's writings abound in references to Plato. In fact, Spann considered Plato's writing as one of the

⁶⁹Othmar Spann, Gesellschaftslehre (3rd rev'd. ed., Leipzig: Quelle und Meyer Verlag, 1930), 507.

⁷⁰Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 390 and 399.

foundation-stones of his own philosophy.⁷¹ Spann was not alone in deriving intellectual inspiration from Hellenic antiquity. Central European intellectuals saw in the great cultural productivity of the ancient Greek city-states an ideal fusion of artistic endeavor and vigorous civic consciousness. The interest in the ancient Greeks in general and Plato in particular, both of which had an "incalculable" influence on European thought and art after 1700, was particularly marked in Germany.⁷² In eighteenth and nineteenth century German literature Neo-Hellenism also left its mark on political and social theory. The Prussian social theorist Karl Johann Rodbertus viewed the ancient Greek polis as the model of a total community where politics and society were fused into a meaningful unity.⁷³

The ancient Greek polis more and more became a political as well as an aesthetic ideal for many nineteenth century Central European intellectuals disturbed by the growing social and economic problems brought on by the industrial revolution. As the problems of modern society made themselves felt to all members of the community, some of these intellectuals looked longingly

⁷¹Wilhelm Andrae, a disciple of Spann who taught at the University of Graz, translated Plato for Vols. V, VI, and XIII of "Die Herdflamme" series, which Spann edited.

⁷²Eliza Marian Butler, The Tyranny of Greece over Germany. A Study of the Influence Exercised by Greek Art and Poetry over the Great German Writers of the Eighteenth, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958), 6.

⁷³Rohan D'Olier Butler, The Roots of National Socialism (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1942), 126.

back to classical antiquity for model societies. Nietzsche saw the polis of the Greeks as representing an active community of nobles and held it to be infinitely superior to the Roman empire, which was for him little more than sober and stable order organized on a large scale.⁷⁴ As some Central European intellectuals conceived of the essence of the ancient Greek city-state, the state and society were one and the same, the state being a "common life." Literary critics emphasized that in Greek drama human tragedy was outweighed by the "higher fate" of the state. The life of the individual received meaning only through his place and function in the community; individual tragedy became universally meaningful only when deemed important enough to be presented at state festivals.⁷⁵ The political theorizing of the ancient Greeks was closely bound to ethics; their primary interest was in formulating political ethics rather than in spinning out legalistic political theory. Above all, the Greeks did not have the state-society dichotomy of modern times. The state-society relationship was not a burning question in the "total" society of ancient Greece.⁷⁶ Besides giving German and Austrian intellectuals a historical picture of a "unified"

⁷⁴Kolnai, The War Against the West, 589.

⁷⁵Max Pohlenz, Die griechische Tragödie (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1930), 5-9 and 85-95.

⁷⁶Ernest Barker, Greek Political Theory. Plato and His Predecessors (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1918), 6-13.

society, the Greek polis, particularly the politeia of Plato, presented them with the rather pleasing idea of the right, indeed, the duty, of assuming sovereign authority as the intellectual élite of the state.

It has been remarked that Plato's Republic is a Staatsroman, a literary Utopia.⁷⁷ Plato conceived of his ideal city-state as the highest realization of social unity, a social order that was essentially corporative in structure. With "rigid stationarity," Plato sketched a society with a small, constant number of citizens, constant wealth with limitations on holdings, and a regulation of the economy in general. Government was to be entrusted to a caste of rulers and "guardians" who were to live as a group apart, without individual property or family ties, devoting all of their talents and energies to the art and science of ruling.⁷⁸ The Platonic élite was mirrored in Spann's Staatstand, the corporation of the rulers, whose sole business it is to attend to affairs of state, "just as it is the cobbler's business to make or mend boots." This "self-evident" division of labor was presented by Spann, who explained that the cobbler may also "rule"--in the "sphere of cobblership."⁷⁹ Realizing

⁷⁷Joseph A. Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis, edited by Elizabeth Booddy Schumpeter (New York: Oxford University Press, 1954), 55. See also Edgar Salin, Platon und die griechische Utopie (Munich: Duncker & Humblot Verlag, 1921).

⁷⁸Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis, 55-56.

⁷⁹Kolnai, The War Against the West, 161.

that Platonic ideas are open to criticism because of their apparent static rigidity, Spann gave his own philosophy a dynamic aspect, the idea of "potentiality." Life is a creative totality, always changing and constantly developing, he said. This dynamic subsection of his main theory was called "kinetic universalism" by Spann.⁸⁰

Just as Plato himself was engaging in partisan politics when he wrote his Republic, Platonic ideas in postwar Central Europe were used to bolster various political and ideological positions. Sociologists like Hans Freyer described, in none-too-clear terms, the mystical transformation, by means of a "total mobilization" through a transitional dictatorship, of a Volk into a polis. Freyer spoke of Plato's political theories as "true universalistic sociology, sociology as it should be," because it explained the state as the "materialization of the idea of justice in the substance of mankind."⁸¹

Austrian social and political theorists in the 1920's and 1930's also came under the influence of Plato's fundamentally metaphysical ideas. Not only Spann, but also his contemporary, the Austrian Catholic social theorist Ernst Karl Winter, was influenced by some of Plato's ideas. Winter derived his system of society in varying degrees from the writings of Kant, Marx, and

⁸⁰Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 390.

⁸¹Kolnai, The War Against the West, 415; Hans Freyer, Soziologie als Wirklichkeitwissenschaft. Logische Grundlegung des Systems der Soziologie (Leipzig and Berlin: B. G. Teubner Verlag, 1930), 69.

Vogelsang. Next to Spann he was the most original and prolific theorist of the revolutionary Right in the First Austrian Republic. He approved of Plato's transcendental sociological ideal of the "true," paternalistic state and society, but pointed out that although empirical forms of government had in various degrees modeled themselves on this ideal of the "true" state and society, they could never attain true perfection in this world. Winter criticized Spann for his essentially unrealistic and unrealizable system of "the true state," which he said was strongly grounded in elements of neo-Kantian and other Idealistic philosophy.⁸²

Both Plato and Spann posited a fundamentally metaphysical doctrine of absolute truth. Their political programs were largely based on the historicist assumption that existing states are to a greater or lesser degree the decayed forms of a pre-existing "perfect" state. The formula for establishing a "true" and perfect state and society was to establish it and then resist all change. At least logically, the Platonic state is identical

⁸²Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 220-229. Winter's sociological Platonism is explicitly expressed in his Platon. Das Soziologische in der Ideenlehre (Vienna: Gsur & Co. Verlag, 1930). Also valuable for a study of his ideas are his "Der paternale Staat," Zeitschrift für Öffentliches Recht, Vol. X, No. 2 (September 15, 1930), 213-257; his "Der wahre Staat in der Soziologie des Rechtes. Ein Beitrag zur kritischen Abgrenzung der Transzendentalsoziologie von reiner Rechtslehre, scholastischer Metaphysik und Ganzheitssoziologie," Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht, Vol. XI, No. 2 (June 1, 1931), 161-205; and his "Platonismus, Thomismus und Marxismus," Wiener Politische Blätter, Vol. III (June 23, 1935), 101-106.

to many of the basic assumptions of modern totalitarianism.⁸³ Spann's ultimate justification for his "true state" was aesthetic and cultural, since ideally society and culture are a unified whole. His view of the state's functions and powers was a total, if not indeed a totalitarian, one. Representing the "highest form of spiritual and intellectual unity," in his opinion, is the Kulturstaat, which is "not satisfied in dealing only with the purely mechanical and administrative matters of social life," but also takes it upon itself to be responsible for the growth of intellectual and spiritual life between the members of the state.⁸⁴ From this it appears that at least part of Spann's basis for his all-encompassing conception of the state was artistic in origin. Spann and the sensitive intellectuals who joined his circle often thought of political and social issues in what were fundamentally aesthetic terms. An intense devotion to artistic creation characterized his wife, Erika Spann-Rheinisch, who was a devout Catholic who had published mystical and religious

⁸³Karl Raimund Popper, The Open Society and Its Enemies (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1950), 86-164. The "Plato problem" continues to this day. Recent works of differing views are Richard Howard Stafford Crossman, Plato To-Day (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1937); Thomas Landon Thorson (ed.), Plato: Totalitarian or Democrat? (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1963); and John Wild, Plato's Modern Enemies and the Theory of Natural Law (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953).

⁸⁴Spann, Der wahre Staat, 66.

poetry, and was also interested in ancient Greece, both as a scholar and as a poet.⁸⁵

Spann believed that all of the various measures undertaken in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to combat the insecurity and atomization of the individual in an industrial society had at their root an attempt to recapture the harmonious spirit of the corporate bonds (ständische Bindung) of "the medieval corporative order."⁸⁶ As did his contemporary Ernst Karl Winter, Spann had a vision of the middle ages as a time when there was a "total culture" which embraced "both religion and social ethics."⁸⁷ Although he nowhere specifically advocated the eventual setting up of a theocracy, his glowing admiration for the social institutions and basic patterns of thought of the middle ages was clear beyond question. That Spann would be fundamentally attracted to the socially collectivistic and

⁸⁵Barth Landheer, Der Gesellschafts- und Staatsbegriff Platons auf der Grundlage seiner Ideenlehre entwickelt (Rotterdam: N. V. Nijgh & van Ditmar's Uitgevers-Mij, 1929), passim; Ernst Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben. Begegnungen und Begebnisse (Cologne and Berlin: Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch, 1958), 208-209; Erika Spann-Rheinisch, "Kretische und vorgriechische Sprache, "Anthropos, Vol. XXV, Nos. 5-6 (September-December, 1930), 1003-1009; Erika Spann-Rheinisch, Vor attischen Grabmalern. Dichtungen (Munich: F. Bruckmann Verlag, 1925), 1-62. Frau Spann's love of the middle ages expressed itself in the medieval costumes she wore at times. Conversation with Friedrich Engel-Janosi, Houston, Texas, March 28, 1966.

⁸⁶Spann, Der wahre Staat, 83 and 128-129.

⁸⁷Ernst Karl Winter, Die Sozialmetaphysik der Scholastik (Leipzig and Vienna: Franz Deuticke Verlag, 1929), 168-169.

anti-individualistic middle ages is understandable, since his theory of universalism closely resembles the basic working assumptions of scholastic Realism; individualism, on the other hand, can be shown to have had its roots in scholastic Nominalism. Taken as a whole, German thought from the middle ages on drew much greater sustenance from the tradition of Realism than it did from that of Nominalism. Spann's system of sociology was probably the clearest example of a neo-Realist and metaphysical trend in modern German thought.⁸⁸

Spann's blueprint for the creation of the "true state" depended less on Plato and medieval philosophy for inspiration than it did on nineteenth century German and Austrian Romanticist thought. The influence of political and cultural Romanticism on Spann was overwhelming and obvious. The most influential theorist and writer of political Romanticism was Adam Heinrich Müller, whose writings Spann chanced upon in 1907.⁸⁹ As did all the Romanticists, Müller venerated the middle ages, which he believed had experienced a high degree of spirituality and social cohesion under principles of Catholic and corporative monarchism.

⁸⁸Jean F. Neurohr, Der Mythos vom Dritten Reich. Zur Geistesgeschichte des Nationalsozialismus (Stuttgart: J. G. Cotta'sche Buchhandlung Nachfolger, 1957), 190; André Siegfried, The Character of Peoples, translated by Edward Fitzgerald (London: Jonathan Cape, 1952), 116. See also Karl Pribram, Die Entstehung der individualistischen Sozialphilosophie (Leipzig: C. L. Hirschfeld Verlag, 1912).

⁸⁹Othmar Spann, The History of Economics, translated by Eden and Cedar Paul (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1930), 11.

Emphasizing the collectivity rather than the individual, Müller contended that the individual was lost without the state, which was a "natural" human organization based on specific social duties rather than on vague concepts of individual freedom.⁹⁰ The Vienna circle of Romanticist intellectuals sponsored by Klemens Maria Hofbauer were mainly North German Protestants who felt themselves attracted to the South German and Austrian traditions of Catholic conservatism. Sharing so many common characteristics with Romanticism, Catholicism afforded an intellectual and spiritual home for many German and Austrian thinkers in the early nineteenth century. Determined to experience life in its quintessential forms, the Romanticists asserted the fundamental reality of both the sensuous and supernatural worlds. The aesthetic emphasis and basically impractical nature of Romanticist political thought has led some authorities to see it as little more than a short-lived intermediate stage of aestheticism between the basic moralism of the eighteenth century and the economic and

⁹⁰ Adam Müller, Ausgewählte Abhandlungen, edited by Jakob Baxa (2nd rev'd. ed., Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1931), 4; Adam Müller, Elemente der Staatskunst, edited by Jakob Baxa (2 vols., Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1922), Vol. I, 29-31; Paul Kluckhohn, Persönlichkeit und Gemeinschaft. Studien zur Staatsauffassung der deutschen Romantik (Halle: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1925), 69-70. See also Kurt Borries, Die Romantik und die Geschichte. Studien zur Romantischen Lebensform (Berlin: Deutsche Verlag für Politik und Geschichte, 1925); and Gottfried Salomon, Das Mittelalter als Ideal in der Romantik (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922).

social emphasis of most nineteenth century political thought.⁹¹

While some nineteenth century Romanticist intellectuals conceived of the state primarily in aesthetic and poetic terms, others, particularly Hegel, saw the state as the highest political and social embodiment of human historical development. This "total" view of the nature and function of the state was developed by Vogelsang in the 1870's and 1880's. As did Adam Müller two generations earlier, Vogelsang defined the state as the totality of material and spiritual institutions and activities. His conception of the state was ultimately a mystically totalitarian one, for it was quite literally defined as being the embodiment of all secular and social relations between men.⁹² He insisted that the state was "innate in man, coexists with him, and is the determinant of his existence."⁹³ In opposition to the liberal society that had become two bitterly opposing camps of workers and capitalists, Vogelsang proposed the creation of a society and economy organized along what he

⁹¹Alfred von Martin, "Romantische Konversionen," Logos. Internationale Zeitschrift für Philosophie der Kultur, Vol. XVII, No. 2 (August, 1928), 146-147; Josef Nadler, "Hochlandkämpfe von Gestern und Morgen," in Max Ettliger, Philipp Funk, and Friedrich Fuchs (eds.), Wiederbegegnung von Kirche und Kultur in Deutschland. Eine Gabe für Karl Muth (Munich: Verlag Josef Kösel & Friedrich Pustet, 1927), 59-70; Carl Schmitt, Der Begriff des Politischen (Munich and Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot Verlag, 1932), 70. See also Rudolf Till, Hofbauer und sein Kreis (Vienna: Verlag Herold, 1951).

⁹²Anton Orel, Vogelsangs Leben und Lehren (2nd ed., Vienna: Vogelsang Verlag, 1922), 52 n.

⁹³Von Klopp, Die sozialen Lehren des Freiherrn Karl von Vogelsang, 236.

called corporative lines.

Vogelsang's corporative society was conceived of as being an organic order permeated throughout by Catholic principles. Central to his corporative society is the idea of occupational and functional rather than political and territorial representation. Above all, he saw the restoration of the moral basis of human social and political organization as the paramount and crying need of his time. The corporative order he proposed in his writings would be an "organic relationship" in which political representation based on an "inner relationship" between representatives takes the place of the liberal political tie, the "causal and superficial act of voting." A system of corporative representation at all levels would ensure the autonomy of local and occupational bodies and in general serve to strengthen the organic fabric of society. Occupational representation would insure that the representative would be familiar with the problems and aspirations of his constituents. His relationship to the social body he represented and spoke for in the political arena would be a truly organic one, since he was a member of the subsection of the entire body of society that he had been most fitted for.⁹⁴ Vogelsang insisted that the advent of the corporative system of social organization would quickly lead to the sloughing off of the most evil consequences of capitalism, urbanization, industrialization, and secularization. The strengthening of local and professional corporative bodies would bring

⁹⁴Ibid., 245.

about the inevitable weakening of the "centralized and bureaucratized state apparatus" that governed and administered "in a Byzantine manner" those peoples whose societies had lost their corporative institutions and traditions.⁹⁵

The corporatist school of thought in Austria was represented chiefly by Vogelsang's followers after his death in 1890. One of his most influential disciples was Dr. Rudolf Meyer, who wrote what are probably the most important expressions of Austrian corporatist thought in the period between 1890 and the publication of Spann's Der wahre Staat in 1921.⁹⁶ Meyer wrote with great passion of the terrible misfortunes that the stock exchange and the mentality of the market society and economy had brought to Austria. He sharply contrasted the ruination of society and life in his own time with what he felt was the spirituality and social, cultural, and economic unity of the middle ages. Meyer saw modern times as characterized by self-interest, avarice, and egotism. He viewed the European wars

⁹⁵Ibid., 248; August Maria Knoll, "Karl von Vogelsang und der Ständegedanke," in Jakob Strieder and Johannes Messner (eds.) Die soziale Frage und der Katholizismus. Festschrift zum 40jährigen Jubiläum der Enzyklika "Rerum Novarum" (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 1931), 64-85.

⁹⁶Ralph H. Bowen, German Theories of the Corporative State with Special Reference to the Period 1870-1919 (New York and London: Whittlesey House; McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1947), 116-117.

fought since 1648 as having been mainly sordid wars of trade rivalry.⁹⁷ Meyer's vigorous general critique of modern capitalist-individualist society was in the basic tradition of the political Romanticist theories of Vogelsang.

The corporative idea as advanced during the last decades of the nineteenth century by Vogelsang and his school and revived, updated, and refined in the first third of the twentieth century by Spann and his circle was based on an organic conception of the state. An organic conception of the state and society has often provided a logical basis for the acceptance of a corporative state structure. The biological analogy makes it possible to put different elements of the social body into their respective "proper" places. Being a living organism, the body of society must honor the demands of the whole over those of the single members or parts. Just as some parts of the body are more "valuable" than others, some individuals or groups within society have, because of varying abilities, more social worth to society as a totality, all still being equal before the eyes of God. This being the case, it follows that social rights, duties, privileges, functions, responsibilities, and rewards are to be apportioned unequally. The unconscious and automatic reflexes of the human body have been seen by corporative theorists

⁹⁷Rudolf Meyer, Der Emancipationskampf des vierten Standes (2 vols., Berlin: August Schindler & Hermann Bahr, 1875-82), Vol. II, 39; Rudolf Meyer, Der Capitalismus fin de siecle (Vienna and Leipzig: Verlags-Buchhandlung "Austria" /Franz Doll/, 1894), 392.

as models for pluralistic sovereignties like those expressed in federalism and political and economic decentralization.⁹⁸ Economic interests will be fully taken account of under a corporatist society, which will be organized along occupational lines; just as federalism will revive local and community autonomy, functional representation will lead to a rebirth of professional competence and pride of accomplishment. Proclaiming as its ultimate goal the psychic as well as material security and well-being of all members of society, corporatism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries appeared at various critical periods to offer itself as a third force opposed to both the "natural laws" of classical capitalist individualism and the "historical necessity" of revolutionary Marxism.⁹⁹

The organic view of state and society exercised a particularly strong influence in Germany and Austria in the nineteenth century. Organicism was used as a basic concept by German Romanticist philosophers and intellectuals to combat the revolutionary and egalitarian theories that regarded the state as a rational creation of man to be used consciously by him for limited and utilitarian ends.¹⁰⁰ Although the organic analogy can be used to

⁹⁸Bowen, German Theories of the Corporative State, 13-14.

⁹⁹Eugene O. Golob, The "Isms". A History and an Evaluation (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1954), 542.

¹⁰⁰Francis William Coker, Organismic Theories of the State, Nineteenth Century Interpretations of the State as Organism or as Person (New York: Columbia University Press, 1910), 191-192; Peter Viereck, Conservatism Revisited. The Revolt Against Revolt 1815-1949 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), 51.

sustain extreme individualism, as can be seen in the example of Herbert Spencer, the German Romanticists used it in their time to defend the existing conservative social order and its institutions.¹⁰¹ Basing itself on the Romanticism of the first half of the nineteenth century, Austrian conservative political thought continued to emphasize the organic nature of society in the increasingly sociologically-oriented second half of the century. The German-Austrian sociologist Albert Schäffle advocated a society where representation was by economic groupings ("estates") rather than by political party or ideological camp. Although Schäffle prided himself on his system's logical and positivistic basis, ultimately his view of the new state and society, which saw the state as a Universalkorporation, a "central, universal corporation" in which "the whole nation achieves unity and individuality,"¹⁰² was as mystically Romantic and metaphysical as the conceptions of the "true" state offered by the poets and dreamers of the first decades of the century. Above all, it is this same combination of a refined and logically

¹⁰¹Karl Mannheim, "The History of the Concept of the State as an Organism: A Sociological Analysis," in Karl Mannheim, Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology, edited by Paul Kecskemeti (New York: Oxford Univeristy Press, 1953), 166.

¹⁰²Hugo Hantsch, Die Geschichte Österreichs 1648-1918 (2nd ed., Graz, Vienna and Cologne: Verlag Styria, 1953), 410; Albert Schäffle, Bau und Leben des sozialen Körpers (2nd ed., 2 vols., Tübingen: Verlag der H. Laupp'schen Buchhandlung, 1896), Vol. I, 428.

sophisticated sociological methodology with an ultimately metaphysical goal of total social unity that one finds in the writings, thought, and political action of Othmar Spann.

Chapter II: Spann and the Ideal World of the Corporative State

Long before the new, organic and corporative social order Spann envisioned so clearly in Der wahre Staat could be established, it was necessary vigorously to criticize, analyze, dissect, and intellectually demolish the old existing society. Before concrete work on the construction of the ideal world of the corporative state could even be realistically attempted, the existing order of liberal, individualistic, and capitalist society would have to be subjected to a systematic and thoroughgoing criticism. Seeing himself as a leader of the great revolution of his time, which was essentially a conservative counter-revolution directed as a conscious first stage against the heretofore victorious march of liberalism,¹ Spann considered virtually the entire range of the modern social sciences as his own domain. As a self-proclaimed leader of the vanguard of the intellectual conservative revolution, he proudly categorized himself as a man in the thick of the "fight against individualism, atomism, psychologism, Marxism, and other dead sciences."² Spannian universalism was held to be much more than just a "correct" methodology of social science and research. In

¹Spann, Der wahre Staat, 4.

²Othmar Spann, Tote oder lebendige Wissenschaft. Abhandlungen zur Auseinandersetzung mit Individualismus und Marxismus (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1925), xiv.

essence, it was in the final analysis meant to be the only "true" theory of life and society that was valid for explaining the modern world.

The basic underlying assumption of Spann's comprehensive philosophical system was the idea of anti-individualism.³ As he saw it, the old liberal and individualistic order had been weighed on the scales of history and "truth" and found wanting. The political, economic, and cultural ruin and despair that gripped Central Europe after 1918 convinced him that the eleventh hour of western civilization had come. For Spann, the choice facing his generation was clear and simple: one of the two world systems, individualism or universalism, had to be accepted as an ideology and as a fundamental way of viewing social reality. If universalism were not accepted, Europe in general, and Austria in particular, would be doomed to increasing social decay. Historically, individualism would run its fatal course, with all its inevitable and terrible consequences. Inevitably it would in time lead to the essentially inhuman systems of mass-democracy, anarchy, and Bolshevism. Spann believed that Bolshevism was basically little more than an extension of the individualistic doctrine of the natural rights of man from the political sphere to the realm of economic relationships.⁴

³Karl Polanyi, "The Essence of Fascism," in John Lewis, Karl Polanyi, and Donald K. Kitchin (eds.), Christianity and the Social Revolution (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), 362.

⁴Ibid., 363.

Marxism was for Spann the natural rather than the abortive development of the great trends of liberal and democratic thought. In spite of Marx's intellectual indebtedness to the self-contained and monolithic Hegelian system, Marxism was fundamentally an individualistic social philosophy. Thus the Marxian theory of the ultimate "withering away" of the state was seen by Spann as an idea that was individualistic to the point of being close to anarchistic Utopianism.⁵ The Marxian Socialist goal of "free association," i.e., the absence of domination of human beings by human beings, was seen by the universalistic school of sociology as an absurdity--a fiction as unrealistic as the entire idea of a "classless" and "stateless" human society. Because Marxist ideologists made clear that ethics and values-systems were not absolute entities, and that each age, social class, and "mode of production" produced its own system of morality,⁶ Spann insisted that Marxian Socialism was thoroughly grounded in, and tied to, social relativism.

In analyzing individualism, Spann pointed out what he believed were the concrete results of an adherence to this "divisive" and "atomistic" view of the social world. As

⁵Ibid.

⁶Karl Kautsky, Ethik und materialistische Geschichtsauffassung (Stuttgart: Verlag von J. H. W. Dietz Nachf., 1906), 110-120.

applied to political life, individualism would make "inevitable" certain large-scale processes of social disintegration. In each guise that it had assumed in a specific period of history, individualism had played the fundamentally negative role of disrupting and loosening traditional values, substituting for "truth" various temporarily popular ideas, beliefs, and social goals. Egotistic individualism had shattered what Spann considered was the harmonious corporative harmony of the middle ages and created the basis for the modern liberal and mass-democratic spirit, a "mighty eruption" of social and intellectual forces that accompanied the French revolution.⁷ Ever since the collapse of the old order of Europe in the war and chaos of the 1790's, the eternal verities of society had been under serious attack from many quarters.

In all his major writings, Spann pointed to the relativistic view of social values that characterized individualism as the root-cause of the crisis of the civilization of his day. Since "truth" was for Spann an already existing entity to be discovered by a few experts, the "majority principle," the idea of "using the ballot box to decide questions of truth and justice," was for him little short of "ridiculous."⁸ Whether political, economic, or cultural, majority rule was a purely mechanical and superficial method of deciding public policy because it weighed all votes equally, when in fact each issue

⁷Spann, Der wahre Staat, 83.

⁸Ibid., 112.

needed to be decided by technical experts who would base their opinions on the specific details raised by specific problems. Under such a dryly unimaginative and "mechanistic" system of nose-counting, Spann insisted, the individual, rather than being given his due respect, was in fact being reduced to a mere statistic, morally swindled and robbed of his intrinsic value as a unique human being.⁹

Using the fundamental assumptions of his universalistic philosophy as an intellectual bastion, Spann proceeded to attack two of the basic concepts of the liberal and democratic Weltanschauung: the ideas of liberty and historical progress. Going back to some of the basic concepts of medieval and Romanticist political thought, he advanced the idea of the qualitative nature of liberty. In this category, liberty becomes detached from the individual and is transferred to its "true bearers," the larger collectives, in this instance the estates of society (Stände). For them, the estates were the carriers of the inner principles of spiritual and social growth. It is through their development, he argued, that liberty will be realized in society.¹⁰ In all this, the role of the individual is to be fundamentally one of membership and participation

⁹Ibid., 111.

¹⁰Alfred von Martin, "Weltanschauliche Motive im altkonservativen Denken," in Paul Wentzcke (ed.), Deutscher Staat und deutsche Parteien. Beiträge zur deutschen Partei- und Ideengeschichte. Friedrich Meinecke zum 60. Geburtstag dargebracht (Munich and Berlin: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1922), 345.

in the slow growth of the community spirit, for ultimately all life is community life.¹¹ For Spann, freedom and liberty are not to be found in the realization of individual autonomy, but in a profound recognition of the need of subordination to an overarching totality, the whole of society. Freedom, then, consists ultimately of recognizing and then serving the ends of the social totality.¹²

Spann also attacked the idea of progress as the main concept of historical change, because it had posited what he felt were totally untrue assumptions. Universalism did not accept the idea of the inevitable improvement of man and society according to mechanical laws of social development. Opposing such "obviously" liberal and individualistic ideas, Spann advanced the conception of the historical process as a reflection of the totality of the human mind. He defined history as a manifestation of the mind. As an already existing spiritual totality, it did not know any "progress" as such. In effect, Spann suggested that history was thus to be understood in idealistic terms, as a creation, unfolding, and growth of the divine and human mind.¹³

¹¹Othmar Spann, "Die Grundentscheidungen in die Gesellschaftsphilosophie," Blätter für deutsche Philosophie, Vol. II, No. 3-4 (1928), 221-228.

¹²Ludwig Resch, "Zur Soziologie der Freiheit," Archiv für Rechts- und Wirtschaftsphilosophie, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (October, 1929), 29-39.

¹³Othmar Spann, "Gründung und Entfaltung als Kategorien der Geschichte. Ein Beitrag zur geschichtlichen Kategorienlehre," Standisches Leben. Blätter für organische Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftslehre, Vol. I, No. 3 (1931), 302-316.

Because individualism had exalted the individual at the expense of the social collectivity, it had made possible the growth of the philosophy of the totally autonomous individual, the purely rational homo economicus of classical laissez-faire economic thought. Spann categorically rejected this view of man. He rejected liberalism and democracy because they were not grounded in the "true" nature of man, which was social and which craved the enveloping bonds of the community. In the ideal organic community such as Spann envisioned for Austria and Germany, the relationship between individuals and the social whole was a moral rather than a legalistically contractual one. Morality and not the sum of individual self-interests was to be the underlying principle of social interaction in the "true" state. These relationships had their basis in the only true source of individual morality, Spann's category of "total spirituality" (das Gesamtgeistige).¹⁴ Having the same source in the realm of total spirituality, the interests of the individual and the totality were harmoniously fused together, for threats to the well-being of the individual were simultaneously threats to the totality of society. This organic unity of individual and totality effectively precluded the totality's claiming that damage done to the individual had been undertaken in the interest of the totality, for such an action would damage

¹⁴Spann, Der wahre Staat, 46-48.

the totality as well as the individual member of the social body. Despite the clear reliance of universalist social theory on organic theories that subordinated the individual to the collectivity, Spann insisted that in his system it would be possible for reality to "rest in the totality" without in any way being "a threat to the uniqueness of the individual."¹⁵ This rather mystical concept becomes part of a greater unity when the universalistic society is examined. In the ideal state, Spann wrote, economic activity would essentially be of secondary importance because it was "only" the sum-total of material actions. The material aspects of society in the universalist scheme of things exist only to create the proper atmosphere for fruitful moral, religious, and artistic activities. The economic aspect of a society based on universalistic principles thus exists to serve as a concrete basis for the higher aspirations of the social totality, the various spiritual undertakings of its members.¹⁶

In his own day, Spann wrote, the crisis of individualism manifested itself most markedly in the economic problems of capitalism.¹⁷ The crisis of capitalism was as much ideological as material, since capitalism was part of the Ideenkreis of individualism. Capitalism was, in effect, the supreme

¹⁵Ibid., 74-76.

¹⁶Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁷Ibid., 123-124.

manifestation of the spirit of individualism in the material sphere. Historically, capitalism had led to the forces of materialism, economic freedom, and economic equality, all of which Spann viewed very critically. Materialism was the result of the removal of controls from the desires of the average individual; the result was that society invariably placed its principal emphasis and highest value on the achievement of material success as measured in terms of the accumulation of goods. The acceleration of the demand for goods, which, human nature being what it was, would probably be the case in most societies at most periods in history, would ultimately reach the point where all aspects of life would be judged by purely material standards.

Spann especially attacked the major symbol of classical capitalism: the idea of economic freedom. Economic freedom went hand in hand with the exaltation of the autonomy of the individual at the expense of the social collectivity. This view led to the idea of the limited "nightwatchman" state, which not only was not in a position to deal effectively with the evil social repercussions of individualistic capitalism, but was actually at times, particularly during Austria's period of economic expansion in the 1870's, used as a tool to justify the power of the economically "strong" capitalists over the economically "weak" workers.¹⁸ Capitalism, Spann insisted, had a

¹⁸Ibid., 83-85; Friedrich Freiherr von Wieser, Das Gesetz der Macht (Vienna: Verlag von Julius Springer, 1926), 187.

tooth-and-claw ethic all its own, for it posited the victory of the ruthless monopolistic producers over artisans, small-scale producers, retailers, and customers. The competitive ethic of capitalism was essentially a kind of "Machiavellian individualism" that awarded the "palm of victory" to the strong rather than to the "best."¹⁹

Capitalism had proclaimed the doctrine of the equality of economic opportunity, but because of numerous historical factors this operational aspect of economic freedom was never realized in practice and remained in most instances little more than a "formal" element in the ideology of capitalism. Spann pointed out that the shortcomings of capitalism did not lead to a complete rejection of the system because mankind has always been able to live with poverty, and, indeed, simply because "poverty will always be with us."²⁰ Nevertheless, the failure of capitalism to create conditions of economic equality led to serious attacks on the system by those who had suffered from it either materially or morally. The efforts to reform or even to transcend the capitalist system, which included various types of Socialism, the cooperative movement, and the Catholic melioristic doctrines of piecemeal reforms, were all efforts to construct a more meaningful form of society. These anti-capitalist measures were not just negative restrictions on economic freedom but "uncoordinated,

¹⁹ Spann, Der wahre Staat, 125.

²⁰ Ibid., 127.

planless, and insufficient" efforts to erect a modern counterpart to the bonds that had united the various members of society in the corporative order of the middle ages. These movements all tried to capture the essence of social solidarity that Spann held would form the basis for his "true" state. Socialism was a wide-ranging social philosophy that sought to replace the society of capitalism with a social organization somehow based on cooperation rather than competition. The proponents of social reform argued that it would be possible through legislation to protect the weak and helpless members of society; they reasoned that once the legislator had intervened positively, local bodies could look after the tasks of economic self-government. Finally, the cooperative groups tried to protect artisans, small-scale producers, retailers, and customers, all of whom were being subjected to the very greatest of threats to their existences in the era of large-scale capitalism.²¹

Just as he concluded that pure democracy had never existed simply because it was "against the nature of things,"²² so Spann pointed out that a stage of complete capitalism had never been achieved. This was the case because of the continued existence of various pre-capitalist social patterns, attitudes, and institutions, as well as curtailments on economic freedom spawned by the system itself, which included cartels, monopolies, and trade

²¹Ibid., 128-129.

²²Ibid., 115.

unions. Nevertheless, the damage done by capitalism and its entire way of life was, in Spann's view, little short of catastrophic. The evils of capitalism were not superficial, but underlying and fundamental ones, since they led to the very core of the individualistic ethic. Ultimately the failure of capitalism as a truly meaningful basis for social organization could be found in its underlying spiritual and social assumptions. The capacity of capitalism for almost unbounded material productivity was never questioned by Spann; if nothing else, capitalism had the ability to produce huge amounts of high-quality goods. All things taken into account, capitalism could distribute these goods with a considerable degree of fairness. Making exception for the early years of poor working conditions and gross maldistribution of the products of production, capitalism tended to present a good case for itself on purely statistical and quantitative terms.

It was not to the economic workings of capitalism that Spann took exception, but to the moral and aesthetic problems it had created. The crisis of the post-1789 (or even post-Renaissance and Reformation) world lay in the fact that the healthy organic order of the Christian commonwealth of Europe had been destroyed--and nothing of comparable social value had come to take its place. Even the conditional capitalism that had become the European way of life after the middle ages had brought on a great human crisis of dehumanization, total secularization, and insecurity, in sum, an "atomization" of life for

great masses of people in the urban and industrial civilization of the West.

As Spann saw it, the genuine crisis of capitalist society was the atomization and the "externalization" of life it had led to. Capitalism and the individualistic philosophies that supported it had deceived the individual by making him think that he was basically in control of his destiny at all times, when in reality he was often alone and helpless.²³ Capitalism had alienated the workers from society and had made of them an embittered group bent on the total destruction of the existing society. They were now declassed, uprooted, insecure, and unsure of their "true" place in the body of society. These spiritual woes were not confined to the workers. The wealthy also suffered from the general cultural malaise that cast a dark cloud of "insecurity, rootlessness, and insignificance" over people in all stations of life.²⁴

Spann's critique of the "externalization" of life under capitalism was an echo of Adam Müller's longing for a return to the feudal relationship between a person and his property, a relationship that was clear, concrete, and immediate. Müller regarded possessions as extensions of the limbs of the body and described feudalism as the amalgamation of the person and his property. This Romanticist insistence on the need for an "intimate" living

²³ Ibid., 69-70.

²⁴ Ibid., 127.

relationship between property and owner and the contrast between it and the supposedly abstract nature of property relationships under capitalism found its way into the large social system offered by Marx and other "scientific" Socialists.²⁵ In the final analysis, Spann's criticism of capitalism was as much an artistic criticism of the overly rational and "cold" aspects of modern industrial society as it was an indictment of its more concrete shortcomings.

Spann's over-all view of the "best" form of society was clearly enunciated in his major writings, particularly in Der wahre Staat. As he described it, the "true" state existed only in a society whose major emphasis was centered on the growth and increasing realization of the idea of totality (Ganzheit). Indeed, Spann's entire sociological system is called "Ganzheitslehre," the sociology of totality, or even, the sociology of totalitarianism.²⁶ The universalistic "true" state would consist of members who are not independent entities in the classical liberal sense, but who are consciously members of the entire totality. The whole has no existence as such, since it is only in the relationship of the totality and its component parts that the entire social organism exists. The relationship between the whole and its parts is intimate and vital, with one depending on the other for

²⁵Karl Mannheim, "Conservative Thought," in Mannheim, Essays on Sociology and Social Psychology, 104-105.

²⁶Polanyi, "The Essence of Fascism," 364.

sustenance. Ultimately, all that exists does so only as part of a much greater whole.²⁷ Spann's declared goal of presenting a scheme of social organization that would have at its heart the integration of isolated individuals into an organic "total" society was grounded in his view of the reality of society. The economy and society itself are totalities that are to be arranged in a hierarchy of spiritual evaluations. For Spann, the concept of totality is to be seen as the "true seed of living scholarship, learning, knowledge, and science," just as the ideas of separateness and individuality are the "dragon's seeds of false doctrine, in the final analysis, dead knowledge."²⁸

The universalistic society would be organized according to the idea of a functional hierarchy. A "true" society must in the final analysis always be based on the realization that human equality is neither desirable nor within the realm of possibility. In the corporative state of the future, the "true" structural laws of society will take into account the concept of equality among equals and see to it that those who are less spiritually developed are taught to obey their spiritual "betters." Insisting at all times that man is above all else a

²⁷ Spann, Der wahre Staat, 11. Spann's corporative theory was the most elaborate one developed in Austria after Vogelsang's. Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 165 n and 235 n. See also Spann, Der wahre Staat, 195-315, and Spann, Kategorienlehre, 3 and 54.

²⁸ Spann, Tote oder lebendige Wissenschaft, ix.

spiritual being, Spann talked about creating a hierarchical structure of society built up according to a scale of spiritual values which he claimed were absolute and immutable. This system is based on the idea that some men will by nature be higher on the scale of spiritual values than others. Such a scheme would not lead to the disturbing problems of identity-seeking that exist in a liberal and capitalistic society, since in the "true" state each and every individual will belong to a definite social grouping, which in turn will have a distinct and entirely functional role to play in the life of society as a whole. A clearly delineated structure of ranks in which each unit is given its own unique place, both microcosmically and macrocosmically, would thus be established.²⁹

The fundamental laws that were to govern the universalistic society as it moved toward corporativism and "true" sociability from the rubble of the liberal-capitalistic world were to be derived from fundamental concepts of the existence of distinct, absolute, and unvarying qualities, as well as on sociological definitions of the "true" nature of association and hierarchy. First of all, because the component parts of society are not equal, although all are in the final analysis equally indispensable for its survival and development, some of the organs of society would be unequal in relation to others simply because of their very nature. It thus followed that some members of society

²⁹Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 392-394.

would be of more value to the totality than others. As it was in the process of construction and growth, the new organic order of society would more and more be based, not on mechanically arranged, isolated individual atoms, but on larger cooperative units (Gemeinschaften), which, though not centrally controlled, would be hierarchically arranged. Based on the common ties of spiritual mutuality and generally similar professional abilities, these groups, called "estates" (Stände), would of necessity have to be small in size.³⁰

The recognition of the spiritual basis of human activity would require that the Stände be organized on the basis of certain distinctly hierarchical principles. Prior to more specific corporative planning, there would be a more or less latent community of intellectual and spiritual activities divided into several major categories which Spann called the Vor-Stände. Next in the organizational hierarchy came a loosely grouped category of people classified according to their intellectual or material activities without definite or formal organization; this grouping was to be called a Voll-Stand. More definite organizations in the hierarchy of the first stage of the "true" state-in-construction were the groupings known as the zunftiger Stände, which were distinct bodies to be constructed on the basis of the common activities of its members. These units could

³⁰ Spann, Der wahre Staat, 196-197; Spann, Gesellschaftslehre, 123; Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 393-394.

be vertically subdivided, or, if several of them were grouped together, horizontally. At the very apex of this fundamental organizational structure stood the organization of rulers in their ruling capacity, an organ that was called the politischer Stand.

Further subdivisions could be made within the framework of the projected corporative system. The Vor-Stände["] could be divided into three distinct "spiritual communities." First would be the community of those engaged in material activities. Somewhat higher on the scale of spiritual values used as an evaluative yardstick for the entire system was that community whose members were engaged in "spiritual" activities--teachers, professors, and performing artists--but who made no "truly" original contribution to the legacy of the spiritual estate. Capping the spiritual communities would be the group whose members made genuinely original spiritual contributions in the course of their creative activities. In Spann's ideal society the Voll-Stände["] would be divided into the following ranks, listed in ascending order in the functional ladder. Fifth and lowest in the scale would be the manual workers, whose basic social function was regarded as the procurement of the material means necessary for the well-being of the community. Next would come workers of a "higher" type, that is to say, artisans who had definite skills and techniques; this category would also include the "lower" types of intellectual workers--those who performed tasks of an essentially repetitive and uncreative type. This group

would, for example, include workers engaged in building, construction, and the decorative arts. The next highest rank would consist of the creators and "guiding spirits" of the various economic organizations, the leaders of business and industry. Next to the highest category would be the leaders of public organizations, the heads of state bodies, of the army, and of the Church. The highest grouping of all would be the "truly" creative body--that of the leaders of spiritual and creative affairs, the wise, but not necessarily old, men of the organic community.³¹

Spann then went on to define some of the specific aspects that would characterize the community life of each spiritual community in the eventual "true" state. In an organic order the workers would find their own level of community experience by participating in club life and by visiting motion picture performances and other types of shows and parties. Since their "nature" was grounded in semi-technical and repetitive skills, the artisans and lower-level intellectual workers would have access to a more cultured form of daily life based on an interest in art, science, and other significant creative forces. On the qualitative plane, the leaders of business and industry would justify their place in society by their executive-level energy and initiative. Since their place and function is clearly in the realm of action, they do not need to possess any higher spiritual

³¹Spann, Der wahre Staat, 195-315.

values. The high position of the leaders of state, army, and Church life is justified by the fact that their skill consists of administering the institutions of organized society; their function is to provide the basis for a higher social order. The highest group of all, the spiritual leaders, are often free of the specific demands of organized community life. Being above all free and creative individuals, they are only rarely recognized as a social group per se, and certainly never as organized social leaders. The role of the intellectual leader, that of being the creator of new ideas and inventions, by definition makes of him a lonely and often tragic "outsider" who only rarely finds a stable place within a conventional community.³²

The divisions which Spann used for the economic system, the "realm of means," were also put forward as suggestions for a basis for the eventual organization of the Stände. This work was to be done on the basis of the economic tools and methods employed. The three traditional divisions of a society are agriculture, commerce, and manufacturing. Spann's concept of the basic "nature" and character of the occupations can be traced back to Adam Müller's description of agriculture as the conservative, and manufacturing and commerce as the more progressive occupations. They may be regarded as an attempt to return to a stable society and economy, one that can be seen in terms of clearly visible bodies of thought and action. Relative stability

³²Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 392-397.

in this society was to be assured by putting restrictions on property. Private property was to be allowed to remain, but the existing forms of property were to be considerably modified in their relationship to the community as a whole, and, in general, private property was to be subject to increasing social controls over its use. This regulation was to be rational and legal, and not based on emotional factors such as those which had in the past led to unjustified and pointless seizures and control of private property.³³

In essence, Spann proposed three basic forms of property for the corporative society. First of all, private property was to be retained if it served a genuine social function. It was, however, to be subject to strict controls both by the state and the various corporative organs most concerned with the specific forms of private property in question. Most property in the "true" state was, however, not to be privately owned but was to be loaned to the individual by the community. Thus, objects of genuine importance to the well-being of the social body, such as heavy machinery, were only to be held by private individuals in the form of a fief (Lehen), that is to say, they were to be allotted somewhat in the same way as feudal tenures during the middle ages. The individual who held land or other goods under this form of property relationship would have use of the property and the expectation of the community to receive services from the same

³³ Spann, Der wahre Staat, 195-315.

individual. The third type of property would be in the form of direct ownership, control, and operation by local and municipal bodies, corporative organs, and the state itself.

Emphasizing the ideal of stability, Spann held that the economy could be organized in large units dealing with one another. These were to be labor unions on one side and employers' organizations on the other. The anti-individualistic idea of both sides' agreeing to collective bargaining is an indication that fundamental bonds of social unity exist even where there are genuine conflicts of interest. The relations between the various estates, as well as internal economic relations within the separate corporative bodies, are to be based on industry-wide contracts that will eventually prove to be one of the keys to the proper day-to-day functioning of the entire corporative structure. These contracts would deal with a large segment of the economy in formulating wages, hours, and working conditions. From such basically economic issues the agreement could be extended to more fundamental social issues, such as the regulation of the prices of goods produced under the terms of the agreement. From these beginnings at worker-employer cooperation, the professional bodies would be strengthened as organic groups that could, and would, shape all aspects of community existence. The example of cooperation would develop its own momentum and would in time lead to other forms of cooperation between employers and employees, such as the training of apprentices, cooperative buying, and other types of activity that would benefit an industry as a whole.

In order to ensure stability, Spann made several suggestions regarding the "slowing down" of certain types of economic activity. The measures already mentioned, by making economic life more self-contained in readily manageable "natural" units, would tend to decrease trade, banking, and stock-market activities and would stimulate the more directly productive activities of the economy. The weakening of the peripheral economic activities of the individualistic system would remove the opportunities for almost totally unproductive "parasitism" that Spann felt were inherent in a liberal-capitalistic society. He unequivocally argued in favor of the idea of social and economic planning, pointing out that planning is absolutely essential for the success of any large-scale industrial enterprise. Planning would not be synonymous with bureaucratic inefficiency. In order to prevent total ossification, the economic estates would have to be deprived of their legal powers to control their own activities; this would permit "latent" competition to continue.³⁴

Social and economic flexibility within the relatively stable social order of the "true" state would be assured by the strengthening of autonomous family-sized artisan enterprises. Also to be allowed a free existence outside the bonds of the corporative organizations were to be the areas of trade, finance, and banking. By retaining a "free-moving" capitalistic element within the more settled elements of the national economy, Spann hoped to provide

³⁴ Ibid.

the dynamism and flexibility of enterprise necessary for any viable economy to function over an extended period of time. Spann did not expect his system to eliminate the possibility, or even the probability, of recurring economic crises. Because economics was a form of life, and because the fundamental movement of life always takes place in waves, depressions would come and go. They were to be accepted as an inevitable part of any kind of social reality. The all-embracing nature of the universalistic theory of society would, however, make possible a system of regulation and stabilization. For example, the industry-wide contract was a comprehensive social mechanism for softening the impact of most major economic crises.³⁵

The future of the European economic system was in the balance, Spann insisted as he wrote in the 1920's. The individualistic capitalism of the nineteenth century had shown itself to be bankrupt in that it no longer provided deep or meaningful social ideals for which men could live the whole of their lives.³⁶ Just as capitalism was based on an erroneous view of the nature of man, socialism too had erred in proclaiming the equality of man and complete economic democracy as the final goals of society. Spann regarded the communist program of economic and social egalitarianism as fundamentally a perversion of the worst elements

³⁵Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 235-240; Spann, Der wahre Staat, 277.

³⁶Polanyi, "The Essence of Fascism," 363.

of individualistic thought. As an ideal to be realized in the real world, economic democracy was for Spann a despotic and barbarous idea. Having ruled out communism as a workable social and economic solution for the future, Spann and his pupils came to the conclusion that capitalism would also lead to more and more dead ends in the future. Even the limited demands of workers for participation in management would be opposed by the managerial class. The basic workings of the capitalist order were fundamentally opposed to the idea of social autonomy for the producers. At the same time, the capitalists would apply pressure to keep the workers from ever inducing the government to regulate the production or distribution of the social products of work.

Austria and Europe would have no future assured them if they continued to live under the "barbaric, brutal, and bloody"³⁷ rule of liberal capitalism, or in attempting to carry out the unrealizable Utopias of economic democracy. The only way out of the terrible economic, social, and cultural dilemma of modern European society, Spann said, was to build a "true" state on the basis of the systematic development of the new corporative and class organizations and combinations that had begun to transform the capitalist society and economy in such nations as Fascist

³⁷ Ibid.

Italy.³⁸

Spann made clear that the social and economic basis of the corporative order would in the final analysis be dominated by an over-all organic view of life. He saw idealistic and anti-materialistic philosophy as the heart of his social system. At all points, the ideological enemy was empirical philosophy. In its broadest sense, empiricism included every sort of naturalism, sensualism, relativism, nominalism, and agnosticism. Empiricism regarded experience not as determined or given as a whole, but in its various pieces and atomistic component parts. By denying "truth" it led to relativism, and by denying what Spann held to be a super-sensual reality it led to solipsism and atomism. Finally, by denying the soul it became associationism, and by rejecting the idea of a social reality that went beyond the needs and desires of the individual it became utilitarianism. Founded in its modern form by Comte, utilitarian sociological thought tended to regard social institutions and the state itself as mechanisms set up by individuals, by contract, for mutual material aid. The family, the economy and the Church were similarly viewed

³⁸Walter Heinrich, "Wirtschaftsdemokratie oder ständische Wirtschaftsordnung," Nationalwirtschaft, Vol. III, No. 3 (1930), 239-245; Walter Heinrich, "Dottrina fascista dello stato e dottrina universale organica," Stato (May, 1932), 340-349. Ernst von Salomon has described Walter Heinrich as "the Peter among Spann's apostles, his closest colleague, friend, and confident /sic/, a pale, thin, fanatical man, incredibly learned, a wild and deadly intellectual." See Ernst von Salomon, Fragebogen /The Questionnaire/, translated by Constantine FitzGibbon (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1955), 95.

in a utilitarian light as external and instrumental structures existing for the meeting of certain basic material wants. Empiricism sooner or later led to the belief that the economic and social system was paramount, superior to the state and culture. The economic ends of the individual became all-important social goals, while the mechanically causal laws of economic development were seen as the fundamental motive force of society and history itself. All of these ideas were clear proof for Spann that empirical and individualistically oriented philosophies were phenomena that went hand-in-hand with cultural decadence as well as with moral and political enfeeblement.

Idealistic philosophy was defined by Spann as the opposite of empirical philosophy in all respects. He pointed out that it regarded objects as self-determined, and that it accepted the fundamental reality of the super-individual aspects of society. For example, idealistic philosophy generally accepted the Platonic world of ideas and the concept of an objective spirit. It set up "objectivism" and universalism against the various philosophies of individualism and atomism. Social phenomena seen from the vantage point of idealistic philosophy become part of an over-all pattern that is intelligent, teleological, and fundamentally spiritual. Economic activities are conditioned not by individual self-interest, but by the idea of values as intimate and meaningfully real social facts. The economic order is thus to be seen as a system of means regulated for cohesive social ends. In opposition to the views of historical materialism, the economic

system is always to be instrumental and subordinate to the state and to culture in all its forms.³⁹

Just as his criticism of modern sociology was aimed at what he considered was its excessive materialism and dependence on fundamentally superficial economic categories, Spann's theory of knowledge rejected the idea of understanding and perception as a relationship of subject and object. Instead, perception was held to be "an inner light, the actualization of the Idea in ourselves." Knowledge was thus to be seen as a "form of existence, a life process, and not merely a matter of abstract differentiation."⁴⁰ Ultimately, knowledge as a social phenomenon was grounded in the complex interrelationships of society itself. The value system of society is to be found embodied in the "all-encompassing social organization" known as the state.⁴¹ To point out that this development toward an acceptance of all-embracing social bodies is both inevitable and necessary, Spann made clear that many of the often materialistic and utilitarian sociological assumptions of his own day must eventually surrender to a faith

³⁹ Spann, "Die Grundentscheidungen in die Gesellschaftsphilosophie," 221-228.

⁴⁰ Othmar Spann, Philosophenspiegel. Die Hauptlehren der Philosophie begrifflich und lehrsgeschichtlich dargestellt (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer Verlag, 1933), 10; Othmar Spann, Schöpfungsgang des Geistes. Die Wiederherstellung des Idealismus auf allen Gebieten der Philosophie (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1928), 285, 533 and 552.

⁴¹ Spann, Gesellschaftslehre, 252.

in social unity and cohesion, for every universalistic epoch was essentially an "era of de-rationalization."⁴² Summing up the theoretical philosophical basis of his beliefs, Spann defined the life-creating final and all-encompassing totality outlined in the hierarchies of his theory of categories, the "primal totality" (Urganzheit).

According to Spann, the ideal society would have a minimum of centralized government control and a maximum of social interrelatedness. The liberty to be free from others, the kind of desire for freedom that was glorified by the individualistic school of thought, was categorically rejected by universalistic sociology. One of the basic essences of humanity, as Spann saw it, was the desire of the individual human being, as a social animal (socius), to seek the company of others and to work with them for the growth of society in general. The governing ideal of society cannot be based on the liberal concept of absolute freedom. Particularly when viewed as a conscious attempt to make the various parts of society correlate to form a "living" social body, the ideal of justice is to be seen as the fundamental ideological basis for the "true" state and society of the future. Justice required that all members of society recognized and performed the functions they were best suited for. Above all, justice demanded that social tasks be undertaken by those best fitted to execute them. The

⁴²Spann, Der wahre Staat, 98.

idea underlying this conception of justice is clearly one of social peace and order, of everyone and everything in its "natural" place. Any meaningful sense of community in a cor-
porative society must be grounded on the great variations of human talents and interests that clearly exist. Using these social norms as a yardstick, peace, harmony, and order would be the order of the day, since every person would find his own niche and level of competence and responsibility. But in his own day, Spann lamented, these ideas would first have to overcome democratic and socialist ideas, both of which were fundamen-
tally individualistic--and wrong.

Society could make no greater mistake than to think of nothing but placing the majority in control of political, social, and economic power. In everyday practice this would invariably mean that the morally and intellectually "lower" individual would rule over their "natural" superiors, the former being in a very small minority at all times. Majority rule, that is to say, democracy of various kinds, would mean the crude mechaniza-
tion and often vindictively motivated levelling down of both the material aspects of society and the ethical tone of political life. The triumph of democratic majority rule would in effect exclude "true" values from the process of politics by means of imposing on the leadership class the great pressures of parlia-
mentary interest groups and more direct plebiscitary involvement by the electorate itself. In effect, Spann wrote off democratic government and society as leading to more and more intellectual,

moral, and social levelling and mediocrity.⁴³

Individualism, mechanization, and equality, the motivating principles of democracy, were for Spann inadequate ideological bases for the creation and growth of a "true" state and society. Those who demand of the state an element of transcendental meaning and spirituality cannot believe in democracy.⁴⁴ For the state to become an organic spiritual and cultural entity, a Kulturstaat, the ideologies of liberalism and democracy will of necessity have to be superseded by the sociology of universalism. One barrier to this realization of a more organic state is the slavish reliance of democrats on the parliamentary system, which Spann insisted had clearly failed because of its glorification of mechanical procedures over essential social laws. The often glaring incompetence and venality of legislators was compounded by the lack of technical knowledge on the part of their constituents. Parliamentary rule by political parties and their bosses was an expression of relativism and a mechanistic reliance on quantitative rather than qualitative social categories. Spann traced this emphasis on relativism back to the revolution of the "restless" French in 1789 and the introduction of these ideas into Central Europe in 1848. Ever since this time the masses of people no longer knew what the

⁴³Spann, Der wahre Staat, 107-112.

⁴⁴Ibid., 116-119.

"true" state and society was; as a consequence, political life had "plunged from one abyss to another." The final result of the triumph of these ideas had been "democratic anarchy here, Bolshevism there."⁴⁵ Not only was the situation tragic enough; it would get worse. Since there was no central spiritual theme around which society was centering its activities, popular slogans of the day would often enable the professional democratic politician to over-simplify and even distort the central "truths" of complex social issues. This situation would invariably develop a logic all its own, and the various pressures at work would lead to the increasing radicalization of political leadership in a democracy.⁴⁶

At least in his more theoretical writings, Spann went considerably beyond traditional Romanticist political theory by attempting to create a situation that would lead to the eventual disappearance in his "true" state of the direct economic functions of the state, as well as the fading away of the powers of the political territorial assembly. At the end of the "organic" process of the gradual surrender of its purely political responsibilities, the state should ideally reserve control only

⁴⁵Othmar Spann, Hauptpunkte der universalistischen Staatsauffassung (2nd ed., Berlin and Vienna: Erneuerungs-Verlag, 1931), 20-22.

⁴⁶Walter Heinrich, Staat und Wirtschaft (3rd ed., Berlin and Vienna: Erneuerungs-Verlag, 1933), 21-22; Spann, Der wahre Staat (1931 ed.), 87-92.

over cultural activities like education, religion, and law. So that the state would be free from the corroding influences of material pressures, the Stände["] would eventually absorb most of the legal and administrative responsibilities of the traditional political machinery. In time, the same development would hold true for the various other bureaucratic agencies of the government. Both the political state and the Stand system would over a period of time fuse and become united in a corporative chamber at the apex of social power and prestige. At this stage of corporative development the conventional political legislature based on political parties and territorial constituencies would have disappeared because its powers and functions had been "naturally" and "organically" taken over by the single representative body of the new social order. Called the Ständehaus["] (house of estates or corporative bodies), this institution will unite and represent in one general representative organ the representatives of all the different organizations of employers and workers in agriculture, industry, and trade.⁴⁷

In the mature "true" state the advent of political decentralization would lead to a rejuvenation of local community life. Civic pride and local spirit would grow as local problems more and more came under the jurisdiction, moral as well as strictly legal, of the various community bodies. Over a period of time,

⁴⁷ Spann, Der wahre Staat, 284-290.

this "organic" process of returning responsibility for the solution of essentially local problems to the social bodies of the locality that is most vitally concerned would develop its own momentum. Instead of entrusting these problems to the often unconcerned and politically-appointed bureaucratic specialists working for the democratic political state structure, the problems of each community and industry could in most cases be handled by those people who were on intimate terms with the specific problems that confronted them daily.

The development of political and managerial decentralization would lead to a growing degree of civic consciousness and pride. More specifically, this situation would allow for the growth and prosperity of small enterprises. The return of the skills and ideals of an artisan class would bring about a renewal of the pride of workmanship, an attitude that had almost totally died in the days of industrialization. Spann's sketch of a revival of artisan skills and attitudes in his plan for a "true" state and society was a clear reflection of his interest in attempting to emphasize what he felt to be the qualitative aspects of traditional values of life and work, as opposed to the statistical and mathematical quantitative emphasis which he associated with much of the modern liberal-democratic view of social reality. Seen in historical perspective, this emphasis on specialization as a qualitative good, as opposed to the notion of one man performing several, and even many, social

functions can be traced back to the strongly hierarchical views of Plato.⁴⁸

For the universalist school the state was the actual concretization of the idea of the good, for it was clearly "an organism of a higher kind,"⁴⁹ being the highest form of human social achievement. Although Spann was a religious man who regarded religion as a super-individual objective phenomenon rather than as an "external" experience not relevant to society,⁵⁰ he did not generally use the often fundamentally religious arguments that were used by the early nineteenth century Romanticists to justify the supreme power of the state. Furthermore, the Romanticists often concentrated on justifying already existing regimes and social relationships, whereas Spann was painting, in broadly impressionistic strokes, the fundamental outlines of an ideal society that did not yet exist in the real world. Fundamentally, Spann argued for the omnipotence and omnicompetence of the state from the point of view of the justification of its power as the supreme manifestation of the idea of the good in history. Spann argued from the idea of history as a process, which was based on the Hegelian philosophy of history,⁵¹ which

⁴⁸Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 396-397.

⁴⁹Spann, The History of Economics, 63-64.

⁵⁰Othmar Spann, "Individualistische und universalistische Religionssoziologie," Schmollers Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft, Vol. LIV, No. 5 (1930), 941-946.

⁵¹Kolnai, The War Against the West, 127.

went beyond traditional religion in being as much secular as it was idealistic and mystical.

In the final analysis, the majesty (Hoheit) of the state needs no external sanction, not even that of the Church or religion, Spann explained. The state exists on its own terms, and it makes its own dynamism. Although as a social phenomenon religion will be one of the major underlying spiritual underpinnings of the "true" state, the state's interests will always come before those of the institutional upholder of religion, the Church.⁵² Although his philosophy usually had a distinct religious and metaphysical tinge, Spann's concept of the state was almost exclusively a derivation from Hegelianism.

Repudiating all of the essentially quantitative and materialistic explanations of economic life that he believed were simply manifestations in economic thought of the individualistic view of reality, Spann viewed the relationship between economics and the other arts and sciences in an essentially dynamic and totalistic manner. He rejected the idea of economics as a separate scientific discipline sufficient unto itself. According to the universalistic viewpoint economics was to be regarded as the sole science whose end was not an end in itself but only a means to other ends. For Spann, economic doctrine could not be a valid

⁵²Ibid., 248. The state is an estate, "the highest estate, that is to say, the director and judge of all other estates." Spann, Hauptpunkte der universalistischen Staatsauffassung, 12.

expression of human desires and experiences until it became linked with the "great fundamental outlooks on society and life"⁵³ that distinguished a sociological theory of society based on universalistic principles from one that was purely mechanistic and utilitarian in scope.

Universalistic economic thought centered on man and society. Whereas the various individualistic schools of economics-- Ricardian, marginal utility, mathematical, and Marxian--all conceived of economic life as being directed by blind, mechanistic, and rigid laws of inevitable historical necessity, universalistic thought rejected the idea of economics as a deterministic force over which man had no control. Spann held that economics could be understood only in terms of a complete awareness of underlying social and historical conditions and philosophies. As part of a tradition in German thought that can be traced back at least to Fichte and List in the early nineteenth century, Spann insisted that economic activity should be seen as a vital but at the same time subordinate element in the totality of social activity, always to be improved as a means for fundamentally social ends. Thus, when the economic system of any given society becomes humanly insufferable, it is not because of any "laws" of historical inevitability but because of the ideologically-grounded inadequacies of the social order. Using this idea

⁵³ Spann, The History of Economics, 13.

as a point of departure, it follows that, when necessary, the productive structure of any given society can be rebuilt to suit human needs and ideals. Ultimately, economic life must be viewed as having functions higher than the satisfaction of "mere" material wants. Spann insisted that in the final analysis a coming to grips with both the practical and idealistic aspects of economics would reveal heretofore hidden human ingenuity and resources of genuine practicality and would lead to a greater intimacy with the world of nature. Ultimately, then, Spann's economics had a social and aesthetic basis.⁵⁴

In the "true" state and society leadership would be based on the idea of rule by an elite of intellect, energy, and accomplishment. The idea of rule by a small group of "obviously" superior human beings over the great mass of ignorant, inert, and incompetent people was given a great impetus in the late nineteenth century by the prophetic writings of such men as Nietzsche.⁵⁵ In the years after World War I various European

⁵⁴Othmar Spann, "Fluch und Segen der Wirtschaft im Urteile der verschiedenen Lehrbegriffe," Jahrbücher für Nationalökonomie und Statistik, Vol. CXXXIV, No. 4 (April, 1931), 656-672. Spann assigned to the state a crucial role in economic life, since it was to be responsible for the creation and maintenance of "capital of higher order" in the form of laws and directing agencies which were to be the indispensable means of economic activity. Othmar Spann, "Der individualistische und der universalistische Begriff der Weltwirtschaft," Weltwirtschaftliches Archiv, Vol. XXX, No. 2 (October, 1929), 113-121.

⁵⁵Ludwig Trönte, "Elitebildung durch agonale Auslese." Nietzsches Gedanken zu einer Rangordnung (Vienna: Forum Humanum, 1958), passim.

Rightist political movements emphasized the idea of leadership and rule by elites. This was particularly true of Italian Fascism.⁵⁶ Echoing these ideas of his times, Spann insisted that society would not find a redeeming principle until it allowed "the best" rather than the representatives of the many to rule society, rather than just to manage and regulate.⁵⁷ This would be perfectly just, since, just as the "cobbler rules in the sphere of cobblership," the corporative estate of the political rulers (Staatstand) would concentrate on the actual problems of mastery, of ruling wisely and justly. Under such an arrangement, there would be a "new form of equality--an equality between human beings who really are equal among themselves," all having the same general skills within a given area of competence. The "rule of the best" would be institutionalized in the new voting system, which would be essentially qualitative rather than quantitative in that "votes would no longer be counted; they would be weighed." In essence, the best form of state and the supreme goal of politics would have to be found in the creation of a society that allowed for the "rule of the best."⁵⁸

A scarcely disguised contemptuous disdain of the great mass of the people is found in such statements of Spann's as that

⁵⁶Hellmuth Fischer, Das Eliteprinzip des Faschismus (Emsdetten i. W.: H. & J. Lechte Verlag, 1935), passim.

⁵⁷Spann, Der wahre Staat, 163 and 274.

⁵⁸Ibid., 163; Kolnai, The War Against the West, 161.

"the great mass of people are merely united in the pool of sensual and vital life," and that they express their "fabric of urges" and "vegetative life . . . in public houses, at vulgar home parties, at popular amusements, and in cinemas."⁵⁹ In contrast to the passions of the mob there would stand the exceptional men, the born leaders, the rare intellectuals with crystal-clear minds and pure hearts. An ascetic morality would distinguish the rulers from the ruled. In an organic society inimical to individualism and the pursuit of private interests, the most important positions would be held by those men whose intelligence and high moral sense allowed them to measure up to the high standards demanded of their positions. The high intelligence and noble character of the rulers would make it possible for them to live in the essentially spiritual and ascetic atmosphere of loneliness and supreme responsibility that was theirs, and theirs alone.⁶⁰

Although work in the "true" state is a necessary part of social action, it is a "lower" activity. Thus the claims of Marxism that the proletariat will forge a new epoch of historical development are false both qualitatively and quantitatively, since it is an argument based not on historical and social value but almost entirely on "mere numbers."⁶¹ Indeed, as Spann tells us,

⁵⁹Quoted in Kolnai, The War Against the West, 96.

⁶⁰Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 395-396.

⁶¹Kolnai, The War Against the West, 340.

"it is not work, but leadership (Führerschaft) that ennobles."⁶² Spann saw the corporative leader of his ideal society as a man far superior to the politicians and capitalist captains of industry of the liberal-democratic era. Within each Stand there would arise a "natural" all-around leader (Lebensführer). He would in many ways resemble an idealized medieval knightly squire or lord of the manor who was all at once a judge, administrator, and military figure. The same general abilities were to be found in the guild and municipal corporation heads who were at the same time political leaders and military commanders. Spann lamented the fact that both the theory and practice of this form of heroic multi-purpose leadership was almost "totally removed" from his own age, which he characterized as being "formalized, specialized, and bureaucratized."⁶³

In the final analysis, the political leaders of the corporative state are to be in a position of power and prestige so as to be able to ask "unconditional obedience" of the members of the social body at all times.⁶⁴ Such a society must count on strong leadership and heroic values. Spann believed that a great and heroic personality (Staatsheld) could put his personal stamp on centuries of historical development.⁶⁵ The ideal political leader

⁶²Spann, Hauptpunkte der universalistischen Staatsauffassung, 21.

⁶³Spann, Der wahre Staat, 236.

⁶⁴Kolnai, The War Against the West, 389.

⁶⁵Spann, Hauptpunkte der universalistischen Staatsauffassung, 21.

in times of great crisis would have to be both a statesman and a warrior. Using these "heroic" criteria as a yardstick, Spann held that Metternich was not to be seen as a great statesman because of his lack of soldierly traits.⁶⁶ This emphasis on the ideals of strong leadership, obedience, and hierarchical structure became more and more central to Spann's system over the years. This overriding concern for order and social stability, almost an obsession at times, is reflected in a doctoral dissertation viewing the caste system of India in a highly favorable light (!) that was written under Spann's supervision in his advanced seminar at the University of Vienna.⁶⁷

Spann's increasing concern with social peace, order, and stability as ends in themselves is at least a partial indication of the hardening of universalism into an ideology of peace and order above all else. In essence, the only group that could speak for the entire nation under such a system would be the leading corporative organ, the estate of the political leaders. This estate, the politischer Stand, would include both secular and religious leaders. In spite of the elaborate provisions for political decentralization and organizational dynamism which Spann attempted to work into his blueprint for a "true" corporative society based on organic principles, operatively it was still an

⁶⁶Kolnai, The War Against the West, 418.

⁶⁷Alfred Geiger, "Grundlagen und Aufbau der indischen Gemeinschaftsordnung" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Vienna, 1934), cited in ibid., 384-386 and 690.

autocratic regime that would have absolute control over its subjects. When all of its disparate elements were taken into account, Othmar Spann's wahre Staat appeared to be disconcertingly similar in its theoretical structure to many another "Romantic autocracy"⁶⁸ that had been offered as a panacea for the problems that had plagued Europe since the last decades of the eighteenth century. Deeply disturbed by the fundamental trends of his times, Spann attempted in the 1920's and 1930's personally to intervene in the political affairs of Central Europe in order to implement some of his ideas in the world of concrete events. Spann tried to overcome one of the central problems of intellectual history, that of the transformation of ideas into historical facts. It is to this sequence of events of Spann's activities in the real world of politics that this study will now turn.

⁶⁸Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 240.

Chapter III. Spann and the Real World of Politics

The Vienna of 1919 presented a depressing spectacle to the young people who in 1914 had lived in a world of security and relative certitude. Many conservative and nationalistic intellectuals in Germany and Austria felt that the "German spirit" had not been endangered to such a degree in centuries. It was being threatened by the ideological attacks from the West (parliamentary democracy and mass rule) and the ideological offensive from the East (revolutionary Bolshevism and social leveling).¹ Returning from the often unifying experiences of trench warfare, the young men of the war generation desired a new society for the postwar world. They wanted to help in the building up of a "true" state and society that would unify all classes in an organic national community. In one way or another these ideas on the need for the creation of a unifying state and society all derived from the fundamental concepts that Othmar Spann offered in his popular "sociology" lectures at the University of Vienna.²

Unlike those studies done for modern mass political movements, a sociological analysis of the nature of the adherents of Spann's

¹Johann Plenge, Durch Umsturz zum Aufbau. Eine Rede an Deutschlands Jugend (Münster: E. Obertüschen's Buchhandlung Adolf Schultze, 1918), 37-38.

²Guido Zernatto, Die Wahrheit über Österreich (New York and Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co.; Alliance Book Corporation, 1938), 77 and 115-117.

ideas remains to be done.³ His thinking undoubtedly attracted some people from the strata of society that gave the radical Right its strength in postwar Germany. War, revolution, and inflation had brought ruin and despair to large segments of the formerly secure middle classes. The young men of this period were particularly bitter, since they not only felt unwanted by the society around them, but also had taken the step of breaking with the ideals of their fathers. They had rejected both the monarchical past and the republican present. Above all, they despaired of anything of value ever arising from the situation as they found it. Expecting "something" to come along that would not be "polluted" by democratic parliamentarianism or Marxian class-consciousness, they felt themselves to be both spiritually and materially dispossessed and often tended to think of themselves as "seekers" after a glorious new order of society.⁴

³A useful introduction to the sociology of modern political movements is William Kornhauser, The Politics of Mass Society (New York: The Free Press, 1959). Specific studies include Gabriel A. Almond et al., The Appeals of Communism (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1954); E. B. Ashton /pseud., Ernst Basch/, The Fascist. His State and His Mind (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1937); and Daniel Lerner et al., The Nazi Elite (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1951).

⁴Helmut Franke, "Der deutsche Faschismus," in Karl Landauer and Hans Honegger (eds.), Internationaler Faschismus. Beiträge über Wesen und Stand der faschistischen Bewegung und über den Ursprung ihrer leitenden Ideen und Triebkräfte (Karlsruhe: G. Braun Verlag, 1928), 52.

Many of the students and intellectuals of Central Europe found it difficult to accept the realities of a highly competitive industrialized society. Although this attitude was already in existence by the beginning of the twentieth century, it was greatly exacerbated by the Austrian economic crisis of the 1920's, which made many university students and graduates socially superfluous. These "academic proletarians" were discontented with, and intensely hostile to, the society that seemed to them to hold out so little hope for the future.⁵ Probably more than any other part of Austrian society, this group of often poverty-stricken intellectuals was the first sub-culture to be receptive to the ideas of Othmar Spann.

Particularly hard hit by the collapse of the empire and the inflation that followed were the free professions and the former imperial civil servants, who were the backbone of Austria's urban middle class. Living for the most part in Vienna, this group, which had before 1918 been an intellectual and administrative elite, was now powerless and poverty-stricken. They have with justice been called the "real losers" of World War I in Austria.⁶ This professional class was caught in a squeeze in the early post-war years by the working class from below and the numerically small but economically, politically, and often socially powerful

⁵Joseph A. Schumpeter, Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy (3rd ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 152-153.

⁶Bauer, Die "österreichische Revolution, 207.

group of "pushy" profiteers (Schieber) who were now above them on the new social ladder of republican Austria. In the throes of despair, many of these displaced professionals and bureaucrats felt themselves to be attracted to conservative and Romanticist political ideals, including those of Othmar Spann, whose book Der wahre Staat had been published in Germany in 1921. Although it is probably a simplification of the social forces involved in the shift from social discontent to ideological commitment, it is obvious that the social roots of this phenomenon are to be found in the collapse of the old Austrian professional elite and the subsequent alienation of this group from the ideals of republicanism. There is thus clearly some value in the statement of the Social Democratic leader Otto Bauer that the popularity of Spann's ideas represented the "flight into the Romanticist ideal of a corporative state of a bourgeois intelligentsia ruined by currency devaluation."⁷

If the preconditions for the acceptance of his ideas by certain discontented elements of Austrian society already existed, it is also clear that Spann's exposition of his thinking also aided in the success of the diffusion of these same ideas. His teaching at the University of Vienna was an unqualified success.⁸

⁷ Ibid., 211.

⁸ Letter of December 16, 1965, from Kurt von Schuschnigg to the author; Frederick D. Rodeck, "Othmar Spann, 1878-1950," American Sociological Review, Vol. XV, No. 6 (December, 1950), 803.

Spann's system, claiming to be as "large" and as all-encompassing as the philosophy of dialectical materialism, was a godsend for many of the young intellectuals of the period who did not accept any of the various forms of Marxism and yet sought a totalistic philosophy. Practically reigning as an uncrowned intellectual sovereign at the University of Vienna, Spann took under his tutelage practically all of the politically involved students who were not receptive to Marxian or liberal-democratic ideas. Although it was the Viennese students who were the first group to come under his influence, Spann's ideas eventually reached members of the older generation who, although generally more hard-headed, cynical, and wary of ideal schemes of social order, were also already receptive to the basic tenor of thought that the Spannian Ganzheitslehre reflected.⁹

Spann's effectiveness as a teacher and propagandist was due both to the social crisis of the times and his very great gifts as a spokesman for his own ideas. Spann was seen by one of his most famous disciples, Ernst von Salomon, as a "small, thin man with the head of an actor," a man who could easily be characterized as a "strange mixture of ascetic scholar and cunning politician." Von Salomon went on to say that Spann made a profound impression with a face crossed with "lines of mimicry" and with piercing, penetrating eyes that were the most memorable features of a man

⁹ Wandruszka, "Österreichs politische Struktur," 335-337.

and teacher who, if he had no affectations, could only be seen as a fascinating personality because his seeming absence of pose was undoubtedly "the hallmark of the highest histrionic talent." For Von Salomon, Spann resembled many a worldly-wise Catholic cleric in his "admixture of scholarship, politics, and histrionics."¹⁰

Lecturing at the University of Vienna, Spann used the largest of the University's lecture halls and was usually greeted by a "deafening, thunderous ovation." Von Salomon sat "enthralled" listening to Spann lecture on social economy. On one side of him sat a general wearing the uniform of the Austrian army, and on the other a girl wearing the national clothing of Bohemia. Spann's influence on the Viennese students was "formidable" because of his "outstanding qualities as an excellent and inspiring teacher."¹¹ His classes and lectures at the University of Vienna showed him to be a master lecturer, a scholar who could first give a very sympathetic account of various theories and schools of thought, and then proceed to demolish them totally, replacing them with his own "vastly improved" ideas. Von Salomon was only one of many young Austrian and German intellectuals who, caught in the "general malaise" of the times, occupied their time

¹⁰Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 92.

¹¹Letter of December 16, 1965, from Kurt von Schuschnigg to the author; Schumpeter, History of Economic Analysis, 855, 1139-1140 and 1154.

exploring the possibilities of smashing the grim present and creating "something better." ¹²

Ernst von Salomon can be looked upon as a "typical" disciple of Spann in that he lived through, and was deeply stirred by, one of the most dramatic and revolutionary periods of European history. Born in 1902, his secure German middle class upbringing was shattered by the harsh realities of war on the eastern front, where he served in a Freikorps unit. The postwar world did not serve to calm Von Salomon's restless spirit, and he became involved in political violence which culminated in 1922 in the assassination of Walther Rathenau, the German Foreign Minister-- a crime in which he was involved and for which he was sent to prison for five years.¹³ Von Salomon lived through both the Weimar and Nazi periods as novelist, editor, journalist, and amateur scholar. His ideas, particularly as they weave in and out of his novels, are intensely emotional and ultimately derive their intellectual sustenance from the Romanticist and Hegelian conviction that the community is much more than just the sum total of its individual components. Von Salomon was a conservative revolutionist in that he desired the restoration of the

¹²Letter of December 16, 1965, from Kurt von Schuschnigg to the author.

¹³"Emil Julius Gumbel, Berthold Jacob, and Ernst Falck, "Verräter verfallen der Feme." Opfer/Morder/Richter, 1919-1929 57 and 70-73.

essences of old values and social institutions, if necessary by violent and revolutionary means.

The conservative revolutionists were mainly intellectuals who felt out of place and unsure of themselves in a highly complex and rationalized society. They desired a return to a "deep" feeling of sociality (Bindung), a sense of wholeness or organic interaction (Ganzheit), and, above all else, social unity (Einheit). This basic reconstruction of Germanic society would only take place after various deleterious foreign influences had been expelled from the national body. The indigenous and uniquely German feeling for social unity that Von Salomon and Spann believed would have to be resurrected before any meaningful social reconstruction could take place had, they felt, been destroyed by the coming of "foreign" ideas into Germany.¹⁴ The basic problem of the times, the splintering of the will of the people into many bickering political parties, had been brought on primarily by the growth of the idea of parliamentarianism. Parliamentarianism, and with it the various democratic and egalitarian ideas of the French revolution, had not grown on German soil but were instead to be regarded as dangerous and unworkable imported systems that would, and in fact had, brought disunity, internal strife, and impotence to Germanic Central Europe.¹⁵

¹⁴Andrew G. Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon: A Study in Frustrated Conservatism," The South Atlantic Quarterly, Vol. LVI, No. 2 (April, 1957), 236-237.

¹⁵Sontheimer, Antidemokratisches Denken, 191 and 252.

The conservative revolutionists, including Von Salomon and Spann, tended to regard their own era with contempt, insisting that it was little more than a chaotic interregnum between the old unified culture and the new Germanic organic civilization that they were certain would soon arise on the rubble of a bankrupt society. Emerging as a way of life that was almost totally without any redeeming human qualities, modern society fared very badly in Von Salomon's novels. The vulgar and decadent culture of materialism had led to the destruction of an organic order that gave meaning to the lives of all of its various members. Above all, the West was to be blamed for the collapse of the old order. Western ideas had brought out the worst aspects of German social and intellectual development. The revolution that would halt this trend of decay and social dissolution would not be predicated on the idea of a quickening of progressive movement toward a distant but ultimately attainable goal. Instead, it would mean a return to an earlier period of history, one that had been organically "healthy" until it succumbed to fundamentally corrupt ideas and institutions.¹⁶ In effect, the conservative revolutionists asked for radical surgery on the social body. Once this had taken place, they hastened to add, the organic nature of man's place in society would once more allow for healthy and natural social development.¹⁷

¹⁶Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon," 238.

¹⁷Mohler, Die konservative Revolution, passim.

The society that Von Salomon dreamed of in the early 1930's was conceived of as being fundamentally hierarchical and authoritarian. It was to be above the demands of the "selfish" masses who had been seduced by the egalitarian and mass-democratic promises of both nationalist and Socialist thought. With this vision in mind, Von Salomon went to Vienna in 1932 in order to study with Othmar Spann at the Sociological Institute of the University of Vienna. Living at the time in the south of France when he was urged by Spann to study the theory of universalism in Vienna, Von Salomon was rather dubious of going to a city on the brink of civil war; the hardened journalist in Von Salomon saw in Spann's odd handwriting "a small child who was top of his orthography class . . . or . . . a retired equerry."¹⁸ At this point Spann and Von Salomon had known each other only from their writings. The German novelist and political adventurer was not only invited to Vienna by the now famous Austrian professor, but was also sent a draft for 10,000 francs in order to be able to liquidate several outstanding debts and purchase a train ticket to Vienna.¹⁹ Von Salomon decided to accept the invitation. He

¹⁸Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 90-91.

¹⁹Ibid. The sources of Spann's apparently considerable income have been hinted at by several of his contemporaries. German heavy industry was apparently highly favorable to some of his ideas, which found expression in the Gaming Wochen, semi-annual gatherings held in the picturesque mountain village of Gaming. The meetings brought together in an old monastery the Austrian and German university students that Spann wanted to train for leadership roles. A certain Herr Krukenberg, a legal representative of German industry in Düsseldorf, acted as liaison man between Spann and the German employers' associations, as well as seeing to it that the Gaming meetings were adequately subsidized. See especially Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, 209.

arrived in Vienna at the height of Spann's popularity--a time which was marked by the death-throes of democratic parliamentary government in both Austria and Germany.

Working closely with Spann, Von Salomon began to study universalism as "a student among students." Under Spann's guidance, he attended classes and lectures. His long reading lists included books in almost every discipline known to the world of scholarship. Von Salomon derived "an indescribable pleasure" from watching Spann the virtuoso lecturer expound his theories. Being with Spann for many hours every day brought to Von Salomon the realization that the brilliant, stimulating, and ultimately exhausting professor was trying to do nothing less than to "fit all human existence comfortable into a single theory." More and more, the German detected dangers in the Austrian's universalistic theory and system of society; Spann's desire and need to have everything fit into his all-embracing ideology had "become a sort of mania with him." Granting that this desire on Spann's part was an element of greatness in the man, Von Salomon was still forced to conclude that ultimately this was a dangerous weakness of the philosophy of universalism.²⁰

Writing almost a generation later, Von Salomon pointed out that, although from the perspective of the present time the system of society outlined by Spann in the Vienna of the early 1930's can

²⁰Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 92-93.

almost be laughed at because of its clarity, simplicity, and apparent ease of putting into practice, at the time it seemed to offer to many intellectuals the hope for a better society. The concepts of life and social interaction that Spann expounded so brilliantly in the lecture hall and seminar room appealed to many intellectuals and rootless young people who were tired of the increasing political opportunism and bipolarization of German and Austrian public life. Von Salomon himself had for years been seeking the secret of the "third force," an ideology and code of existence between capitalism and Marxism. It was this desire that probably led him to attempt to master the philosophy of universalism, for it seemed to offer a solution to the general crisis of the times that went beyond the blind inevitability and drab levelling of Marxism and the destructive nihilism and vulgar opportunistic demagoguery of National Socialism. The solution for these pressing dilemmas would have to be much more than just the day-to-day compromises that characterized parliamentary life.²¹

Spann's system included just about everything for which disillusioned intellectuals had longed and dreamed. It claimed to be able to extricate Germany and Austria from a situation of almost unbearable tension. Since it was based on eternal "truths" of life and social existence, this system, once it was established,

²¹Ibid.; Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon," 240.

would create social unity and harmony. It would pull Central Europe out of the "actual appalling situation in which two mutually irreconcilable forces were bent on one another's destruction." The "true" state erected on the corporative principle would be a spiritual, moral, and social totality. In ways that were both material and spiritual it would be able to order society so that values "higher" than "mere" efficiency and rationality would be put into daily practice. The key themes in the reconstitution of the basic goals of society would be unity and reconciliation. The reconciliation of classes and the state, of peasants and workers, industrialists and politicians, culture and civilization, authority and liberty, the masses and the individual, would be possible under a system that Spann was able to present smoothly, logically, and with a staggering display of scholarly erudition. He considered all areas of human knowledge to be his own province for proving the validity of the doctrines of universalism and expected his students and serious followers to be equally ready to dabble in the fields of history, geography, philosophy, theology, literature, and jurisprudence. For a student to master the intricacies of universalistic thinking to Spann's liking, he apparently had to be familiar with almost every branch of human thought and experience, as well as with the philosophies of all the "great men" from Plato to Othmar Spann. Finally, he had to be on intimate

terms with "every documented manifestation of the German spirit of the past two thousand years."²²

Von Salomon broke with Spann in early 1933, just at about the time that the Nazis took over control of Germany. Having studied the philosophy of universalism with Spann for a number of weeks, and having read the assigned books and attended the required classes and lectures, as well as discussing "everything" of value with Spann himself, Von Salomon finally decided that he could no longer in good conscience still consider himself a follower of Othmar Spann. Spann was deeply upset to lose Von Salomon as a disciple, for he had thought of him as one of his most promising and potentially important students. Von Salomon spoke to Spann before leaving Vienna, and, as a friend and someone who was fond of him, tried to explain to the Austrian professor why he could no longer accept his ideas. Almost bluntly, he told him that because he had never really concerned himself with the specific situation in Germany as a whole, he was, in effect, spinning the fine threads of doctrine in a vacuum. Von Salomon could not believe in Spann's political concepts because to him they appeared to offer little more than doctrine and could not be consequentially realized. In effect, universalism was wrong in one decisive way, that of having practically no sense of practical political reality. Spann's doctrine seemed to Von Salomon to be good,

²²Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 93-94.

perhaps even "exceptionally fine" if it were to be put into effect where it was most superbly fitted for practical adaptation. This place, Von Salomon made clear, would have to be an area resembling Lower Austria rather than the Ruhr.²³

The final reason for the break between Von Salomon and Spann was that, although neither man was a Nazi (although both could without too much difficulty find "good" elements in both the theory and practice of National Socialism), Von Salomon recognized the revolutionary dynamism of the Hitler movement while Spann believed that it could be contained and "tamed." Von Salomon was an intellectual and a man of action at the same time. His literary talent and intuition gave him a tragic sense of life that ultimately led him to reject the "big system" that Spann offered as a solution for the ills of the age. Having seen European society crumble in World War I, Von Salomon finally arrived at a position of aesthetic hierarchical authoritarianism overlaid with a profound sense of tragic aloofness. Von Salomon was a frustrated conservative revolutionist. He never compromised with Nazism, which he considered to be a mass movement that derived much of its momentum from the levelling traditions of democratic radicalism and Marxian Socialism. While Spann and Von Salomon were both believers in the value of tradition and were ultraromatic German nationalists, the two men diverged in

²³Ibid., 98.

their social philosophies. Spann continued to insist on the primacy of the social collectivity, while Von Salomon more and more abandoned the analytical approach that Spann used to bolster his beliefs. Belief strengthened by individual acts, and a mystic faith that penetrated into the essential mysteries of existence, became the individualistic philosophy that Von Salomon used to deal with the problems that confronted him.²⁴ His free spirit could not be confined within any one system of thought, even one that originally seemed to offer him as much intellectual and emotional sustenance as did the universalistic philosophy of Othmar Spann.²⁵

Other thinkers in the Germany and Austria of the 1920's and 1930's came close, in varying degrees, to the thinking of Othmar Spann. It would be erroneous to classify these individuals and groups merely in terms of "Right," "Left," and "Center." The interaction between the radical Right and Left in interwar Europe was an intimate and often direct relationship, one often arising as a reaction to the existence and militancy of the other.²⁶

²⁴Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon," 246.

²⁵Von Salomon prided himself on the essentially mystical roots of both his thought and action and he insisted that only a select circle could and would understand the deepest truths of the conservative revolution. See Ernst von Salomon, Die Geächteten (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1931), 310.

²⁶Alfred Meusel, "Revolution and Counter-revolution," Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences, Vol. XIII, 367-376.

Programs, concepts, and slogans of one radical group often made their way, sometimes virtually unchanged in their major outlines, from one radical group to another. All had in common the belief that constitutional democracy had become too much an end in itself and had not even come close to realizing the "true" material and spiritual purposes of government. As these various opposition groups saw it, "the system" (i.e., the democratic, constitutional parliamentary governments of Germany and Austria between 1919 and 1933) was either contrived or inevitably led to the defeat of the "true" social functions of the state, be they the demands for social egalitarianism that the Left voiced, or the Right's belief that order, stability, and social hierarchy were the basis for a just society. In any event, this great disillusionment with democracy as both a means and an end in itself was a belief prevalent on both sides of the political spectrum in almost all European countries.²⁷

Another thinker of the non-Nazi Right whose ideas were at times close to those of Spann was Hans Zehrer, who was a close friend of Von Salomon. Born in 1899, Zehrer fought both in World War I and as a Freikorps volunteer. Inflation having ruined his family, as well as his chances for an academic career, he became a journalist, and during the years immediately preceding 1933 he was the guiding spirit behind Die Tat, one of the

²⁷Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon," 238.

most influential journals of the conservative revolution.²⁸ Zehrer's ideas were often vague and contradictory; yet certain basic themes run through his thought. He believed that intellectuals could, and should, play a leading role in the reconstruction of society. Zehrer and his circle condemned and ridiculed both the Marxian goal of a classless society and the democratic ideal of popular sovereignty as absurd and totally impossible to realize in practice. They propagandized tirelessly for the creation of a society in which a permanently established elite class or caste would rule with authoritarian power.²⁹ This would be an elite of young, vital people whose position was based on personal merit rather than on wealth or birth. In the sense that the new leadership class would take its members from all strata of society, this new social order would be much closer to "true" democracy than a system in which large numbers of people pressure their parliamentary representatives to do their bidding.³⁰

²⁸The ideas and personalities of the Tat circle are comprehensively analyzed in Kurt Sontheimer, "Der Tat-Kreis," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. VII, No. 3 (July, 1959), 229-260. See also Vermeil, Doctrinaires de la Révolution allemande, 188-220.

²⁹Walter Struve, "Hans Zehrer as a Neoconservative Elite Theorist," The American Historical Review, Vol. LXX, No. 4 (July, 1965), 1036.

³⁰Oswald Spengler, Jahre der Entscheidung: Deutschland und die weltgeschichtliche Entwicklung (Munich: C.H.Beck Verlag, 1933), 161; Edgar J. Jung, "Volkserhaltung," Deutsche Rundschau, Vol. CCXXII (March, 1930), 188.

At various times the Tat circle discussed the possibilities of organizing the new social order they envisaged on a corporative basis.³¹ Although the idea of an economic rather than a political parliament came briefly to a point of discussion in 1919, it was only during the early 1930's that German intellectuals again spoke seriously of the possibility of an "ordered" society led by dedicated and highly trained technocrats and intellectuals who were far above the emotionalism and pettiness of party politicians. Similar to the Tat circle of intellectuals was the Ring group, which also included aristocrats. Probably more conservative and less "socialistic" than the Tat circle, the Ring group spoke as one voice in condemning the "insolent greed" of the masses and the social anarchy and impotence of the nation under a system of political parties. Through its spokesmen, Heinz Brauweiler and Heinrich von Gleichen, and through its Herrenklubs, the Ring group advocated a corporative social order. Frankly admitting that this society would have to be run by landed aristocrats and industrialists, they argued that only under such a system would it be possible to have the social services demanded by the workers. Members of the Ring group included the political chameleon Franz von Papen and Fritz Thyssen, the industrial magnate who was one of Hitler's

³¹At times, entire issues of the Tat circle's monthly magazine centered on the discussion of corporatism. See Die Tat, Vol. XVII, No. 7 (July, 1925), passim.

financial angels and who had deluded himself into believing that his own muddled "understanding" of corporatism had become a political principle of the Nazis. Significant about both the Tat and Ring groups was the fact that General Kurt von Schleicher was close to both and probably aided in subsidizing both.³²

Kurt von Schleicher, the ambitious Reichswehr chief and "social General" of the last years of the Weimar Republic, was a man who seemed to be able to effectuate the "revolution from above," a coup d' état that would set the stage for the emergence of a corporative society led by the new elite as envisioned by the Tat circle. Schleicher believed that a possible solution for the terrible social problems of Germany lay in instituting direct "non-political" collaboration between the General Staff, the "Left" wing of the Nazi party led by Gregor Strasser, and the major trade unions.³³ A confirmed monarchist and conservative, Schleicher distrusted the Nazis in no uncertain terms. His love of political intrigue, as well as his personal connections and strategic position, made it possible for him to experiment with the "radical" solutions suggested to him by Zehrer and

³²George N. Shuster and Arnold Bergstraesser, Germany. A Short History (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1944), 193.

³³Thilo Vogelsang, Reichswehr, Staat und NSDAP. Beiträge zur deutschen Geschichte 1930-32 (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1962), 258-367; Gerard Braunthal, "The German Free Trade Unions During the Rise of Nazism," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XV, No. 4 (January, 1956), 343-347; Siegfried, The Character of Peoples, 110-111.

other intellectuals. For all of his conservatism, Schleicher was firmly convinced that the basic problem of his time was not the form of government, but the solution of the "social question"--an issue that went beyond mere economics.³⁴ He was interested in corporative ideas in general and Spann's ideas in particular and appears to have believed that they might one day serve as a basis for the reconstruction of the economic council (Reichswirtschaftsrat) created by the Weimar constitution but never of any real social or political value in republican Germany. Schleicher apparently felt that the council could be transformed into a "true" representative chamber with functioning corporative organs.³⁵ Schleicher's regime of experimental non-Nazi authoritarianism collapsed early in 1933 because it could not attract mass support; the moderate aristocratic Right had no myth with which to mold the public opinion of a society in the throes of despair.³⁶ The Tat circle and Schleicher were drowned in the tidal wave of Nazi

³⁴In contrast to Von Papen and many of the East Elbian Junkers, Schleicher was against the idea of an absolute military dictatorship, recognizing that even an authoritarian regime in the modern world would have to in the final analysis base itself on at least a large minority of the politically active segment of the population in order to remain in power. See Kurt Caro and Walter Oehme, Schleichers Aufstieg. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte der Gegenrevolution (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1933), 270.

³⁵Otto Meissner, Staatssekretar unter Ebert-Hindenburg-Hitler. Der Schicksalsweg des deutschen Volkes von 1918-1945, wie ich ihn erlebte (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1950), 256-257.

³⁶Kolnai, The War Against the West, 344.

victory. Zehrer and other intellectual advocates of a "new elite" voluntarily withdrew into total obscurity while Schleicher was killed in the Nazi blood bath of the old Right on June 30, 1934.

Other groups and thinkers came close to the general ideology of corporatism during this time. Small groups of radical intellectuals, either of the non-Nazi Right or the non-Communist Left, met to discuss the many critical issues of the time. Zehrer believed that the last years of the Weimar Republic were the high point of one of the most intellectually fruitful periods of German history. As the crisis of German and Austrian democracy deepened, the "old, outworn divisions" of Right and Left no longer divided intellectuals into air-tight compartments. Their discussions usually led to general agreement on the ends of society (social unity secured by the cessation of class warfare and parliamentary impotence); it was only on the means of achieving this new society that the intellectuals really disagreed.³⁷ Most felt that the new social order would have to be instituted by violent means. In spite of all of the apparent fruitfulness of these discussions, it was real politics (i.e., power) and not ideas that decided the course of events in 1933.³⁸

³⁷Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 102-103.

³⁸Perhaps the best example of the actual impotence of these intellectuals was the fact that the idea of subsidies for the publications of Rightist intellectuals to be furnished by German heavy industry was shelved once Nazism had made heavy electoral gains; being unimportant, the intellectuals could be dispensed with. See Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, 211.

If Schleicher and Zehrer can be said to have been on the conservative elitist side of the conservative revolution, then the dissidents from Nazism and the so-called National Bolsheviks were basically those intellectuals who wanted to further the conservative revolution by means of social-revolutionary methods. Although they did not always draw inspiration from Spann and other corporatist thinkers,³⁹ they felt that Bolshevism, once cleansed of its "backward" Russian and internationalistic aspects, could be fused with corporatism to create a society vastly superior to that based on the liberal-democratic individualism of the West. The early Soviet system was admired by certain corporative theorists because it seemed to them to be an uncertain, but, nevertheless, viable, concretization of their ideas. Once these ideas had been infused with "higher" German social and political ideals, they could serve as a basis for the creation of a "true" state and society.⁴⁰ Where Marxism hoped to create the conditions for an eventually "classless" society, the German National Bolsheviks accepted the idea of the continuation of a social order basing

³⁹ Spann proudly pointed out what he believed to be corporatist and universalistic elements in Russian Bolshevism. See Spann, Der wahre Staat, 189.

⁴⁰ See Arnold Bergsträsser, "Neuere Literatur zum Gedanken des berufsständischen Staates," Schmollers Jahrbuch für Gesetzgebung, Verwaltung und Volkswirtschaft, Vol. XLVII (1923), 283-299.

itself on class distinctions.⁴¹

National Bolshevism was popular in Germany from 1918 to 1933 among certain intellectuals who desired above all that the "corrupt" and "decadent" West that had imposed the Versailles "system" on the German people be smashed by an alliance of Europe's two outcast nations, Germany and Soviet Russia.⁴² Aristocrats and generals, as well as intellectuals, toyed with these intriguing ideas. The intellectuals who accepted the basic ideas of National Bolshevism were also, in the main, receptive to some of Spann's corporative thinking. They included Von Salomon and Zehrer, the two Junger brothers, the two Strasser brothers of the Nazi "Left," Moeller van den Bruck, and, above all, Ernst Niekisch. Niekisch proposed an alliance of the supposed virtues of Potsdam and Moscow directed against the values of Western civilization.⁴³ Niekisch

⁴¹As opposed to the Marxian idea of a "horizontal" organization of society, Spann offered the corporative concept of "vertical" groupings by vocation. See Wandruszka, "Osterreichs politische Struktur," 364. Spann's system was quite explicit in having society become an organic entity accepting the idea of class structure. See Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 93.

⁴²Basic studies of National Bolshevism include Abraham Ascher and Guenter Lewy, "National Bolshevism in Germany. Alliance of Political Extremes Against Democracy," Social Research, Vol. XXIII, No. 4 (Winter, 1956), 450-480; Karl Otto Paetel, Versuchung oder Chance? Zur Geschichte des Nationalbolschewismus (Göttingen: Musterschmidt-Verlag, 1965); and Otto Ernst Schüddekopf, Linke Leute von rechts: Die nationalrevolutionären Minderheiten und der Kommunismus in der Weimarer Republik (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer Verlag, 1960).

⁴³Hans Kohn, The Mind of Germany. The Education of a Nation (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 312-316.

was acquainted with Spann, and, although they disagreed on many points of doctrine, they both hated the ideas and society of the West and desired a new, uniquely "Germanic" society based on qualitative hierarchical authoritarianism.⁴⁴ Both men were intellectuals of great erudition, but with little sense of practical politics; neither could create a mass movement with which to implement his ideas in the cruel arena of daily politics. Consequently, each ran afoul of the Nazis, who easily smashed both of them.

If Spann had friends, allies, and followers, he also had a considerable number of critics and outright enemies. The Marxist Left obviously singled him out for attack, but in the main they found his ideas so hopelessly unrealistic that they did not even take the time and trouble to attack them seriously.⁴⁵ It was from within his own general ideological sphere, that of the radicals of the Right and the intellectuals of the conservative revolution, that Spann found the most criticism of, and opposition

⁴⁴ Spann had some dealings with Niekisch's Widerstand ("Resistance") circle. See Othmar Spann, Vom Wesen des Volkstums. Was ist deutsch? Ein Vortrag (3rd rev'd. ed., Berlin: Widerstands-Verlag, 1929), 1-62.

⁴⁵ The Left generally treated Spann with amused contempt; yet they admitted that he at least had the conviction of his beliefs, and that he had not become a racist. See Kurt Hiller, Profile. Prosa aus einem Jahrzehnt (Paris: Éditions Nouvelles Internationales, 1938). Other Leftist contemporaries of Spann developed elitist theories surprisingly similar to his. See Leonard Nelson, Demokratie und Führerschaft (2nd rev'd. ed., Stuttgart: Verlag "Öffentliches Leben," 1927), 103-149.

to, his ideas. Much opposition also came from Catholic intellectuals who in the main felt that Spann had been correct in his slashing criticisms of Liberalism, capitalism, and individualism, but believed that he had placed too much emphasis on the collective nature of society and the coercive apparatus of the state. This, insisted some Catholic intellectuals, was incompatible with the doctrines of social pluralism advocated by the Church.⁴⁶ Finally, Spann alienated many of his colleagues in the academic world, often plunging with "gay insouciance" into the "jealous preserves of his easily mortified colleagues."⁴⁷

The impact of Spann's ideas on Austria went through several stages. At first, his ideas were strongest among a select group of students and intellectuals. Then his influence began to make itself felt among those who desired an Anschluss with Germany. Finally, his concepts of a corporative structure of state and society were accepted by most of the leadership elements of the Austrian Right, including the Heimwehr armed formations, even if

⁴⁶Othmar Spann, "In eigener Sache," Standisches Leben. Blätter für organische Gesellschafts- und Wirtschaftslehre, Vol. II (1932), 330-333; the Catholic critics of Spann have had their anti-Romanticist position clearly summarized in Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 159-167.

⁴⁷Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 93; Alfred M. Missong, "Ernst Karl Winter, Monarchist und Republikaner: Mitschöpfer der zweiten Republik," Neues Forum. Österreichische Monatsblätter für kulturelle Freiheit, Vol. XII, No. 5 (May, 1965), 244-245. Criticisms of Spann's thought by some of his most prominent scholarly contemporaries are found in Karl Dunkmann, Der Kampf um Othmar Spann (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer Verlag, 1928), 1-104.

only as slogans. All the time that his ideas were gaining prominence, Spann was consciously propagandizing the theory of the "true" state to all those who wished to find solutions to the serious problems of the times. He wrote voluminously,⁴⁸ and travelled all over Austria and Germany lecturing and explaining his theories to all who showed an interest in them.⁴⁹

The closest Spann ever came to implementing his ideas in real life occurred in the Sudetenland, a German-speaking area of the Habsburg monarchy that had become part of independent Czechoslovakia in 1918.⁵⁰ The Sudeten Germans generally despised the Czechs, but it was not until the late 1920's that some of them took it upon themselves to seek autonomy or even to break away from the Czechoslovak Republic. Until then the youth and intellectuals had generally contented themselves with a cultural nationalism that centered around the youth movement. When the world economic depression hit the industrialized German-speaking areas of Bohemia, the effect was immediate and disastrous. Social unrest led to

⁴⁸A bibliography of his writings can be found in Othmar Spann, Das philosophische Gesamtwerk im Auszug, edited by Hans Riehl (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950), 323-334.

⁴⁹Spann, Edgar J. Jung, and Oswald Spengler were probably the most popular and eloquent spokesmen of the conservative revolution, and were often to be found at student gatherings. See Anton M. Koptanek and Manfred Schröter (eds.), Oswald Spengler. Briefe 1913-1936 (Munich: C. H. Beck Verlag, 1963), 529.

⁵⁰Ernst H. Buschbeck, Austria (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1949), 115. More than four million German-speaking subjects of the defunct Habsburg empire were incorporated into Czechoslovakia, Italy, and Jugoslavia in 1919.

political ferment. Although some Sudeten Germans became Nazis, most remained simple conservatives and nationalists. For most of them, Vienna rather than Berlin was their spiritual and intellectual home. This attitude found expression in the Comrades' Union (Kameradschaftsbund), founded in 1926 by Walter Brand, Walter Heinrich, and Heinrich Rutha, young German Bohemians who were closely associated with Spann.⁵¹

The Kameradschaftsbund, also known as the KB, was founded as an organization for the practical execution of Spann's ideas.⁵² The idea of the Kameradschaftsbund was to secretly train an elite core of disciples who would infiltrate existing Sudeten German organizations in order to prepare for the day when a corporative order could be put into effect.⁵³ This infiltration was quite successful. Unfortunately for Spann and his followers, the growth of Kameradschaftsbund influence was more than matched by that of Konrad Henlein's Sudetendeutsche Partei, which came more and more

⁵¹Robert William Seton-Watson, A History of the Czechs and Slovaks (London: Hutchinson & Co. Ltd., 1943), 351.

⁵²Richard Freund, Watch Czechoslovakia! (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons Ltd., 1937), 69.

⁵³Emil Franzel, Sudetendeutsche Geschichte. Eine volkstümliche Darstellung (2nd rev'd. ed., Augsburg: Adam Kraft Verlag, 1958), 362-363. Franzel believes that the Kameradschaftsbund never had more than 250 members. Spann's plans in the Sudetenland never went much beyond a first step into the second stage of the typical totalitarian sequence of ideology, movement, party, and government. See Carl J. Friedrich and Zbigniew K. Brzezinski, Totalitarian Dictatorship and Autocracy (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956), 295.

under Nazi influence. Rudolf Kasper, a militant Nazi, put pressure on Henlein to check the influence of the Kameradschaftsbund. Kasper distrusted the Kameradschaftsbund circle because it had "unsound" racial views, and was too sympathetic to clerical ideas and influences.⁵⁴ In Germany, the circles around Heinrich Himmler, and, to a lesser extent, Henlein himself, also distrusted the Kameradschaftsbund and supported the radical Sudeten German Nazis under the leadership of Karl Hermann Frank.⁵⁵ By 1938 the Kameradschaftsbund found itself in a weak position within the Sudeten German political movement. After the annexation of the Sudetenland to Germany in October of that year, the Kameradschaftsbund was abolished; some of its leaders were put on trial and spent the years until 1945 in concentration camps.⁵⁶ Spann's most significant venture into the real world of politics had ended in disaster.

Austrian political life in the 1920's was carried on under the shadow of the leadership of Ignaz Seipel, the priest, scholar,

⁵⁴Elizabeth Wiskemann, Czechs and Germans. A Study of the Struggle in the Historic Provinces of Bohemia and Moravia (New York: Oxford University Press, 1938), 248-249.

⁵⁵MacAlister Brown, "The Third Reich's Mobilization of the German Fifth Column in Eastern Europe," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XIX, No. 2 (July, 1959), 141-143.

⁵⁶Helmuth K. G. Rönnfarth, Die Sudetenkrise in der internationalen Politik. Entstehung. Verlauf. Auswirkung (2 vols., Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1961), Vol. I, 128-133; Vol. II, 71-73.

and political leader who probably saved Austria from collapse, only to lead her into a period of authoritarianism.⁵⁷ Although Seipel was an intellectual of high attainments, he also had a great sense of political realism. He was frankly distrustful of political Romanticism, considering it impractical and often dangerous. Seipel believed that "true" democracy could best be achieved by means of strong leadership that rose above the petty disputes that often characterized parliamentary political life.⁵⁸

Until the last few years of his life, when he came increasingly under the influence of both the ideas and personality of Spann, Seipel rejected most of the ideas put forth by Spann and other neo-Romanticist social theorists.⁵⁹ He rejected the idea of an economic parliament, holding that it would eventually become a political assembly as potentially unruly as the one it had attempted to supersede. Neither would the idea of a supplementary economic chamber designed to work alongside of the

⁵⁷A critical but nevertheless scrupulously scholarly study of Seipel's attitudes toward democracy is offered in Diamant, Austrian Catholics and the First Republic, 106-116 and passim.

⁵⁸William T. Bluhm, "The Austrian Idea: A Study of the Ideology of the Christian Corporative State of Austria, 1934-38" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, The University of Chicago, 1957), 177 and 188.

⁵⁹Starting in October, 1929, Seipel and Spann had frequent meetings. See Klemens von Klemperer, "Chancellor Seipel and the Crisis of Democracy in Austria," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XXII, No. 4 (January, 1963), 477 n.

territorial political assembly work, since such a situation would probably only serve to complicate the process of government.⁶⁰ Although he did not accept the idea of functional representation as late as the summer of 1929, by the end of the same year Seipel publicly approved the idea of corporative institutions for Austria. In the increasing political and social tension of the time, it would appear that Seipel's "conversion" to the ideas of corporative reconstruction was primarily based on practical political considerations. Seipel's major concern was not social justice, but the creation and maintenance of a strong government and a stable political order. In order to stifle class warfare by means of the idea of the eventual elimination of political parties, Seipel praised the idea of a society organized according to the principle of social functions. The idea of a "true" state and society thus became a very useful political instrument in Seipel's hands for him to use in his struggle against his various political opponents, whom he could brand as divisive elements in the body politic.⁶¹

Seipel believed that at the heart of the crisis of Austrian democracy was the fact that political parties had become both the ends and the means of public life. In order to ensure the growth

⁶⁰Seipel, Der Kampf um die österreichische Verfassung, 186.

⁶¹Bluhm, "The Austrian Idea," 197-207.

of "true" democracy, Seipel insisted, the "rule of parties" would have to end. In order to save democracy, political parties would have to go. Seipel was particularly sympathetic to the Heimwehr, in effect a private army of the Right, which he characterized as symbolic of a "longing for true democracy."⁶² The Heimwehr emphasized activism, but was also armed with an ideology. It was heavily subsidized by Austrian and German industrial cartels.⁶³ In the program adopted at Korneuburg in 1930, the Heimwehr vehemently rejected political parties and the entire apparatus of democratic parliamentary institutions.⁶⁴ Modelling itself at least in part on the historical development of Italian Fascism, the Heimwehr was also influenced by the ideas of Spann.⁶⁵ The specifically corporative proposals of the Heimwehr program stem directly from the ideological prompting of Spann and his right-hand man, Walter Heinrich.⁶⁶ The Heimwehr was basically a group of disparate opportunistic elements, and few of its actions can be burdened with intellectual explanations. Nonetheless, it

⁶²Ibid., 191; Johann Auer, "Seipels Verhältnis zu Demokratie und autoritärer Staatsführung" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Vienna, 1963), passim.

⁶³Richard Lewinsohn (Morus), Das Geld in der Politik (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1931), 140-142.

⁶⁴Anton Rintelen, Erinnerungen an Österreichs Weg. Versailles-Berchtesgaden-Grossdeutschland (2nd ed., Munich: F. Bruckmann Verlag, 1941), 144.

⁶⁵Bluhm, "The Austrian Idea," 76 n.

⁶⁶Wandruszka, "Österreichs politische Struktur," 364.

groped about for an ideology and decided on the idea of the corporative state, which seemed to its leaders to offer a panacea for the pressing problems of the present and future. At the German Club in Vienna, Spann helped the political and intellectual leaders of the Heimwehr movement formulate their ideological program.⁶⁷

The collapse of Austrian parliamentary government in early 1933 made it appear as if the conditions for the creation of Spann's long-awaited "true" state were now at hand. The chancellor and strong man, the diminutive Engelbert Dollfuss, announced to his people in the fall of 1933 that the "new" Austria would be reconstructed on a Christian and professional basis. The new order would not allow "demagogic" party politics. A strong authoritarian regime would be instituted once the old "rubbish" of republicanism had been cleared out.⁶⁸ Austria was no longer a republic but an Austrian German Federal State. The various trade unions were to be combined into one single union that would consist of syndicates corresponding to each of the professional groups outlined by a board of experts. The constitution of May 1, 1934 explicitly recognized the Catholic nature of Austria, for it included in its body the text of the recently signed Austrian-

⁶⁷Ludwig Jedlicka, "The Austrian Heimwehr," The Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. I, No. 1 (1966), 137; Niekisch, Gewagtes Leben, 157.

⁶⁸Clyde Kendrick, "Austria under the Chancellorship of Engelbert Dollfuss, 1932-1934" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Georgetown University, 1958), 66, 76, 115 and 119-122.

Papal concordat. This constitution was designed, in effect, to provide for an authoritarian government that would be able to carry on its functions with as little disturbance from the forces of public opinion as possible.⁶⁹ Arbitrary government by decree having been replaced by a constitutional structure allowing for an eventual state and society based on vocational representation, it seemed fair to expect that neo-Romanticist social theorists like Spann would approve of the new political pattern, and yet many of them did not do so.

As a Pan-German and an intellectual, Spann could not approve of the course of events under Dollfuss. Spann had always wanted Austria to unite with the German Reich, and he was one of the leading voices calling for an immediate union between the two nations.⁷⁰ The events that Dollfuss set in motion convinced Spann that this desired union would now be delayed. Spann became increasingly hostile to both the person and the government of Dollfuss, whom he considered to be a petty autocrat and an ideological charlatan and opportunist.⁷¹ Dollfuss refused to give credit to Spann for the May, 1934 constitution, saying instead

⁶⁹Malcolm Bullock, Austria 1918-1938. A Study in Failure (London: Macmillan & Co., 1939), 237-238.

⁷⁰Gerhard Höper, "Österreichs Weg zum Anschluss. Die Frage der Wirtschaftsangleichung Deutschlands und Österreichs als Vorbereitung des politischen Anschlusses" (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing Verlag, 1928), 14-19.

⁷¹Bluhm, "The Austrian Idea," 84 and 242.

that its basic ideas were derived from the Papal encyclical Quadragesimo anno of May 15, 1931. The constitution was not popularly approved but imposed on a basically restive population by a government that had just emerged victorious from a civil war.⁷² Spann disavowed the entire "Christian corporative state," saying that it had turned into little more than a "weird carnival joke."⁷³

After Dollfuss' assassination in July, 1934, Spann continued to criticize the Austrian regime, even going so far as to warn Kurt von Schuschnigg that he might share the same fate as Dollfuss if he did not give up his "treacherous anti-German course." Spann went to Germany several times during this period, convinced that Nazism and his own universalistic philosophy were ideologically complementary. When he returned to Austria, disillusioned, he offered to support the Schuschnigg government in its struggle to maintain Austrian independence.⁷⁴ His dealings with Nazism had awakened him to at least a few of the realities of political life.

⁷²Jakob Baxa, "Die romantische Soziallehre im Weltbild der Gegenwart," in Walter Heinrich (ed.), Die Ganzheit in Philosophie und Wissenschaft. Othmar Spann zum siebzigsten Geburtstag (Vienna: Wilhelm Braumüller Universitäts-Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950), 101. Ironically, Spann felt that Quadragesimo anno gave the Papal imprimatur to his own social philosophy.

⁷³Hanns Leo Mikoletzky, "Österreichische Zeitgeschichte. Vom Ende der Monarchie bis zum Abschluss des Staatsvertrages 1955" (Vienna and Munich: Österreichischer Bundesverlag, 1962), 268.

⁷⁴Letter of December 16, 1965, from Kurt von Schuschnigg to the author.

The development of Spann's relations with Nazism is a history of tentative contacts, seemingly fruitful interaction, bitter disillusionment, and, finally, total rejection of both systems for one another. Although he was born in Austria and at times used this fact as a convenient tool of political opportunism, Adolf Hitler actually had a low opinion of Austria and the Austrians. He detested the Vienna that Spann lived and worked in for his entire life. Vienna was for Hitler a city of liberal, cosmopolitan, Socialist, and, above all, "Jewish" values, and it was thus for him an utterly "un-German" city. The Austrian peasantry was too much under the thumb of the Catholic clergy, just as the workers of Vienna were all unpatriotic "Reds," as far as Hitler was concerned. Admiring what he felt were the specifically German virtues of organizational genius, military valor, and racial consciousness, Hitler viewed the National Socialist ideology as a concrete plan for the eventual realization of specifically "German" values. In the main, however, Hitler concentrated on the tasks of day-to-day practical politics and left to his subordinates the tasks of defining and combatting ideas; these were "unimportant" chores when compared to Hitler's major concern, that of gaining control over people by means of propaganda and force.⁷⁵

⁷⁵Alan Bullock, Hitler. A Study in Tyranny (rev'd. ed., New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 31-36; William A. Jenks, Vienna and the Young Hitler (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), passim. Nazi ideologists particularly hated the old, easy-going Habsburg empire. See Alfred Rosenberg, Kampf um die Macht. Aufsätze von 1921-1932, edited by Thilo von Trotha (8th ed., Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, Franz Eher Nachf., 1940), 211-216 and 353-358.

The official Nazi ideological program of 1920 included several seemingly anti-capitalistic demands that asked for the eventual creation of an organic "social state" basing itself on various "corporative and professional chambers."⁷⁶ The basic economic slogan of Nazism, that of "breaking interest bondage," was coined by a certain Gottfried Feder and was at best a vague idea.⁷⁷ The Nazi insistence on the need for a new social order that would transcend the individualistic values of the nineteenth century, ideas that had spawned modern industrial capitalism, democracy, and Marxism was part of the Central European conservative revolution of the 1920's. The social forces of individualism were held to be intimately related to one another and were to be regarded as being fundamentally un-German and divisive ideas and attitudes. In the organic social community advocated by the National Socialists, the various bickering classes and interest groups of society would be united into a purposeful national body.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Konrad Heiden, Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus. Die Karriere einer Idee (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt Verlag, 1932), 21-24.

⁷⁷ Spann was one of the few academicians to accept the basic soundness of Feder's monetary theories. See Spann, The History of Economics, 238-239. Feder in turn paid tribute to some of Spann's ideas. See Gottfried Feder, Das Programm der N.S.D.A.P. und seine weltanschaulichen Grundgedanken (25th-40th ed., Munich: Franz Eher Verlag Nachf., 1931), 17.

⁷⁸Gottfried Feder, Das Manifest zur Brechung der Zinsenknechtschaft des Geldes (Diessen: J.C. Huber Verlag, 1919), 1-62; Wolfgang Hock, Deutscher Antikapitalismus. Der ideologische Kampf gegen die freie Wirtschaft im Zeichen der grossen Krise (Frankfurt am Main: Knapp Verlag, 1960), passim; Polanyi, "The Essence of Fascism," 364-365.

Various corporative ideas in the 1920's were at least as popular in Germany as they were in Austria. In Germany, the more industrialized nation, the emphasis in corporative thought was often on the more obviously centralized political, bureaucratic, and administrative aspects of running a corporative social organization. The autonomous social elements that Spann's thought tended to emphasize were either ignored or greatly toned down by German corporative theorists, who sensed that a complex urban and industrial society would almost certainly need strong central controls, if only during times of crisis and historical change. In most instances, German corporative thinking emphasized the need for strong and even "heroic" political leadership.⁷⁹ In line with this trend of thought was the idea of rational efficiency in the service of a "social state." Bismarck suggested the idea of a national economic council in the early 1880's, hoping that the political parliament would eventually be superseded by a corporative chamber based on representation by vocational associations.⁸⁰ Article 165 of the Weimar Republic's constitution provided for a somewhat similar body, but it had little if any practical political significance.⁸¹

⁷⁹Heinz Brauweiler, Berufsstand und Staat. Betrachtungen über eine neuständische Verfassung des Deutschen Staates (Berlin: Ring-Verlag, 1925), 90 and 246-248.

⁸⁰Hans Rothfels, Prinzipienfragen der Bismarckschen Sozialpolitik. Rede (Königsberg: Gräfe und Unzer Verlag, 1929), 16-17.

⁸¹Shuster and Bergstraesser, Germany, 134.

At least theoretically, the coming to power of the Nazis in Germany on January 30, 1933, meant that the foundations of German society would be reconstructed along corporative lines. Almost immediately Nazi theoreticians began to make grandiose plans for the building up of corporative organs.⁸² Industrialists, including politically ambitious figures like Alfred Hugenberg and Fritz Thyssen, favored the creation and encouragement of various kinds of corporative and artisan guild organizations as the basis for a "middle way" somewhere between state ownership and laissez-faire free enterprise.⁸³ In 1933 Spann's most important disciple, Walter Heinrich, became director of a short-lived Institut für Standewesen located in Düsseldorf. Partly organized and financed by Thyssen, who before 1933 had been chosen by the Nazis to "prepare" Germany for the introduction of a corporative order, this institute had as its major purpose the selection and training of "suitable people" for leadership roles in the new "organic"

⁸²Gottfried Feder, Kampf gegen die Hochfinanz (6th ed., Munich: Zentralverlag der N.S.D.A.P. Franz Eher Nachf., 1935), 40-50; Helmut Nicolai, Grundlegen der kommenden Verfassung. Über den staatsrechtlichen Aufbau des dritten Reiches (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing Verlag, 1933), 84-86.

⁸³Arthur Schweitzer, Big Business in the Third Reich (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1964), 116. The powerful I. G. Farben Industrie cartel's "social welfare secretary," a Dr. Klein, was preoccupied with devising formulas for the solution of the social question by means of the corporative system of society as outlined by Othmar Spann. See Fritz Thyssen, I Paid Hitler, translated by César Saerchinger (New York and Toronto: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1941), 124-125.

society.⁸⁴ At the same time, several bureaus for corporative organization were created within the Nazi party and the Reich Labor Front. These agencies were under the general direction of Max Frauendorfer, a warm supporter of many of Spann's basic ideas.⁸⁵

Both the hierarchy of the Nazi party and the leading German industrialists either distrusted or refused to take at all seriously the corporative ideas of Spann and others. Big business was extremely suspicious of various types of schemes for the experimental institution of artisan corporatism and was able to prevent these ideas from ever being seriously implemented.⁸⁶ The result of an internal dispute that had taken place within the higher echelons of leadership of the Nazi party was that the group that favored a political dictatorship in an economically decentralized state (a corporative state, one that, in effect, resembled Spann's "true" state in many ways) was defeated by the group favoring the highly centralized one-party state bent on an aggressive foreign policy that finally emerged. Nazi bureaucrats were generally suspicious of any and all proposals to establish "autonomous"

⁸⁴Thyssen, I Paid Hitler, 25 and 125; Taylor Cole, "Corporative Organization of the Third Reich," The Review of Politics, Vol. II, No. 4 (October, 1940), 447.

⁸⁵Cole, "Corporative Organization," 447.

⁸⁶Schweitzer, Big Business, 127 and 142.

estates that might in time be strong and independent enough to jeopardize centralized state control of economic affairs.⁸⁷

By the end of 1934 corporative "experiments" were clearly on the wane in Nazi Germany. Even the advocates of corporatism in theory had to emphasize the fundamental primacy of "world-historical" politics and the idea of the Volk over the state and economy.⁸⁸ The system of "corporative reconstruction" that the state-run "labor union" directed by Robert Ley advocated died when Ley himself disassociated himself from corporatism and went so far as to personally "take issue" with Spann's teachings.⁸⁹ Although the term "corporative construction" was still being used to describe the building of the social and economic New Order of National Socialism in 1938,⁹⁰ it was only the myth of corporatism that remained, for not the slightest trace of economic autonomy remained in the Germany of 1938.⁹¹ Corporatism had been discarded because it was fundamentally conservative and pacifist and

⁸⁷ Cole, "Corporative Organization," 448-450; Golob, The "Isms", 572.

⁸⁸ Hans Buchner, Grundriss einer nationalsozialistischen Volkswirtschaftstheorie (7th ed., Munich: Verlag Franz Eher Nachf., 1934), 10, 29-31 and 35-37; Max Frauendorfer, Der ständische Gedanke im Nationalsozialismus (3rd ed., Munich: Verlag Franz Eher Nachf., 1933), 24.

⁸⁹ "Nazi Chief Scraps Point in Program," The New York Times, January 2, 1935, 5.

⁹⁰ Ernst Forsthoff (ed.), Deutsche Geschichte seit 1918 in Dokumenten (2nd rev'd. ed., Stuttgart: Alfred Kroner Verlag, 1938), 333-352.

⁹¹ Karl Loewenstein, "Occupational Representation and the Idea of an Economic Parliament," Social Science, Vol. XII (1937), 429.

could not be used as a basis for the preparation of the German war machine for its "inevitable" conflict with the enemies of the Reich. In many ways, the Nazis ultimately rejected the ideas of corporatism because they had offered at least a theoretical basis for the creation of social and economic bodies that sooner or later would be able to claim an autonomy that was fundamentally incompatible with a totalitarian view of the state and society.

If corporatism in general failed to establish itself in the Third Reich, the same was eventually true for the specific social theories of Othmar Spann. Sooner or later the all-embracing system of universalism had to come into conflict with Nazism, an ideology that also made total claims on the individual⁹² Spann had earned the undying hatred and scorn of Alfred Rosenberg, the Nazi movement's official "philosopher," who saw universalism as an ideology of the reactionary Right and as an erroneous system of thought that almost totally ignored the idea of "race," one of the key tenets of Nazism.⁹³ In order to preserve the basic ideological "purity" of the Nazi party and also to strengthen his own position, Rosenberg was always interested in pushing other ideologists out of the intellectual limelight. He took the most

⁹²Karl Loewenstein, Hitler's Germany. The Nazi Background to War (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), 143-145. In Nazi Germany's spectacular and breathless rush toward conflict with its neighbors, the often rather static and prosaic ideas of a "corporative order" were "soon as good as forgotten." Thyssen, I Paid Hitler, 128.

⁹³Polanyi, "The Essence of Fascism," 387.

jealous care to prevent the ideas of Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck, and Spann from ever gaining a foothold in the ideological foundations of National Socialist thought. After 1934 Spann's theories more and more came to be declared heretical and "obscurantist" on certain points of racial dogma. Spann was not a racist; his outlook on types of human "races" was basically mystical, "spiritual," and idealistic.⁹⁴ Although some of his social philosophy paralleled Nazi "theories" on the creation of an ideal society not based on Marxist or liberal assumptions, and both Nazism and universalism held out promises of the achievement of class harmony, national solidarity, and economic stability, the two ideologies quickly came into very serious conflict. For all of their similarities, the two systems of thought were fundamentally incompatible.

One of the major reasons for the break between Spann and the Nazis was the essentially Catholic basis of much of his thought. Standing in almost a direct line of descent from the Catholic Romanticist tradition of protest against the French revolution and modern society, Spann tried to formulate an enthusiastic renewal of this tradition to fit the modern world. Although his thinking and the ideology of National Socialism cross-fertilized one another in various ways in their mutual hatred of individualism and in their glorification of the ideals of social unity and

⁹⁴Kolnai, The War Against the West, 449.

ordered hierarchy,⁹⁵ a parting of the ways between the two schools of thought took place soon after the Nazi assumption of power in Germany in 1933. Spann was in many ways a specifically Catholic intellectual, for his thought dealt with absolute, universal, and eternal qualities. Spann has been described as being essentially "Catholic, Catholic throughout, in the Austrian style that makes no great business of religion though permeated with Catholicism through and through."⁹⁶ In his major writings, Spann was particularly fond of using specifically Catholic imagery. He spoke of the member of the corporative society as being similar to the Church believer who is a limb of the "mystical body" of the religious community.⁹⁷ As Nazism came increasingly into conflict with the Catholic Church, the attempt of Spann to find for the Church a new and definite role in secular society, by designating it a Stand in the "true" state, infuriated the more militant Nazis. Some went so far as to suggest that the model for the entire corporative structure Spann had erected was a more or less conscious imitation of the organizational structure of the Church of the middle ages.⁹⁸

⁹⁵Kurt Sontheimer, "Einleitung," in Hans Müller (ed.), Katholische Kirche und Nationalsozialismus. Dokumente 1930-1935 (Munich: Nymphenburger Verlagshandlung, 1963), xxii.

⁹⁶Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 92.

⁹⁷Kolnai, The War Against the West, 99.

⁹⁸Justus Beyer, Die Ständeideologien der Systemzeit und ihre Überwindung (Darmstadt: L.C. Wittich Verlag, 1941), 218.

Once the Nazis had taken it upon themselves to discard the ideology of corporatism, they sooner or later had to smash its most prominent theorist, Othmar Spann. The Nazis themselves admitted that Spann had dominated this school of social thought for well over a decade and that his system had become the "theoretical equipment of the most diverse tendencies;" in fact, it "simply became the corporative science."⁹⁹ Spann's most famous book, Der wahre Staat, became "the bible" of his followers.¹⁰⁰ To demolish this formidable enemy, the Nazis called on their biggest ideological guns. Alfred Rosenberg led the assault on the "neo-Scholasticism" of Spannian universalism. For Rosenberg, Spann's thought had been valuable only in that it had aided in the destruction of "stupid and materialistic" individualism. Other than having helped in this process, it offered little of value to a German Volk intent on racial reconstruction. Spann was accused of preparing the way for the institution of a theocratic society based on social concepts that were fundamentally medieval, and his entire system was held to be a coldly intellectual construction that failed to take into account the "racial soul" of the

⁹⁹Ibid., 174.

¹⁰⁰Bowen, German Theories of the Corporative State, 10 n.

German Volk, as well as ignoring the absolute necessity of the leadership principle as embodied in the person of Adolf Hitler.¹⁰¹

By 1936 Spann was under heavy attack by various elements within Nazi Germany. Various party journals were filled with articles attacking corporatism in general and Spann in particular.¹⁰² Often referred to as the "pope of intellectualism," he was accused of denying the need for unity of the Volk in order to protect the narrow interests of corporative bodies and the supra-national Catholic Church.¹⁰³ The social pluralism implied in a corporative order of society could not be reconciled with a movement making totalitarian claims of absolute justice, truth,

¹⁰¹ Alfred Rosenberg, Der Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts. Eine Wertung der seelisch-geistigen Gestaltenkämpfe unserer Zeit. (137th-142nd ed., Munich: Hoheneichen-Verlag, 1938), 695-698. Rosenberg condemned Spann's theories mercilessly in an address given at the Martin-Luther Universität, Halle-Wittenberg, on April 27, 1938. See Alfred Rosenberg, Gestalt und Leben (Halle/Saale: M. Niemeyer Verlag, 1938), 1-29. For Spann's denial of the Führerprinzip, see Beyer, Die Ständeideologien, 330; Fritz Nova, "The National Socialist Fuehrerprinzip and Its Background in German Thought" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1943), passim; and Klaus Selzner, Die deutsche Arbeitsfront. Idee und Gestalt (Berlin: Junker & Dünhaupt Verlag, 1935), 14.

¹⁰² Heinrich Hartle, "Othmar Spann, der Philosoph des christlichen Ständestaates," Nationalsozialistische Monatshefte, Vol. IX, No. 8 (August, 1938), 690-698; Karlheinz Rüdiger, "Klarheit über Othmar Spann," Wille und Macht, Vol. IV, No. 2 (January 15, 1936), 12-17; and "Einer wird herausgegriffen," Das schwarze Korps, Vol. IV, Nos. 49-51 (December 8, 15, 22, 1938), 13 ff.

¹⁰³ Arbeitswissenschaftliches Amt der deutschen Arbeitsfront, Österreich. Die soziale und wirtschaftliche Struktur (Berlin: Arbeitswissenschaftliches Amt der deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1938), 60.

and order. The idea of corporatism was seen by the Nazis as creating an essentially static social order that would not let the nation use its full energies in preparation for conflict with "inferior" nations and peoples. In contrast to the rather rigid social stratification that Spann proposed, Nazi social theory demanded the eventual elimination of social classes by means of the heightening of racial consciousness within the framework of the totalitarian nation. This would constitute a type of radical democratic social structure, since a National Socialist people's community (Volksgemeinschaft) would be based on a fusion of "workers of brawn and brow." They would become, in effect, the "do-ers" (die Schaffenden), and as an elite group would supply the entire spirit of dynamism of the new order of National Socialist society.¹⁰⁵ Where Fascism tended to emphasize the potentially more conservative and "organic" nature of the state itself,¹⁰⁶ Nazism glorified in the dynamism of the

¹⁰⁴Waldemar Gurian, "The Rise of Totalitarianism in Europe," in Stanley Pargellis (ed.), The Quest for Political Unity in World History. In Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1942, Vol. III (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1944), 297-298; Beyer, Die Ständeideologien, 340.

¹⁰⁵Andrew G. Whiteside, "The Nature and Origins of National Socialism," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XVII, No. 1 (April, 1957), 73; Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon," 242.

¹⁰⁶Spann and Heinrich were always warmly in sympathy with the great majority of the achievements of Italian Fascism. Spann made several trips to Italy to present his ideas to meetings of Italian corporative theorists. See Walter Heinrich, "Die Organisationsformen der Wirtschaft," in Gerhard Dobbert (ed.), Die faschistische Wirtschaft. Probleme und Tatsachen (Berlin: Reimar Hobbing Verlag, 1934), 23.

movement (Bewegung), the racial purity of the people (Volk) and race (Rasse), and the supreme genius and statesmanship of the leader (Fuhrer).¹⁰⁷ Nazi ideologists emphasized that the Third Reich was based not on a differentiation of the people into groups or occupational categories, but on the idea of the "total organization of labor." Since the bonds of blood now united the German racial community, the idea of an elite remained only in name, all Germans being at least potentially capable of exercising some form of leadership. It was emphasized that the Third Reich was not an "Estates State" but a people's state and a leader-state following Adolf Hitler.¹⁰⁸

Spann's most vociferous enemy was Alfred Rosenberg, but the most practically dangerous people who distrusted his ideas and motives were the supreme technicians of power, the leadership corps of the SS, up to and including Heinrich Himmler himself.¹⁰⁹ The SD, the Security Service of the SS under the direct control of Himmler, prepared several confidential reports on the ideas

¹⁰⁷Gurian, "The Rise of Totalitarianism," 301.

¹⁰⁸Heinrich Härtle, "Vom Ständestaat zur Priesterherrschaft: eine Abrechnung mit Othmar Spann" (Berlin: Verlag der deutschen Arbeitsfront, 1938), 14 and 87.

¹⁰⁹Karl Otto Paetel, "The Reign of the Black Order. The Final Phase of National-Socialism: The SS Counter-State," in International Council for Philosophy and Humanistic Studies-UNESCO (eds.), The Third Reich (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1955), 643.

and activities of Spann and his circle.¹¹⁰ Himmler distrusted people with original ideas, even if these ideas closely paralleled Nazi thinking. He took it upon himself to see to it that "free" intellectuals never became ideologically important to the Nazi party. Spann was included among those whose ideas and personalities were suspected of not being of lasting value in the construction of a National Socialist Greater Germany.¹¹¹

As his dealings with the Nazis make abundantly clear, Spann was almost totally innocent in practical political experience. He felt that the National Socialists would accept his ideas simply because they were clear, logical, and above all, "true." The apparent "success" he had in the early 1930's in explaining his national-conservative ideas to certain officials of the Nazi state and party somehow convinced Spann that Nazism would be "tamed" and won over to the fundamentally stable order envisioned by corporatism. At the same time that he was carrying on contacts with the Nazis, he was repudiating his own government's version of a Standestaat, saying that it was little more than a

¹¹⁰ A secret report based on interrogations and the private correspondence of Spann and his associates, "Der Spann-Kreis. Gefahren und Auswirkungen. Ende August 1938," was prepared in the office of the SD Hauptamt of the Reichsführer-SS (Himmler), and a copy sent to Reichsstatthalter Seyss-Inquart in Vienna on October 28, 1938. See National Archives Microcopy of Captured German Documents, No. T-77, Serial 575, Roll 575, Frames 1754793-1754830. An earlier report from the same office is cited in Rönnefarth, Die Sudetenkrise in der internationalen Politik, Vol. I, 128-133, Vol. II, 71-73.

¹¹¹ Karl Otto Paetel, "Die SS. Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie des Nationalsozialismus," Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte, Vol. II, No. 1 (January, 1954), 8.

farce. Although at this time Spann publicly campaigned for an Anschluss between Christian-Corporative Austria and Nazi Germany, he paradoxically had a low opinion of the aggressive native Austrian Nazis, led at that time by Gauleiter Alfred Frauenfeld, calling them "subhuman" people.¹¹² After the collapse of his contacts with the Nazis, the disillusioned Spann more and more retreated into private life, although in 1937 he offered his services to aid in the support of the Austrian government, "fully convinced that Germany was on the wrong way."¹¹³ But independent Austria's time was up. Even the Right had to admit that the Austrian "Christian corporative state" was basically a failure.¹¹⁴ The relations between Spann and the Nazis ended in a grotesque but perhaps not utterly inappropriate manner. On the day when German troops marched into Vienna in March, 1938, he assembled his family in order to toast with champagne the final achievement of an Austro-German union, calling the day "the happiest" of his life. Two hours later he was under arrest. After a lengthy period of imprisonment, he was allowed to retire to the mountains to live a life of quiet "rustic solitude."¹¹⁵

¹¹²Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 98 and 101.

¹¹³Letter of December 16, 1965, from Kurt von Schuschnigg to the author.

¹¹⁴Martin Fuchs, A Pact With Hitler: The Death of Austria (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1939), 199.

¹¹⁵Von Salomon, Fragebogen, 102.

At one stroke, the dreams of a "true" state were smashed, the Spann circle scattered and silenced, and a chapter in Central European intellectual and political history ended.

Although Spann died in 1950, it is clear that the man had outlived his own ideas by a dozen years. The Spann circle, broken up by the Anschluss and scattered during the war years, was not effectively reconstituted at war's end in 1945. Indeed, Spann was a highly suspect figure in the first years of the Second Austrian Republic. As an outspoken anti-Bolshevik, he was on the blacklist of the Soviet occupying forces in Austria, and as a confessed anti-democrat he could not be accepted by the West. Ironically, Spann, who had bitterly criticized the regimes of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, was generally thought of in the immediate post-war years as having been basically an intellectual precursor of "Austro-Fascism." The man who had come to grief in his dealings with the Nazis was now placed in a similar category with the dyed-in-the-wool enemies of democracy.¹¹⁶ Spann spent his last years writing a philosophy of religion based on historical evidence.¹¹⁷ Starting his academic career as a sociologist, he ended his years of intensive scholarship and involvement in the

¹¹⁶This information is based on a July, 1965, conversation the author had with Andrew G. Whiteside, who was stationed in postwar Vienna with the United States Occupation Forces.

¹¹⁷Othmar Spann, Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage (Vienna: Gallus-Verlag, 1947), cited in Heinrich, "Othmar Spann--heute," 9.

problems of his time as a philosopher of religion, far removed from the dual holocausts of Nazism and total war. A pessimist writing of Spann's career would point out that those who try hardest to change the course of history, and are essentially unprepared to deal with the harsh realities of the world and men contending for power in it, are liable to find themselves very foolish or very dead, or both.

The ideas of corporatism have had little success in the increasingly stable and prosperous Western Europe of the post-1945 era. Although some conservative Catholics, including the pope, believed that corporative associations would be of value in the social and economic reconstruction of Europe, post-war corporatism was stillborn. Corporative bodies would be in standing with long-established Catholic social philosophy and would be vastly preferable to nationalization or socialization.¹¹⁸ The idea was never seriously considered, and was dead by 1950. The Austrian

¹¹⁸ Arnaldo Cortesi, "Pope Decries Nationalization and Calls for 'Corporative' Units," The New York Times, July 21, 1946, 1 and 10. Corporative theories were closely connected with nineteenth century Catholic social thought. See Karl Huemmer, "Der standische Gedanke in der katholisch-sozialen Literatur des 19. Jahrhunderts" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wurzburg, 1927); and Karl Zimmermann, Die standische Idee in der katholischen Sozialphilosophie (Cologne: Verlag Balduin Pick, n.d. [c. 1929/]). The problem of the representation of organized interests continues to provide social theorists with food for thought. See, for example, Joseph H. Kaiser, Die Representation organisierter Interessen (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot Verlag, 1956), 54-65; and Fritz Nova, Functional Representation. An Appeal to Supplement Political Representation (Dubuque, Iowa: W. C. Brown, 1950), passim.

Catholic Congress of 1952 rejected the idea of authoritarian corporatism, accepting unequivocally the concept of a free society.¹¹⁹ If corporatism is no longer of any real significance as a viable social and political force in Austria, it, however, still occasionally provides a basis for conservative intellectuals to view the problems of their country, Europe, and the world. In this context, they feel, the thought of Othmar Spann is still valid. The indefatigable Walter Heinrich has been the leader in keeping Spann's ideas before the Austrian public.¹²⁰

Corporatism was a popular social philosophy among intellectuals of the Right in the years between the two world wars because it appeared to offer possibilities of creating a "third way" between anarchic capitalism and repressive Communism. Even democratic-oriented intellectuals in Central Europe felt pessimistic about the possibilities of achieving social and economic stability and justice under conditions of parliamentary confusion

¹¹⁹Bluhm, "The Austrian Idea," 127.

¹²⁰Spann's complete writings are in the process of republication. See Walter Heinrich and Oskar Mullern (eds.), Othmar Spann. Werke. Gesamtausgabe (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1963-). Heinrich continues to command respect from a select circle of Austrian scholars. See, for example, Hans Riehl, Ulrich Schöndorfer, and Josef Lob (eds.), Festschrift für Walter Heinrich. Ein Beitrag zur Ganzheitsforschung (Graz: Akademische Druck- und Verlagsanstalt, 1965). A recent solid scholarly study of the Spann circle is Otto Hausmann, "Othmar Spann und seine Schule" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Vienna, 1962).

and lack of dedicated leadership.¹²¹ The idea of social stratification and paternalism was not confined to conservative intellectual circles alone. Representatives of German and Austrian industry almost always listened favorably to ideas outlining the creation of a society that would somehow recapture the clearly defined social stratification that they imagined had existed in the middle ages.¹²² This Germanic desire to reconstruct the spirit and social structure of a middle ages that was in fact little more than a highly idealized picture was a clear reflection of some of the basic trends of Central European intellectual development. Always seeking "absolute beauty in the realm of absolute truth,"¹²³ German intellectuals under the influence of Romanticism tended to emphasize what they believed to be the unique and separate nature of German thought from that of Western European thought. German idealism was believed to provide the basis for a profound and "deep" understanding of individual and social reality.¹²⁴

¹²¹Alfred Weber, Die Krise des modernen Staatsgedankens in Europa (Stuttgart, Berlin and Leipzig: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1925), passim.

¹²²Abraham Ascher, "Baron von Stumm, Advocate of Feudal Capitalism," Journal of Central European Affairs, Vol. XXII, No. 3 (October 1962), 271-285; Moritz Julius Bonn, Das Schicksal des deutschen Kapitalismus (rev'd. ed., Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1930), 73.

¹²³Butler, The Tyranny of Greece over Germany, 4.

¹²⁴Hajo Holborn, "Der deutsche Idealismus in sozialgeschichtlicher Beleuchtung," Historische Zeitschrift, Vol. CLXXIV, No. 2 (October, 1952), 359-360.

The desire of intellectuals to find the underlying themes of human experience led to an increasing alienation from a world that they saw as becoming increasingly "cold" and materialistic. These intellectuals rejected as totally unacceptable for themselves, and for any "true" society as a whole, the values of industrial capitalism and its liberalistic political and social ideology, holding that these individualistic and utilitarian values could not possibly serve as "deep" and "noble" human ideals.¹²⁵ Western rationalization was condemned as a process that had led to a "de-mystification" of the world (Entzauberung der Welt).¹²⁶ As German and Austrian intellectuals felt themselves to be increasingly alienated from, and hostile to, their own society, many of them looked back to an earlier age for inspiration. If early nineteenth-century political Romanticism was in one respect a reaction to the ideas and events of the French revolution, then the neo-Romanticism of the last decades of the century and the first third of the twentieth century could be said to have been a reaction to the problems raised by industrialization and the Socialist movement that grew out of this historical development. Both Romanticism and neo-Romanticism were ideologies of "cultural crisis."¹²⁷

¹²⁵Ludwig Mises, Liberalismus (Jena: Verlag von Gustav Fischer, 1927), 4.

¹²⁶William J. Bossenbrook, The German Mind (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1961), 386.

¹²⁷Eugene N. Anderson, "German Romanticism as an Ideology of Cultural Crisis," Journal of the History of Ideas, Vol. II, No. 3 (June, 1941), 301-317.

The nineteenth century saw the coming to maturity of sociology as a social science. By the end of the century sociologists were actively involved in the great issues of the times and sociological concepts had come into common usage. Political and economic theorists more and more came to regard sociology as a useful ally, and some even regarded politics as being, in essence, an important branch of sociology.¹²⁸ As the nineteenth century ended, its ideologies of freedom and equality no longer satisfied some intellectuals.¹²⁹ Looking both into the past and into an ideal realm of essences, these European intellectuals criticized the existing order and sketched the outlines of the new form of society they envisioned, not in philosophical terms, but by using the terminology of sociology.¹³⁰ As many of the academic sociologists of Germany and Austria found themselves increasingly involved with the issues of the times, they in effect were no longer functioning as social scientists but rather as social philosophers.¹³¹ Not all of these social scientists became as

¹²⁸Henry Packwood Adams, Karl Marx in His Earlier Writings (London: G. Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1940), 73.

¹²⁹Daniel Bell, The End of Ideology in the West. On the Exhaustion of Political Ideas in the Fifties (Glencoe, Illinois: The Free Press, 1960), 373; Leonard Krieger, "The Intellectuals and European Society," Political Science Quarterly, Vol. LXVII, No. 2 (June, 1952), 247.

¹³⁰Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, 226.

¹³¹Carl Jantke, "Hochschule und Sozialwissenschaft," Hamburger Jahrbuch für Wirtschafts- und Gesellschaftspolitik, Vol. I (1956), 25-26; Barth Landheer, "Presupposition in the Social Sciences," The American Journal of Sociology, Vol. XXXVII, No. 4 (January, 1932), 539.

involved in political affairs as Spann, but the more prominent ones, like Werner Sombart and Ferdinand Tönnies, whose concepts of Gesellschaft (society) as opposed to Gemeinschaft (community) came to have an impact on German and Austrian political thought, certainly brought into the world of affairs ideas that often had major repercussions on political terminology and ideology.¹³²

These politically conscious sociologists were severely critical of the observed shortcomings of party politics and advocated a new social order based on functional representation by means of vocational groupings. Grounding their arguments in the existence of what they considered to have been an indigeous Germanic tradition of collective economy and society that was neither "Western" (rationalized organization) nor Marxian, these scholars and publicists advocated the creation of a harmonious national community based on principles of order and stability. These ideas appealed to various individuals and social classes. No one group held a monopoly on corporative ideas during this period, for they were discussed by the Right, Left, and Center.¹³³

¹³²Werner Sombart, Deutscher Sozialismus (Berlin-Charlottenburg: Buchholz & Weisswange, Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1934), 224-241. A recent critical study of Sombart's intellectual development is Werner Krause, Werner Sombarts Weg vom Kathedersozialismus zum Faschismus (Berlin /East/: Rütten & Loening Verlag, 1962). For the ideas of Tönnies see particularly Ferdinand Tönnies, Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft. Grundbegriffe der reinen Soziologie (2nd rev'd. ed., Berlin: Karl Curtius Verlag, 1912).

¹³³Bowen, German Theories of the Corporative State, 178, 187 and 218.

If the theories of corporatism were often brilliantly reasoned out and presented with impressive scholarly erudition, the actual practices of the various corporative regimes of the 1930's were a dismal performance indeed. The Austrian example will suffice as a case in point. Basically a despotism most of whose sharp edges had been dulled by indifference and administrative sloppiness, the Austrian authoritarian regime of 1934-1938 was not really a "pure" Fascist state, although it took over some of the traditions of Mussolini's Italy. Never having overwhelming popular support, it was imposed from above, ruled by a small clique, and appears to have been, in a word, a reactionary regime that often had little awareness of the dynamism of modern political life.¹³⁴ Other states with official ideologies that were corporative or close to corporatism during this period included Franco Spain, Vichy France, Greece, and Latvia, as well as Portugal and Brazil, both of which claimed to have instituted a "new state" (Estado Novo). As in the Italian instance, these regimes used an elaborate ideology as window-dressing for an authoritarian and oligarchic rule that did not want to have quite the dynamism of Nazi Germany.

Two basic themes stand out in the ideas of Othmar Spann. First of all, he attempted to create an all-embracing theory

¹³⁴Hugh Seton-Watson, "Fascism, Right and Left," The Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. I, No. 1 (1966), 191.

of society. Secondly, his "true" state was basically an aesthetic ideal. It has been suggested that both Marx and Spann stand in an almost direct line of succession from the idealistic social metaphysics of classical German idealistic philosophy, that is to say, Hegel. Both were philosophical totalitarians, and created a system in which the highest category in an ascending hierarchy of perfections was "totality" itself.¹³⁵ As a sensitive and brilliant intellectual, Spann created a sociological system that more closely mirrored his goals of absolute social order and unity, ideas more perfect and metaphysical than realistic, than any political program that lay within the realm of possible realization.¹³⁶ Spann

¹³⁵Henry William Spiegel, The Development of Economic Thought. Great Economists in Perspective (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1952), 753 n; René König, "Germany," in Joseph S. Roucek (ed.), Contemporary Sociology (New York: Philosophical Library, 1958), 785; Julius Kraft, "Über den soziologischen Mystizismus in der Gegenwart," Archiv für Rechts- und Wirtschaftsphilosophie, Vol. XXIII, No. 1 (October, 1929), 20-28; Johannes Sauter, "Die philosophischen Grundlagen des mittelalterlichen Naturrechts," Zeitschrift für öffentliches Recht, Vol. X, No. 3 (December 15, 1930), 321-379. A remarkable similarity in thought between certain of the philosophical assumptions and terminology of the Marxian and universalistic views of social totality can be found in Georg Lukács, Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein. Studien über Marxistische Dialektik (Berlin-Halensee: Der Malik-Verlag, 1923), 36-40.

¹³⁶Max Adler, Das Rätsel der Gesellschaft. Zur Erkenntnis-kritischen Grundlegung der Sozialwissenschaft (Vienna: Saturn-Verlag, 1936), 163-164; Freyer, Soziologie als Wirklichkeits-wissenschaft, 70; Ernst Karl Winter, "Die Stunde des Konservatismus," Wiener Politische Blätter, Vol. I (June 18, 1933), 71.

became much more than even a politically-involved intellectual, being a "herald" and a "prophet" of a new social order that would resolve all differences between the individual and his social environment.¹³⁷

As both an Austrian and a European intellectual, Spann often despaired of the ability of modern civilization to provide a meaningful background for the preservation of old cultural values and the creation of new ones. He was obviously neither the first nor the last European intellectual "of an artistic nature who revolted against the harshness of modern society."¹³⁸ Germany and Austria provided particularly fertile ground for neo-Romanticist ideas such as those of Spann, for these nations were for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the "classical" lands of irrationalism.¹³⁹

In their insistence on the ideal of an absolute society that existed in a realm of perfection, Spann's ideas represented

¹³⁷ Heinrich, "Othmar Spann--heute," 9; August Maria Knoll, "Austria," in Roucek, Contemporary Sociology, 809; Lehl "Der Katholizismus als Bildungsmacht," 68.

¹³⁸ Landheer, "The Universalistic Theory of Society," 398.

¹³⁹ Georg Lukács, Die Zerstörung der Vernunft (Berlin /East/: Aufbau-Verlag, 1954), 29. See also George L. Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964); and Sigmund Rubinstein, Romantischer Sozialismus. Ein Versuch über die Idee der deutschen Revolution (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1921).

a "leap from despair to utopia across all existing reality."¹⁴⁰
Ever since the middle of the nineteenth century sensitive European intellectuals had rejected the idea of individualistic "Manchesterian economic man." They sought to restore mystery and a degree of transcendental meaning to man and his social reality.¹⁴¹
Social change had caused them to complain that the world of cities and machines was "too much with them," and that society, rather than giving meaning to human existence, was crushing and destroying its deepest sources of spiritual life. They tended to think that the situation was getting worse rather than better with the passage of time. The acceleration of social change only intensified a longing for a past that existed only in a highly idealized vision of total social peace and justice.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰Stern, The Politics of Cultural Despair, xi. The Social Democrats dismissed Spann's plans for a "true" state as "reactionary Utopianism." See the scathing review of Der wahre Staat published in the Arbeiter-Zeitung, February 20, 1922, 1-2.

¹⁴¹Peter Drucker, The End of Economic Man. A Study of the New Totalitarianism (New York: The John Day Company, 1939), passim. In France the crisis in cultural values produced grandiose schemes for a social order that was all-encompassing and "organic." See the two studies, the first superb and the second competent, on this phase of French intellectual history: Frank E. Manuel, The Prophets of Paris (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1962); and Matthew H. Elbow, French Corporative Theory, 1789-1948. A Chapter in the History of Ideas (New York: Columbia University Press, 1953).

¹⁴²The psychological roots of totalitarianism have been searchingly studied in Franz Alexander, Our Age of Unreason. A Study of the Irrational Forces (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1942); and Erich Fromm, Escape from Freedom (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1941).

As an intensely serious scholar and intellectual, Spann tended to think of many political problems in fundamentally aesthetic terms. More and more he came to think of the state and society as resembling an absolutely perfect work of art in its ultimate form. Ideal factors, and not "mere" material goods, would again be part of daily experience in the "true" state. This rejection of many of the aspects of the material world was an underlying attitude of cultural fatigue and alienation that even reached into the highest leadership positions of German and Austrian society.¹⁴³ Intellectuals tried to become political figures, just as political leaders more and more tried to arm themselves with ideologies claiming absolute truth and validity. The example of Gabriele D'Annunzio, the Italian poet, novelist, and adventurer who seized Fiume in 1919 and proclaimed a corporative constitution for the legionary city-state is clear evidence of aesthetic leadership attempting to become political leadership.¹⁴⁴ Some European rationalists

¹⁴³James Joll, Intellectuals in Politics. Three Biographical Essays (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1960), 57-129. Walther Rathenau is the classical example of a man of affairs who is also profoundly alienated from the material world that he has so clearly mastered and brought under the control of his will.

¹⁴⁴George L. Mosse, The Culture of Western Europe. The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. An Introduction (New York: Rand McNally & Company, 1961), 305; Anthony Richard Ewart Rhodes, The Poet as Superman. A Life of Gabriele D'Annunzio (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1959), passim.

were alarmed at this trend of events, going so far as to claim that the intellectuals' desire to engage in the "game of political passions" constituted little less than "treason" to their traditional role of dedication to basically transcendental values. Much of the tragic turmoil and excessive public passion of modern times was traced to this fundamental act of "treason," which derived from the desire of many European intellectuals to "abase the values of knowledge before the values of action."¹⁴⁵

Othmar Spann failed in his attempt to combine the "values of knowledge" with the "values of action." The direct relationship between his ideas and his times is a problem yet to be adequately studied. The problem is one of both "why?" and "how?" since neither ideas nor social environment carry on separate air-tight existences apart from one another. Indeed, ideas would appear to "live" lives of their own, independent of their immediate social environment, in only a highly qualified way.¹⁴⁶ The continuing problem of intellectual history is the refinement of approaches to issues and ideas. Ideally intellectual history must be both precise and intuitive, open-ended and rigorously scientific. Although much can be learned from a study of the ideas, life, and times of Othmar Spann, the student of this

¹⁴⁵ Julien Benda, The Betrayal of the Intellectuals (La Trahison des Clercs), translated by Richard Aldington (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), 21, 119, and 135.

¹⁴⁶ Baumer, "Intellectual History and its Problems," 198.

aspect of thought, or of any other problem in the history of ideas, must not fall prey to conceit. If much is known in certain areas, even more may still be unknown, for the realistic historian of ideas will generally subscribe to the proposition that the entire process "by which ideas spread, become generally accepted, and affect social behavior is something of a mystery."¹⁴⁷ Spann was himself aware of the essentially mysterious nature of social and intellectual interaction. Seeking the all-embracing bonds of community, he forgot that the social unity he sought was more often than not an artistic ideal, and was thus a belief essentially not of this world. In attempting to relate everything to an absolute category of totality, he became a prisoner of his own system of thought, confusing ends and means. Goethe, the greatest and most serene of German intellectuals, was as aware of the "need to belong" as was Spann, only Goethe also recognized the human frailties and limitations of both man and his society.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷Whiteside, "Ernst von Salomon," 245.

¹⁴⁸Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, "Vier Jahreszeiten. Herbst. 68," in Goethes Werke. Herausgegeben im Auftrage der Grossherzogin Sophie von Sachsen (133 vols., Weimar: Herman Böhlau, 1887-1919), Vol. I (1887), 355.

Was ist heilig?
Das ist's, was viele
Seelen zusammen Bindet;
Bänd' es auch nur leicht,
Wie die Binse den Kranz.

What is sacred?
It is that which binds
Together many souls;
But be sure to bind
it lightly,
As the rush binds the wreath.

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