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Conservative Revolutionary Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic and National Socialist Germany: Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger

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ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Conservative Revolutionary Intellectuals in the Weimar Republic and National Socialist Germany: Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger

This thesis will examine the writings and career/life paths of three conservative revolutionary intellectuals during the Weimar Republic and National Socialist Germany. The purpose of this examination is not only to provide an overview of the development of conservative revolutionary thought in Germany after World War I, but also to investigate the influence these intellectuals had on the National Socialists' seizure and consolidation of power. The works and lives of three important intellectuals will be examined: Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger. In combination with scholarly secondary literature, this thesis will be based mostly on translated primary writings.

State University of New York
College at Buffalo
Department of History

*Conservative Revolutionary Intellectuals in Weimar and National Socialist Germany:
Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, and Martin Heidegger*

A Thesis in
History

By

Vincent S. Betts

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of

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INTRODUCTION

The National Socialist reign in Germany is one of the most popular areas of study in contemporary European History. In retrospect, it is extremely difficult to fathom how an entire nation could follow a leader such as Adolf Hitler; a man who had such extreme and racist views. It is difficult to grasp the concept of how a nation as modernized as Germany could not only let a man with such a corrupt sense of right and wrong into power, but then follow him blindly, and help him commit one of the most diabolical plans in history, the Holocaust.

In order to truly dissect this problem, the first step necessary is to move beyond the incorrect, preconceived notions that run rampant today in terms of how Hitler came to power, and what the actual social climate of Germany was in the early twentieth century. In regards to the first problem it is a major misconception of its own to say that Adolf Hitler was chosen to be head of government in Germany. It is popularly thought that Hitler was elected by the majority of eligible voters in Germany to be the head of government, but this is not true. The most votes he and the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) earned was in the election held in March of 1933, even though the election was held under conditions of political duress, and the political left was greatly suppressed. Another concept that is often forgotten is the fact that Hitler was never elected as dictator. Although he was elected to the Reichstag, Hitler was appointed Chancellor by President Hindenburg. Hitler soon passed the Enabling Act, which allowed him to write himself in as acting Dictator of Germany, essentially killing the Weimar Republic.

It is also important to describe the social climate of Germany at the beginning of the twentieth century. After a devastating defeat in World War I, Germany succumbed to a downward-spiral. Not only did German society have to deal with the agony and humiliation of defeat, they also had to cope with the embarrassment of taking the blame for initiating the conflict. Germany was also given the responsibility of paying reparations for the damages of the war all across the European continent which enhanced these hardships even more. Everything combined, Germany's core infrastructure was in tatters. What may have been the most devastating part of the loss in the war was what the German people at home had to endure. The majority of war propaganda in Germany from World War I that was shown to the German people at the home front made it seem like Germany was winning the war. When the armistice was signed to end the war, the German people were surprised and angry to find that they were on the losing end. The "Stab-in-the-Back Legend" became a popular myth after the war. This concept stated that certain people—identified by the NSDAP as the Jews, Social Democrats, liberals, and the Communists—had betrayed the country and caused the defeat. Myths such as this became widespread after the war, and when a series of inflation, rationalization, and depression hit Germany throughout the 1920s, they resulted in panic and hatred that could be used by certain people in order to manipulate and coerce society into subscribing to a certain belief or series of actions.

A second step to correcting the preconceived notions about the Nazi reign in Germany is reconsidering the role of right-wing intellectuals. Examining several of these intellectuals is the aim of the following discussion. Thoughts and theories of the conservative-revolutionary intellectuals will be discussed and analyzed in order to

demonstrate how the socio-economic and political conditions during Weimar made it possible for these three influential figures to spread their theories, and in certain cases, to promote their individual careers and aspirations. The three men examined here represent three genres of writing: political, philosophical, and literary. Though much of this examination will focus on the textual works, the actions of the intellectuals will also be discussed and examined. The political sphere will be represented by Carl Schmitt; the philosophical sphere by Martin Heidegger, and the literary sphere by Ernst Jünger. With their writings and actions, these three intellectuals established themselves as leaders in their specific fields and may have even played a part in the growth of National Socialist sentiments in the 1920s and early 1930s.

This discussion will examine Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger in respect to how their writings and theories influenced and resonated with National Socialism during and after the Weimar period in Germany. Although some instances, as in the case of Martin Heidegger's theories, might seem directly linked to National Socialist ideals, they may need to be examined in greater depth in order to reveal the actual reasoning behind their writings and actions. Whether directly or indirectly, these men indeed made a profound impact in regards to the negative emotions felt towards the Weimar Republic, and positive emotions felt towards a conservative revolution driven by a group such as the National Socialist German Workers' Party.

The basis for this discussion will be the primary works of the three men in question, as well as supplementary examination of secondary works composed by contemporary scholars. Understanding the socio-economic climate provides a necessary historical context for understanding the theories of the three men. In the first

short chapter, I will briefly discuss the time period after the armistice of World War I. The next three chapters will address Schmitt, Heidegger, and Jünger. Each chapter will begin with a brief biographical sketch, followed by an analysis of their early writings and early career developments, their writings during the Weimar period—when each of these men expressed their most significant ideas and themes—and, finally, their writings during Nazi reign. The conclusion will examine their writings as a whole, and compare them to the rest of their career in their respective fields. The conclusion will also briefly assess of each individual's impact on the growth of National Socialist sentiments in Germany, and how their career paths were related to the ideals expressed in their writings. In short, this thesis will attempt to establish a coherent analysis of Schmitt, Heidegger, and Jünger individually, as well as of how their efforts combined in order to abet the popularity and/or legitimacy of the NSDAP.

CHAPTER 1

WELCOME TO WEIMAR

A nation in extreme turmoil, the state of interwar Germany was one of instability. Coming off of a debilitating defeat in World War I, Germany was in dire need of a new beginning. In combination with its defeat in the Great War, Germany was also put into further debt by the victors. The Versailles Treaty that was ratified in June, 1919 placed a great deal of hardship on the nation of Germany. Not only did it have to deal with the loss and blame for the war, it was also charged with paying reparations for the destruction throughout Western Europe. Although it may be debated by historians such as Detlev Peukert whether or not the reparations were as big of a burden as many historians generally claim, dealing with the bills, along with all of the other charges from the defeat of World War I made Germany, at the very least, a nation heavily in debt.¹

As some historians and authors have been quick to point out, the reparation bills that were imposed upon Germany were not the only cause of the turmoil to which the nation later succumbed. The “War Guilt Clause” of the Treaty was also a major issue for German society. Defeat in war was enough trauma for a nation to endure, but having to bear the blame for beginning the war even beginning was an additional hardship for many German people. Additionally, due to the propaganda that was being used, the home front during the war, believed that Germany and its allies were decisively winning the war.

¹ Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, Translated by Richard Deveson, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992).

In addition to the list of issues that the Versailles Treaty prescribed for Germany in terms of economic and social troubles, the political structure of the nation was in shambles. Germany was in need of a new government. The Empire had collapsed and the German people demanded that politics move in a new direction; the new direction being a Republic. With the civil unrest that was rampant after the war, the Republic was to become a symbol of hope for a rebirth of the German nation. In short, the Weimar Republic in Germany was an effort to stabilize and to bring stability to a nation that was emerging from an emotionally devastating defeat in war. In an era of rapid modernization, supporters of the Republic hoped it would be able to modernize the nation and bring it out of the depths of defeat.

Many believe that the Weimar Republic in Germany was destined to fail due to the conditions that it had to endure in interwar Germany. Though this is generally what is thought about Weimar Germany, a new concept is also being debated. This is the concept that Weimar was not a complete and utter failure. There are several historians who believe that the Weimar was in fact an era of great social progress. Three historians of the Weimar era, Eric D. Weitz, Detlev Peukert, and Peter Gay, have discussed the progress that was made during the Weimar era of Germany. They believe that Weimar possessed promising institutions that failed due to the combination of the Treaty of Versailles, the fragmented political parties of the time, and poor economic conditions. Several areas of society were greatly improved during Weimar including, but not limited to, architecture, art, sound (phonograph and radio) and imaging technologies (photograph and fast-printing, printing presses), the performing

arts, philosophy and the liberalization of gender and sexual norms; on top of all that there was a solid economic recovery between 1924 and 1929.

This thesis will examine how three intellectuals, directly or indirectly, provided ideological justification for the rise of Adolf Hitler and the Third Reich. These writers helped set the stage for the Nazi Party to enter the framework of Weimar Germany, and to turn the country upside-down. This thesis will examine three major intellectual areas of the German Nation in the 1920s and 1930s: the political, philosophical, and literary spheres.

In terms of these three different intellectual spheres, Germany was in a unique position, because it had representatives who were leaders not only of their own nation, but also arguably of Europe as a whole in their respective areas. Carl Schmitt will represent the political sphere in this thesis. Although there are many issues that contemporary historians have debated regarding his theories, there can be no doubt that he was not one of, if not *the* most influential political theorist in Germany in the early part of the twentieth century. In terms of political theorists, Schmitt was extremely flexible, which is one of the major reasons that contemporary historians and theorists find inconsistencies and even contradictions in his ideas throughout his career. Although there are historians that find his shifting political stances problematic, his different ideas are what make him so unique, dynamic, and extremely important when studying the Weimar period in Germany.

With regard to the philosophical sphere, we will examine the works and career of the important twentieth-century German philosopher, Martin Heidegger. There is much debate on the relationship of Heidegger to the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich.

Most commentators have argued that Heidegger believed that only good would come from the Nazi reign in Germany and that, although he did not truly believe in everything that Hitler and the Nazi Party were doing, he did believe that what they were doing would ultimately lead to a desirable conclusion. Though there is a debate concerning what his actual vision of the Nazi Party was, one theme is consistent through his career: opportunism.

The literary sphere is represented by a soldier, writer, and a veteran of World War I: Ernst Jünger. Bursting onto the scene writing about his experiences in the Great War, Jünger glorified the trials, tribulations and hardships of war and battle. His many writings have caused quite a debate among contemporary historical and literary scholars because there are several different ways in which they can be interpreted. Although his texts glorify war and death, he never joined the inner circle of the Nazi Party—even though he was invited to do so. These divergent interpretations are due to the fact the content of his writings was closely related to the views and theories of the National Socialists.

The political, philosophical, and literary spheres of the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich played major roles in determining the fateful course of Germany in the early part of twentieth-century. These three spheres were significantly shaped by the writings and career paths of Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger.

Economics

One issue that proved to be extremely problematic throughout the Weimar Republic was the economic disasters that plagued the nation twice during Weimar's existence.² Although the Great Depression in particular occurred throughout much of the world, economic crises hit especially hard in Germany due to its loss of World War I. With all of the war debt that German leaders had incurred in order to finance the war, along with the reparations that Germany had to pay, the crises which hit after the war proved to be devastating in Germany.

The economic crises which Germany had to endure after the war are generally split into three separate and distinct phases. As Eric D. Weitz explains, the phases were that of inflation, rationalization, and depression.³ Hyperinflation was due to the immense war debt that the German government incurred throughout the duration of the war, as well as the reparation payments that were inflicted upon Germany. In order to compensate for the reparations that needed to be paid due to the loss in World War I, they raised prices to increase national profits. Consumer prices went up, and many workers went on strike due to wage and hour issues. With the workers going on strike, the nation had no choice but to acquiesce to the demands made by the workforce. Although the workforce technically ended the 1921 workers' strike victoriously, not much effectively was changed. The issues concerned with wages and hours were dealt with, but the economy was still suffering. The workforce was getting higher wages, but the currency in which they were being paid was depreciating. This monetary depreciation

² The first being hyper-inflation and the second being the Great Crash.

³ Eric D. Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2007), 149.

was also due to French occupation of the Ruhr, which led the government to print an overabundance of currency. Thus, inflation was followed by hyperinflation. This hyperinflation caused the currency of Germany to become almost worthless. Stabilization projects were then put into effect. The most significant of these stabilization projects was the one conjured up by Gustav Stresemann and Wilhelm Marx. This project, in conjunction with the Dawes and Young Plans, not only created a more coherent payment plan for Germany's reparations, but also vacated Allied forces from the Ruhr. These stabilization projects eventually succeeded and assisted in reviving the German economy in 1924. The successful conclusion of the stabilization projects ushered in the "Golden Years" of Weimar Germany in the mid-1920s. These "Golden Years" were marked by immense changes in the social atmosphere in Germany. During this period workers' living standards began to steadily improve, and there was increased faith in the credit system.

Rationalization was the next step for the nation. Rationalization is the "application of scientific methods to production in order to expand output with less labor."⁴ Germany began to look at the United States as *the* model of rationalization. German industrial leaders were in awe of America's rate of production and consumption as well as their efficiency and effectiveness in production. Germany began to use more modern methods and technologies in the workplace. Although wages increased slightly, the major disadvantage of rationalization was the drastic increase in unemployment. Both the industrial and agrarian workforce was adversely affected. Life was turned upside-down for most Germans who became impoverished. Even those

⁴ Ibid.

that succeeded in these “Golden Years” were soon to be upended by the Stock-Market Crash in December of 1929.

Although the stock market Crash began in the United States, it severely impacted Germany. The Great Crash in the United States began a sort of domino effect that spanned across the world. With the United States spinning into a financial crisis, one of their first maneuvers was to recall the short-term loans that had been given to Germany through the Dawes and Young Plans to help with reparations. The loss of these short-term loans sent Germany straight into a financial crisis that quickly developed into a crisis of production. With the economic issues that Germany was facing at the time of the World Economic Crisis, it was forced to downsize its workforce and cut numerous jobs. In 1930 almost one-third of the workforce was officially unemployed. Weitz states that statisticians did not count another two million “unofficially” unemployed Germans which would account for 40 percent of the workforce.⁵ In turn, Germany also went into a period of deflation between the years of 1930 and 1933. But this deflationary period failed to stimulate the economy in any significant way.

Politics

The political conditions in Weimar Germany were extremely tense. The Weimar Republic was initially proclaimed on November 9, 1918, and although there was some hope for it to succeed, it was almost immediately denied legitimacy by large sections of the German population. Due to several differences in opinion, the constitution that was

⁵ Ibid., 161.

drafted was quickly transformed into a list of compromises. One article, in particular, of the Weimar constitution was to have fateful consequences for the Republic: Article 48.

It stated:

If a state does not fulfill the obligations laid upon it by the Reich constitution or Reich laws, the Reich President may use armed force to cause it to oblige. In case public safety is seriously threatened or disturbed, the Reich President may take the measures necessary to reestablish law and order, if necessary using armed force. In the pursuit of this aim, he may suspend the civil rights described in articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153, partially or entirely. The Reich President must inform the Reichstag immediately about all measures undertaken based on paragraphs 1 and 2 of this article. The measures must be suspended immediately if the Reichstag so demands. If danger is imminent, the state government may, for their specific territory, implement steps as described in paragraph 2. These steps may be suspended if so demanded by the Reich President or the Reichstag. Further details may be regulated by Reich legislation.⁶

Although rule by emergency decree had been put in place by Heinrich Brüning already in 1930, Article 48 would acquire additional significance in Hitler's consolidation of power in 1933.

Outside of the Weimar constitution, there was a thriving political world with many diverse active parties. In the early 1920s no clear leader had emerged among the different political parties. During this time Germany had a wider range of free speech than any other country; that is until a public speaking ban was put in place from 1924 until 1927.⁷ The extreme right of the political world during Weimar idealized violence and racial anti-Semitism while the left idealized militarism due to the Bolshevik Revolution. Representing the political left was the Communist Party (KPD). Representing the political right was the German National People's Party (DNVP), the

⁶ "Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution of 1919," University of South Alabama, URL = <<http://www.southalabama.edu/history/faculty/rogers/348/article48.html>>. [accessed May 14, 2013].

⁷ Weitz, 83.

German Peoples' Party (DVP), and the National Socialist German Worker's Party (NSDAP). Representing the political center was the Weimar Coalition which consisted of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), the German Democratic Party (DDP), and the Catholic Center Party.⁸ With so many different political groupings there was much political dissension during the Weimar Republic. As a result German society was a disoriented and disillusioned community.⁹

Weimar, between the years of 1918 and 1924 and 1929 and 1933, were periods of duress and instability. Economically, Germany was constantly in flux. Once it was stabilized in 1924, it was quickly shattered again by the Great Crash in 1929. Politically, Weimar saw more instability. During the reign of the Weimar Republic, there was constant call for revisions or change, mostly due to the inability of the republic to stabilize the economy for a prolonged period of time. This instability of the economic and political systems gave political and social organizations, such as the NSDAP, the opportunity to gain public support. This thesis will examine how Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger may have further influenced the German people to fall in line with National Socialist ideology, and any motivations these men had in doing so.

⁸ These are examples of the larger political parties that were represented. Many smaller parties also existed during the Weimar Republic due to the "5% hurdle."

⁹ Peukert, 245-246.

CHAPTER 2

CARL SCHMITT

Carl Schmitt is essential to any examination of interwar German politics. This section will chronologically outline his primary writings in a coherent and contextual manner. Beginning with a brief biography, the discussion will then examine Schmitt's writings from his early period, during Weimar, and under the Third Reich. Though it can be argued that his writings lack a clear political ideal, this discussion will show how many of his fundamental principles remain firm throughout his interwar career. Focusing on writings through and after Weimar, this discussion will show how, although he argues that he supported the Weimar Republic, he consistently maintained political ideals that contradicted those realized with the Weimar Constitution.

A Biographical Glimpse

Carl Schmitt, a German jurist, University Professor of Law, and legal theorist, was born in 1888 in Plettenberg, Germany. Schmitt was a widely renowned political, legal, and constitutional theorist in Germany during Weimar Germany and National Socialist Germany in the early 20th century. Still controversial today, many of his most influential writings were based on the principle that there is a decisive need for a strong central government in order to further the interests of the nation; that a republic which is

based upon liberal democracy and deliberation would never be able to express the unified will of the people. Schmitt believed that a liberal democracy would ultimately harm the people, and the government, because nothing could ever be completed in a satisfactory manner. He believed that no party in the deliberation process would be appeased if it needed to agree to some sort of compromise which would inhibit its desires and/or needs. More importantly, he believed that all parties should be subordinated to the will of the state.

Carl Schmitt gained admittance to the Friedrich-Wilhelm University of Berlin,¹⁰ which at the time was “the pinnacle of the university system and thus one of the greatest universities in the world.”¹¹ Although he originally desired to pursue an education at the university level in the field of philology, he was quickly persuaded by one of his uncles to modify his studies “in the more practical direction of jurisprudence.”¹² After passing the assessor’s examination and with the outbreak of World War I, Schmitt enrolled in the German Reserve Infantry. After recovering from a back injury in basic training for the reserve infantry, he eventually rose through the ranks and was promoted to sergeant in the censorship sector of the regional martial law administration for the General Command of Army Corps 1 in Munich.¹³

When World War I began, Schmitt began to develop some of his own personal intellectual ideals. Schmitt went against the popular mantra of nationalism during war. When the war began he “did not share the initial belligerent enthusiasm of his

¹⁰ In 1949 Friedrich-Wilhelm University was renamed the Humboldt University

¹¹ Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (New York: Verso, 2000), 13.

¹² *Ibid.*, 13.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 16.

countrymen.”¹⁴ The fact that many of his earliest works do not reference the idea of qualities and virtues specific to the German people is noteworthy because, as Gopal Balakrishnan notes, it shows just how detached Schmitt was from the German people as a whole, especially during what Balakrishnan designates, with just cause, as *the* “defining experience of his generation.”¹⁵

Although he illuminates the fact that Schmitt may have, early in his lengthy career, not always followed popular opinion, Balakrishnan does not fully develop this notion. Schmitt was notorious for always adapting his theories to popular opinion. However, in the case of his early career, Schmitt maintains his personal ideals as opposed to the opinions of those who could advance his career further in a more expedient manner. He embraces some opinions that would hold very little weight in terms of career advancement. Although this independence did not last long in the future for Schmitt and his public opinions, it is a minor exception to a rule that many critics of Schmitt are quick to point out.

Much of Schmitt’s early professional years were spent focusing on his legal studies. Although he did allocate some of his efforts to his personal legal and political theories, his most influential, and what would become his most controversial works, were composed after the conclusion of World War I during the Weimar Republic. Many of his most renowned works revolve around ideals of sovereignty and centralized governmental power.

In 1933 Schmitt became a Professor of Law at the University of Berlin, a position he held until 1945. Also in 1933, Hermann Goering appointed Schmitt the “Prussian

¹⁴ Ibid., 16.

¹⁵ Ibid.

State Counselor.” He was also elected president of the Union of National-Socialist Jurists in November of the same year. It is easy to see the importance of Schmitt for the Nazis simply by looking at the numerous prominent positions that he held. In addition to these positions, Schmitt was also a prominent advisor to several leading politicians.

There are two primary criticisms that are commonly leveled against Carl Schmitt. The first is the simple fact that he became a leading political theorist for the National Socialist regime when they ascended to power. The motivation behind this criticism is the thought that it is difficult to put much importance on a political theorist who defended the indefensible. The second and for our concerns here more pertinent criticism is the notion that Schmitt continuously adapted and manipulated his legal and political theories to adhere to the ideologies of those who were in power at the time; that he would change his own personal ideologies to suit those in power in order to advance his legal and political career.

A common criticism made in regard to the entire spectrum of Schmitt’s career is that he was not a true political theorist; that he simply adapted his theories in order to appease those who were in power at any given time. Thus, Schmitt’s theories and works appear to fluctuate throughout his entire life. Although this may have been true of the works during his “Nazi Experience,”¹⁶ as Joseph Bendersky refers to it as, some of his earlier works can be examined and interpreted in the opposite way. For example, in 1923 Schmitt composed an essay entitled *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*,

¹⁶ Joseph W. Bendersky, *Carl Schmitt: Theorist for the Reich* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

which essentially condemned the political principles that had guided Germany in establishing the Weimar Constitution.

Although Carl Schmitt is commonly portrayed as a Nazi apologist who adapted his political theories as a reaction to events which were taking place in front of his eyes, there is much more to his writings. Also, Schmitt is commonly criticized for the apparent discontinuity of his works. Again, this statement might be true in some instances, but in other instances it can be regarded as shortsighted. True, in the overall trajectory of his career there are many areas in which his theories are constantly fluctuating, but there are a small number of ideas which remain relatively constant in his works throughout his life.

In order to study the career of Carl Schmitt in a comprehensive manner, it is important to keep certain essential facts in mind. Due to the extreme amount of fluctuation in his theories, the most important criterion to always retain is context. The time and events which were occurring during the composition of his works are pertinent for the correct analysis of his works. The second theme that must be addressed is the manner in which Schmitt's writing should be approached. As this study is more than a biographical sketch of Carl Schmitt, the examination would not be fulfilled with a general analysis of the texts. Rather, in order to sufficiently detail his arguments, one must separate his works in a chronological fashion, again making sure to always retain and compare his views of a certain time period to the context of the socio-economic climate of that corresponding time period. The three chronological phases most salient for this examination are: the period before and during World War I, the Weimar Republic, and finally the National Socialist Regime.

Early Writings

Although the great majority of Carl Schmitt's theories and works were composed after the First World War, there should be brief mention of his political theories before the war. They may not have played a pivotal role in the grand scheme of his career, but Schmitt's earliest intellectual works are still of interest as they provide the first indication of the ambiguous commitments which become much more apparent throughout the remainder of his career.

The majority of Schmitt's earliest works were comprised of critiques of what was the dominant legal theory of the time: "legal positivism." The main premise of the theory of legal positivism is two-fold. First, legal positivism states that laws are rules which are generated by human beings, and no other entity. Secondly, this theory supposes that legal procedure has no direct or indirect connections with human ethics or human morality. Legal positivism is a judicial theory which completely disregards any notion of "natural-rights." As Lars Vinx puts it, "the fact that a policy would be just, wise, efficient, or prudent is never sufficient reason for thinking that it is actually the law, and the fact that it is unjust, unwise, inefficient or imprudent is never sufficient reason for doubting it."¹⁷

The very first of Schmitt's writings before and during the First World War were scholarly in nature. The first of his writings was his dissertation entitled *Über Schuld und Schuldarten* ("On Guilt and Degrees of Guilt"). In this dissertation, Schmitt's primary objective was to examine the specific moment in which a judge makes a

¹⁷ Lars Vinx, "Carl Schmitt", *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2010 Edition)*, Edward N. Zalta (ed.), URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/schmitt/>>. [accessed May 14, 2013].

decision in a legal case. He argues that this precise moment is extremely inefficient and is a “free-floating element in the legal process.”¹⁸ Schmitt soon complemented his dissertation with another discourse entitled *Gesetz und Urteil* (“Statute and Judgment”). This work too, which was an extension of his dissertation, focused on the precise moment when the judge makes his decision. Schmitt concluded that the legal norm is extremely inefficient. He argues that the legal norm is “entirely embedded in the ultimately arbitrary conventions of interpretation within the legal community.”¹⁹ Schmitt, in this text, appears to be entirely disgusted with the manner in which judicial decisions are made, and possibly even more so, how they are generally “proven.” He indicates that “a judicial decision is now correct when it can be assumed that another judge would have come to the same judgment.”²⁰ Schmitt emphasizes that legal positivism disregards any notion of natural law. He states that, in practice, legal positivism does not presuppose any sort of inherent law of humanity; specifically, it does not reserve any possibility for morality or reason. Schmitt, at this time, criticizes legal positivism believing that, if enforced correctly, it essentially eliminates reason, asserting that every person is accountable for their actions regardless of situation or alternate choices, whether it would have concluded more positively or negatively.

These two discourses which Schmitt composed before the First World War portray political views which are, as many historians are quick to indicate, very different from his post-war political theories. Some of the basic principles he defends in these early writings are opposed to the arguments which he makes in the Weimar writings. In these scholarly discussions Schmitt contends that interpretations in the legal community

¹⁸ Balakrishnan, 14.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

are incorrect, vague, and inefficient. He argues that the system in place needs to be recalibrated in order to become more effective. Many of his writings during the Weimar period in Germany have a considerably different tenor to them. Implied in these early writings, Schmitt appears to favor natural law, arguing that without accounting for morality, reasoning, and rationality. Later writings, as will now be discussed, will imply a total rejection of Universalist natural law theory.

Weimar Writings

Although many of his earliest works are fairly inconsequential in the grand scheme of his entire career the choices that Carl Schmitt made in his university years to pursue an education in jurisprudence followed him throughout his career. As has been previously noted, Schmitt, during the outbreak of the First World War, did not display the same amount of enthusiastic nationalism as did most of his German counterparts. With the arrival of the news of the armistice and the Treaty of Versailles, Schmitt then began to compose a series of some of the most significant political writings of the Weimar Republic.

In two of the first major works that Schmitt composed, he examines several issues such as sovereignty, the order of the state, and the question concerning leadership. These works in question are *The Dictator*, written in 1921, and *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, written in 1922.²¹ *The Dictator*

²¹ Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, Translated by George Schwab, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005).

was his examination of the historical meaning and use of dictatorship throughout the world. Schmitt delves back to the original idea of dictatorship, that of Rome. Dictatorial power in Rome was used for the protection of the current form of government. The primary premise which Schmitt tends to emphasize throughout his work is that dictatorial power is not usually sovereign. With the addition of the term “sovereign,” it is important to define what Schmitt truly identifies as “sovereign.” He firmly believes that as long as governance is exercised with the will of the people in mind, a dictator would in fact be a sovereign dictator. The entirety of Schmitt’s historiographical approach to the idiom “sovereign dictator” is intended to illustrate the development of basic emergency powers which the state should maintain in a suitable democracy. This calling for a “sovereign dictator” is consistently hinted at in many of his earliest works, but *The Dictator* is where this ideal is fully developed. This ideal becomes the keystone of Schmitt’s call for a populist dictatorship later in his career.

Many of the historical instances which Schmitt discusses involve revolutions. The primary reason that Schmitt discusses these revolutions is because emergency powers were called upon. Most integral for him was the French Revolution. The reason he places so much emphasis on the French Revolution is because Schmitt sees in it the first glimpse of a “sovereign dictatorship.” What makes the French Revolution so important to his discourse is the fact that dictatorial powers were called upon and, most importantly, were used in order to transform the primary system of government in the name of, and by the will of, the people. Schmitt noted the efforts of Jacobinism during the French Revolution. The mentality of “fighting for the good of the general will” that was displayed, according to Schmitt would ideally translate to the populist movement

during Weimar, ideally leading to a populist and sovereign dictator.²² For Schmitt, *The Dictator*, although it stresses the impact of the French Revolution, presents a comparable situation to that of Weimar. A sovereign dictator, in the name of the people, is the perfect solution for the instability of the Weimar Republic.

Another integral facet of Schmitt's discourse on dictatorship is the fact that he views this "sovereign dictatorship" as being essentially a democratic institution since the dictatorial emergency powers are designed with only the true will of the people in mind. Schmitt argues that the term dictator should not be regarded as complete and permanent authority given to a single individual, and that any dictatorial emergency decree must only be made with the will of the people in mind.

In his 1921 work entitled *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt analyzes the term politics, the political, and the state. Schmitt begins this text by comparing the ideas of the state and of the political. As he puts it, "the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political."²³ What is crucial here for Schmitt is that the political is not equivalent to the concept of the state. He then details the difference between the concept of the political and the concept of party politics. The primary difference that he maintains is that the political is a component of human nature rather than a component of the state which is where he locates party politics. Schmitt then devotes the remainder of the text to his primary thesis of the friend-enemy distinction as the basis of politics.

The friend-enemy thesis, on which Schmitt focuses the bulk of his attention in this text, states that, in the political realm, there must be a series of friends and enemies

²² Carl Schmitt, *Die Diktatur* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1994), 127-149.

²³ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, Translated by George Schwab, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996) 19.

in order for there to be a concept of the political. He begins this argument by stating that “friend,” and more specifically, “enemy,” are, in essence, political terms. An extremely important argument that Schmitt states here is that political enemies are not individuals, but rather belong to a group. He expands his theory of the political enemy by stating that, “the enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity.”²⁴ Schmitt also describes the enemy as necessary in order for the political and, to a larger extent, the state to become legitimate. He continues the defense of his theory by stating that a political enemy of a state would not necessarily be the enemy of the state forever.

The primary theme in this work, which could easily be seen as foreshadowing of Carl Schmitt’s future career development, is the differences between the friends of political groups and the enemies of political groups. Schmitt makes certain not to delineate specific political groups, but he does outline proper actions to take in the case of political enmity. Throughout much of his text he illuminates and suggests that war against political enemies is not only acceptable, but it is necessary in order to provide homogeneity in the nation or state. In the mind of Schmitt, the state is the most important institution in the nation; the state is practically omnipotent in its reign, and is regulated solely by the people which put it in power. Echoing sentiments Hobbes relayed in *Leviathan*,²⁵ Schmitt even goes so far to declare that:

The state as the decisive political entity possesses an enormous power; the possibility of waging war and thereby publicly disposing of the lives of men...as

²⁴ Ibid., 28.

²⁵ Hobbes, Thomas. *Leviathan*. Edited by J.C.A. Gaskin. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

long as the state is a political entity this requirement for internal peace compels it in critical situations to decide also upon the domestic enemy.²⁶

Although it is fairly easy to see the significance of this quote in light of Schmitt's later personal involvement in the National Socialist state, it also illustrates his defense of state power more generally. Throughout *The Concept of the Political* he attempts to justify any action the state could take; whether it is against other states, other political organizations, or against anyone, or anything, that could be considered a "real enemy" for any reason. He states that "the justification of war does not reside in its being fought for ideals or norms of justice, but in its being fought against a real enemy."²⁷ Implicit in this quote is the complete rejection of not only international law, but also universalist norms including human rights.

Another major argument in *The Concept of the Political* is Schmitt's ongoing polemic against the ideals and institutions of liberalism. He declares that true liberalism attempts to begin the process of "depoliticalization."²⁸ He believes that true political belief systems lose the entire worth of their existence if the presence of a central state rests on the compromises of friendly deliberation and litigation. If these attributes of liberalism actually guided any nation, it would, according to Schmitt, effectively lead to the lack of any political organization due to the absence of political differences which create the friend-enemy debate. Thus, with no political differences, there would be no real politics and – recollecting his original statement in *The Concept of the Political* that

²⁶ Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 46.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 49.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 55.

“the concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political,”²⁹ – there would, in effect, be no state at all.

Schmitt also stakes out a position concerning the possibility of universalism; he argues that true universalism is not actually attainable. For evidence, he looks at the League of Nations which was created after World War I. He states that the League of Nations would not be able to make collective political ideals due to the fact that, inside of the League of Nations, every state would still be recognized individually. Schmitt is able to connect this argument to his friend-enemy thesis by discussing how, in such a group, there is still certain to be outcasts, and at the very least there will be dissent over ideas and topics. He is able to connect his theories on universalism to his position on humanism as well. He was also a critic of humanistic beliefs. Humanity, in Schmitt’s views, cannot even wage war. Humanity consists of all human beings. In this sense, humanity has no one to wage war against; there is no other party for the collective humanity to declare war upon. Schmitt believes that humanity corresponds to universalism in the very strong sense that it assumes equality for all. He states that universalism of any sort would assume that there were no states. Schmitt affirms this theory by stating, “universality at any price would necessarily have to mean the depoliticalization and with it, particularly, the nonexistence of states.”³⁰

Schmitt’s greatest fear is the lack or nonexistence of a political system, which would, in turn suggest the lack or nonexistence of the state. In his discourse he states that liberalism and/or the Kantian idea of a global republican government would destroy both the political system and the state. Schmitt declares:

²⁹ Ibid., 19.

³⁰ Ibid.

It would be a mistake to believe that a nation could eliminate the distinction of friend and enemy by declaring its friendship for the entire world or by voluntarily disarming itself. The world will not thereby become depoliticalized, and it will not be transplanted into a condition of pure morality, pure justice, or pure economics. If a people is afraid of the trials and risks implied by existing in the sphere of politics, then another people will appear which will assume these trials by protecting it against foreign enemies and thereby taking over political rule.³¹

What Schmitt is stating is the fact that, if a certain group of people have no interest in the traumas of politics, and if they decide to take the liberal/universal route of renouncing their political ideals, there will certainly be a separate group that will be more than willing to take control of the area and instill their own personal political ideals. This would effectively make the original group, which renounced their political participation, subject to the “protector...who decides who the enemy is.”³²

In his 1922 discourse entitled *Political Theology* Schmitt further develops his theories regarding sovereignty and dictatorship. In this text he argues that an individual authority must be present in order to dictate and guard legal norms of the state. He argues that in a state in which there is a large legislative system, much of the legal precedents can be lost through the processes of translation and interpretation. Schmitt declares that, in order for the legal system to hold true to its standards, a single authority must be present. With an authority, the legal norms would be upheld with much more confidence and consistency. He sees a basic problem with the way in which the legal system is upheld. The system, as Schmitt understands it, is only as efficient as the case is clear. In cases with specific and particular scenarios and evidence, he believes that there must be a sovereign authority who can properly interpret the legal code in terms of how it may pertain to the case at hand. Schmitt here

³¹ Ibid., 52.

³² Ibid.

is only concerned with material law; he does not consider the role of emotion, morality, or mental state as he believes that politics and jurisprudence should not be concerned with matters of this nature.

Another concern of importance, according to Schmitt, is the fact that the legal system requires a “homogenous medium.”³³ By this he is referring to the idea that normal legal codes prove to be ineffective in a political, economic, and social state of disarray. He declares that no normal legal code can control a state in an emergency. He believes that the only person that can overcome a state in total emergency is “the sovereign.”³⁴

One of, if not *the* most important target of Schmitt’s criticisms was the institution of parliamentary democracy. In *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, Carl Schmitt condemns the fundamental ideals upon which parliamentary democracy is based. In order to truly understand the arguments made by Schmitt in this critique one must understand what in fact he is actually criticizing. In the mind of Schmitt, democracy is understood as being a government which is ruled for and, more importantly, *by the people*. With this idea at the forefront for Schmitt, one can examine his critique in further detail.

Democracy is a very fragile institution for Schmitt. He believes that, in order for this institution to complete its duty in a way that satisfies its defining characteristics, it is necessary for the people to be in control of the government. With the addition of the representative parliament, Schmitt believes that this condition will never be satisfied.

³³ Ibid., 13.

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

He believes rather that parliament destroys what it is designed to accomplish. There are a variety of reasons for this belief which he elaborates in this critique.

The main reason he proclaims why the institution of parliament inhibits the ideals of democracy is the fact that there is a series of compromises throughout the deliberation processes that occur in parliament. With compromises come the fact that people will not get exactly what they are aiming for; the people are being forced to concede a portion of their desires. He declares early on in his treatise:

Destroying almost every hope...parliamentarism has already produced a situation in which all public business has become an object of spoils and compromise for the parties and their followers, and politics, far from being the concern of an elite, has become the despised business of a rather dubious class of persons.³⁵

Although it is not realistic for every individual to achieve all of his or her desires, Schmitt believes that this is a failure of parliament to fulfill its duties.

Arguably one of the most disturbing arguments Schmitt makes in his critique is the idea of the majority and the "General Will." He states:

In democracy the citizen even agrees to the law that is against his own will, for the law is the General Will and, in turn, the will of the free citizen. Thus a citizen never really gives his consent to a specific content but rather *in abstracto* to the result that evolves out of the general will and he votes only so that the votes out of which one can know this general will can be calculated. If the result deviates from the intention of those individuals voting, then the outvoted know that they have mistaken the content of the general will.³⁶

³⁵ Carl Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, Translated by Ellen Kennedy. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988) 4.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

Echoing the thoughts in Rousseau's *The Social Contract*,³⁷ Schmitt is effectively arguing in this instance that the essence of democracy states that only the people who vote on the victorious side of the issue are correct in terms of what the general will comprises. The people who voted for the opposition were mistaken when they were voting, and that the victorious option was what they truly desired: again reiterating Rousseau who argued that dissenters must be "forced to be free!"³⁸ Schmitt is obviously criticizing the ideals of parliamentary democracy in this excerpt insofar as it entails the protection of minority opinions and rights.

Schmitt also states in his critique that the people are not necessarily being represented in parliament in a sufficient manner. He accuses democratic representatives in parliament of having their own personal agendas which they pursue during deliberation instead of the desires of those who they are supposedly representing. "Democracy seems fated then to destroy itself in the problem of the formation of a will."³⁹ He believes that in the true spirit of democracy, the representatives, have the problem of choosing whether to fight for the will of the majority or for the will of themselves. In this case these parliamentary representatives have the ability to transform their own personal will into the general will of the people.

Schmitt states that "the minority might express the true will of the people; the people can be deceived, and one has long been familiar with the techniques of propaganda and the manipulation of public opinion."⁴⁰ This "ancient dialectic in the

³⁷ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract and Other Later Political Writings*. edited and translated by Victor Gourevitch (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

³⁸ Rousseau, "Book I, Chapter 7: The Sovereign," in *The Social Contract and Other Political Writings*.

³⁹ Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 28.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 27.

theory of the will of the people”⁴¹ is another area in which Carl Schmitt believes parliamentary democracy is faulty. This adage maintains the idea that just because there is a majority vote it does not necessarily correlate into it being the proper ideal for the general will. Due to outstanding public and external factors, the will of the majority can be misrepresented and misconstrued. The majority can be, in the words of Schmitt, “manipulated” and “deceived” by the hands of propaganda.

Throughout his entire discourse on the topic of parliamentary democracy, Schmitt argues that the principles, upon which this institution is based, are nothing but an “idealistic belief”⁴² that is no longer sufficient to complete the objectives it was constructed to accomplish. His argument that parliamentary democracy is anachronistic is based on his thought that “today...the masses are won over through a propaganda apparatus whose maximum effect relies on an appeal to immediate interests and passions.”⁴³ Schmitt argues that the parliament is outdated due to the fact that “political elite”⁴⁴ no longer have the interests of the “general will” in mind, but rather their individual will.

Although it may appear in this treatise that Schmitt does not believe in the values instilled in democracy, he is simply critiquing the institution of liberal parliamentarism. He aims to separate democracy from liberalism in order to create an authoritarian populist state. By separating and defining liberalism and democracy, he is able to weaken the fundamental principles of both. Concerning liberalism he declares that, being originally liberal in thought, parliament’s deficiencies are essentially unequivocal

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid., 7.

⁴³ Ibid., 6.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 7.

because it has run its course. Concerning democracy, Schmitt argues that it is incapable of being sustained due to, what he views as the essential issue within democracy, equality. He maintains in this text that “every actual democracy rests on the principle that not only are equals equal but unequals will not be treated equally. Democracy requires, therefore, first homogeneity and secondly—if the need arises—elimination or eradication of heterogeneity:”⁴⁵ a declaration that may foreshadow the direction which Schmitt’s career advances in the 1930s.⁴⁶

In another major theoretical discourse, *Constitutional Theory*,⁴⁷ Schmitt applies his primary political theories to the Weimar Republic. In this discourse he argues that constitutional change is unacceptable due to the manner in which the Weimar Constitution was composed. He argues that since the constitution was composed after the German Revolution of 1918 by a politically united people, the initial decrees that were included in the constitution are acceptable. The problem that Schmitt perceives is the secondary decrees, or the decrees which the representatives incorporated into the constitution. As it usually does, the role of the popular sovereign plays a major role, in Schmitt’s understanding, in the composition of a constitution. He argues that, due to the fact that not all of the constitutional decrees were composed and agreed to by the popular sovereign, amending these different decrees must be done in various manners.⁴⁸ Due to the fact that not all of the constitutional decrees were included in the same fashion by the same people, they are not inherently equal. Thus, they must have

⁴⁵ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶ He argues that “in democracy there is only the equality of equals, and the will of those who belong to the equals. All other institutions transform themselves into insubstantial social-technical expedients which are not in a position to oppose the will of the people, however expressed, with their own values and their own principles.” Ibid., 16.

⁴⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, Translated J. Seitzer. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).

⁴⁸ Ibid., 85.

a varying ease of modification or amendment. The conclusion which Schmitt attains returns to the sovereign dictator he had outlined earlier in *The Dictator*. He argues that only a sovereign dictator possesses the ability to legitimately amend constitutional decrees in the name of the popular sovereign. According to Schmitt, not only can a sovereign dictator challenge the current constitutional decrees, but also, if the popular sovereign fears a coup by a tyrannical representative group. As a result, as Lars Vinx writes, “the German people, in a renewed exercise of their constituent power, might legitimately choose a non-liberal and non-parliamentarian form of democracy.”⁴⁹

As critical as Schmitt is of liberalism, he actually defends it, in a sort of ambiguous manner, when he states that as long as the state is able to secure individuals’ constitutional freedoms in a proper fashion, liberalism would be acceptable for a short period of time. Of course, the only acceptable means by which this security would be maintained would be the President of the Weimar Republic and the institution of the infamous Article 48 of the constitution. Since liberal rights were fundamental to the Weimar Constitution, Schmitt believed that those rights would have to be respected and protected –though there was an important exception. This exception was that of the sovereign. He argued that, as long as it was done in the name of the people, a sovereign decision could suspend and amend any section of the constitution and political state that would be considered necessary.⁵⁰

Although Carl Schmitt has been repeatedly accused of constantly changing his views, his writings during the Weimar Republic seem to consistently argue several similar points. A sharp and consistent critique of liberalism can be found in the majority

⁴⁹ Vinx, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/schmitt/>>. [accessed May 14, 2013].

⁵⁰ Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, 80-81.

of his texts during this time. The overarching theme in a number of his texts is that liberalism is an attempt to universalize the state, to take popular sovereignty out of the political equation, and even to rid the state of politics all together. In terms of his understanding of the role of liberalism, Schmitt believes that it essentially destroys the principles which it was instituted to defend. Democracy, as Schmitt understands it, is a political institution which is designed to implement the will of the people. Liberalism, as he repeatedly notes in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, effectively disregards the will of the people in favor of the will of those who were supposedly chosen to represent the will of those people and special interest groups. Not only is there a likelihood that the representatives will choose for what is better for them than for the betterment of the people as a whole; liberal democracy also destroys the basic ideal of the people being sovereign.

As he makes clear in several of his writings during the Weimar period, Schmitt was also an advocate of a sovereign dictator. In his discourse on the history and role of dictators, Schmitt was sure to define the specific sort of dictatorship which would be politically defensible for the state. In *Die Diktatur*, Schmitt outlines a blueprint of what a proper dictator should be, and the correct situation in which a dictator would be useful, and even necessary. He also continues to allude to the idea of a dictator, specifically a dictator that would declare an authoritarian populist state; in other works, such as *Political Theology*, he discusses the necessary role of a sovereign authority.⁵¹ He also states that a dictatorship is essential in his discussion of liberalism in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* when he examines the issue of how disconnected the

⁵¹ Schmitt, *Political Theology*, 5-10.

institutions of liberalism are with the guiding ideals of democratic politics. He states that a sovereign dictatorship is in much closer relation to democracy than that of liberalism.⁵²

Another continuity which is apparent from a variety of Schmitt's Weimar writings is the role of homogeneity. Although it does not appear in as strong a manner as the other primary components of Schmitt's arguments, the ideal of homogeneity is still present. Although Schmitt argues in *The Concept of the Political* that there is a necessity for political differences, he describes how the end result should conclude with a sovereign authority who maintains the power to decide "upon the domestic enemy,"⁵³ and who is also capable in deciding in—"if the need arises—elimination or eradication of heterogeneity."⁵⁴

Easily the most formative period of Carl Schmitt's career and theories, the Weimar period witnessed a plethora of new political ideas. He was among the theorists who expounded on how a true democracy should be comprised. Central to many of his arguments is his description of democracy. Schmitt has a very specific definition of democracy, and what it entails. In *The Dictator* he details what his definition is. He believes that a democratic constitution is one voted by the popular majority. The argument that he makes is that a democratic government must maintain an executive, "sovereign" body, capable of making decisions. This, whether it is a president, or any other "head of state," according to Schmitt, must also maintain the power to declare a "state of emergency," or as Schmitt defines it, a "state of exception."⁵⁵ Schmitt identifies

⁵² Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 32.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 46.

⁵⁴ Schmitt, *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, 9.

⁵⁵ Schmitt, *Die Diktatur*, 1-7.

this as being essentially dictatorial.⁵⁶ This consistent support of “democracy” is a primary argument that he later points to in order to prove his support for Weimar and refute claims that he had supported the Nazis earlier.

The Nazi

Carl Schmitt’s career during the 1930s is the period that provides critics with the most ammunition. This period of his career is by far the most controversial. When Adolf Hitler ascended to power in 1933, Schmitt elected to amend his political allegiances in favor of National Socialism. This decision has plagued the entirety of his career, for obvious reasons. Schmitt became a leading political advisor to the Nazi party during the majority of their reign. He was given a number of political promotions, and held high-ranking positions of political importance, such as when Herman Goering promoted him as Prussian State Counselor. Not only was he a political advisor to the Nazi party, he was also a leading academic professor in the field of law and jurisprudence at the University of Berlin. He was even elected as president of the Union of National-Socialist Jurists. The year 1933 proved to be an extremely successful year for the personal career advancement of Carl Schmitt.

In order to coherently explore the career development of Schmitt after the National Socialist reign in Germany, it is important to examine the choices that Schmitt made, and the reasons for those choices. Leading up to the Nazi rise to power, he suggested that he was an advocate of the Weimar Republic, though it was mostly due

⁵⁶ Ibid., 127-49.

to the emergency powers that were entitled in the constitution. In the latter writings he composed during the Weimar period, most notably his *Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, he strongly criticized the Weimar system. The system, due to the drastic fluctuation of the economy—especially with the 1929 World Economic Crisis—was rapidly losing public support. With this major point in the mind of Schmitt, many of his critics argued that shifting his support towards the Nazi regime was simply a ploy in order for the opportunistic Schmitt to further develop his career. Although it is difficult to argue that these critics are incorrect, with all of the accolades he received shortly after amending his support, it can also be argued that this does not accurately represent the entire situation.

In many of his primary discourses throughout the Weimar period he presents a strong critique liberalism and the representational system of constitutional drafting; the essence of Weimar. One of the only premises which Schmitt applauds from Weimar is that it was created by the people through the course of the 1918 revolution. When comparing many of his political theories to National Socialism, there seems to be a greater amount of similarities. Gopal Balakrishnan states of Schmitt during the early section of 1933 that:

After a few months of caution in 1933, it dawned on him that National Socialism in power represented the unexpected, even perverse resolution of what he had earlier identified as the main problems of political order in age of mass politics. This conviction was the basis of his relationship to National Socialism, even when one allows for the role which naked ambition and opportunism played in his decision to cleave to the new order.⁵⁷

Another item that may have played into the decision which Schmitt ultimately made in shifting his political affinities to support National Socialism was self-preservation. This is

⁵⁷ Balakrishnan, 177.

another area which Balakrishnan describes. Balakrishnan alludes to the idea that, in order for Schmitt to remain in German society, especially political society, he essentially had no decision to make. Although this may be the case, it is also apparent that this was not the entire case either; no one with the mantra that they simply did not want to be outcast due to their political affinities would soon become referred to as the “Crown Jurist’ of National Socialism.”⁵⁸

During his affiliation with National Socialism Schmitt devoted the majority of his efforts to educating the youths at the University level, as well as defending the events which Hitler and the Nazi regime were propagating. He occasionally published articles and texts which were designed to support the wrongdoings of the regime such as the Nazis’ killings of political opponents⁵⁹ and their usurpation of power in order to create a more centralized government headed by Hitler. These writings and texts are commonly used in the critiques of Schmitt for obvious reasons; he was effectively defending the indefensible.

Much of Schmitt’s time and efforts during his Nazi period were concerned with defending the acts of Hitler and Nazi leaders. Many of these consist of the murders of Nazi political opponents.⁶⁰ Schmitt was able to defend these killings by arguing that “the government can exempt itself from judicial review when it must ‘defend society against enemies, inside, outside, open, concealed, present, and future.’”⁶¹ This statement parallels his earlier notions made in *The Dictator* and *The Crisis of*

⁵⁸ Vinx, URL = <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2010/entries/schmitt/>>. [accessed May 14, 2013].

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Carl Schmitt, *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar — Genf — Versailles 1923–1939*, (Berlin: Duncker&Humblot, 1988) 227-232.

⁶¹ Carl Schmitt, “Der Führer schützt das Recht”, in *Positionen und Begriffe*, (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1989) 201, quoted in Balakrishnan, 202.

Parliamentary Democracy where he argued that emergency powers are necessary for a successful form of government.

National Socialism eventually became disillusioned with Schmitt and his politics. Balakrishnan credits this disillusionment to Schmitt's political colleagues.⁶² Many of these former colleagues criticized Schmitt for his Catholic ideals, Jewish contacts, and fervent opportunism. Nazi investigators began probing the devotion of Schmitt to Nazism, and Nazi leadership. Goering soon called off the investigation citing his personal trust. Goering stated, "Without wanting to take a position on the factual accusations which are in themselves not unjustified, I must emphatically state that it is not acceptable for well-known personalities, who have been called to high public office through my trust, to be defamed in this way."⁶³ During the latter years of Schmitt's Nazi period, he dealt less with Nazi jurisprudence, and focused the majority of his time on questions involved with international law.

Although there are critics and sympathizers of Carl Schmitt due to his support of the Nazis after their takeover of Germany in 1933, no one argument is truly sound. An examination of his Weimar work makes clear that it is highly unlikely that Schmitt made his decision solely in a fit of opportunism. There is also the argument, although not as strong as the others, that the decision had something to do with self-preservation.

⁶² Balakrishnan, 204.

⁶³ Goering to the editorial board of the *Schwarze Korps*, 21 December 1936, cited for Koenen, *Der Fall Carl Schmitt*, p. 752, quoted in Balakrishnan, 207.

Looking Back

Carl Schmitt is a highly controversial political figure. The reason behind this is primarily due to the decision he made in the early 1930s to support the National Socialists. Many historians are quick to criticize the decision he made based on the argument that he compromised his principal political theories in order to advance his political and professional career.

Throughout his works, there is a plethora of evidence that supports the argument that Schmitt did not have to critically amend many of the primary principles of his theories. When examining his discourses, especially those from the Weimar years, it is exceedingly difficult to determine whether Schmitt is criticizing the Weimar Constitution or supporting it. Although he “openly” declares that he was an advocate of the Weimar system in his latter works, it is difficult, especially in his early works to discern whether he supports the political system.

The principles guiding the Weimar system were a representative democracy based on liberal principles. These are the basic principles of what Weimar was instituted to represent, on behalf of the people. These principles are essentially the same that Schmitt condemned in the vast majority of his Weimar discourses. Some of his criticisms are more candid than others, but the majority of his discussions concerning liberalism and representative democracy culminate in a strong criticism of the doctrines as a whole.

Several of his texts focus on these Weimar principles. In *The Dictator*, *The Concept of the Political*, and *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* he states what he

believes are the primary problems with the doctrines in the Weimar Constitution; specifically with the ideals of liberalism and of representative democracy. In *The Dictator*, Schmitt applies the foundations for many of his works that were soon to follow. He declares how there is a great necessity for a strong central government; more specifically a dictator, and a dictator who is placed into power on behalf of the people to be exact. This supposed necessity of a strong central government was not represented anywhere in the Weimar Constitution.

In *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* Schmitt continues his assault upon what could be seen as the institution of the Weimar Constitution. In this text Schmitt sets out in hopes of undermining the basic principles instituted in liberal democracy as a governmental establishment. He declares that a government founded with these values will not be sufficient in providing for the safety and welfare of the people it governs over. The majority of this text emphasizes the objections Schmitt has to basic principles of liberal democracy and, specifically, of parliament. Schmitt views parliament as an unproductive tool which is not effective in making adequate and efficient decisions based on the general will of "the people." In attacking the parliament, Schmitt is effectively attacking one of the main institutions used in the drafting of the Weimar Constitution. While the constitution was being drafted, the parliament was in control of deliberating different options and ideals that could be incorporated into the constitution. If Schmitt's theories are taken directly as he composed them in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, it can easily be deduced that the manner in which the Weimar Constitution was constructed was simply inappropriate.

Schmitt's assault on the institution of parliament is also analogous to the Nazi reign in Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. The very idea of parliamentary discussion during the reign of Hitler was suppressed. He had only a small number of close advisors who would counsel him in major decisions. This, in combination with the "sovereign dictator" idiom which Schmitt writes about, is a clear parallel to the reign of Hitler and the National Socialists.

When looking at the theories that Schmitt composed during Weimar Germany, one could find it difficult to relate them to the ideals instilled in the conception and the implementation of the Weimar Constitution. The Weimar Constitution was based upon the liberal ideal there the people were represented by many different parties in a parliamentary style republic. These very ideals were opposed vehemently by Schmitt in the majority of his texts during the Weimar Republic. Very little, if any, liberal thought or liberal sympathies can be found when analyzing his writings. In fact, the majority of his writings are in strict opposition to liberal thought. Schmitt argues that there should be a dictator that exercises power, in the name of the people, and that the dictator should rule in a very strong manner.

After considering everything, it is very easy to see the many parallels between the theories of Carl Schmitt and the ideals of National Socialism. The gray area between his theories and the ideals instilled by the Weimar Constitution become more distinctive. Schmitt's alleged support for the Weimar Constitution is greatly exaggerated. Although many scholars believe and declare that Schmitt greatly skewed his Weimar theories to adapt them to the ideals of the National Socialists, upon further review it appears that his views could have been adapted to the ideals of the National

Socialists rather easily. When taking the Weimar Constitution, and comparing it side-by-side to National Socialism and Hitler's reign in the 1930s and 1940s, Schmitt's theories are much closer in relation to the latter. The basic premises involved in National Socialism are shared by the theories composed by Schmitt during Weimar. Both idealize a strong centralized government that is realized by way of a populist "sovereign dictator."

CHAPTER 3

MARTIN HEIDEGGER

A Biographical Glimpse

Martin Heidegger was born in 1889 in Meßkirch, Germany. He began his extensive studies in the realm of theology but eventually altered his studies to the field of mathematics and philosophy. After earning his doctoral degree and completing his dissertation, "The Doctrine of Categories and Signification in Duns Scotus," Heidegger enrolled in the German Army and achieved rather quick success, being promoted from private to the rank of corporal within ten months.⁶⁴ Although he had some early success during his stint in the armed forces, Heidegger was discharged from the German Army due to health concerns.⁶⁵ He then began to focus on a new profession: teaching and lecturing at the university level. His first major professorial position was at the University of Freiburg where he became a lecturer of philosophy. Later, Heidegger took a position of associate professor at the University of Marburg in 1924.⁶⁶ These were the years when he wrote *Being and Time*,⁶⁷ the philosophical work that would prove to be the most influential, as well as most controversial, of his career, even though he was

⁶⁴ Rudiger Safranski, *Martin Heidegger: Between Good and Evil*, (Harvard University Press, 1999) 496.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Translated by John Macquarrie and Edward Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1962).

pressured to finish before it was truly completed. Heidegger claimed that the work represented only one-third of the final masterpiece he was ultimately planning.⁶⁸

Heidegger would continue to hold his position of professor and also continue delivering his lectures at the University of Marburg until 1928 when he elected to accept a professorial position at the University of Freiburg. The year 1933 posed a very important professional achievement as well as a very big political decision for Heidegger. In 1933 he was elected Rector of the University of Freiburg. This was also the year when he officially joined the National Socialist Party. These two milestones for Heidegger are most certainly related to one another. He held his position at the University of Freiburg until 1934,⁶⁹ when he resigned because of disputes with several faculty members and local Nazi political officials.⁷⁰ Although he resigned as Rector due to the differences in opinion with Nazi administrators, Heidegger remained a member of the National Socialist Party until 1945.⁷¹

Due to his influence and importance as a philosopher and his involvement in the Nazi Party, Heidegger is a highly controversial figure. To make matters worse in terms of controversy, he refused to apologize for his involvement even after receiving such advice from Herbert Marcuse.⁷² During the denazification process, Heidegger was banned from lecturing at the university level, essentially ending his professorial career. He was also denied emeritus status for a period of time, although he was ultimately awarded the status. Heidegger suffered a nervous breakdown in 1946, but continued to

⁶⁸ Safranski, 496.

⁶⁹ Julian Young, *Heidegger, Philosophy, Nazism* (Cambridge University Press, 1997) 3.

⁷⁰ Safranski, 496.

⁷¹ Richard Wolin, *The Politics of Being: The Political Thought of Martin Heidegger*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990) 13.

⁷² Richard Wolin (Ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, (MIT Press, 1992) 327.

compose speeches and write. Although he continued to write and speak, his most important, influential, and controversial pieces remain those he wrote from the late 1920s and early 1930s, especially his *magnum opus Being and Time*. Martin Heidegger died in Freiburg on May 26, 1976.

The life and career of Martin Heidegger is still an area of much controversy today. Some of the more important scholarly texts composed by Victor Farias, Richard Wolin, and Emmanuel Faye are highly critical of Heidegger, his career, his political path, and his philosophy. These three men have similar arguments. They essentially argue that Heidegger believed that his most important ideals had been realized with the takeover of the National Socialist Party. Although these authors adopted varying degrees of severity in terms of how they judged his career path, all three of them conclude that Heidegger's theories bore a strong correlation to the ideology of the Nazi Party.

The philosophical theories most pertinent to the examination at hand are found in *Being and Time*. As Richard Wolin suggests,⁷³ the principal philosophical ideas in *Being and Time* can also be used to examine Heidegger's political values. In this chapter I will take a similar approach, although the argument that is made is slightly different. While Wolin, Faye, Johannes Fritsche and other scholars tend to argue that Heidegger's philosophies were realized with National Socialism, it will be argued in this thesis that it was rather the opportunistic Heidegger that was able to adapt and manipulate some of his ideologies in order to advance his career and personal agenda within the growing Nazi Organization. Once in a position of power, Heidegger believed

⁷³ Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, 221.

that he would be able to influence Nazi administrators into taking stances that were more in line with his true philosophical ideals.⁷⁴ The predominant ideas in the texts of Martin Heidegger will provide the basis for an examination of his political beliefs and actions.

Being, Time, and Politics

The life of Martin Heidegger has been subjected to much scrutiny and criticism. This is due in part to his influence as a philosopher, and to the decisions he made to join and his involvement with the National Socialist German Worker's Party. A highly influential philosopher and professor at both the University of Freiburg and the University of Marburg, his career was marred by this decision. Many scholars such as Richard Wolin, Johannes Fritsche, Michael Zimmerman, and Emmanuel Faye, assert that many of Heidegger's political ideals can be derived from his philosophical texts. The most notable of these is *Being and Time*.

Being and Time was Heidegger's most influential philosophical treatise. In this text he aims to effectively examine what "Being" truly is. There are three main theories that are integral for the understanding of this text. The primary theme and purpose of the text is to pose the question of the meaning of Being. He desires to examine what the essence of "Being" is. He is also determined to describe the criteria for what type of

⁷⁴ Once Heidegger realized that the Nazis were not going to implement any of his ideas, he lost his initial enthusiasm for them.

entity constitutes a “being.”⁷⁵ The first major theme of “being” is the conception of “being.” Heidegger argues that in order to fully grasp the meaning of “being” one needs to conceptualize the fact that he is himself truly “being.” A true “being” needs to therefore become fully aware of their own existence. The “being” that is able to conceive himself as existing as a “being” is what Heidegger denotes as “Dasein.”

Dasein is the second notion that must be grasped for Heidegger. Dasein is his attempt to state what is encompassed in “being.” He states that Dasein is not “man” but at the same time is nothing other than “man.” According to Heidegger Dasein is the human being that is aware of itself and its existence. This is also where he begins to examine the concept of authenticity. According to Heidegger, authenticity was essential. Several attributes were also necessary for authenticity to be achieved for Heidegger. Not only does there have to be a sense of individualism, but also—as is seen in the final two sections of *Being and Time*—a subordination of this group of individuals to the collective. For Heidegger, this would ultimately result in *Schicksal(s)gemeinschaft*, or the “community of destiny.” This community that Heidegger anticipates is a community that is united in will and ideals. The notion of authenticity for Heidegger leads to the third notion, that of time.

Time creates a problem for Heidegger in his theories. According to him, Dasein is a being that is self-aware of its personal existence. Along with this concept comes the idea that this Dasein is a human being. Human beings have a finite life span; that is to say that Dasein will be born and will eventually die. Dasein to Heidegger does

⁷⁵ “Being” refers to *Sein* that Heidegger denotes in *Being and Time*, and “being” correlates to *Seiendes* from *Being and Time*.

neither. According to him, Dasein is much more than just a human being, it is the ontological category of historicity that is grounded in the individual.

Although on the surface this text does not show much similarity to National Socialist theories, when one examines the text more carefully, there are certain parallels between the two. As Richard Wolin states near the beginning of his critique and examination, Heidegger never specifically states his political theories. But, Wolin states:

In Heidegger's case, the element of mediation is provided by his "political philosophy"; or, more adequately expressed—since, for reasons that will later become clear, Heidegger never articulated a political philosophy *per se*—by the "political thought" through which Heidegger seeks to philosophically ground his understanding of the world political situation.⁷⁶

Wolin is stating that although Heidegger never articulates his political beliefs, they can be inferred from his philosophical theories. Although Wolin is not the only scholar to believe this to be true, this is the primary basis for his arguments throughout the text. Wolin details the philosophy that is in Heidegger's *Being and Time*, and demonstrates through a thorough examination that the ideals instilled, specifically in the last two sections of the text, are essentially the same as the tendencies realized in National Socialism. Emmanuel Faye is another scholar that argues this point of view, though through a certainly more aggressive critique.

Emmanuel Faye argues that Heidegger's philosophical ideals, which are embodied in *Being and Time*, have strong political parallels with National Socialism. Though the basis of his argument is very similar to Wolin's, Faye takes a much stronger stance in criticizing Heidegger and his philosophy. Faye expands on the argument

⁷⁶ Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, 10.

made by Wolin by drawing upon new lecture notes that were not available to Wolin in his work. Between Wolin and Faye, Wolin's work is a more credible piece of scholarship. Although Faye's work offers some insight, there are inaccuracies, specifically in many of the translations. Faye is also blinded by his argument at times which can explicitly be seen in his various arguments concerning Heidegger's alleged anti-Semitism.

These two scholars make numerous arguments that are very critical, but useful, to the examination at hand. Along with other scholarly works these offer a tremendous amount of insight into the philosophical and political theories of Martin Heidegger. There are many incidents that anticipated the decision Heidegger would make in 1933; there are several instances when National Socialist ideals can be discerned in his texts, most notably *Being and Time*.

Though Wolin and Faye both attack the philosophies and career of Heidegger, there are those that are more sympathetic to him. Hans Sluga is notable in this category. In his text *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, he outlines Heidegger's career, and argues that he was guilty of failed political ambitions. Sluga attempts to persuade the reader that Heidegger strongly believed that he could successfully steer the Nazi State in a better direction. This naive belief was fatal to the political and professional career of Heidegger.⁷⁷

In an examination of *Being and Time*, it is essential to separate three main tendencies. The first division of the text is Heidegger's argument for radical individualization. In this argument, Heidegger discusses the way in which people need

⁷⁷ Hans Sluga, *Heidegger's Crisis: Philosophy and Politics in Nazi Germany*, (Cambridge, MA., Harvard University Press, 1993) 296.

to be cleansed from the evils of modern technology and society. Through this cleansing process, Heidegger argues that the people should be re-educated in the importance of philosophy and tradition. The second tendency is the process of recovering one's individual self and authenticity. Heidegger states that this tendency can only be accomplished by acknowledging and facing one's mortality. The third tendency in *Being and Time*, which is most pertinent to this examination, represents a significant change. The final two sections of the text are where Heidegger argues for a "community of destiny," or the *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*. This concept refers to a community of people that have already gone through the cleansing process proposed in the first section of the text, who thus have a uniform set of values and knowledge. Thus, this group of people would maintain the same wants and desires. Heidegger then argues that this "community of destiny" must select a "hero" or strong leader that would guide them in the best possible direction.⁷⁸

Throughout the first sections of *Being and Time* Heidegger devotes his attention to the individual. Instead of describing a specific person he refers to Dasein. He refrains from specifying a gender of the Dasein. He does not use the terms "he" or "she." In the final sections of *Being and Time* specifically, Heidegger seems to do everything within his power to make Dasein capable of representing a singular, multiple, or collectivity of all society. What he is doing is essentially stripping society of any individuality. By combining every person, a class order or struggle no longer exists. It is effectively arguing for a sort of National Socialist ideal where there is a loss of individuality; where every person joins together in a collective effort regardless of individual gain. This can be seen in Section 74 of *Being and Time*. It is in this section

⁷⁸ Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 422 and 437.

that Dasein recognizes its fate and becomes part of the collective. Dasein can choose to recognize its fate, obey the call, and submit to its fate.⁷⁹ According to Heidegger, Dasein could become autonomous by not missing the opportunity to become “master of their fate.”⁸⁰ For Heidegger, fate was a calling for Dasein to join the community of *the* people.

In his discussions pertaining to his theory of societal “being,” Heidegger also makes reference to another National Socialist doctrine; the *Volksgemeinschaft*. Closely related to his discussions of the “self” and the “I” involved with society Heidegger argues in his text that once the self is realized, there is a collective *Gemeinschaft* of the people. As Emmanuel Faye argues in his text, “the real project of *Being and Time* is the will to destroy the idea of the *I* in order to make room for the ‘most radical individuation’ (*radikalsten Individuation*), which is emphatically realized not in the individual but in the organic indivisibility of the *Gemeinschaft* of the people.”⁸¹

This is another example of Faye being essentially blinded by his argument. Though he argues his point very firmly, he overlooks one of the basic roots of Heidegger’s personal ideals; his disdain towards the concepts of science. Heidegger was a strong opponent of modern technology and science. The concept of biological categories, including the concept of race, would thus be inconsequential for Heidegger. Faye, although he mentions Heidegger’s critical stance concerning science, demonstrates a lack of continuity in this argument. All of his “evidence” is very vague

⁷⁹Ibid., 435.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy*, Translated by Michael B. Smith. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2009) 17.

and as so, could easily be interpreted in a way that is completely removed from any type of race theory.

In the final sections of *Being and Time*, Dasein to Martin Heidegger is the realization and collectivity of the people as a group. The group is not any collection of any sort of people. He believes that the collectivity of people in this group must have certain prerequisites. These prerequisites require the members of the collection to realize their common ties; they must know that the group is more important than the individual. The group must also realize what their goals are, and what events need to happen in order to make them a reality. In addition, the group must also select a “hero” or leader that will be able to follow. This “hero” would be a strong personality who maintains a goal of uniformity and subordination to the collective.

As Faye also argues in his text, Heidegger was an avid supporter of taking steps towards creating a homogenous state.⁸² As Faye mentioned, in *Being and Time* Heidegger was a firm believer that there was a culture of “inauthentic” people. Faye asserts that in some of Heidegger’s later texts, he focuses on the idea of the *Gleichartigkeit*,⁸³ or the “extermination of the heterogeneous.”⁸⁴ In addition, he also refers to the *Gleichschaltung*,⁸⁵ or the means of achieving the *Gleichartigkeit*.⁸⁶ Faye asserts, “not only that the *Gleichschaltung* is a political ‘bringing into line’ but that its goal is racial ‘reconstruction’ or ‘homogeneity,’ by the exclusion of ‘non-Aryan elements of a foreign race’ from ‘public life.’”⁸⁷ What Faye finds evident is the fact that Heidegger

⁸² Faye, 40.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 152

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 153.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

called for an “extermination of the enemy” (which Faye identifies as the Jew without much evidence from Heidegger) which the collective group of authentic people identified.

Here again, Faye makes an error which comes with the translation and tendentious interpretation that he uses for *Gleichartigkeit*. A more proper translation of *Gleichartigkeit* would be “uniformity.” This change in translation quickly exposes the inaccuracies of another of Faye’s arguments in which he puts a large amount of stock. To make matters worse, the difference in translations makes it appear to the reader that Faye is modifying what Heidegger wrote to appease his argument, regardless if it is accurate or not.

Although there are many inaccuracies and faults found in Faye’s text, it is an important piece of literature to review in a discussion concerning the role of Heidegger and his philosophies, and the possible impact that they may have had on the growing conservative revolutionary sentiments during Weimar Germany. Though some of his arguments may have flaws, the point of view and interpretation Faye maintains for Heidegger and *Being and Time* is important for any objective examination.

With a discussion and an investigation of Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, it is imperative to at least mention the concept of decisionism. Heidegger’s decisionism is a major point of emphasis for the arguments that Richard Wolin makes in his text. The main aim of the text is to deduce the political thought and opinions of Martin Heidegger solely based on Heidegger’s own writings; specifically *Being and Time*. This major argument that Wolin makes deals with the governmental system that he supposes Heidegger promotes in *Being and Time*. Wolin contends that Heidegger strongly

promotes an authoritarian governmental system in *Being and Time*. He argues this due to the fact that in *Being and Time* Heidegger is a strong proponent of decisionism. In his work, Heidegger argues that it is much more important for the “hero” of the community to assertively make a decision rather than to rationally justify his decision. He continues his argument stating that a singular opinion in a decision making process is stronger and more effective than a decision made by way of a sort of parliamentary, liberal, deliberation. Wolin states that what Heidegger truly yearned for was “politics grounded in a pure decision”⁸⁸ and “not based on reason and discussion and not justifying itself.”⁸⁹ Heidegger appears to view decisions being made in a dictatorial fashion as optimal decisions as they are the only “pure decisions” because they have not been altered or amended by deliberative action.

As is documented by Karl Löwith,⁹⁰ Heidegger based his support of National Socialism on the idea of historicity. Richard Wolin asserts that it was not solely the premise of historicity on which Heidegger based his support of National Socialism; decisionism also played a major role in his support. Wolin States:

Freed of such bourgeois qualms, the National Socialist movement presented itself as a plausible material “filling” for the empty vessel of authentic decision and its categorical demand for existentiell-historical content. The summons toward an “authentic historical destiny” enunciated in *Being and Time* was thus provided with an ominously appropriate response by Germany’s National Revolution. The latter, in effect, was viewed by Heidegger as the ontic fulfillment of the categorical demands of “historicity”: it was Heidegger’s own choice of a “hero,” a “destiny,” and a “community.”⁹¹

⁸⁸ Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, 30.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Karl Löwith, “Last Meeting with Heidegger,” in Wolin (ed.), *The Heidegger Controversy*, 142.

⁹¹ Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, 65.

Wolin's thesis is based upon the theory that Nazism filled a void that existed in the middle of Heidegger's philosophy and was not seen as incompatible by Heidegger with his philosophy. Whereas Faye attempts to argue that Heidegger was a major proponent of the Nazi Regime, Wolin takes a much more realistic and convincing approach.

The argument that Wolin begins to make, that Heidegger was using National Socialism to fill this void he had in his philosophy in a most extreme case of opportunism, is the argument being made in this thesis. Whereas Faye argues that National Socialism was realized within the contents of *Being and Time*, it can be argued that there were enough similarities in the text that Martin Heidegger was able to mold his writings and philosophies into the ideals that were instilled in National Socialism. Thus, Heidegger would be able to proclaim himself the true "philosopher king" of National Socialism and, as Hans Sluga argued, could in turn use his power and influence to guide Nazi leaders in the "correct" direction. This opportunism, as will be discussed, blurred the vision of Heidegger's beliefs and in some of the choices he made through important times of his career.

Published in 1927, *Being and Time* is the major work of Martin Heidegger during Weimar. Although it is clear that *Being and Time* is crucial for examining the importance and influence of Martin Heidegger during and after World War I and the Weimar Republic, it is not the only work that needs to be explored. What may be just as important in this examination are the actual decisions that he made and events that took place through this period of time.

Beyond *Being and Time*

Although *Being and Time* is arguably the most important and influential work by Martin Heidegger, the arguments in that work are far from being the only ones relevant to Heidegger's involvement in National Socialism. Many of the thoughts that scholars such as Richard Wolin and Emmanuel Faye are able to distill out of *Being and Time* concerning Martin Heidegger's political ideals are fairly well documented, but there is much more to the National Socialist tendencies of Martin Heidegger. Throughout many of his writings, correspondence, lectures, and speeches, there are many similarities between Heidegger's personal theories, and the theories propagated and promoted by Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist Party.

Hitler and the National Socialist German Workers' Party sought a break from liberalism and Western Civilization. The product of the modern bourgeoisie, liberalism posed such an immense threat to the ideals of the National Socialist Party because the primary theories that National Socialism sought to promote were "Aryan" racial supremacy. Liberal thought maintained the ideals of discussion and deliberation with the opinions of all coming into account when a decision was made. Although Hitler and his propagandists might have deceived the people of Germany into believing that the National Socialist Party had the best intentions, the only opinion that truly mattered to the National Socialist Party was those of Adolf Hitler and some of his closest advisors.

To the National Socialists, liberal thought was something that was not part of their master plans. With such events as the Beer Hall Putsch, it was apparent that central power was much more pertinent for their success. As both Wolin and Faye point

out, Heidegger was also extremely fond of the works and theories of Ernst Jünger, who, as this work will elaborate upon, was a major advocate of struggle, power, and, most of all, war. As understood by Adolf Hitler's text *Mein Kampf*, a major premise of his personal ideals, and National Socialism as a whole, was strife and struggle for power.

A similar promise that Heidegger saw in struggle was another type of decision. He believed that if a person or group of people were to decide to engage in some type of war or conflict, the decision must be very resolute and concrete due to the fact that there is no ability to rescind their actions. This type of decision was something that Heidegger idealized due to the fact that it was made without any sort of remorse or caution; it is based simply upon instincts and core beliefs of a strong leader. As Richard Wolin cites from Heidegger's *Rektoratsrede*, Heidegger states, "all powers of the heart and all capacities of the body must be deployed *through* struggle [*Kampf*], intensified *in* struggle [*Kampf*], and preserved *as* struggle [*Kampf*]."⁹²

Wolin, Faye, and others argue that Heidegger's philosophy was realized with National Socialism. Although this is a popular argument made by critics of Heidegger, this is conceptually incorrect. One could argue that Heidegger's philosophy was not realized, but rather adapted by Heidegger in order to relate more succinctly to the ideologies of National Socialism. In a fit of opportunism, Heidegger was hoping to claim a position of power and importance in order to influence politics and policies which the Nazi administration was making. As Michael Gillespie states:

[H]e was convinced that the possibility for such a revolution [(of subordinating technology to knowledge)] existed within this movement and within this movement alone. What was necessary to bring this revolution about was a commitment by the positive intellectual forces in Germany to join this movement

⁹² Ibid., 29.

and spiritualize it from within. He saw himself playing a leading role in this effort.⁹³

Heidegger did become disillusioned with the Nazi organization fairly soon after he realized that Nazi leaders had no interest in any of his personal ideas.

Heidegger was also opposed to the modernization of Germany. According to him, modernization; specifically modern technology, and modern science, would ultimately lead to a decreasing intellectual capacity of the people. As Michael Zimmerman points out, Heidegger believed that modern technology would make people lethargic, senseless, and incompetent.⁹⁴ Heidegger maintained that language and tradition that preserved a non-instrumental relationship to nature and “being” could prove to be a strong determining factor in the success of a person or a state. He not only preached this core ideology, he lived it, calling the Black Forest area of Germany his home for many years; fundamentally cutting himself off from the “tortures” of modern technological society.⁹⁵

As Jeffery Herf elaborates, the Nazi Party, while claiming to reject modern, urban, industrialized Germany, in fact flourished with the use of pro-modern and pro-technological tactics.⁹⁶ The anti-modern sentiments maintained by Heidegger ultimately put him at odds with the practices of the Nazi Party. Although Heidegger maintains such revulsion for technology and modernity, he also maintained that the use of modern

⁹³ Michael Allen Gillespie, “Martin Heidegger’s Aristotelian National Socialism,” *Political Theory* 28 (2000): 153.

⁹⁴ Michael E. Zimmerman, *Heidegger’s Confrontation with Modernity: Technology, Politics, Art*, (Indianapolis, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1990) 306.

⁹⁵ As evidence of his anti-modernist convictions, Victor Farias and Hugo Ott both note that Heidegger refused an offer to teach at the most prestigious university in Germany because it was in Berlin and one of his peasant neighbors in the Black Forest advised him not to go.

⁹⁶ Jeffrey Herf. *Reactionary Modernism: Technology, Culture, and Politics in Weimar and the Third Reich*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984) 251.

technology would justify the results that he believed National Socialism would accomplish, especially with himself as leading philosophical advisor to Nazi administration. As Michael Allen Gillespie argues in his article “Martin Heidegger’s Aristotelian National Socialism”:

Heidegger developed a vision of praxis and politics on an Aristotelian foundation that he believed would reverse the domination of theory and technology in modern life and put it its place the rule of practical wisdom or *phronêsis* that was rooted in a historical understanding of the world and that put human beings and human action ahead of values, ideological imperatives, and the process of production.⁹⁷

A primary argument that Gillespie makes in his article is that Heidegger first became attracted to the National Socialist movement due to the fact that he believed that it offered a much needed solution to the “crisis of Western Civilization.”⁹⁸ Although Heidegger eventually became disillusioned with the prospect of the Nazi movement creating a break with Western Civilization, he believed, as Gillespie concludes, that “the Nazi movement was bringing such a politics into being and that even when he recognized this was not that case, he continued to believe such a politics was both necessary and desirable, modifying only his conception of the means by which such an end could be attained.”⁹⁹

Heidegger and Carl Schmitt have ideals and theories that are extremely similar in various ways. Although many of his arguments concerning Martin Heidegger are based upon Heidegger’s *Being and Time*, Emmanuel Faye also widened his sources. Faye also researched Heidegger’s speeches, lectures, letters and lesser known publications and works that were never fully published or published at all. The majority of these

⁹⁷ Gillespie, 140.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 141.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 141.

speeches and publications, such as Heidegger's Rector's Address, entitled "The Self-Assertion of the German University,"¹⁰⁰ suggest a similar point: that Martin Heidegger was a very enthusiastic advocate of the National Socialist Party, and of the actions that the party was undertaking. In his Rector's Address, Heidegger lays out his arguments and plans to renovate the structure of the German University system to go along with the systematic changes occurring within the German state. Although this is a common perspective on the subject, Emmanuel Faye argued the point more strongly than his counterparts.

Faye is so adamant in his attacks on Heidegger that he even argues that Heidegger should not even be considered a true philosopher due to the fact that he was attempting to proselytize his fellow Germans into following the National Socialist Party by justifying the theories and acts that the party was taking in the 1920s and 1930s. Although he is very radical and unsympathetic in his position concerning Heidegger, Faye's work does shed some light on Heidegger before his official conversion to National Socialism. In order to do this, Faye dissected statements made by some of Heidegger's closest students and followers from earlier periods. For example, Faye notes that former students such as Günther Anders and Max Müller note the emotions and beliefs of Heidegger were those very similar to National Socialist tendencies far ahead of the massive growth of the party in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Müller even states that Heidegger would talk to his students about the "relationship of the folk [*Volkstum*] with nature, but also with the Youth Movement [*Jugendbewegung*]. He felt an intimate closeness to the word *volkisch* and said he was tied 'to the blood and the

¹⁰⁰Heidegger, Martin. "Rector's Address: The Self-Assertion of the German University and the Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts," *Review of Metaphysics*, 38:3 (March 1985) 467-502.

soil.”¹⁰¹ Faye also notes how another “disciple”¹⁰² of Heidegger, Hans-Georg Gadamer, recalls Heidegger having an “obvious sympathy’ [...] ‘for the Nazi radicalism...far earlier than 1933.”¹⁰³

The ideas of the *Volk* and the importance of “blood and soil” are significant facets of National Socialism. These two terms were critical to the successes of National Socialist propaganda during the growth and expansion of National Socialism in Germany. What Emmanuel Faye is essentially attempting to argue in this section of his text is that it was abundantly apparent to his students that in retrospect, Heidegger always had National Socialist tendencies, and, at least to a certain degree, argued and attempted to instill those theories and beliefs to his students in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

This is an area where Faye is tendentious, and where he loses much of his credibility. In these transcripts that Faye selects, he fails to mention some of his more notable students, such as Herbert Marcuse. Marcuse is just one of Heidegger’s former students that have stated the complete opposite of the students that Faye includes in his critique. Marcuse claimed that he saw no trace or foreshadowing Heidegger’s National Socialist tendencies were apparent before 1933.¹⁰⁴

In addition to all of these notations and accounts taken from former students, Faye also delved into the diary of Hermann Mörchen. Mörchen, a German philosopher, studied under Heidegger from 1925-1929 and kept in contact with him after his studies concluded. Mörchen’s diary stated that Heidegger firmly believed that National

¹⁰¹ Faye, 30.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Herbert Marcuse, *Heideggerian Marxism*, eds. Richard Wolin and John Abromeit (Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 2005) 169.

Socialism was a necessary step in the evolution of the German people. Mörchen stated that Heidegger held this belief due to the fact that he maintained that National Socialism was the only political ideology that could successfully be in opposition to Marxism. This notion that he held onto, Mörchen stated, was because of the head of state in a National Socialist regime: a dictator.¹⁰⁵

One important notion that Faye examines in his text are the actions that Heidegger took physically. Faye did not simply discuss Heidegger's "philosophical" importance in his writings and speeches; he also examines the events that took place throughout his tenure as university rector during the National Socialist reign. One of the most important of these physical actions taken by Heidegger is that of the discussion concerning "*Gleichschaltung*" or the "bringing into line" of the German people.¹⁰⁶ Heidegger was a major player in the ideals instilled in the thought and belief of *Gleichschaltung*. Heidegger played an important role for the Nazis in this regard. The role Heidegger played was to provide a certain amount of legitimacy to the Nazi regime. With Heidegger, whom was already one of the most prominent European philosophers of the time, joining the National Socialist Party, it would surely draw some popular interest due to his social, academic, and intellectual status.

Another instance where Faye loses some of his credibility is when he compares Heidegger's ideals to National Socialist conceptions of race. Faye puts a significant amount of weight on his argument that anti-Semitism played a major role in Heidegger's political and personal ideology. He even devotes four of his nine primary sections to the notion of race. Faye, by way of incorrect translations and distortions of Heidegger's

¹⁰⁵ Faye, 30.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 40.

texts, argues that Heidegger maintained racial and, more specifically, anti-Semitic prejudices throughout his career.

For Heidegger, race proves to be insignificant in his texts. Even in his *magnum opus Being and Time*, he does not mention the notion of race being any sort of deciding or divisional factor in authenticity. Also, his disgust with modern science is at odds with Faye's claims about alleged racial/biological based arguments. These arguments are also at least rendered questionable by Heidegger's many relationships with Jewish students such as Herbert Marcuse, his teacher and dedicatee of *Being and Time* Edmund Husserl, and his intimate relationship with Hannah Arendt. With all of these factors, Faye's arguments that are based on race are negligible at best.

A major step for his career advancement occurred when the Heidegger was elected, by his colleagues, Rector of the University of Freiburg in April, 1933. His colleagues believed that he would protect the university from the National Socialists. These same colleagues were surely surprised when the opportunistic Heidegger, in his *Rektoratsrede*, came out openly in strong favor of the Nazi Regime.¹⁰⁷

Martin Heidegger played a major role in this initial goal of the Nazi *Gleichschaltung*. By attaining the position of rector of the University of Freiburg, Heidegger was effectively the head of university. He was able to approve or deny any piece of legislation. Ironically, Heidegger officially joined the NSDAP just eleven days after he was voted to the position by a faculty senate. Also ironic, this faculty senate had just undergone an alteration to its members. Less than a month before the vote for the rectorship of the University of Freiburg the *Gesetz zur Wiederherstellung des*

¹⁰⁷ Bernd Martin, "Universität im Umbruch: Das Rektorat Heidegger 1933/34," *Die Freiburger Universität in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus*, eds. E. John, B. Martin, M. Mück and Hugo Ott (Freiburg: Ploetz, 1991), pp. 9-24.

Berufsbeamtentums went into effect. This “law for the reconstitution of the civil service,” as it is translated to, effectively revoked the employment of “non-Aryan” university professors. Although this legislation, upon Hindenburg’s insistence, offered exceptions to Jewish veterans who fought in the First World War, in the Badenland, which included the University of Freiburg, another legislation was passed; the Badner Decree which allowed absolutely no exceptions.

Although it could be argued that Heidegger had no reservations about taking the rector position due to the fact that it was a great opportunity to further his career at the university level and that all he needed to do was to follow the ways of the National Socialists, upon further investigation, it was most likely not as simple of a decision for Heidegger. His close friend, former teacher, and dedicatee of *Being and Time*, Edmund Husserl, was a professor at the University of Freiburg, and was in fact Jewish.¹⁰⁸ This means that not only was Husserl stripped of his emeritus status at Freiburg, but he was also stripped of his livelihood. Also, Faye points out that Heidegger and his wife even composed a note to the Husserl family and stated that the legislation and decisions made were “hard” but “reasonable.”¹⁰⁹ Faye states that the letter showed just of how strongly Heidegger felt about the *Gleichschaltung*, and the need for a shift in the German university and his faith in National Socialist decrees. He stated not too long after that he was acting “in full awareness of the necessity for the unconditional implementation of the law on reconstructing the Civil Service.”¹¹⁰ Faye is swift to state the obvious similarity between this statement by Heidegger and general National

¹⁰⁸ Husserl was originally Jewish, but converted to Christianity in order to become a professor.

¹⁰⁹ Faye., 41.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 43.

Socialist rhetoric; the insistent adjectives such as “full” and “unconditional.”¹¹¹ Here again, Faye fails to correctly translate the passage, and instead takes the liberty of adding key words to the translation. A correct translation shows that Heidegger and his wife must “act as if we unconditionally commit” to the German decrees. The addition of the word “act” critically changes the interpretation of the passage which Faye cites. Although many of the public speeches he gave during the time period, such as his speech “The University in the New Reich”¹¹² given to the Student Association at the University of Heidelberg, in which he essentially subordinates the university system to the state, suggests that he was enthusiastically supportive of the Nazis, the new interpretation shows a sense of remorse and regret due to the events resulting in the decree, as opposed to the unconditional devotion that Faye argues Heidegger maintained. What seems most likely, according to the sources available, is that Heidegger was so entrenched in his own personal philosophical growth and ambitions, that he was willing to make certain sacrifices.

Another essential facet that goes along with the *Gleichschaltung* was the “Führerprinzip.”¹¹³ This concept created a sort of dictatorship within the university level that appeared to be in correlation to the dictatorship of Hitler and the Nazi Party. Although the “rector-Führer” was elected by the faculty senate, he was in control of selecting, by way of his personal free will, all of the other power positions involved in the university. The “rector-Führer” had the ability to handpick the dean of the university.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Martin Heidegger, “The University in the New Reich”, speech given on June 30, 1933. English translation in Richard Wolin, *The Heidegger Controversy: A Critical Reader*, ed. Richard Wolin, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998, pp. 44-45

¹¹³ Wolin, *The Politics of Being*, 124.

¹¹⁴ Martin Heidegger, *Die Selbstbehauptung der deutschen Universität / Das Rektorat, 1933/34: Tatsachen und Gedanken*. Frankfurt: V. Klostermann, 1983.

With this, just as when Hitler took power over the state, eliminated all sense of democracy at the university level. Heidegger drastically curtailed the powers of the faculty senate and attempted to establish a direct link with the students, who were sympathetic to the Nazis, in an effective manner. He attempted to put a boot camp system in effect that would essentially prepare a line of philosophy-rulers for the future.¹¹⁵ This is a goal that is suggested not only in *Being and Time*, but it is also briefly suggested in his Rector's Address. He states:

They will no longer permit *Knowledge Service (Wissensdienst)* to be the dull and quick training for a "distinguished" profession. Because the statesman and the teacher, the doctor, and the judge, the minister, and the architect, lead the being (*Dasein*) of people and state, because they watch over it and keep it honed in its fundamental relations to the world-shaping powers of human being, these professions and the training of them have been entrusted to the Knowledge Service.¹¹⁶

This "Knowledge Service," which was the third part of Heidegger's tripartite service system that he outlines in his Rector's Address, is an argument that the state of the university system needs to be reconstructed around the education of future leaders of Germany.

Heidegger was ushered into the role of *Rektor-Führer* due to the ministry and the changing climate of the state for several reasons. Nazi leaders most likely had their aim set on a multitude of tasks and positioned Heidegger to fulfill certain tasks according to the *Führerprinzip* and the *Gleichschaltung* that the state had its eyes set upon.

Heidegger was a trophy for National Socialism. Being one of the leading philosophers of the time, he brought a certain amount of intellectualism and legitimacy to the Nazi

¹¹⁵ Hugo Ott, *Martin Heidegger: Unterwegs zu seinen Biographie* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus, 1992), 214-224.

¹¹⁶ Martin Heidegger, "Rector's Address: The Self-Assertion of the German University and the Rectorate 1933/34: Facts and Thoughts, 477.

Party. For Heidegger, it seems as though he was more sympathetic to opportunity than to Nazi ideologies. Many ideologies that were found within National Socialism were ideologies that Heidegger held firmly in contempt. Modernization, technological advance, and biological racism are ideals that are not defended by Heidegger. Thus, what was the true connection between him and National Socialism if he had no interest, and even held many of National Socialist ideals in contempt? Even with all of this as evidence of the differences between his core beliefs and the root ideologies of National Socialism, he opportunistically became a member of the Nazis, thus propelling his career forward. Although he believed for a few years that National Socialism was heading in the right direction, the manner in which they were achieving it seems less associated to him, opposed to what Faye may argue.

Looking Back

Whether one is reflecting on *Being and Time* or the events of his life in the first decades of the 20th century, it is clear that Martin Heidegger was a man of great influence, and still to this day, is a man of great controversy. *Being and Time* alone is a philosophical masterpiece that is without doubt one of the most influential works of the 20th century, but the influence of Heidegger goes well beyond just this single text. He exercised a lifetime of influence, the most important of which came during the late 1920s and through the early 1940s while he focused his time at the university level.

Throughout the entirety of *Being and Time*, specifically the last third, there is authoritarian political rhetoric which was compatible with Nazi ideology. In this text, Heidegger is calling for a renewed and united nation; a nation of "Being." He is urging the German nation to rid itself of all "inauthentic" people from taking part in the state. Heidegger believed, very similarly to Hitler, that these people were a disease to the German social climate, and that the only way for the German nation to become powerful again was to reconstruct a homogenous nation and civil service. Although there seems to be an apparent parallel to Hitler's "final solution," Heidegger's goal was different. While Hitler aimed to eliminate the Jews, Heidegger instead aimed to re-educate the inauthentic people with his own ideas and to make himself the Philosopher King of National Socialism.

This idea for a philosophical dictatorship to be put in place in Germany is argued for especially in the final sections of the text; that a dictator would be the only true way for the German nation to return to power. *Being and Time* emphasizes the fact that the nation of "beings" needs a strong and centralized leader in order to keep the people on course. This dictator is also called for by Heidegger "to make possible the moulding of individuality in seeing and looking, [which] would be a pedagogical task for the state."¹¹⁷ This would ensure a nation of blind followers, although this was surely not the way in which Heidegger would describe them. Heidegger would surely describe them as a group of powerful and enlightened "beings" that have a uniform set of goals. For Heidegger, "authenticity" is only possible within the "national *Schicksalsgemeinschaft*." However it is described, it effectively creates a homogenous group of people that would decisionistically "choose its leader" and uncritically conform to a single person of power.

¹¹⁷ Quoted by Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 454-455.

As a professor at the university level for the majority of his professional career, Martin Heidegger was in the ideal situation to proselytize and propagate these thoughts and theories to youthful and impressionable minds. Being put on a stage in front of adolescents that are eager to learn, especially in a field with such ambiguity as philosophy, gave Heidegger a perfect platform to disseminate his own personal theories and ideologies. During this time period, Heidegger was ideologically involved with his theories of "being." Although at the time these theories may not have been thought of as politically important, after World War I these theories, as have been previously discussed, had a clear and distinct political tenor. When the war came to an end, many of the ideals discussed in *Being and Time* have been seen to coincide with many of the ideologies of Hitler and the National Socialist German Worker's Party.

Being named Rector of a university system is of key importance for the goals of the Nazi party to be realized. Together with programs and organizations such as The Hitler Youth, having control over the information that would be taught, in a legitimate setting, would potentially form the minds of the youthful minds of Germany. Not only were these minds of the youth of Germany, but they were also the adolescents that would eventually become the educated elite of Germany. In turn Heidegger was personally in charge of hiring and firing the instructors and determining what the curriculum would be for the future teachers, businessmen, lawyers, and other professions that had the greatest potential to hold positions of power. The Nazis and Heidegger had similar aims in the re-education of the German people, but the final goals were very different. The primary goal for the Nazis behind these steps was to effectively create several generations of Nazi followers who would all collectively follow,

out of their own free will and thought processes, the ideals set out by a strong central leader, such as Hitler. Oddly enough, the culminating objective is remarkably comparable to the one set out by Heidegger in *Being and Time*, although it soon became apparent to Heidegger that his vision of the future and a “totally transformed German *Dasein*,” was very different than Hitler’s. Heidegger opportunistically believed that being elected Rector would lead to his re-education of the “inauthentic” people, educating them in the official philosophy of Nazi Germany; the philosophy of Martin Heidegger himself. This opportunism was obstructed when Heidegger soon realized that the Nazis had no interest in his ideals, and were just using his name to bolster their intellectual legitimacy.

Conservative revolutionary thought is another ideal that is abundant throughout Heidegger’s philosophies and career. Heidegger consistently points to the tragedies of modern society and technology. He believed that the modern world is “the ever more encompassing attempt to objectify nature, to convert it into an object that can be mastered and controlled.”¹¹⁸ The primary component of the modern world that Heidegger attacks is natural scientific thought and the institution of modern technology. Heidegger believes that technology puts a premium on the process of production, and even promotes production over human beings and human values.¹¹⁹ According to Michael Gillespie, “Heidegger was attracted to Nazism because he believed it offered a solution to the crisis of Western civilization.”¹²⁰ Gillespie’s interpretation effectively debunks many of the anti-Semitic based theories that Faye defends.

¹¹⁸ Gillespie, “Martin Heidegger’s Aristotelian National Socialism,” 142.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

Martin Heidegger's career and philosophies are controversial to this day. Although it is commonly argued by scholars such as Wolin, Faye, and Fritsche that although his authoritarian political attitudes began to form well before National Socialism began, it can be argued instead that Heidegger was able to opportunistically adapt his philosophical ideals to fit that of National Socialism in order to advance his personal career and political agenda. Although there are also those who maintain that there was a shift between Heidegger's pre-Nazi and Nazi ideologies and that there are no political theories that can or should be inferred from his texts—specifically *Being and Time*—the two periods of his life and work are so important to both philosophy and German interwar history, that they should be examined, and examined together. It is nearly impossible to ignore Heidegger's opportunism that is vivid while examining his career, *Being and Time*, and the events and goals of the Nazi period in Germany during the early twentieth century.

CHAPTER 4

Ernst Jünger

A Biographical Glimpse

Born in Heidelberg, Germany in 1895, Ernst Jünger was the oldest of six children. Jünger's father played a major role in his development during childhood but unfortunately his father's role was pertinent in an adverse manner due to a lack of emotional affection. His father, a professional chemist and pharmacist, is commonly depicted in Jünger's memoirs as being extremely distant emotionally from Jünger, or from any of his siblings for that matter.¹²¹ His mother, on the other hand, was quite the opposite. She was overwhelmingly warm, loving, and affectionate. Although she was very caring and tender towards her children, she was commonly "overpowered by the domineering personality and charisma of the patriarch."¹²²

Though his father was very unaffectionate, he was highly interested in the intellectual development of his children, especially Ernst. During the majority of his youth, the Jünger family was constantly on the move. He was constantly being uprooted and transplanted to different educational institutions. Different schools meant an assortment of varying conditions to which Ernst needed to constantly adjust himself: different settings, people, friends, teachers, rules. Taking this into account, it is no wonder that Ernst was very dispassionate about and disconnected from his education.

¹²¹ Elliot Y. Neaman, *A Dubious Past: Ernst Jünger and the Politics of Literature After Nazism*. (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1999) 23.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 24.

In addition, Jünger believed that the educational system had too many rules and regulations. Rules and regulations, such as the ones enforced in school, were against the innate complexion of Jünger's mind. He was a daydreamer; the physical walls of a classroom could not contain his mind or imagination. As Elliot Neaman puts it, "he belonged to the generation of youth in Germany that rebelled against the philistinism and suffocating *Bürgerlichkeit* of Wilhelmine Germany."¹²³

While the classroom could not hold Jünger's attention very effectively, he believed that he was destined to find something that could. "The tendency of flight into a dreamworld sustained him well into adulthood,"¹²⁴ and in 1911 he joined the *Wandervogel*, a part of the German youth movement. The *Wandervogel* taught "defiance, hate, yearning, love," and everything that had been "repressed, denied [and] forcibly sublimated"¹²⁵ during his youth due to his authoritarian father.

In 1913 Jünger left home in search of more adventure and excitement. He decided to join the French Foreign Legion in Algeria. Here he made an unfortunate discovery; the dreams he had of the adventures awaiting him were crushed. Not only were his youthful exotic fantasies of Africa crushed, but Jünger was also captured by a group of mercenaries.¹²⁶ Although it may seem improbable due to their past tensions, Ernst's father came to his rescue, liberating him from mercenary captivity.

After returning home in 1914, Jünger reached a pact with his father. The pact consisted of a single agreement; if Ernst completed high school, his father would fully fund a trip for the two of them to go on a mountain climbing expedition to Mount

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 25.

Kilimanjaro, a trip which would surely fulfill Ernst's adventurous fantasies. The Great War broke out soon thereafter. Jünger presumed this was his chance at real adventure and jumped at the opportunity to take a high school proficiency examination. Jünger passed the exam and subsequently enlisted in the German military, specifically the Fusilier Regiment 73. After two months of basic military training Jünger was sent to the front lines. The trenches are where Jünger's fantasies of excitement and adventure were finally realized. Carrying a notebook documenting his experiences he noted that, "the things waiting for us would never happen again, and I anticipated them with the greatest curiosity."¹²⁷

The war was exactly what the young Jünger yearned for. He was quickly awarded for his extreme bravery during the war as he was shot and wounded a number of times, including being shot in the lung, and was wounded a total of fourteen times throughout the war.¹²⁸ He was also awarded the *Pour le Mérite*, the highest order of the German army, by the Kaiser personally.¹²⁹ Jünger was the youngest to ever receive such an honor. After the war ended, Jünger was one of the 100,000 men that were allowed to remain in the restricted army permitted per terms of the Treaty of Versailles and was put in charge of reconstructing the training manual "designed to introduce future soldiers to the technology and tactics" of possible warfare in the future.¹³⁰

The notes that Jünger compiled throughout the entire war served as the groundwork for one of his most significant works, *Im Stahlgewittern (Storm of Steel)*. Although it was just his first piece of literary work, it was arguably his most popular.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 26.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

Storm of Steel is also credited with asserting many of Jünger's values, philosophical ideals, and political viewpoints. The manner in which Jünger dealt with the horrors of war is precisely the reason, not only why he was so popular, but also why he was such a controversial figure.

Ernst Jünger might be the most controversial of the three intellectuals examined in this study. Although he is noted as being a leading Nazi literary figure, Jünger was never an official member of the National Socialist Party—a fact to which he later would repeatedly point when defending the events of his life, particularly during Nazi control of Germany between 1933 and 1945. Jünger was commonly attacked due to the fact that his texts glorified many of the same ideals that are commonly associated with the National Socialists; war, work, and nationalism.

The relationship between Ernst Jünger and National Socialism is wrought with tension. Though some of the basic principles found in his earliest works appear to parallel many of the focal points of the NSDAP, this is a misconception. As we will see, Jünger was envisioning a governmental system that would not be satisfied through the Weimar Republic or National Socialism. Many of his critics, such as Elliot Neaman, Kurt Sontheimer, and Nikolaus Wachsmann, have argued that Jünger was a proponent of the NSDAP. These historians arguments parallel each other in many respects pointing to the fact that Junger published articles in the *NS – Briefe (National Socialist - Letters)*, glorified work as did the National Socialists, and aestheticized war. In reality, though Jünger indeed published a small number of articles in the *NS – Briefe*, he in fact published articles in numerous publications and articles of various political affiliations. He published articles in the *Völkischer Beobachter (Nationalist Observer)*, *Das*

Tagebuch (*The Diary*), a Liberal publication, the *Deutsches Volkstum* (*German Folk*), and was an editor for *Der Vormarsch* (*The Advance*). In these various periodicals and publications, not only is there evidence that supports the arguments made by Neaman and Wachsmann and that shows Jünger's support of National Socialism, but there is also evidence of his resistance of National Socialism. In 1929 Jünger published an article entitled "'Nationalismus' und Nationalsozialismus" in *Das Tagebuch*. In this article Jünger attacks the "nationalist" movement, especially the NSDAP.¹³¹ For Jünger, this article, along with his publication of *On the Marble Cliffs* are two primary instances where a split is definitely evident between his ideals and those of National Socialism.

The affinity Jünger had for Nazi ideals was due to his experiences in World War I. As a youth Jünger was always searching for adventure. At the age of nineteen, Jünger found the adventure he was searching for; he entered the German armed forces. He was sent to the front lines after a very brief and basic training. When he finally arrived at the front lines, he came to the realization of what the Great War was, and how it would be fought: the horrors of poison gas weaponry and trench warfare.

Der Sturm

Ernst Jünger was an instant phenomenon when he first broke into the literary scene. His first text, *Storm of Steel*,¹³² was received very well. This piece of writing is a

¹³¹ Nikolaus Wachsmann, "Marching Under the Swastika: Ernst Jünger and National Socialism, 1918-33." *Journal of Contemporary History* 33 (1998): 582.

¹³² Ernst Jünger, *The Storm of Steel*, Translated by Basil Creighton, (New York: Howard Fertig Inc., 1996).

compilation of Jünger's wartime diary entries and notations, collected and composed in a single, coherent text. Jünger received immediate acclaim for this text due to the exuberance and honesty with which he expressed himself, especially the unflinching detail of his own personal experiences in World War I. In the end, Jünger did much more than simply compose a text compiling his wartime memoirs; he essentially became a polarizing figure throughout the Weimar years in Germany.

World War I had an obvious impact on the young Ernst Jünger. *Storm of Steel* begins with the young and naïve Jünger getting his feet wet when he saw his first "action" in Orainville. A rather sobering moment for Jünger, he found out that war, especially in the Great War, was not at all what he had expected. Instead of the excitement of dodging bullets and hand to hand combat, he found himself in a different scenario. "Instead of the dangers we had hoped for, only mud and work and sleepless nights had fallen to our lot, and the conquest of these called for a heroism that was little to our taste."¹³³ Although this was not exactly what Jünger had hoped for, his fortune was soon to change, although again, not necessarily to what he had expected.

Before Jünger had gained any combat experience, he was brought face to face with a horrifying reality of war. He described a morning when he awoke to a corpse in utter surprise and horror.¹³⁴ He stated that the French must have gone months without burying their fallen soldiers. After this first glimpse of death due to war, Jünger seemed as though he had a legitimate feeling of horror, but soon after he stated, "Although I made up my mind to omit all comments from this book, I should like all the same to say a word or two about this first glimpse of horrors. It is a moment so important in the

¹³³ Ibid., 9.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 21-22.

experience of war. The horrible was undoubtedly a part of that irresistible attraction that drew us into the war.”¹³⁵ Although he first described the horrors of war with surprise, he soon described how it became rather mundane. He gave a colorful description of the change in perceptions of human loss in the war:

We looked at all these dead with dislocated limbs, distorted faces, and the hideous colours of decay, as though we walked in a dream through a garden full of strange plants, and we could not realize at first what we had all around us. But finally we were so accustomed to the horrible that if we came on a dead body anywhere on a fire-step or in a ditch we give it no more than a passing thought and recognized it as we would a stone or a tree...¹³⁶

This description essentially showed the growth, or rather the transformation of a youthful, adventure seeking Ernst Jünger, into Ernst Jünger the hardened, World War I German soldier. The tone of his text followed suit, transforming from hopes to events; from yearning, to experiencing.

Battle soon follows. The excited Jünger was about to see his first real combat experience. He expressed the anxious enthusiasm he felt while preparing and awaiting battle. But as soon as he arrived, it had ended. The excitement that Jünger had was that of the yearning to test his nerve and wit against an opponent; to feel that moment when either he or his enemy would fall. He explained:

The battle of Les Eparges was the first I was in, and it was not at all what I had expected. I had taken part in a great military operation without coming within sight of the enemy. It was later that I experienced hand-to-hand fighting, that supreme moment of warfare when the infantryman comes into the open and when the chaotic vacancy of the battlefield has its murderous and decisive interludes.¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Ibid., 22-23.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 23.

¹³⁷ Ibid., 30

Although the battle of Les Eparges was not what Jünger had expected and hoped for, he would have plenty of hand-to-hand combat to experience throughout his tenure in war.

Jünger then continued to describe the day-to-day life in the trenches. The majority of the text was consumed with the tedium of sleepless nights, taking post duty, and having the company of rats, mice, and cats that were not able to escape the fire between the trenches. This monotony was occasionally highlighted with death, a brief bit of sleep and rest, some coffee, and some beer swilling. Even the bit of excitement of a soldier manning the post getting shot seemed to have become boring and monotonous to Jünger. "One of a post suddenly collapses in a stream of blood, shot in the head. His fellows tear the field-dressing from his tunic and bind him up. [...] Somebody throws a shovelful of soil over the red patch and every one goes about his business."¹³⁸

Increasing emotional detachment is another theme which Jünger portrays in the text. He describes his emotional state and that of the other veteran soldiers in his battalion as no longer being "whitefaced"¹³⁹ and scared; they are now "callous."¹⁴⁰ He described the veterans as looking at battle as though it was sport.¹⁴¹ He wrote of several stories of how members of his battalion used practical jokes in order to entice and eventually anger the English into firing at them, which was clearly an exercise in futility. These examples of emotional detachment are another way that Jünger was able to depict the horrors of war. War for Jünger became a path to manhood; war was able

¹³⁸ Ibid., 42-43.

¹³⁹ Ibid., 43.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

to toughen boys and turn them into men. These experiences were necessary for Jünger to tell his story of war.

Jünger then detailed some of the most horrible events that he had had to endure at Guillemont. Upon hearing of his platoon's new station he stated, "I heard a monotonous tale of crouching all day in shell-holes with no one on either flank and no trenches communicating with the rear, of unceasing attacks, of dead bodies littering the ground, of maddening thirst, of wounded and dying, and of a lot besides."¹⁴² This portion of the text detailed the most gruesome and horrid tales of his time in World War I. The description Jünger gives of his personal guide is that of shock. Jünger describes the guide's appearance:

The face half-framed by the steel rim of the helmet was unmoved; the voice accompanied by the sound of battle droned on, and the impression they made on me was one of unearthly solemnity. One could see that the man had been through horror to the limit of despair and there had learnt to despise it. Nothing was left but supreme and superhuman indifference.¹⁴³

Jünger repeatedly described tales of wounded that he states will never escape his memory such as tales of his profusely bleeding comrades reaching to him asking for help, and Jünger knowing there was nothing that he can do to help, or stories of English prisoners having to be shot and killed because "going over the top" with a prisoner was simply unrealistic – it would only put the prisoner and, more importantly, the German soldiers in even more danger.¹⁴⁴

Though much of the war that Jünger portrays was one of death and struggle, Jünger also spent a brief amount of time expounding another characteristic of war; a

¹⁴² Ibid., 92.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 92-93.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 102.

characteristic to which Jünger attributed his life being saved numerous times. This characteristic was that of luck. In one memorable glimpse, Jünger recollected a day when his troop was succumbing to a lengthy bout of shelling from the English. Jünger and his battalion retreated to a farm, and when the shelling came to a pause Jünger describes the events that followed. "In the evening the same performance [shelling] was repeated; only this time, as it was fine, I stood outside the farmhouse. The next shell fell right in the middle of it."¹⁴⁵ Jünger then goes on to state, in a rather resonating manner, "Such are the chances of war. Here more than anywhere was a case of little causes and great effects. Seconds and millimetres make the difference."¹⁴⁶

Although *Storm of Steel* is commonly portrayed as solely a memoir of war, it could also be considered a collection of life lessons. Much of what Jünger described dealt with experiences in which a lesson was taught and though many of these experiences occurred by way of war, battle and death, Jünger seems to have been more interested in the lessons and experiences to be gained. Though placed in the setting of war, many of the lessons and experiences that Jünger detailed can be applied to multiple scenarios, but since his personal experiences took place in a war setting, it was the best way for him to describe them. Lessons of leadership are strewn throughout the entire text, as well as the ideals of personal responsibility. He mentioned at the beginning of the text the significance of speech and rhetoric while in a position of leadership. He stated:

An officer should never be parted from his men in the moment of danger on any account whatever. Danger is the supreme moment of his career, his chance to show his manhood at its best. Honour and gallantry make him master of the hour. What is more sublime than to face death at the head of a hundred men?

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 211.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

Such a one will never find obedience fail him, for courage runs through the ranks like wine.¹⁴⁷

While he was detailing an event and a speech that was given to him and his fellow soldiers, this was a lesson that Jünger followed through his entire military career, and also a lesson that is applicable in various scenarios. According to Jünger, leadership is a characteristic that is universal in the manner that it works. Strong leadership can put sufficient confidence in men to face a struggle of any kind.

This advocacy for strong centralized leadership in the military can be paralleled to his support for an authoritarian government. In *Storm of Steel*, Jünger states that he believes a strong leader, such as a military officer, is capable of infusing confidence and courage into his followers to the extent of overcoming any obstacle. Transitioning this belief into the context of Weimar Germany, it would be inferred that a strong enough public leader would be capable of infusing the German people with enough confidence and courage to stand up to the status quo of Weimar. This inference was realized with the emergence of Adolf Hitler into the public sphere, and the rise to power of the Nazi Party.

Storm of Steel is commonly represented as classic National Socialist propaganda or idealism; Elliot Neaman and Nikolaus Wachsmann are just two historians that argue this point to some extent. This argument misrepresents what Jünger was attempting to accomplish in many of his texts. Although it can be claimed that Jünger simply glorifies war, instead he is glorifying the existential experience of war and struggle. He refers to his own individual experience, and sometimes the experiences of other soldiers in whom he had a significant emotional investment. Focusing his attention on his own

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 27.

personal experiences throughout the war, he does not put much emphasis on Germany, other than the fact that he himself is German fighting with the German forces.

The ending of the text is particularly important within this discussion. Jünger does not end the original version of his text with the Versailles Treaty, or even with Germany losing the war. Instead, he concludes his text with himself receiving the prestigious *Pour le Mérite* on September 18, 1918. It was not until four years later, in 1924, that he made an addition to the end of the text,¹⁴⁸ namely, a nationalistically charged quote: “Though force without and barbarity within conglomerate in somber clouds, yet so long the blade of a sword will strike a spark in the night may it be said: Germany lives and Germany shall never go under!”¹⁴⁹

This addition is not to be overlooked. The addition of such openly nationalistic tone changes much of the complexion of the text as a whole. It transforms a text that is almost solely concerned with glorifying and aestheticizing the individual experience of war, to glorifying the German nation. This quote transforms an individualistic and apolitical Jünger, into the Jünger that took on the role of one of Germany’s “political ideologue[s],”¹⁵⁰ and who allegedly “preached the gospel of Auschwitz.”¹⁵¹ The addition of this nationalist conclusion to *Storm of Steel* marked a significant change for much of his career. Jünger, through novels and articles became one of the prevailing voices of German Nationalism.

The reasoning behind this transition is due to the inability of the Weimar Republic to stabilize the economic and social climate of Germany. Nationalist groups, most

¹⁴⁸ Neaman, 31.

¹⁴⁹ Jünger, *The Storm of Steel*, 319.

¹⁵⁰ Wachsmann., 573.

¹⁵¹ Ibid..

notably the NSDAP, called for radical change under the mantra of nationalism. These groups were in opposition to the “material” and “intellectual...filth” of Weimar. These ideas captivated Jünger, and as Wachsmann states, when Jünger “had heard Hitler speak at a mass meeting in Munich, [he was] deeply impressed by this ‘event of elemental force.’”¹⁵² With this shift to a radical nationalist stance, Jünger thus edited *Storm of Steel* in 1924 in order to reflect his new ideals.

Although the versions of the text appearing after 1929 had a significantly stronger nationalistic tone, the final message that Jünger passed along stayed the same. It was the last message that Jünger incorporated into his text that finally allowed him to realize his position in the world. It may have taken him four years of fighting in the freezing wet trenches of Europe, but he figured out his own identity, something he struggled with throughout his youth. While he was searching for adventure and excitement when he was a young boy, he found himself plagued with more confusion. It took World War I to clear the way for Jünger to find himself. Jünger described the final lesson he absorbed from the war in the following way:

And almost without any thought of mine, the idea of the Fatherland had been distilled from all these afflictions in a clearer and brighter essence. That was the final winnings in a game on which so often all had been asked: the nation was no longer for me and empty thought veiled in symbols; and how could it have been otherwise when I had seen so many die for its sake, and been schooled myself to stake my life for its credit every minute, day and night, without a thought? And so, strange as it may sound, I learned from this very four years’ schooling in force and in all the fantastic extravagance of material warfare that life has no depth of meaning except when it is pledged for an ideal, and that there are ideals in comparison with which the life of an individual and even of a people has no weight. And though the aim for which I fought as an individual, as an atom in the whole body of the army, was not to be achieved, though material force cast us, apparently, to the earth, yet we learned once and for all to stand for a cause and if necessary to fall as befitted men.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Ernst Jünger, *Jahre der Okkupation* (Stuttgart 1958), 249, quoted in Wachsmann, 577.

¹⁵³ Wachsmann., 316.

Though there was a certain amount of nationalistic resolve in it, Jünger's final assertions in *Storm of Steel* are important in order to understand his psyche. He discovered that his role in the world was to fight for and ensure the greatness of Germany. Jünger yearned for Germany to once again become a nation at the pinnacle of greatness.

Scholarly discussion concerning Jünger and *Storm of Steel* has been contentious and controversial. The perceptions of what Jünger was attempting to portray, share, and reflect upon is up for debate, but there are several points of consistency throughout the debates. The glorification of war is an evident point. There is another point of emphasis that is often only briefly discussed, if it is discussed at all. That is the notion that Jünger wanted to make it clear just how difficult and destructive the First World War was, not only on a national and military level, but more importantly on a personal level.

As we have already seen, the Weimar years in Germany were not very welcoming for German veterans of World War I. For many of the men who had fought in the war, the Treaty of Versailles took much of their lives away due to the drastic reduction of the German military. Veterans no longer had jobs or income that they could rely upon. On top of that was their physical and mental fitness. Many veterans were injured or deformed, and in a Weimar Germany that put increasing emphasis on beauty, where did that put all of these men? In addition, with the debts the German government incurred in order to finance the war effort, as well as the reparations that were demanded from Germany in the Treaty of Versailles, there were no funds that could be spared for these men. Their mental and psychological condition is not always brought up in this discussion either. These soldiers lived for years in trenches, covered in mud while dodging constant shelling and gunfire. Surprised, but also relieved, when

the war ended and Germany defeated, the return home for many men proved difficult. Coming home, especially with the “Stab-in-the-Back” legend that became so popular, made it even more difficult for the men to integrate back into society.

Is it possible that Jünger may have composed and published this compilation of his personal war memoirs in order to give himself, as well as other World War I veterans, an identity within society? By creating this text, Jünger essentially gave the reader a sample of war; an illustration of the war that so many German World War I veterans had to fight, survived, and the memories they had to live with. He consistently stated how difficult the war was to endure, repeatedly declaring that World War I was “no child’s-play.”¹⁵⁴ Jünger discussed the sacrifices that he and his fellow soldiers made throughout the war. Though he never deflects the blame to anyone or anything else for his own personal choices in joining the war efforts, he asserted:

Our losses in young officers were again frightfully heavy during these days. Every time afterwards that I heard prejudice and depreciation on the lips of the mob, I thought of these men who saw it out to the bitter end with so little parade and with so fine an ardour. But after all—what is the mob? It sees in everything nothing but the reflection of its own manners. It is quite clear to me that these men were our best. However cleverly people may talk and write, there is nothing to set against self-sacrifice that is not pale, insipid, and miserable.¹⁵⁵

This emotional description of the war appeared to be a salute to those men who fell and gave their lives to their country and their cause. It is easy, through this statement, to see the chasm between those at home and those who fought on the front lines. This chasm generated a sense of contempt that was held by many soldiers upon returning home; a contempt that could easily be channeled against the supporters of Weimar by

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 213.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 220.

military leaders such as Hindenburg, or those who aestheticized and glorified war, such as Hitler.¹⁵⁶

Storm of Steel, other than being a great personal literary achievement for Ernst Jünger, is seen by many scholars¹⁵⁷ as expressing the personal and political ideals of Jünger. When questions concerning Jünger and his ideologies are posed, *Storm of Steel* is often times the “evidence” of what Jünger would supposedly believe or pursue. According to these historians, the memoir contains answers hidden in its contents and its style.

An already controversial figure due to his glorification of war and the war experience becomes more controversial due to what some scholars believe is a push for a National Socialist revolution. Due to the glorification of war in *Storm of Steel* it seems almost natural to compare the text to the ideals and virtues instilled by Adolf Hitler and the National Socialist German Worker’s Party.

In this work alone, there are several different levels on which to compare Jünger and National Socialism. The glorification of war is the most obvious of these levels, but is also the shallowest. It is simple to see the connection between Jünger and the Nazis on the surface. Throughout the latter editions of *Storm of Steel* Jünger details the greatness of war and how “there is no lovelier a death in the world”¹⁵⁸ than to die for Germany. On this level, there are certain parallels to National Socialism, but there are

¹⁵⁶ Although it is Jünger’s agenda to establish an identity for the returning soldiers, this is not the only way to describe the arrival of the German fighters. Ernst Toller, in his memoir *I Was a German*, illustrates an alternate perspective that was seen by many returning soldiers. Toller, who was also a volunteer for the German Military in World War I, describes how the war had an effect opposite in comparison to Jünger’s. Toller, upon returning home, quickly joined the revolutionary efforts in Germany. He is also known for his unyielding resistance towards Nazism. (Ernst Toller, *I Was German: The Autobiography of a Revolutionary*, (New York: Paragon House, 1991)).

¹⁵⁷ For example Elliot Neaman, Nikolaus Wachsmann, and Wolf Kittler.

¹⁵⁸ Jünger, *The Storm of Steel*, 1.

also certain misrepresentations. In both Jünger's text and the ideals of Hitler's National Socialism there exists a glorification of war and struggle. The misrepresentation of this premise is based on the nature of this glorification. Hitler argues that war is a national endeavor; a national experience for the betterment of Germany. In contrast, Jünger asserts, specifically in his first edition, that war is glorified solely as an individual experience. Nikolaus Wachsmann, who comes to a similar conclusion, states:

For Hitler and other leading Nazis, the war was in the first place a national experience, and they focused on its political outcome: the fight against the republic domestically and against the Versailles settlement abroad. In contrast, Jünger in his early works never instrumentalizes war for political ends—the main aim for Jünger the writer is the heroisation of Jünger the Soldier.¹⁵⁹

This contrast in ideals is also present when looking at Hitler's ideological treatise *Mein Kampf*¹⁶⁰ and the alleged ideological treatise of Jünger, *Storm of Steel*. In *Mein Kampf* Hitler argues that “his personal experience is entirely subsumed in the national disaster”¹⁶¹ of losing World War I, and that he declares that the day of German defeat in World War I was the first time he had shed tears since the funeral of his mother.¹⁶² Jünger, however takes a different approach to the end of World War I. In contrast to Hitler, who saw World War I as a “national disaster,” Jünger concludes his original treatise with “Jünger's personal triumph of being awarded the *Pour le Mérite*.”¹⁶³

On this level, which Wachsmann describes as being “superficial,”¹⁶⁴ there are some basic similarities, but when examined in more detail, Jünger and Hitler have very different opinions. Hitler asserts that war is important on a political level where the

¹⁵⁹ Wachsmann., 575.

¹⁶⁰ Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf*, Translated by Ralph Manheim, (New York: Mariner Books, 1999).

¹⁶¹ Wachsmann., 576.

¹⁶² Hitler., 186.

¹⁶³ Wachsmann., 576.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 575.

struggle is a national struggle. In contrast, Jünger believes that war is a struggle for personal survival and individual merits. Whereas Hitler views World War I as an utter disappointment and failure, Jünger views it, especially in his early editions of *Storm of Steel*, as a success filled with personal achievements, honors, and quenching his thirst for adventure.

Storm of Steel is a text that is essential to review when examining post-World War I Germany, or the Weimar Republic, and even proves to be useful in any general examination of war. In Germany, *Storm of Steel* was an instant sensation for Jünger. His work allowed people to realize what soldiers in the Great War had endured. It allowed the citizens at home to relate to, and sympathize with, the soldiers who returned home after the war and, in the case of Germany, after defeat. *Storm of Steel* was a work that comprised a wide array of literary themes. On a superficial level the text appeared to be a simple list of experiences and emotions felt by a soldier at the frontlines of war. If nothing more, *Storm of Steel* gave Jünger publicity and a platform to proliferate some of his later arguments and ideologies. Although *Storm of Steel* is probably Jünger's most controversial and popular text, to understand his place in Weimar literary and intellectual life, one must also survey his other significant works.

Der Arbeiter

Though *Storm of Steel* is arguably Jünger's most noteworthy composition due to his aestheticization of war and death, he often reflected on his frontline experiences in

his other early works. Another of Jünger's texts that is necessary to include in any examination of Jünger is *The Worker*, which was published in 1932.¹⁶⁵ This is Jünger's "last and final reflection on the battlefield experience in the trenches of World War I."¹⁶⁶ *The Worker* is another example of controversial writing. Much like *Storm of Steel*, there is much in this text that anticipates the National Socialist State. As Elliot Neaman describes it, "*The Worker* was Jünger's most protofascist book."¹⁶⁷ Late in his career Jünger must have realized the parallels between this text and the Nazi state and he had the text blocked from being translated to other languages (including English).¹⁶⁸

The Worker is Ernst Jünger's argument for a totalitarian state which is run by wartime front soldiers, workers, and their leaders. Thomas Nevin allocates the phrase "cybernetic storm troops"¹⁶⁹ to this group. For Jünger, the text is a glimpse into the near future of what the political and social spheres of Germany could, and according to Jünger, *should*, look like. As he began composing *Der Arbeiter* in October of 1930,¹⁷⁰ Jünger was taking the position of "a distant observer, detecting global historical-metaphysical movements."¹⁷¹ According to Jünger, this distance was essential due to the fact that "daily German politics became too insignificant to be of interest" to himself; an attitude typical among conservative intellectuals who often prided themselves on taking an "apolitical" stance. He was looking at a large-scale interpretation of global

¹⁶⁵ Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter*, (Hamburg: Klett-Cotta, 1932). This text has not been translated into the English language.

¹⁶⁶ Wolf Kittler, "From Gestalt to Ge-Stell: Martin Heidegger Reads Ernst Jünger," *Cultural Critique* 69, (Spring 2008): 79.

¹⁶⁷ Neaman, 43.

¹⁶⁸ Kittler, 79.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Nevin, *Ernst Jünger and Germany: Into the Abyss, 1914-1945*, (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1996) 284.

¹⁷⁰ Wachsmann, 596.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

politics. Jünger also points to this distance from Weimar politics that he created while composing *Der Arbeiter* in order to defend some of the theories he illustrates in the text.

Der Arbeiter is Jünger's call for the soldier-worker to rise up. The Worker,¹⁷² according to Jünger, "is neither a social class nor an economic force, but simply the type of soldier, also called warrior, who fought in the trenches of war that had functioned as a melting pot, in which the petit bourgeois, the peasant, and the proletarian stood shoulder to shoulder."¹⁷³ For Jünger the Worker embodied the same virtues of the soldier; discipline and self-sacrifice. The Worker was also not simply a German phenomenon. Jünger believed that the Worker would come to rule in countries throughout the globe, and essentially rule the world. He believed that due to Germany's political history, it was the perfect social and political climate for such a change. Jünger maintained that since Germany was never truly a liberal-bourgeois society, it is the only country where the Worker is ready to rule (the Soviet Union ranks a distant second).¹⁷⁴

Jünger believed that the process of generating a dependency on the Worker in Germany had already begun taking place during the Weimar years. Jünger argued that the modern world would increase the "predictability, efficiency, and discipline"¹⁷⁵ of the Worker. The one necessary piece of the puzzle that Jünger believed was missing was that of a "'young and ruthless leadership' to lead the way to a new state ... where 'military discipline' and 'labor duty' would be implemented 'from top to bottom.'"¹⁷⁶ Here, it is apparent that Jünger is advocating a party much like the NSDAP.

¹⁷² "Worker" is capitalized to illustrate the difference between the "Worker" in Jünger's *Der Arbeiter*, and worker, in the normal labor sense.

¹⁷³ Kittler, 82.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., 80.

¹⁷⁵ Neaman, 43.

¹⁷⁶ Ernst Jünger, *Der Arbeiter (Sämtliche Werke 8)* 8, 217, 263, and passim., quoted in Neaman, 44.

Although on the surface it may appear to be a sign of political affiliation for Jünger, it is again important to reflect on context. During the composition of *The Worker*, the socio-economic climate was deplorable. As a result of the stock-market crash of 1929, Germany, along with much of the rest of the world, was in great financial crisis. Included in that was the steeply rising rate of unemployment. Like many on the right, Jünger already despised the Weimar Republic and he became even more critical of it due to its inability to rise out of the depression. Not only was *The Worker* a call for a governing system that was dynamically different than that of Weimar, it also instilled some of the traditions and virtues of the old Prussian state that oversaw great economic growth leading up to World War I. With steep unemployment rates, a vision such as Jünger's, which emphasized the importance of the workforce and promises an influx of employment opportunities, would surely draw interest. These contextual issues are often ignored by historians such as Neaman, Wachsmann, and Kittler in their interpretations of *The Worker*.

Wolf Kittler makes a relatively important observation in his article noting that *The Worker* is significantly different from Jünger's previous texts, especially *Storm of Steel*. The difference Kittler observes is that *The Worker* reads like a manifesto that "aims at predicting the future destiny of mankind on planet earth in the age of technology,"¹⁷⁷ whereas *Storm of Steel* and many of his other previous texts are lucid examinations on his past personal experiences. Some commentators, such as Kittler and Wachsmann, view this distinct shift in Jünger's writing style as a more direct parallel between his

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 79.

views and the ideologies of National Socialism, although Jünger was careful to refrain from ever mentioning a specific party in *The Worker*.¹⁷⁸

The conclusion that is drawn by many, including Neaman, Wachsmann, and Kittler, is that it is the text “was Jünger’s most protofascist book.”¹⁷⁹ Looking specifically and solely at the text, this is an acceptable conclusion. There are many examples throughout the text that directly anticipate National Socialism. What these accounts of *The Worker* lack, is a contextual interpretation. By contextualizing *The Worker*, the interpretation is strengthened. Jünger, as in the vast majority of his other texts and articles, is arguing for a radical change from the Weimar Republic, and in the case of *The Worker*, is arguing for a transformation very comparable to the change maintained within the ideals of National Socialism.

Marble Cliffs

Storm of Steel, although it is Jünger’s first and arguably most influential and recognized work, is far from being the only one of importance. A work that is arguably just as important is *On the Marble Cliffs*,¹⁸⁰ first published in 1939. In comparison to *Storm of Steel*, it is strikingly different; in fact they are near opposites in many respects. *On the Marble Cliffs* is a fictitious story whereas *Storm of Steel* is a memoir compiled of Jünger’s own personal war diaries and notations. *On the Marble Cliffs* is also widely

¹⁷⁸ Wachsmann, 586.

¹⁷⁹ Neaman, 43.

¹⁸⁰ Ernst Jünger, *On the Marble Cliffs*, Translated by Stuart Hood, (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books 1970) 116.

thought of today as a parable of the times in which it was written, and as part of a hidden agenda held by Jünger, whereas *Storm of Steel* is widely recognized for simply being firsthand encounters and experiences of what Jünger faced at war. Finally, and possibly the most important difference between these two works by Jünger is the fact that, while *Storm of Steel* is driven by individuality and adventure, *On the Marble Cliffs* suggests a definite political and societal milieu.

On the Marble Cliffs is a novel composed by Ernst Jünger in the years following the collapse of the Weimar Republic. First published in 1939, the text was relatively popular selling approximately 35,000 copies in the spring of 1940 alone.¹⁸¹ Although the work showed some promise in terms of sales, the “authorities” stopped further printing of the text after the spring of 1940.¹⁸² The reason for the discontinuation of printing is most certainly due to the material that was in the text. Though Jünger denied the idea that the text was an attack on the Nazi party, it is relatively certain that the “fictitious” novel was indeed a parable of the late 1920s and early 1930s in Germany.

On the Marble Cliffs begins with a rather lengthy description of the setting. The majority of the text takes place in and around the Marble Cliffs, including the hermitage and herbarium of the narrator. The narrator, who is most definitely a “fictitious” Ernst Jünger, lives with his brother Ortho, his cook and house-keeper, Lampusa, and the narrator’s illegitimate “love-child” Erio. The narrator and Ortho were soldiers and had just returned from war at the “Campagna.” Their goal was to simply live a “life of leisure.”¹⁸³ The two brothers would consume their time in the research of botany, ichthyology, and entomology. Not surprisingly, these were the same scientific studies in

¹⁸¹ Ibid., translator’s introduction.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Ibid., 17.

which Jünger immersed himself when returning from the war. Jünger even was able to include some of his botanical and entomological research within the parameters of the text.

Just on the other side of the Marble Cliffs was the town of Mauretania. Several times throughout the work, the narrator and Ortho travel to the town and on one occasion the narrator introduces the chief antagonist of the text, Chief Ranger, the Grand Master of Mauretania. Chief Ranger is undoubtedly a characterization of Adolf Hitler. Chief Ranger is always portrayed in a dark light; rendered as a strong and witty villain, intimidating everyone in his path. He is the leading politician with a large following of thugs whom no one dares oppose. He and his gang are traveling through Mauretania gathering “support” for his crusade through the area towards the Marina, the Marble Cliffs, and ultimately the hermitage of the narrator. The narrator, brother Ortho and the other members of the hermitage meet Chief Ranger and his following, and combat ensues at the conclusion of the text.

The material enveloped in this relatively short novel is essential to the examination at hand. Not only is this text clearly an attack on National Socialism and Hitler himself, it also puts Ernst Jünger in the role leading the aforementioned attack. From the very first paragraph to the end of the text, Jünger voices his own ideologies and desires.

In the very first paragraph of *On the Marble Cliffs*, the narrator reminisces about “times of happiness.”¹⁸⁴ The narrator soon qualifies “times of happiness” as the times before the war broke out. Though this is a very brief flashback, it is noteworthy. If interpreted as a parody of the National Socialist takeover, the war, “Campagna” as it is

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

labeled in the text, is none other than World War I. Thus, the “times of happiness” that the narrator, or Jünger, is alluding to would correspond to pre-World War I Germany. In just this very small segment of the first chapter of *On Marble Cliffs*, the reader can identify some of Jünger’s basic values. Jünger yearned for Germany to revert back to the days of glory, the days of the great German Reich. Of course, with his affinity for a militaristic, centralized state, this is no surprise. *On the Marble Cliffs* clearly shows the connection of the “fictional” text to the ideologies of Jünger. Neaman reflects on the text in a sympathetic manner defending Jünger with the notion that *On the Marble Cliffs* could be interpreted in many different ways.¹⁸⁵ Though there are definite qualities and characteristics of a fictional novel in *On the Marble Cliffs*, Jünger includes a plethora of personal ideals within it. Writers such as Wachsmann and Thomas Nevin conclude that the text was a turning point for Jünger, and his “inner emigration”¹⁸⁶ away from Nazism.

On the Marble Cliffs, also follows a historical timeline that is, in fact, extremely similar to the historical timeline of Germany from the 1920s to the 1930s. Through means of recollections, the narrator continually mentions events that either happened in Germany, or in Jünger’s personal or political life during the same time period. These recollections of the narrator can be construed in various ways, whether it be an explanation, an apology, or an acknowledgement of respect. The use of vocabulary is also important in this examination as Jünger uses specific language in order to elicit a certain response from the reader.

Towards the beginning of the text, in chapter seven, the narrator begins to discuss the power and aims of Chief Ranger and his “Order.” In a memorable section,

¹⁸⁵ Neaman, 120.

¹⁸⁶ Wachsmann, 574.

the narrator details how he and his brother Ortho once were attracted to the order lead by Chief Ranger, and how it was a mistake. He states:

Later I was to hear Brother Ortho say of our Mauretanian period that mistakes become errors only when persisted in. It was a saying that gained in truth for me when I thought back to our position when the Order attracted us. There are periods of decline when the pattern fades to which our inmost life must conform. When we enter upon them we sway and lose our balance. From hollow joy we sink to leaden sorrow, and past and future acquire a new charm from our sense of loss. So we wander aimlessly in the irretrievable past or in distant Utopias; but the fleeting moment we cannot grasp.¹⁸⁷

This example is similar to the first as it is another illustration of how Jünger used *On the Marble Cliffs* as a stage to present his own personal views. On a superficial level, the narrator is explaining how he and Ortho used to be attracted to the stances and prospects of Chief Ranger's order, and how it was a lapse in judgment. Examining slightly deeper, this can easily be seen as Jünger's personal excuse for his initial fascination with the National Socialist organization. This is important on two levels. First, Jünger is actually conceding his interest and fascination with the National Socialist group, and secondly, he is essentially stating that through all of the appeal, the organization was unable to perform in the manner that he had expected.

In this statement Jünger is also admitting his error. He states that in "periods of decline...we sway and lose our balance."¹⁸⁸ He is essentially arguing that he was fascinated with the National Socialist group due to the "decline" of Germany. His argument fundamentally is based on the premise that because the Weimar Republic was failing to lead Germany out of the disrepute of losing a war and multiple depressions, the most sensible action to take at the time was to search for a group that

¹⁸⁷ Neaman, 32.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

demanded change in the most radical sense. Jünger appears to be excusing his National Socialist sympathies by qualifying them with the human condition of suffering from weakness during time of hardship; Jünger is arguing that his sympathies for National Socialism were due to the fact that he desired change so intensely that he became corrupt.

Soon after, the narrator paints a picture for the reader of the aim of the Mauretians. The narrator states that “among the aims of the Mauretians was artistry in the dealings of this world. They demanded that power should be exercised dispassionately as by a god, and correspondingly its schools produced a race of spirits who were bright, untrammelled, but always terrible.”¹⁸⁹ Again, it is essential to the topic to relate this section to its context, and what Jünger was actually attempting to portray. The Mauretians in *On the Marble Cliffs* are the followers of Chief Ranger. Thus, if Chief Ranger represents Adolf Hitler, the Mauretians logically represent the various factions and sectors of the Nazi Party, including the S.S. and the Gestapo. What Jünger is discussing in this brief quotation is the exercising and training of the Nazis.

Jünger also briefly attacks the thought that liberal deliberation is unnecessary. In the quote “power should be exercised dispassionately as by a god,”¹⁹⁰ Jünger seems to be put off by the theory. Schmitt and Heidegger would most certainly believe that power should be used in this manner in order to remove the democratic deliberation process. Although there is another way in which it could be interpreted (as we shall see momentarily), Jünger gives the impression in this quote that the implementation of

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., 34.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

power in such an emotionless manner leads to an almost inhuman state in which there is a divide between the people and the goals of the regime.

The second part of this quote is also important. The narrator states, “correspondingly its schools produced a race of spirits who were bright, untrammelled, but always terrible.”¹⁹¹ This portion of the quote has two connections. First, this quote is just one example of an ongoing theme of the ruthlessness and emotionless “Nazi” figures: whether it was ravaging villages or using intimidation to gain political support. This portion of the quote can also be paralleled to the Rectorship of Martin Heidegger. As has been previously discussed, Martin Heidegger was elected Rector of the University of Freiburg by his colleagues. The Nazi Party understood how important it was to impose their beliefs on the best and brightest young minds of the state. One of the most efficient ways to implement this intention was to control the information that was being communicated to university students. Heidegger became one of the leaders of this operation by essentially creating a sort of “boot camp” for promising students who were to become future leaders of the Nazi University system.¹⁹² Jünger is stating that, while these young minds were supposed to be filled with the knowledge of the world, they were instead learning only what was communicated to them by Nazi leaders. Not only were they being taught these ideals and philosophies, but at the same time, Jünger points out that they were being taught how to implement those theories in the worst possible ways.

When the narrator discusses the thought of resisting the growing party of Chief Ranger, he states that “many had, indeed, thought of resistance, but in such cases,

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ott, 414.

plunderings had occurred which were apparently conducted according to a considered plan.”¹⁹³ He also states that “it became clear how weak the law was in comparison to anarchy.”¹⁹⁴ Both of these quotations are important due to the fact that they show how influential the Nazi Party had become. The first quote suggests that the group would maliciously put down any resistance, even if it meant murder. The second quote is more important for our concerns here, for two reasons. On a superficial level it suggests that the strength of the National Socialist Party had grown to new levels and that the law was unable to control it. On a deeper level, it is important to examine what Jünger is actually comparing. “Anarchy” in this comparison is undoubtedly the Chief Ranger, or the National Socialist Party. On another level, Jünger is comparing the NSDAP to “law.” The only logical entity to which Jünger could be referring is the Weimar Republic. Thus, Jünger is essentially stating that the Weimar Republic was not nearly strong enough to withstand any sort of anarchy, especially a group such as the National Socialists.¹⁹⁵ Although these passages may appear to be sympathetic to the Nazis, it is much more of an attack on the Weimar Republic. Jünger is attacking the legitimacy of the Weimar Republic due to the fact that it could not protect the people against an uprising. This sentiment is also based upon the fact that the Weimar Republic succumbed to series of depressions that left the state in shambles.

The narration then turns to the veterans of the war. The narrator details the routes taken by many of the war veterans:

¹⁹³ Jünger, *On the Marble Cliffs*, 40.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁹⁵ Franz Neumann expounds on this thought in his text *Behemoth* where he discusses how National Socialism essentially represented the total destruction of law. (Neumann, Franz. *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944)).

Thereupon it became apparent that the men of the Campagna already had their representatives in the Marina, for returning citizens had either retained business connections with the herdsmen or joined the clans by taking the blood oath. This group, too, followed the change for evil, particularly wherever order was already undermined.¹⁹⁶

The inclusion of a discussion concerning the war veterans for Jünger is not a surprise, and it is not difficult to see the most important phrase in this section of writing. “The blood oath” to which Jünger refers in this section of writing has a definite National Socialist tone. Jünger also declares that those veterans who took “the blood oath” also “followed the change for evil.” This is significant for him due to his affinity towards veterans of war throughout his career. What Jünger is attempting to show within this section is that even the most pride-filled, virtuous veterans of war were enticed by the promise and influence that the Nation Socialist commanded.

The narrator then expounds further on the resistance that was shown towards Chief Ranger and the Mauretians. The narrator explains:

Soon one had the impression that they hardly regarded one another any longer as human beings, and their speech was shot through with words fit to be used only of vermin that must be harried and stamped out with fire and sword. Only in their opponents could they recognize murder; yet they themselves vaunted of things which in others they despise. While one held the other's dead scarcely worthy of hasty burial in the dead of night, their own were to be shrouded in purple, the eburnum was to sound out and the eagle soar, bearing to the gods a living image of the hero and prophet.¹⁹⁷

The rhetoric in this sample from *On the Marble Cliffs* gives an immediate illusion of the Holocaust; how the Nazis viewed the Jews as “vermin,” not even deserving of a proper burial due to their “inhuman” race. Although *On the Marble Cliffs* was composed before the “Final Solution” in Hitler's Germany came to its apex, the sentiment of anti-Semitism

¹⁹⁶ Jünger, *On the Marble Cliffs*, 43.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

was commonplace throughout Germany. *Reichspogromnacht* had also already occurred on November 9-10, 1938. As well as the connection that is easily drawn to the rampant anti-Semitism, which the NSDAP propagated, the secondary issue that is presented is the manner in which their own were memorialized. The extravagance described by the narrator appears to be an attempt to express how self-righteous the NSDAP was. A good example of such self-righteousness is the burial service in which every member is to be “shrouded in purple, the eburnum was to sound out and the eagle soar,” and each were to be treated as if they were “a living image of the hero and prophet.”¹⁹⁸ The narrator gives the impression that he is obviously troubled by the difference in memorials, even though both parties are human.

While Chief Ranger consistently gains popularity and followers, the narrator makes an assertion. He states that “terror had complete sway under the mask of order.”¹⁹⁹ This is one of the most striking statements that Jünger makes through the entire text. Adolf Hitler and the National Socialists, as well as their fictional counterparts Chief Ranger and the Mauretians, are commonly characterized as thugs. They played the part of the classical corrupt political party using threats and muscle in order to gain support. Support would increase to the point where the party would also gain some legitimacy, and with legitimacy, the party would achieve the illusion of order. While the NSDAP gained an illusion of order, Jünger is arguing that it is just that; an illusion.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 48.

²⁰⁰ Franz Neumann expounds on this illusion that Jünger believes the Nazis were creating in his *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1944), describing how the Nazi state was chaos thinly veiled with the deception of order.

Chief Ranger is the ultimate antagonist for the narrator. He commands so much power and authority that he strikes fear into everyone he passes. The text ends with a battle between Chief Ranger along with the Mauretians, against the narrator, brother Ortho, and those of their hermitage. In attempts to depict the power and authority of Chief Ranger, the narrator states that “To all these [(the Mauretians)] the Ranger was lord and master, to be kissed on the hem of his red hunting coat.”²⁰¹ Not only does this show the sheer amount of authority and respect the Chief Ranger commands from his followers, but the rhetoric, again shows the connection between Chief Ranger and Adolf Hitler.

With all of the thinly-veiled criticisms of Nazism that can be found throughout *On the Marble Cliffs*, the question that must be posed is why. Why would Ernst Jünger, a man who had so many ideological similarities and wrote several sympathetically charged articles towards the Nazis in Nationalist periodicals, compose such an allegory? Perhaps the most reasonable response would be that Jünger, at the time of composition, had become increasingly critical of the Nazis. As previously discussed, Jünger did not agree with everything the National Socialists were doing to gain power or their social visions once power was obtained. He believed that they were unnecessarily forceful in gaining and enforcing their power. Due to this, it would not be unreasonable to think that Jünger could write a novel such as *On the Marble Cliffs* in order to question the Nazi Party and their policies.

Jünger desired changed in Germany, not unlike much of the rest of the German people during the Weimar Republic. When a radical group such as the NSDAP emerged and began to grow, many German people saw a glimpse of hope—that the

²⁰¹ Jünger, *On the Marble Cliffs*, 52.

NSDAP would be able to overthrow the centrally weak Weimar Republic. Although Weimar was overthrown, the NSDAP proved to be much more radical than the German people had initially expected and hoped for. For Jünger not only were some of the policies they put in place too aggressive, but the basic means by which they gained power was also much too aggressive. These are the issues that Jünger is dealing with in *On the Marble Cliffs*.

Another question that must be explained is how the text became available to the public at all. One explanation that Elliot Neaman offers is that Jünger incorporated enough National Socialist ideals throughout the text in order for Nazi officials to permit the text. Another possible factor was that Hitler held a great affinity for Jünger. It is improbable, but possible that Hitler could have protected Jünger from persecution for the text, as well as kept the text in print due to his admiration for the writer, and due to Jünger's past support of the nationalistic sympathies paralleled by the NSDAP.

Looking Back

The discussion concerning Ernst Jünger is one full of controversy. Of the three intellectuals examined in this study, his ideologies may have had the most similarities with those of National Socialism. Although this may be the case, he is also the only one of the three intellectuals who did not officially join the National Socialist Party for any period of time.

Central to this examination is the discussion of Jünger's apparent shift in views. The first indication of his political and philosophical ideals found in *Storm of Steel* suggests a glorification of war and struggle that is very comparable to the view of the NSDAP. This glorification of war is what Jünger is commonly notorious for, but is generally a superficial and incomplete description of his views on war. The original version of *Storm of Steel* argued that the event of war is an experience based upon the individual. Whereas the Nazi Party portrayed war as a national experience, Jünger believed that war is to be made by the individuals that were fighting it; the experience of war should be expressed by the men who lived and died, and the personal achievements that were made.

An apparent shift, most reasonably caused by Jünger's personal abhorrence for the Weimar Republic and bureaucracy as a whole, then occurred. As opposed to celebrating the individual experience of war in *Storm of Steel*, Jünger essentially altered a primary premise of his text; he added more nationalist rhetoric. The most evident is the addition of the last lines of the text which read, "We stand for what will be and for what has been. Though force without and barbarity within conglomerate in sombre clouds, yet so long as the blade of a sword will strike a spark in the night may it be said : Germany lives and Germany shall never go under!"²⁰² The addition of such nationalistically charged elements increases the similarities between Jünger and National Socialism for obvious reasons. No longer did he argue that war was solely an individual experience, but also a national experience.

This increase in nationalist tendencies is rooted in his disdain for the Weimar Republic. The rapid growth in popularity of the NSDAP as well as their radical views

²⁰² Jünger, *The Storm of Steel*, 319.

enticed Jünger to compose essays and articles which were commonly found in a variety of nationalist journals and periodicals. The vast majority of these articles urged the support for nationalist parties in their attempts to change the German state. In 1923, Jünger published his first article in the NSDAP's daily newspaper, the *Völkischer Beobachter*. In the article entitled "Revolution and Idea," Jünger condemns the "annoying spectacle"²⁰³ of the Weimar Republic. He states, "The real revolution has not yet occurred. Its forward march cannot be halted...its idea is the *völkische*, sharpened to as yet unknown hardness, its banner is the swastika, its expression is the concentration of the will in a single point—the dictatorship."²⁰⁴ Not only is Jünger condemning the Republic as early as 1923, but he is also advocating a dictatorship under the symbol of the swastika.

The National Socialists then presumably lost Jünger's interest. Nikolaus Wachsmann examines how the relationship between Jünger and the Nazis had become strained. He argues that the majority of the tension was caused by the relationship that Hitler and the Nazis maintained with democratic states. Wachsmann believes that Jünger saw this as entirely unacceptable. He states "his stance ruled out any co-operation with the Weimar state and the bourgeois system, once more highlighting the influence of war on Jünger's attitude towards politics. He saw no room for compromise, neither on the battlefield nor in politics."²⁰⁵ Though Wachsmann argues this position for Jünger's stance in the early to mid-1920s, Jünger's text *On the Marble Cliffs* shows an opposing disposition.

²⁰³ Wachsmann, 576.

²⁰⁴ Ernst Jünger, "Revolution und Idee", *Völkischer Beobachter* (24/25.9.1923), quoted in Wachsmann, 576.

²⁰⁵ Wachsmann, 582.

On the Marble Cliffs, an allegory notably published after the National Socialists assumed power, provides another shift for Jünger. Whereas Wachsmann argues that Jünger believed that the Nazis were not being radical enough in the 1920s, this allegory portrays a Jünger in the 1930s as believing the Nazis were much too radical, specifically in their attempts to ascertain authority. *On the Marble Cliffs* is essentially an attack on the legitimacy of Nazi power. Elliot Neaman refers to this attack as the “Jünger-debate” as his intentions are not clear,²⁰⁶ but there is a definite attack on the legitimacy of Nazi authority due to Nazi abuse of power.

Ernst Jünger made a name for himself with *The Storm of Steel* which launched his intellectual and writing career. The magnitude of his popularity is noteworthy in this examination due to the amount of influence that he would be able to exploit. Particularly in his texts from the 1920s-30s, the nationalist tendencies are both abundant and essential. Jünger also exploited his popularity to endorse radical nationalism. As has been pointed out, although he did not endorse National Socialism exclusively, he did endorse many of the principles the Nazis supported.

With the last major shift in Jünger’s ideals, he was able to attack the legitimacy of Nazi power in Germany. *On the Marble Cliffs* was able to reach the same audience of readers from Jünger’s past, but also attract a new audience as well; National Socialism’s opponents. This text is not only an attack on Nazi programs, but it can also easily be comprehended as a call for resistance against further persecution at Nazi hands.

The influence of Ernst Jünger is undeniable. From *Storm of Steel*, through the nationalist periodicals in which he published many articles, to *On the Marble Cliffs*, he

²⁰⁶ Neaman, 19.

was able to amass a large and diverse audience for his opinions and views.

Contextually, his audience was in a similar situation as Jünger was himself. He surely maintained a strong following from war veterans for obvious reasons. Along with his military brethren, with whom he shared the experience of the trenches, he also certainly had an audience in those who yearned for a change from the constant depressions and inflations under the Weimar Republic. Subsequently, he also ascertained an anti-Nazi audience from *On the Marble Cliffs*. With these audiences in mind, the influence that Ernst Jünger had is indisputable.

CONCLUSION

Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger were indisputably influential during Weimar and National Socialist Germany. Though they used different styles and, at times, different mediums, there are various similarities between these three men. Although they took different life and career paths, these differences, in several cases, led them to similar arguments. In conclusion, these similarities, along with some differences, will be examined in order to illustrate how all three of them provided a foundation for popularizing conservative revolutionary ideas.

One of the most glaring similarities that can be seen through texts of Schmitt, Heidegger, and Jünger is the call for a dictator. Schmitt composed his text *The Dictator* in which he explains historically how a strong authority figure can legitimately gain power on behalf of the people. Heidegger describes, in *Being and Time*, how and why a strong leader would be necessary in his process of creating a “community of destiny.” This leader would be essential to the process in order to keep the renewed and “authentic” people on course. This leader would mold the people’s *Weltanschauung*, effectively creating a homogenous society that would be able to uncritically conform to a single leader. Jünger dedicated much of *Storm of Steel* to the idea of leadership and discipline. Throughout the text Jünger repeatedly states the importance of leadership qualities and aestheticizes and glorifies the theme of following a powerful leader through tough times.

Along with these suggestions concerning centralized power and dictatorship, come their oppositions to parliamentary procedure. Schmitt specifically has a

pronounced distaste for the entire institution of liberal parliament. In *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* Schmitt criticizes the basis of parliament: representative deliberation. Heidegger echoes this sentiment with his discussion of creating a “community of destiny.” When he discusses the process of the “authentic” people coming together in order to form a renewed and united community in the last third of *Being and Time*, he is essentially stripping them of all political representation. Although Heidegger would surely argue that the community as a whole would have the same political desires, it is a thinly veiled attack on liberal deliberation, illustrating that through such a process riddled with compromises, the community as a whole is unsatisfied. Jünger also attacks the process of representative deliberation. In the mind of Jünger, he views that in politics, just as in war, there is no time or reason for deliberation and compromise. In *Storm of Steel* and *Der Arbeiter*, Jünger illustrates that decisions and politics should be decided by the few in power. In his earlier works, he glorifies decisions made dispassionately by those in power because unemotional decisions are the greatest decisions.

The theme of mortality is another similarity that is found within the texts of Martin Heidegger and Ernst Jünger. Mortality, for Jünger, plays a major role for his process of creating a renewed nation. The second stage in his renewal process was recovering one’s individual self and authenticity by facing one’s mortality. Realizing one’s mortality, for Heidegger, is the only way to become “authentic” and thus join the renewed “community of destiny.” This importance on mortality is paralleled by Jünger in *Storm of Steel*. In the text Jünger strongly suggests that an individual cannot be considered alive until that individual personally faces the prospect of death.

Another important parallel that can be seen between the writings of Heidegger and Jünger is the eventual dissolution of individuality. In the first sections of *Being and Time*, Heidegger calls for the radically individualized, “authentic” *Dasein*. In the last sections Heidegger calls for a collectivized *Dasein* of the “community of destiny.” This transformation that is seen in *Being and Time* is also seen in Jünger’s *Storm of Steel*. In the first edition of the text, Jünger stresses the importance of individuality and individual experiences and achievements. The 1924 edition of *Storm of Steel* shows a transformation similar to the one that Heidegger would later call for. The 1924 edition includes an extreme nationalistic tenor, specifically located within the final lines of the text.

Perhaps the most important parallel that is vivid throughout the writings and life paths of Schmitt, Heidegger, and Jünger is their outright abhorrence of the Weimar Republic. With the exception of Carl Schmitt’s rather lackluster claims later in life that he supported the Weimar Republic while it was in effect, all three of these men vehemently opposed the ideals upon which the republic was based. Through all of their writings there are attacks posed against Weimar; specifically against a representative, parliamentary style government. Schmitt was one of the strongest in his opposition to the liberal parliamentary system. Heidegger also launched attacks against the representative style government through his writings, although they were in philosophical format. Jünger also attacked the Weimar Republic, but using a different technique. In *Storm of Steel* Jünger appealed to the emotional baggage carried over after the loss of World War I in the minds of soldiers and the workforce at the home front.

Although done in different techniques, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, and Ernst Jünger, all played an influential role in the growth of National Socialist tendencies during Weimar and National Socialist Germany. Although they certainly did not put Hitler and the Nazi Party in power, just as certainly they had an impact in propagating and legitimizing National Socialist thought. As Geoff Eley, Peter Fritzsche, and other historians have demonstrated,²⁰⁷ fascism in Germany developed out of a radical, right-wing populist nationalism, which was hostile not just to the parliamentary democracy of the Weimar Republic, but also to the elitism of traditional conservative politics. There were, in other words, deep divisions between conservative elites and fascist rebels in the 1920s. But Schmitt, Heidegger, Jünger, and other conservative revolutionary intellectuals expressed a radical critique of Weimar in terms with which both conservative elites and fascist could identify.²⁰⁸ In this way, conservative revolutionary intellectuals helped make possible the rapprochement between elites and fascists, which was a necessary condition for the National Socialists' rise to power.

²⁰⁷ Geoff Eley, *Reshaping the German: Radical Nationalism and Political Change after Bismarck*, (Yale University Press, 1980). Peter Fritzsche, *Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany*, (Oxford University Press, 1990) and *Germans into Nazis* (Harvard University Press, 1998).

²⁰⁸ For a detailed elaboration of this argument see Weitz, 331-360.

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