

The Great Forge of Nations: Violence and Collective Identity in Fascist Thought

by

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B.A., University of British Columbia, 2015

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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This thesis analyzes the origins and development of conceptions of the relationship between violence and politics characteristic of twentieth century fascist thought. It critiques existing approaches to fascism and fascist ideology in the interdisciplinary field of fascist studies and proposes and employs an alternate approach which centres and emphasizes the flexibility and mutability of fascist thought and denies that any particular complex of beliefs or concepts can be said to constitute an ‘essence’ or ‘heart’ of fascist ideology. Morphological studies are offered of four discursive traditions in fascist and fascist-adjacent thought with respect to violence and politics: German military theory of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; the ‘new’ French nationalism of the *fin-de-siècle*; the genre of ‘future warfare’ around and after the First World War; and the work of Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt. The thesis concludes with some consideration of the continuities and discontinuities made apparent in the morphological studies, an argument that those results vindicate the initial framing, and some avenues for extending them into areas of concrete contemporary relevance.

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Introduction

The study of fascism is universally bedevilled by the problem of definition. Unlike the other major modern political movements, fascism has no comprehensive or foundational texts, no consistent policy programme, and vanishingly few professed adherents outside the period of approximately 1919 to 1945. To define it from without, then, one must have some idea of the range of phenomena in question; in order to designate those phenomena with any confidence, though, one must already have a definition of fascism (Eatwell, 1996, pp. 303-05). How to breach that circularity is one of the central animating questions of the field.

This problem is further compounded by the ideological breadth, flexibility, and mutability which is characteristic of fascist ideologies and movements, and which constitutes one of the conventional disclaimers preceding traditional scholarly accounts thereof (see Payne, 1980, p. 5; Mosse, 1999, p. 1; Griffin, 1991, p. 16; *inter alia*). This tendency is encapsulated pithily in Umberto Eco's "Ur-Fascism":

Fascism became an all-purpose term because one can eliminate from a fascist regime one or more features, and it will still be recognizable as fascist. Take away imperialism from fascism and you still have Franco and Salazar. Take away colonialism and you still have the Balkan fascism of the Ustashes. Add to the Italian fascism a radical anti-capitalism (which never much fascinated Mussolini) and you have Ezra Pound. Add a cult of Celtic mythology and the Grail mysticism (completely alien to official fascism) and you have one of the most respected fascist gurus, Julius Evola. (Eco, 1995)

Even further, though, national fascisms are themselves composites of eclectic and often contradictory elements. The French intellectual circles of the late nineteenth century which are sometimes regarded as the first fascists – of whom we will see more in the body of this work –

included both royalists and republicans, bridging more or less pacifically the decisive political divide of the prior century. The early forms of both German and Italian fascisms featured strong anti-capitalist wings and commitments, with the Fascist Manifesto and the NSDAP's 25-Point Program alike promising progressive labour and social policy, and even in their more conservative regime phases there were differences of emphasis, if not actual programme, between rural and urban contexts. Perhaps most centrally, every national fascism prior to 1945 seems to have contained elements of both a backward-looking cult of tradition and national restoration and a forward-looking technological modernism and programme of industrial development, though the specific forms and expressions of each vary between contexts. Individual theorists or synchronic snapshots of fascism may be internally consistent, but a wider lens always finds at least that last contradiction, which animates the broader movement as the poles of a suspended magnet induce it to spin.

As a result of these problems, there has been a longstanding lack of consensus around even the most basic aspects of what fascism is and where it comes from. For virtually any strong claim that has been made about fascism in the existing literature, the exact opposite claim can also be found. It has been characterized as an extreme form of modernism and as essentially a reaction against modernism (Gregor, 1979; Nolte, 1963/66); as a consequence of the standardization and universalization of knowledge stemming from the Enlightenment and as the culmination of a tradition of anti-Enlightenment particularism (Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/2002; Sternhell, 2010); as a radical break from nineteenth century national conservatism and as the natural extension thereof (De Felice, 1977; Taylor, 1961/64). Reports of a 'new consensus' emerging in the field over the past two decades have been greatly exaggerated (see Griffin, 2012; Bauerkämper, 2006).

Two distinct but interrelated problems can be identified here: the problem of definition and the problem of incoherence. The problem of definition is that, owing to the dearth of willing self-identifiers and clear doctrinal criteria, any definition of fascism presupposes a delineation of the cases in question and vice versa. The problem of incoherence is that any satisfactorily clear theory of fascism, with respect to definition, delineation, or both, will exclude or obscure apparently well-qualified candidates from the obverse face of the phenomenon. A theory of fascism as a revolutionary modernism does not account for its reactionary, antimodernist elements, and vice versa; a theory of it as an extension of Enlightenment universalism will be troubled by its particularist and anti-Enlightenment elements, and so on. Scholars of fascism are, of course, aware of both of these problems, in one form or another, and have devised a variety of strategies to attempt to produce useful theories in spite of them. The next section will review the strategies developed in the historical and contemporary literatures to account for fascism's apparent incoherence and self-contradiction in order to chart a path forward that does so better or, at least, in a novel way that advances our overall understanding of the fascist phenomenon.

Owing in part to the problem of incoherence, the bulk of the literature concerns fascism as a regime or movement rather than an ideology (Eatwell, 1996, p. 304). As we will see, many interpretive traditions, especially prior to 1990, denied that it was meaningfully ideological at all. An overemphasis on movement and regime elements of the fascist phenomenon, though, intensifies rather than resolving or avoiding these problems. The only regimes broadly accepted as fascist, in Italy and Germany, lasted a combined total of just 33 years under highly specific military, political, and economic pressures, espoused and emphasized strikingly different lines on questions ranging from biological race to the role of the Catholic Church, and are generally very difficult to assimilate into a single regime model outside of a general disdain for individual and

political rights (Eatwell, 1996, pp. 304-05). The study of movements offers more source material, but encounters similar difficulties; the movements were, if anything, even more nationally specific in their concerns, organization, and propaganda messaging, with the added convenience of not actually having to commit themselves to or carry out a specific programme. Both varieties run the risk of essentializing historically or nationally contingent features. The study of fascism as ideology, to which this thesis is a contribution, should consider and account for the programmes and actions of movements and regimes, but need not restrict itself thereto. As I hope to show in this work, there are often ideological bases for particular traits and behaviours identified in the study of fascist regimes and movements which can be missed or obscured by inattention to ideology.

Considered as an ideology, fascism is unique in that it engages in a limited decontestation of its own conceptual field – that is to say, it does not enforce a framework of core and peripheral concepts or particular interpretations thereof. Depending on one’s theory of ideology, this may imply that it does not qualify after all. Michael Freeden, for example, writes of nationalism:

For nationalism to be an *established* ideology within a loose framework of family resemblances it will have to manifest a shared set of conceptual features over time and space. On the basis of observed linguistic practices those features will be able to be organized into general core concepts – without which an ideology will lose its defining characteristics as well as its flexibility – and adjacent and peripheral concepts and ideas that colour the core in different ways. (Freeden, 1998, p. 749; emphasis in original)

Freeden analyzes nationalism as a “thin-centred ideology,” notionally if not satisfactorily capable of standing on its own, but at its most efficacious when incorporated into and leveraged by more fully articulated host ideologies, including fascism (Freeden, 1998, pp. 750-51); he takes fascism

as a host ideology to be no more or less coherent than any other, saying that its “core concepts include not only the nation, but also leadership, totalitarian organicism, myth (determinist and/or anti-modernist), regenerative revolution, and violence” (Freeden, 1998, p. 763). On the contrary, I argue, not only does fascism fail – or perhaps decline – to decontest those core concepts in the usual way, it does not admit of an intelligible boundary between the core and the peripheral in the first place. In any ideology, of course, concepts change over time and between contexts in both interpretation and emphasis, but in fascism they dance about too freely and quickly even to open and close one’s shutter for a picture. While Freeden’s core concepts are indeed more or less ubiquitous themes in fascist thought and messaging, they were employed with strikingly different conceptual interpretations, polemical targets, and functional purposes in different contexts. To be a ‘full’ ideology, in his framework, fascism would have to “contain...particular interpretations and configurations of all the major political concepts attached to a general plan of public policy that a specific society requires” (Freeden, 1998, p. 750); by that standard, individual national fascisms might constitute ideologies proper, but fascism *simpliciter* could not be said to constitute a generic or transnational ideology.

What is particularly interesting about fascism is that it nonetheless functions as though it were an ideology, simulating the conceptual commensurability that it fails to actually effect. This is likely due in part to its status as a ‘latecomer’ to already established party systems, which obliged it tactically and inclined it constitutionally to be flexible in its attempts to take and hold political space (see Linz, 1976). Allowing for a greater range of permissible interpretations and contestations of what might otherwise have been its core concepts in the traditional sense thus functions as a kind of force multiplier, permitting fascism to stake larger claims than would have been possible for a traditional ideology under such circumstances and to appeal to a wider range

of potential recruits at home and allies abroad. To return to Freedon, he writes in *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach*:

Ideologies frequently adopt deliberately indeterminate statements, often because a political decision is to be avoided for whatever reason, or because a message is designed to appeal to a pluralist body of consumers. Political party manifestos tend to be such creatures, illustrating how the vagueness of language comes to the rescue of its political users. Even then, political language is employed to convey specific sets of meanings out of wider ranges. (Freedon, 1996, p. 77)

In Freedon's language, we might say that fascist ideology in general has the character of a party manifesto. This is not to say that individual fascist thinkers are incapable of invoking concepts in clear and specific ways, though they do display a tendency to equivocation; rather, it is that they largely treat each other as though they were invoking commensurate conceptions even when they had knowledge – real or constructive – that they were not. Ironically, the greatest degrees of conceptual decontestation achieved in fascism were in the regime periods, when the relevant parties held the greatest degree of influence over the articulation of their particular fascisms, and were finally both able and inclined to reject conceptual variations that they had previously included or tolerated.

The aim of this thesis, in brief, is to attempt a new method for analyzing fascism as an ideology in a way that accounts for these unique characteristics and tendencies and the problems they present to prospective theories. The next section will provide a brief history of the study of fascism and the various strategies employed to make sense of its curious mutability and apparent propensity for incoherence. Following that, we can sketch out a new route which can avoid the obstacles encountered in previous efforts and bring us to a fuller understanding of the fascist

ideology and phenomenon.

Literature Review

The first thinkers to recognize fascism as a potentially transnational political project, rather than the personalist following of Benito Mussolini in particular, were Italian Marxists who saw it principally in terms of its structural role and class character, largely disregarding its ideological pronouncements. Antonio Gramsci wrote in 1921:

What is fascism, observed on an international scale? It is the attempt to resolve the problems of production and exchange with machine-guns and pistol-shots. The productive forces were ruined and dissipated in the imperialist war: twenty million men in the flower of their youth and energies were killed; another twenty million were left invalids...A unity and simultaneity of national crises was created, which precisely makes the general crisis acute and incurable. But there exists a stratum of the population in all countries – the petty and middle bourgeoisie – which thinks it can solve these gigantic problems with machine-guns and pistol-shots; and this stratum feeds fascism, provides fascism with its troops. (Gramsci, 1921/78c, p. 23)

The early Marxist approaches, of which the above is an example, are often stereotyped in the more recent literature as economistic-reductionist ‘agent theories’ overlooking or obscuring fascism’s alleged cross-class appeal and ambiguous relationship to capitalism (see Griffin, 1991; Paxton, 2004, p. 145). While some such analyses did oversimplify the association between fascism and capital – most prominently, the Communist International’s 1935 definition of fascism as “the open terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic and most imperialist elements of finance capital” (Dimitrov, 1935/72b, p. 8) – much of the bycatch of that characterization, including works by Gramsci and other Italian and central European Marxists, in

fact explicitly defined itself in opposition to what was then known as the ‘white guard’ theory of fascism as the direct agent of the bourgeoisie (see Zetkin, 1923/84, p. 103; Zibordi, 1922/84, p. 88). These approaches, in both their straightforward and nuanced forms, took it as given that the fascists’ ideological proclamations were by nature incoherent, insincere, and generally not to be trusted, and accordingly sought their explanations outside the realm of ideology as such.

Non-Marxist scholarship was slower to catch on to the idea of fascism as a generic phenomenon, but early attempts to explain its national variations also emphasized their apparent incoherence and largely attributed it to non-ideological factors. One of the first influential works on the German case was exiled former Nazi and Danzig Senator Hermann Rauschning’s *The Revolution of Nihilism: Warning to the West* (1938/39), which characterized Nazism as “a progressive, permanent revolution of sheer destruction” and “a dictatorship of brute force” (pp. xi-xii). Benedetto Croce, an Italian philosopher and former Senator who had initially supported Mussolini, made a similar case about Italian fascism in *The New York Times*, blaming it on Marxism weakening the “consciousness of liberty,” combined with war veterans’ having “been methodically untaught how to live and work for themselves and on their own responsibility” (Croce, 1943).

The second wave of fascist studies, beginning in the early 1960s, was broadly split between accounts that continued to take fascism as essentially incoherent or non-ideological and those that purported to uncover the true character concealed underneath. British historian A.J.P. Taylor’s *The Origins of the Second World War* (1961/64) advanced an influential version of the former thesis, arguing that German and Italian fascisms were essentially non-ideological despotisms whose goals were largely continuous with those of the earlier regimes in those countries. The camp of scholars who maintained that fascism was meaningfully ideological was

at this point split between those who saw it as a form of modernism, represented most prominently by A. James Gregor's *The Ideology of Fascism* (1969) and *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship* (1979), and those who saw it as a form of anti-modernist reaction – most prominently, Ernst Nolte's seminal *Three Faces of Fascism* (1963/66). These essentializations were themselves attempts to reconcile fascism's contradictoriness into a more intelligible form, but which predictably failed to explain the omnipresence of the opposite tendency.

Toward the tail end of the second wave, the momentum propelling the generic fascism thesis slowed and many analysts embraced nominalism as another approach to fascist incoherence, insisting on the historical specificity of the movements and regimes in question and the impossibility of analyzing them as a single category. Perhaps the most extreme example is Gilbert Allardyce's "What Fascism is Not: Thoughts on the Deflation of a Concept" (1979), which decried even the self-description of interwar contemporaries such as Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (p. 370). More moderate cases include the work of Renzo De Felice, who acknowledges both German and Italian varieties of 'true' fascism but regards them as sufficiently different as to necessitate individual study (1976, p. 94), and that of S.J. Woolf, who distinguishes between pseudo-socialist fascisms of western Europe (including Germany) and an apocalyptic-romanticist variety endemic to central and eastern Europe (1968/81, pp. 8-10). In the weakest form of this tendency, some scholars began to split Nazism off from the fascist family, leaving a more comprehensible generic category centred on France and Italy with some external imitators; the aforementioned work of A. James Gregor is also an example of this kind.

The tendency in the third and most recent wave, beginning around 1990, is to explicitly foreground an anti-essentialist commitment while proposing working definitions "in an

exploratory, heuristic spirit,” in the words of prominent third-waver Roger Griffin, intended to advance our understanding of fascism without ascribing an essential character to it (Griffin, 2004, p. 1530). In spite of that express commitment, approaches in this category almost universally end up proposing an essence by another name. Griffin himself includes in his work the usual disclaimers about “fascism’s inherently protean quality” (2008, p. 189) and maintains that he has not “committed the naïve fallacy of reifying fascism’s core traits” (2004, p. 1530), but rather identified a “Weberian ‘ideal type,’ thus specifically precluding the notion of an ‘essence’ to the phenomenon under investigation” (2004, p. 1530). Those repudiations notwithstanding, Griffin’s central thesis, maintained since his first major publication on the subject in 1991, is that fascism is best defined by its ‘mythic’ or ‘ideological core’ – “a palingenetic form of populist ultranationalism” (1991) – implicated in all the myriad permutations of the fascist phenomenon and which decisively distinguishes them from non-fascist forms of national populism or authoritarian conservatism.

Similar problems plague much of the third wave literature. Roger Eatwell criticizes Griffin for overlooking the ways in which key terms employed in his definition were contested and conceived of differently by conservative and radical elements of the fascist movement (Eatwell, 1992, pp. 172-73; 1996, p. 311; 2006, p. 106). Chiefly, he argues, the concept of palingenesis or rebirth can be construed either as a backward-looking restoration or a forward-looking new order, and it is precisely that ambiguity that made it useful to a movement encompassing both tendencies. Eatwell proposes instead what he calls a “spectral-syncretic model,” which understands fascism as a spectrum of positions derived from “central syntheses” (1992, p. 174) organized around a set of themes with which Eatwell tinkers over the course of multiple works; in what appears to be the most recent iteration, there are three: “(1) the quest for

a new man; (2) the reborn nation; and (3) a new state” (2010, p. 136). This model attempts to account for fascism’s programmatic flexibility and syncretism by conceiving of it as a field of possible positions, but ultimately identifies an ‘essence’ or ‘heart’ of fascist ideology – in that most recent work, he claims that “at the heart of fascist thinking was the creation of a new elite of men, who would forge a holistic nation and build a new third way state” (2010, p. 134).

Robert Paxton has, in turn, criticized Eatwell for that essentialism and proposed instead a process-based approach consisting of five stages: movement formation, popular dissemination, seizure of power, exercise of power, and ultimately either radicalization, as in the late periods of Nazi Germany and the Italian Social Republic, or entropic stabilization into non-fascist authoritarianism (Paxton, 1998; 2004). Paxton pointedly declines to offer a definition until the end of his historical study, which concerns almost exclusively Germany and Italy with a few scattered comparisons to Spain and Portugal; he regards those latter countries as having hosted and, in the case of Spain, temporarily accommodated fascist movements, but never constituting genuinely fascist regimes.

When Paxton does arrive at a definition, it is a functional one founded on the conviction “that the ideas that underlie fascist actions are best deduced from those actions” (Paxton, 2004, p. 219). As Griffin rightly points out in his review of Paxton’s 2004 book *The Anatomy of Fascism*, the argument here is ultimately circular: to understand what fascism is, we must look to fascists’ actions, but Paxton’s account of their actions relies on the presumption that the only fully articulated fascisms were the German and Italian varieties, ultimately justified by the definition of fascism at which he arrives by studying those German and Italian cases (Griffin, 2004, p. 1531). If Paxton has avoided the problem of essentialism, which is debatable, it is at the cost of capitulation to the problem of definition as I identified it above.

Approach and Outline

The aim of this thesis is to chart a new path in the study of fascist ideology which is sensitive to and mitigates the effects of all three problems of definition, incoherence, and essentialism. As a part of that path, I take a deliberately expansive approach to the delineation of fascism with respect to preceding and contemporaneous formations of the extreme right. Rather than attempting to draw a clear line somewhere amid the inevitable fuzziness around the extremities of the category, or restricting my investigation to the unambiguous, canonical cases, I investigate the historical development of certain key conceptual frames leveraged in and by the fascisms of the early twentieth century without regard to when or under what circumstances they became or ceased to be fascist ideas. My interest is in the soup, rather than the bowl. Setting aside the question of delineation allows for a wide-lens, historical approach to fascism in all its configurations, contradictions, and contingencies, accepting that it has no essential ideological core without thereby denying that it has ideas or puts them into practice.

This approach allows us to avoid, on the one hand, the analytic defeatism of the hard nominalists and the non-ideological tyranny school, who collectively deny that we can produce real insights into fascism as a transnational ideology, and the essentialism and oversimplification of the approaches which claim to discover a single true character hiding amongst the contradictions. As Walter Laqueur rightly points out in *Fascism: Past, Present, Future* (1996), “fascism resembles pornography in that it is difficult – perhaps impossible – to define in an operational, legally valid way, but those with experience know it when they see it” (Laqueur, 1996, p. 6). Our approach must take fascism as a system of shifting, contradictory ideas, without a ‘core’, ‘essence’, or ‘heart’, but a system of ideas nonetheless. In lieu of an essence of fascism, what we can hope to grasp is its fluid dynamics – to investigate and see what can be said about

the tendencies, properties, and character of the flux that denies us a centre to grasp. Laqueur's smell test is obviously inadequate as a determinative and analytically satisfactory method of identification, but it provides us with a place to start looking.

Within that flux, there exist certain poles of relative consistency – complexes of tropes, themes, and preoccupations which find a variety of different and sometimes contradictory expressions, but which are nonetheless recognizable upon inspection as a more or less continuous group. Consider one such pole on the theme of nationalism, commonly identified as a necessary component of fascism as such. There are and have been a wide variety of fascist nationalisms, aligned along a recognizable polarity, but internally variegated and occasionally in conflict with one another. For the Nazi regime, for example, the foundation of nationhood was the biological race, understood as scientifically real and conceptually prior to its representation by means of a state; Mussolini¹, by contrast, argued in “The Doctrine of Fascism” (1932/73) that the nation was to be defined “not [as] a race, nor a geographically determined region, but as a community historically perpetuating itself, a multitude unified by a single idea,” and as a historical product of the state as a necessary precondition to that unification as a nation (Mussolini, 1932/73, pp. 42-43). For Maurice Barrès, a relatively representative theorist of the French fascist tradition of whom we will see more shortly, nationhood emerged from a direct, concrete relationship of ‘rootedness’ between a people and their physical territory, resulting in a highly granular and regional conception of organic national difference; Corneliu Codreanu, of Romania’s fascist Legionnaire movement, expounded a theory of the Romanian nation as “a reconciled and redeemed spiritual community...ultimately to participate in eternal life” and argued that patriotic Romanians had a religious duty to safeguard that community by violence

¹ “The Doctrine of Fascism” is officially credited solely to Mussolini but the first section of the text, from which the passage here is quoted, is generally regarded to have been authored by Giovanni Gentile.

even at the cost of their own salvation (Payne, 1995, p. 280). These distinct visions can be collapsed into a single category of ‘ultranationalism’, which is not without its analytic utility, but to do so can often be to lose sight of the discursive breadth represented therein and the way in which different legitimating factors are invoked in different national contexts.

By drawing together the ideas organized along such a polarity, we can produce an image of fascist thought which, while necessarily incomplete, renders it into a form coherent and intelligible enough for analysis. We can consider this as an analog of the concept of adumbration in Husserlian phenomenology, which pertains to the perception of objects rather than bodies of thought, but is subject to similar considerations and pitfalls. Perception of an object, for Husserl, is always mediated through the mental process of adumbration, by which we apprehend a single perspectival manifestation of the object; we lack experiential access to the fullness of the transcendent object, and must not commit the error of mistaking the adumbration for the adumbrated. He wrote:

It must be borne clearly in mind that the Data of sensation which exercise the function of adumbrations of color, of smoothness, of shape, etc. (the function of ‘presentation’) are, of essential necessity, entirely different from color simpliciter, smoothness simpliciter, shape simpliciter, and, in short, from all kinds of moments belonging to physical things. *The adumbration, though called by the same name, of essential necessity is not of the same genus as the one to which the adumbrated belongs.* (Husserl, 1913/83, p. 88; emphasis in original)

Similarly, when we adumbrate fascist ideology into a form amenable to apprehension and presentation, we must bear clearly in mind that the adumbration represents only a facet of the thing and not the thing in itself. The existing literature of the third wave, broadly speaking, can

be understood as at least gesturing at a recognition that they are adumbrating a phenomenon which cannot be adequately encapsulated in its full complexity, but frequently ending up presenting the adumbration as the adumbrated itself.

The goal of this study is to produce and analyze an adumbration of fascist thought centred on the role and employment of violence in politics – like nationalism, a common criterion of fascism as such and one which is similarly often assimilated into a single tendency toward paramilitarism or expansionism rather than the diverse and tumultuous proliferation of discourses that is apparent under closer scrutiny. Three principal subtypes, which tend strongly to harmonize with one another but are not always found together, are observable under such scrutiny: (1) violence as the arena or medium in which collective identity is forged, (2) violence as a necessary precondition to the possibility of a new politics or of politics as such, and (3) violence as independent from instrumental means-ends reasoning and valuable in itself. Advocacy for these conceptions, as above, invokes, intersects, and overlaps with an assortment of adjacent discourses, including various conceptions of nationhood and nationalism; antiparlamentarism; crowd psychology; theories of cyclic or progressive civilizational degeneration and decline; stageist theories of history, particularly with reference to forms of war as either determinative or determined; and predictions of an impending transition to a new, totalitarian stage in which the national entity must act in perfect concert, as a single organism, or be destroyed by rivals who do so more fully or successfully.

By investigating the origins and development of the ideas found in this pole, I hope to accomplish two principal tasks. The first is to provide a more or less comprehensive account of the genealogies of theories of violence expounded, defended, and invoked in fascist discourse, broadly construed, in western Europe in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – the

context in which fascism seems to have originally arisen, where it is easiest to identify more or less conclusively, and, as a result of both of those factors, where we can do the most reliable groundwork on a theory of fascism eventually capable of discriminating appropriately between candidates in fuzzier contexts. The second goal is to use the historical investigation of the first to bring one of the many faces of fascism into relief and examine the ways in which both the central ideas, with respect to violence, and their peripheral connections are mutated and refigured across eras and contexts, and thereby to gain some insight into the mutability and incoherence that makes fascist ideology so difficult to encapsulate and understand.

This work excludes, both for reasons of space and to maximize the regularity of the aspect to be grasped, both non-European candidates and some within Europe which are relatively discursively isolated from the others. Whether there are or were non-European fascisms is a question of longstanding and unresolved debate; there exists, for example, an abundant body of work on Japanese fascism as such, but the literature on fascism *simpliciter* typically denies that the early Shōwa regime or the bulk of its associated movements qualify as examples (see Payne, 1995, pp. 328-37; Kasza, 1984). My approach of deliberately ignoring questions of delineation is plainly unsuited to contribute to either side of that debate, but it is also designed specifically to avoid essentializing what may be contingently European features. With respect to the European candidates, the more fruitful and continuous trajectories of ideas, on which I have focused my attention here, are generally more representative of the modernist wing of the phenomenon than of its traditionalist counterpart. I hope to fill both of these lacunae in future work and will discuss the prospects further in the conclusion of this one.

The body of this work is divided into four chapters. The remainder of this introduction reviews approaches to the question of violence in the existing fascist studies literature, and how

approaching it with the genealogical-morphological frame I have discussed here improves on extant approaches. The first body chapter traces the militarization of the concept of nationhood, the idea of the nation as itself a direct actor in war, and the consequences of that paradigm for the relationship between civil and military planning in German military thought from Clausewitz to Erich Ludendorff, among the first explicit advocates of and the popularizer of the phrase ‘total war’. The second covers the seminal thinkers of the French extreme right from the 1890s through the First World War, the first conjunction of nationalism and socialism into national socialism, and theories of intrastate, non-military violence as the instrument of national salvation and regeneration. The third returns to military theory and discourse and traces the entanglements of theories of future warfare with those of explicitly totalitarian politics from pre-war Italian futurism to British armour theory in the interwar period. Finally, the fourth chapter concerns the ideological progressions of Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger from their early glorifications of violence and nationalism to the more nuanced and ambiguous supranationalisms of their later works, showing that at least the central themes of their doctrines of violence proved more durable components of their thought than even the nationalisms for which they are principally remembered.

Violence in Fascist Studies

The centrality of violence to fascist thought and organization is a rare point of near-unanimous agreement in the field of fascist studies, though its exact status and conceptualization remains subject to a variety of interpretations. We saw above the prominence of violence in the early Marxist approaches and in particular the work of Gramsci – “the attempt to resolve the problems of production and exchange with machine-guns and pistol-shots” (Gramsci, 1921/78c, p. 23). Georgi Dimitrov, a prominent functionary of the Communist International and later Prime

Minister of the People's Republic of Bulgaria, made a similar case in his appropriately titled essay "Fascism is War":

Coming to power against the will and interests of its own countrymen, fascism seeks a way out of its growing domestic difficulties in aggression against other countries and peoples, in a new redivision of the globe by unleashing a world war. As far as fascism is concerned, peace is certain ruin. (Dimitrov, 1937/72a, p. 182)

War and violence are presented as somewhat less central in the second wave literature, but still frequently loom large between the lines. A. James Gregor, who is otherwise quite intent on vindicating fascism from charges of glorifying or valorizing violence, begins his history of fascism proper with Mussolini's approving observation "that the war had crystallized whole populations into national units in which intragroup class distinctions had been by-and-large obliterated" (Gregor, 1969, p. 142). Gregor frames this principally as Mussolini's conversion from socialism to nationalism and does not draw attention to the role of the war itself as the precipitating factor, but this clearly gestures at a conception of violence as the medium of collective identity formation; almost immediately thereafter, he quotes from Mussolini's 1915 writings:

The fatherland is the hard and solid ground, the millenarian product of the race; internationalism was a fragile ideology that did not survive the tempest. The blood that vivifies the fatherland has destroyed the International. (quoted in Gregor, 1969, p. 144)

As in much fascist thought after 1914, it is difficult to disentangle the conceptual role of violence in general from the historical role of the First World War, but both are implicated here; the crucible of war forces nations, as the natural units of history, to abandon petty class distinctions in order not only to survive, but to invigorate themselves anew through sacrifice and martyrdom.

An explicit, if overstated, consensus around the significance of violence to fascism is among the distinctive features of the third wave of scholarship. Stanley Payne's *Fascism: Comparison and Definition* (1980), one of the seminal works of the third wave, includes in its "typological description" – presented in lieu of a traditional definition – the "militarization of political relationships and style" and notes "the theoretical evaluation by some fascist movements...that violence possessed a certain positive and therapeutic value in and of itself, that a certain amount of continuing violent struggle...was necessary for the health of national society" (Payne, 1980, pp. 7, 12). Griffin's *The Nature of Fascism* (1991) mentions that "fascist activists see the recourse to organized violence as both necessary and healthy," though he sees it as "not an end in itself but as the corollary of the regenerative process by which society is to be purged of its decadence" (Griffin, 1991). When Paxton finally arrives at a definition in the final chapter of *The Anatomy of Fascism* (2004), he includes that it "pursues with redemptive violence and without ethical or legal restraints goals of internal cleansing and external expansion" (Paxton, 2004, p. 218). Eatwell, the third member of the third-wave trinity discussed above, regards "the belief that war was endemic to the human condition" as one of the few constants of the fascist *Weltanschauung* otherwise to be understood as a syncretic spectrum (Eatwell, 2011, p. 167).

Despite this surface-level ubiquity, the relationship between fascism and violence is rarely investigated or interrogated to a satisfactory depth. Payne's discussion of the fascist militarization of political relationships and organization only loosely relates it to their valorization of violence, rather than linking both of those phenomena to a broader worldview of violence as the natural form of intergroup relations, or as the form thereof contingently demanded by the historical conditions of the early twentieth century. Griffin associates an

overemphasis on fascist violence with older approaches which denied fascism's genuinely ideological character, instead locating violence as a merely instrumental precondition to the real core of their project: the regeneration which is to follow. Paxton's principal monograph includes a section dedicated to "trying to account for the Holocaust" (2004, p. 158), but does so therein exclusively in terms of the radicalization of the fascist ideology and project in the German context, with the actual violence reduced to an effect of that process. Finally and similarly, Eatwell cautions against putting too many eggs in the basket of violence, largely subordinating it to social Darwinism as the more essential ideological feature leading, in some but not all cases, to the militarism and expansionism displayed in interwar fascisms.

The remainder of this work will show that there are specific and, internally speaking, well-founded ideological reasons for the resort to violence organizationally characteristic of fascism. The reasons given by different fascist thinkers are frequently mutually incompatible or incommensurable, but they can be organized along recognizable polarities in their practical effects and imperatives. The existing literature of the third wave is unable to account fully for violence because, contrary to its stated tenets, it persists in viewing fascist violence and theories of violence through an essentializing frame, whereby they are not only amenable to location with respect to a boundary between the essential and the accidental, but *must* be so located if they are to be acknowledged as significant. By pulling those theories into the fore, while recognizing that the resulting image depicts only an inevitably limited adumbration of fascist ideology – let alone the fascist phenomenon writ large – we can gain insight into its patterns and dynamics without compromising that insight by forcing it into an essentialist mould and artificially providing the kind of structure and coherence whose very absence is what makes fascism uniquely interesting as an object of theoretical study in the first place.

1. The Nation in Arms

This chapter examines the reactions and refigurations of German military thought in response to the declaration of the *levée en masse* in early revolutionary France, as the seed which would eventually grow into mass conscription across Europe. I contrast the young Clausewitz' contemporaneous reaction to Napoleonic warfare to his eventual, more or less conscious reversion to the pre-Napoleonic paradigm in *On War* and examine the way in which the arguments and framework of that later text were adapted by subsequent generations of German military theorists to the changing technological and political conditions of European warfare in the nineteenth century. Eventually, I show, Clausewitz' conceptions of pure, absolute warfare and concretely situated political warfare as opposite and unattainable poles between which actual wars are suspended were inverted and transfigured into the single concept of 'total war', understood as a real, empirical condition combining the most extreme elements of both poles – at once unrestrained, unrestrainable, and intimately linked to all other domains of human social life.

This will accomplish two tasks for the project at hand. The first is to show that some central ideas operationalized in later fascist theories of violence were already present in the German officer corps and military discourse – chiefly, the idea that technological and cultural progress had caused the nation had come to constitute a direct actor in modern warfare and that that development demanded new military strategies, to target the enemy nation directly, and a new, totalitarian form of political organization, which would extend military discipline and sacrifice to the nation as a whole in order to withstand the enemy's efforts to target it in kind. The second is to provide the historical and theoretical background against which later theorists would formulate their ideas – both the shift in military practice itself and in the conceptualization of the roles and goals of those practices and their relationship to the political as such.

Mass Conscription and the National War Paradigm

The period between the conclusion of the European wars of religion, around the turn of the eighteenth century, and the inception of the national-war paradigm in the nineteenth is remembered as the age of the *Kabinettskrieg*, or what Carl Schmitt calls the *jus publicum Europaeum*. European politics in this period, as the traditional story goes, were characterized by absolute monarchy, the developing doctrine of state sovereignty, and a military paradigm in which small forces of professional soldiers or mercenaries pursued limited goals in observance of the rules and conventions which would eventually develop into our contemporary international law – most prominently, strict separations between the conditions of war and peace, combatant and noncombatant persons, combat and noncombat areas, and belligerent and neutral states. The precise extent to which this caricature accurately reflected the reality of the period, which is a matter of some historical dispute, is not important here, but this image would come to form a crucial point of contrast for later thinkers struggling to come to terms with the experiences and transformations of the First World War.

It is certainly true that, relative to the period and paradigm to come, European armed forces were comparatively small and regarded as conceptually distinct from both the rest of the state apparatus and the population at large. This threefold distinction, retained anachronistically as late as Clausewitz's *On War* (1832/2000), is the principal artifact against which the *levée en masse* can be understood as a break. Mass conscription blurs the line between army and nation, implicating the latter as itself an actor in war and beginning the trajectory which, as I will show in this chapter, ultimately developed into the idea that the national-existential stakes and ever-accelerating speed of modern warfare demanded a new, fully modern political form capable of mobilizing and directing that erstwhile trinity as a decisive unity on a permanent basis.

Following the fall of Mainz to Coalition forces in July 1793, the French leadership accepted the necessity of fuller national mobilization and issued the original *levée en masse* (Stewart, 1951, p. 472). Large-scale conscription had begun some months earlier, in response to setbacks in the Flanders campaign and the entry of Spain and Portugal to the war in early 1793, but had met with stiff resistance in some southern and western departments and, on the whole, failed to turn the momentum in France's favour. The first four articles of the decree, laying out the scope and scale of mobilization decreed, are reproduced here:

1. Henceforth, until the enemies have been driven from the territory of the republic, the French people are in permanent requisition for army service.

The young men shall go to battle; the married men shall forge arms and transport provision; the women shall make tents and clothes, and shall serve in the hospitals; the children shall turn old linen into lint; the old men shall repair to the public places, to stimulate the courage of the warriors and preach the unity of the Republic and hatred of kings.

2. National buildings shall be converted into barracks; public places into armament workshops; the soil of cellars shall be washed in lye to extract saltpeter therefrom.

3. Arms of the caliber shall be turned over exclusively to those who march against the enemy; the service of the interior shall be carried on with fowling pieces and sabers.

4. Saddle horses are called for to complete the cavalry corps; draught horses, other than those employed in agriculture, shall haul artillery and provisions (Stewart, 1951, pp. 472-73)

The specific extent to which these orders were actually carried out is unknown and presumably limited. Nevertheless, the armies raised amounted to upwards of half a million soldiers (Forrest,

1989, p. 128), arrayed against coalition forces which had numbered perhaps 350 000 prior to the campaigns of 1793 (Fremont-Barnes, 2001, p. 28). By the spring of 1794, the disparity was approximately 800 000 to 430 000 in favour of France, with nationalist uprisings in Poland further distracting the attention and fragmenting the forces of Prussia and Austria (Fremont-Barnes, 2001, p. 33). France would parlay their advantages in numbers and cohesion into a series of victories and beneficial treaties, leaving them in control of the strategically valuable left bank of the Rhine and at peace with their continental enemies (Fremont-Barnes, 2001, pp. 36, 40-41).

The extent to which this development constituted a true revolution in military affairs and how best to conceptualize it are matters of longstanding debate in the literature. Some accounts see the *levée en masse* as the culmination of a process, going back as far as the turn of the sixteenth century, in which advances in military technology prompted changes in taxation and administration and ultimately drove or necessitated early modern state formation, centralization, and absolutization in Europe (see M. Roberts, 1956/67; Paret, 1986; Parker, 1988). The more recent tendency is to reverse this priority and argue that the increase in the scale of European warfare and the technologies, such as standardized artillery parts, which supported it were themselves effects rather than causes of the development of increasingly professional bureaucracies and the administrative state (see van Creveld, 1989; Gat, 2006). Gat in particular minimizes the significance of the *levée en masse* as a break in military practice:

It should be emphasized that revolutionary France was no more able than earlier states in history to keep over 1 per cent of her population under arms for any prolonged period of time. No miracles were performed here. With a population of some 25 million, France reached a peak of 750 000 soldiers in 1794 only at a price of economic mayhem, and numbers fell to around 400 000 the year after, where they remained until the end of the

decade. (Gat, 2006, p. 503)

Economic mayhem notwithstanding, France was able to levy, supply, and leverage a historically unprecedented quantity of soldiers into a series of resounding strategic victories. Even Gat acknowledges the influence thereof on the other European powers, who “were obliged to ‘fight fire with fire,’ initiating social reform in order to raise the mass armies and generate the popular participation in the state that had made revolutionary France strong” (Gat, 2006, p. 503).

France would go on to win their wars against the Second through Fifth Coalitions on this model of national mobilization before their adversaries caught up with them. Prussia in particular was shocked by the revelation that their vaunted armies, only a few decades removed from the conquests of Frederick the Great, could be defeated by a force of non-professionals. Following Prussia’s humiliating defeat in the 1806 Battle of Jena and the cession of roughly half its pre-war territory to French client states under the ensuing Treaty of Tilsit, King Friedrich Wilhelm III ordered a comprehensive reconstruction and reorganization of the Prussian military (Craig, 1964, p. 38). The Military Reorganization Commission, headed by chief minister Baron Heinrich vom Stein and Major-General Gerhard von Scharnhorst, blamed a sense of dissociation between the Prussian state and people for both their defeat by France and the populace’s willingness to acquiesce thereto (Craig, 1964, p. 40).

The commission believed that the extreme elitism and highly professional character of the Prussian army, once its greatest strength, had alienated the civilian masses from their government and left them thoroughly uninvested in the success or even survival of the state. The object of the reforms at hand, accordingly, had in vom Stein’s words to be

to arouse a moral, religious and patriotic spirit in the nation, to instil into it again courage, confidence, readiness for every sacrifice in behalf of independence from foreigners and

for the national honour, and to seize the first favourable opportunity to begin the bloody and hazardous struggle. (quoted in Craig, 1964, p. 40).

The changes necessary to achieve these goals extended far beyond the purview of the military as such. Hereditary serfdom was abolished in 1807, and a municipal level of government introduced in 1808 (Craig, 1964, p. 41). The officer corps was opened to commoners and a system of written examinations instituted for advancement in rank (Craig, 1964, pp. 43-44). A Ministry of War was established, though without a single minister at its head, and a General Staff convened under von Scharnhorst as Chief (Craig, 1964, pp. 51-52). Most importantly, both in the eyes of the Commission and for the purposes at hand, they advanced a plan for universal male conscription by lot, without exemptions or substitutions, to both the standing army and a national militia (Craig, 1964, pp. 47-48). The king's personal reservations and treaty commitments to Napoleon prevented this from being immediately actualized, but the foundations were laid and processes set in motion for the national army to come.

The national-military consciousness sought by the Military Reorganization Commission could not come quickly enough for Carl von Clausewitz, who had spent time as a prisoner of war following the Prussian defeat at Jena (Wallach, 1986, p. 10). Clausewitz openly chafed at the onerous conditions imposed by the Treaty of Tilsit. When Napoleon further demanded that Prussia supply soldiers for his invasion of Russia in 1812, Clausewitz joined a large proportion of the Prussian officer corps in resigning their commissions and a smaller one in defecting to Russian service. He penned a short but fiery essay, the "*Bekanntnissdenkschrift*" or "Confession Memorandum," explaining his rationale.

In the "Confession Memorandum," as I will henceforth refer to it, Clausewitz argued forcefully for the Prussian people to continue the struggle against Napoleon at all costs, with or

without the help and guidance of the Prussian state. He railed against the “self-serving weaklings and unworthy gluttons” who had acquiesced to Prussia’s submission to France and their “childish hope that the tyrant’s ire can be appeased through voluntary disarmament, his confidence won through base subservience and flattery” (Clausewitz, 1812/2015, pp. 172-73).

He continued:

I believe and confess, that there is nothing more worthy of a people’s respect than the dignity and freedom of its existence;

that these must be defended to the last drop of blood;

that there is no duty more holy to fulfill and no higher law to obey;

that the blot of a cowardly subservience can never be cleansed;

that this poison in the blood of a people is inherited by their offspring, and the strength of later generations is paralyzed and eroded;

that the honor of the king and the government is one with the honor of the people and the only palladium of its welfare;

that a people is insurmountable in the noble fight for freedom;

that the very defeat of this freedom through a bloody and honorable battle guarantees the reincarnation of the people; it is the seed of life from which a new tree strikes firm roots.

(Clausewitz, 1812/2015, p. 173)

Though his later works were more conservative with respect to the role of the people in conflict, the “Confession Memorandum” displays all three discursive subtypes I have identified in later fascist conceptions of violence and politics; he calls on the Prussian people to forge their collective identity through violence, intrinsically valuable in itself, regardless of the outcome, as a precondition to the possibility of a future politics.

Clausewitz, the *Ringkampf*, and the Continuity Thesis

By the time of Clausewitz' magnum opus, *On War* (1832/2000), his tone had become more measured and his analysis more comprehensive. He presents a nuanced account of war as subject to competing imperatives of escalation and containment, but his immense popularity in military circles combined with the obscurity of his method and the unfinished, fragmentary character of the text has resulted almost universally in misinterpretation, with different passages seized on by an array of different thinkers to caricature his position in very different ways.

Clausewitz began *On War* with a definition of the titular phenomenon: “an act of force to compel our adversary to do our will” (1832/2000, p. 264). He compares war to a *Ringkampf*, variously translated as ‘duel’ or ‘wrestling match,’ a strictly causally closed showdown with a single, roughly equal opponent pre-given as such, in which each party seeks to render the other incapable of continuing to fight. To achieve the object of imposing our will on the adversary, he says, “we must disarm the enemy, and this disarming is by definition the proper aim of military action. It takes the place of the object and in a certain sense pushes it aside as something not belonging to war itself” (Clausewitz, 1832/2000, p. 265). In other words, while the determination of the ultimate object remains within the purview of the political, the concrete demands of war are such that it operates in relation to its own proprietary object – disarmament of the adversary – and according to its own logic.

This definition is not intended to be definitive or comprehensive, but rather constitutes the thesis of Clausewitz's dialectic. Its antithesis is the definition more typically and popularly associated with him, sometimes and hereafter referred to as the ‘continuity thesis’: “that war is not merely a political act but a real political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, a carrying out of the same by other means” (1832/2000, p. 280). This version emphasizes the

interconnectedness of war with other domains of social life; it does not, as in the first characterization, take place in isolation in a ring, limited to two parties, with no other objectives or imperatives but to disarm the enemy.

The dialectical synthesis of the *Ringkampf* and the continuity thesis is presented in the final section of Book I, chapter 1. There Clausewitz identifies three tendencies at work in war and associates each with a constitutive element of a warring polity: “the original violence of its essence,” associated with the people; “the subordinate character of a political tool,” associated with the government; and “the play of probabilities and chance,” associated with the commander and army (1832/2000, p. 282). The first and second components of the trinity roughly correspond to the *Ringkampf* and continuity models, respectively, and they are bound together by the operations of chance as mediated by the “courage and talent” of the commander and their army (Clausewitz, 1832/2000, p. 282). Insofar as it can be understood as a pedagogical text, *On War* is dedicated to developing the reader’s understanding of how to negotiate the interplay of these forces.

The operative logic of the first conception – the abstract *Ringkampf* – is what has been called a “logic of escalation” (Dodd, 2009, p. 26). In Clausewitz’s words, “war is an act of force, and to the application of that force there is no limit. Each of the adversaries forces the hand of the other, and a reciprocal action results which in theory can have no limit” (1832/2000, p. 266). In the pure abstract form of war, there is nothing to prevent this internal logic from proceeding toward the three extremes of violence in itself, decisive victory over the adversary, and total commitment of the means at one’s disposal (Clausewitz, 1832/2000, pp. 266-67). Real people and collectivities thereof, however, do not fight pure abstract wars but concrete, situated ones; the “continuation[s] of political intercourse” described in the second characterization

(Clausewitz, 1832/2000, p. 280). In the latter type, progression toward the extremes is hindered by considerations such as the effort and resources to be expended and the knowledge, where applicable, that defeat does not imply total destruction (Clausewitz, 1832/2000, p. 270).

Concrete wars take place in suspension between the opposing forces of escalation and containment, moving toward one pole or the other according to the variation in the balance of those forces, but subject always to both. Clausewitz expanded on this tension in Book VIII:

We must decide upon this point, for we can say nothing intelligent on the plan of war until we have made up our minds whether war is to be only of this kind [Napoleonic, approaching the pole of escalation], or whether it may be of yet another kind.

If we give an affirmative answer to the first question, then our theory will, in all respects, come nearer to logical necessity; it will be a clearer and more settled thing. But what are we to say then of all wars from Alexander and certain campaigns of the Romans down to Bonaparte? We would have to reject them in a lump, and yet we could not, perhaps, do so without being ashamed of our presumption. But the worst of it is that we must say to ourselves that in the next ten years there may perhaps be a war of that same kind again, in spite of our theory, and that this theory, with its rigorous logic, is still quite powerless against the force of circumstances...we shall have to admit that war, and the form which we give it, proceeds from ideas, emotions, and circumstances prevailing for the moment; indeed, if we would be perfectly candid we must admit that this has even been the case where it has taken its absolute character, that is, under Bonaparte. (Clausewitz, 1832/2000, pp. 902-03)

We can see in this passage the fundamental ambivalence of Clausewitz' relationship to the concept of absolute war. On the one hand, he saw it as the purest and most exemplary form of

war as such, and in that respect the proper object of a study of war as a fundamental category of human social intercourse. Furthermore, this aspect allowed him to indulge his preoccupation with his formative experiences in the Napoleonic Wars. On the other hand, he recognized that actual wars as carried out in reality are subject to a wide variety of other factors and even in the most extreme cases do not reach the absolute form in its logical purity.

While the “Confession Memorandum” is interesting for its early and aggressive endorsement of war to be conducted both by the nation itself, as distinct (in later versions, indistinguishable) from the state military, and without regard to particular consequences – themes which would eventually be leveraged in fascist thought and propaganda – Clausewitz’ central importance here concerns the conceptual vocabulary of absolute war and the continuity thesis. These two elements would be taken up, extended, and transformed by subsequent generations of theorists, ultimately fusing together into a single concept of total war: an empirical condition, precipitated (or imminently to be so) by technological and cultural developments, in which war is at once fundamentally entangled with other domains of social life and unhindered in its natural progression toward the extreme. Consequently, we will see it argued, military imperatives must reign supreme over all other social and political considerations, which are possible only as long as we have not yet been destroyed.

From Clausewitz to the Schlieffen Plan

After Clausewitz’ death in 1831, *On War* became the lodestar of the Prussian army – by that time a fully national conscript force as envisioned by the Reorganization Commission – and supplied the conceptual vocabulary for subsequent developments in German military thought. In that context, *On War* was not always appreciated or interpreted in the fullness of its theoretical complexity. Interpretations tended to emphasize both the continuity thesis and the idea of

absolute warfare without recognizing that Clausewitz saw them as opposite and unattainable poles, building on the relative autonomy of war from politics and the primacy of the military imperative over political considerations in the conduct of war, if not in its declaration and conclusion.

Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, a student of the Prussian *Kriegsakademie* under Clausewitz's directorship in the 1820s, went on to expound a more or less explicitly depoliticized version of Clausewitz's doctrine as Chief of the Prussian and subsequently German General Staff. He wrote in 1871, in the context of a then-recent dispute with Chancellor Otto von Bismarck over the management of the 1870-71 siege of Paris:

Policy makes use of war to gain its objects, it acts with decisive influence at the beginning and the end of the war, in such a way as either to increase its claims during the progress of war or to be satisfied with lesser gains. With this uncertainty strategy cannot but always direct its efforts toward the highest goal attainable with the means at its disposal. It thereby serves policy best, and only works for the object of policy, but is completely independent of policy in its actions. (quoted in Wallach, 1986, p. 38)

One will recognize the kernel of this idea from Clausewitz's account of absolute war, but here coupled with the practical qualification of the 'highest goal attainable with the means at its disposal' in place of absolute war's movement toward the extreme. For the purposes of this historical review, what is significant here is that it began or at least presaged the tendency not to discriminate between the abstract *Ringkampf* and the situated war of the continuity thesis.

This was taken up by another Prussian officer and theorist, Colmar von der Goltz, who would eventually fight and die in the First World War as a Field Marshal (van Creveld, 1991, p. 42). Von der Goltz authored a treatise on the changing character of then-contemporary war in

1883, entitled *The Nation in Arms* [*Das Volk in Waffen*] (1883/1913). In its introduction, he outlined his project as providing an updated supplement on military advancements through and of the 1880s to Clausewitz, in whose work “everything of any importance to be said about the nature of war can be found” (von der Goltz, 1883/1913, p. 1). That qualification notwithstanding, von der Goltz broke with Clausewitz on a number of crucial points, if sometimes discreetly.

Like von Moltke the Elder, von der Goltz resented the political yoke to which Clausewitz, at least by the time of *On War*, had thought the military rightly and fundamentally subject. Unwilling to explicitly contradict Clausewitz’s best-known dictum, von der Goltz’s solution was the person of the Kaiser, in whom both political and military leadership was ultimately vested. A focus on the ruler as commander-in-chief allowed him to maintain, per Clausewitz, a nominal subordination of war to the political, while in practical terms rejecting the notion that the chief of the general staff should answer to a common politician. Fundamentally aristocratic in his outlook, von der Goltz insisted that monarchs had a natural inclination for military mastery and belonged at the head of the nation’s armies (von der Goltz, 1883/1913, p. 63).

In more fundamental terms and a more explicit break, where Clausewitz ultimately upheld the primacy of the government in the trinity of people, army, and government, von der Goltz emphasized the indivisibility of the people and the army in the age of the *levée en masse* and the relative priority of their union vis-à-vis the government (von der Goltz, 1883/1913, p. 9). Advancements in technology and civilization, he argued, were such that the unity of people and army, the titular ‘nation in arms’, had become the definitive factor in the erstwhile trinity: “the day of Cabinet wars is over. It is no longer the weakness of a single man, at the head of affairs, or of a dominant party, that is decisive, but only the exhaustion of the belligerent nations... Wars

have become solely the concern of the nations engaged” (von der Goltz, 1883/1913, p. 9). Consequently, he argued, any nation interested in perpetuating its own existence must devote all necessary resources to the maintenance of a state of constant vigilance and preparedness for all-out conflict (von der Goltz, 1883/1913, p. 10). Anything less than full readiness, and immediate application with all necessary force when the moment arrives, would surely result in their destruction.

This represents another crucial milestone in the development of the fascist theories of violence as we will find them in the twentieth century: a preoccupation with the destructive potential of new technologies and the political ramifications thereof. Von der Goltz’ concern was timely. The following year, French chemist Paul Vieille completed his invention of *poudre B*, a smokeless preparation that roughly tripled the propellant ability of black powder and immediately revolutionized the field of small arms (Davis, 1972, pp. 292-93). Over the following two decades or so, the formula was improved, disseminated, and adopted by all of the principal military powers of Europe and the United States, and a descendent of it remains the standard today.

Von der Goltz went even further in his assessment of the political consequences of military technology in a later work, intended for practical consumption by military officers, entitled *The Conduct of War [Krieg und Heerführung]* (1895/96). Therein he argued that, just as the nation and army had been drawn together into a single unity, so too had the state and nation become “practically synonymous” and that as a result, all modern warfare between states put the survival of the nation at risk (von der Goltz, 1895/96, p. 18). It was therefore no longer possible to engage in limited war; existential national stakes demanded the fullest national commitment to war in its fullest intensity. He wrote:

Since wars for conquest, spoliation, or mere love of fighting have been rendered impossible by the advancing civilization of nations, and since their culture has been developed to the extent that every war would injure it, the combatants must endeavour to compel the opponent, as quickly as they can, to recognize the desired conditions of peace. As this only becomes possible after one of the parties has lost all prospect of successful resistance, the necessity of overthrow or destruction again obtrudes itself. (von der Goltz, 1985/96, p. 19)

Despite his emphasis on the nation itself as an actor in war, von der Goltz's doctrine remained fundamentally concerned with decisive battle between more or less symmetrical, mutually recognizable armies. He acknowledged trends toward a greater proliferation of smaller military operations, but maintained that "in these isolated actions no independent purpose is pursued...they [are] intimately connected with the main action and belong to it, as heat lightning belongs to the approaching thunderstorm" (von der Goltz, 1895/96, p. 21).

Von Moltke the Elder's successor as Chief of the General Staff, Alfred von Schlieffen, largely avoided addressing such theoretical matters and concerned himself with applied strategy. Nevertheless, he effected through his actions a significant step in the development of the existential view of war. In his capacity as Chief from 1891 to 1906, Schlieffen embraced von Moltke the Elder's policy-independent approach to strategic planning to the point of disregarding the supposed primacy of policy even in the limited but decisive roles afforded it by von Moltke (Wallach, 1986, p. 38). Most prominently, Schlieffen's now-famous plan for hostilities with France assumed that Germany would invade via Belgium, in violation of its obligation to guarantee Belgian independence and neutrality under the 1839 Treaty of London (Wallach, 1986, pp. 39-40). In purely strategic terms, it may have been the best option, but purely strategic terms

ignore the political ramifications – to wit, Britain’s joining the war.

The strict separation between strategy and policy that Schlieffen had inherited from von Moltke the Elder and subsequently reinforced himself led in practice to strategic planning that largely ignored the political situation and political planning that trusted blindly in the technical expertise of the strategists. To what extent Germany’s actual strategy in the First World War reflected Schlieffen’s planning, and the degree of blame to be allotted to the plan and its execution, respectively, are matters of some dispute that will not be dealt with here. What is clear, and what is important for the purposes at hand, is that Schlieffen helped to entrench the tradition of the functional autonomy of the General Staff vis-à-vis the civilian leadership that would ultimately make it possible to fully and explicitly subordinate policy to strategy.

Schlieffen had also inherited from Clausewitz and von Moltke the Elder a focus on the importance of decisive battles and superiority in numbers, but adapted it to the evolving tactical situation. He recognized that improvements in firearms technology had made attacks on an army’s center of gravity, where Clausewitz had taught that “the strongest blow is struck” (1832/2000, p. 785), increasingly impractical. For Schlieffen, the best way to achieve decisive victory – the only kind worth winning – was encirclement (Wallach, 1986, p. 41). He became obsessed with the battle of Cannae, in which Hannibal had encircled and annihilated a much larger Roman force, and came to believe that Hannibal’s encirclement strategy had been the formula for military success throughout history, whether or not the victor had applied it intentionally. Accordingly, he instructed and expected his officers to attempt a Cannae in their every engagement, reducing military command to a mechanistic science of producing and exploiting encirclement.

Total War

This path away from the foundation laid by Clausewitz culminated in the work of Erich Ludendorff, quartermaster-general of the German General Staff for the latter half of the First World War. After the war, Ludendorff became a key figure in the genesis of the *Dolchstoßlegende* of Germany's defeat and represented the German Völkisch Freedom Party and its short-lived union with the then-illegal NSDAP, the National Socialist Freedom Party, in the *Reichstag* (Wheeler-Bennet, 1938, p. 200). He was acquitted of charges stemming from his participation in the Beer Hall Putsch before eventually alienating the Nazi leadership with esoteric conspiracy theories and breaking with Hitler in the late 1920s.

Shortly before his death in 1937, Ludendorff published a book entitled *Total War* [*Der Totale Krieg*] (1936), in which he took von der Goltz's ideas about the emerging unity of state, nation, and army to their logical conclusion. A disciple of Schlieffen and his mechanical approach to warfare, as well as a commoner in an officer corps still dominated by the aristocracy, Ludendorff did not share von der Goltz's and the broader German military culture's traditional compunction for contradicting Clausewitz's teachings (Wallach, 1986, p. 241). Ludendorff excoriated Clausewitz for subordinating war to politics, which he considered to be the cause of Germany's defeat in 1918. "All the theories of Clausewitz have to be thrown overboard," he wrote; "war and politics serve the survival of the people, but war is the highest expression of the racial will to live. That is why politics must serve warfare"² (Ludendorff, 1936, p. 10).

In order to ensure the survival of the nation, Ludendorff argued, it was necessary to conduct all warfare with the maximum possible force, exerted by the whole of the body politic, lest your adversary do so first and destroy you. Ludendorff was startlingly candid, to the

² This and all subsequent quotations from *Der Totale Krieg* are my own translations from the original 1936 German.

contemporary reader, about what this would entail:

Not only armies, but also peoples, are the immediate object of war...as history has shown of the inhabitants of fortresses, whose distress and deprivation compel the fortress to surrender. Thus, total war is directed not only at the armed forces, but also directly at the people. This is a clear and inexorable reality and must be put into practice. (Ludendorff, 1936, p. 5-6)

The leader of the total war, Ludendorff argued, had the right and duty to demand that his civilian counterparts support him with a total politics, organizing the whole of the nation on a permanent war footing (Ludendorff, 1936, p. 16). It is presumably not a coincidence that this was what Ludendorff and his nominal superior, future Weimar President Paul von Hindenburg, had enjoyed from their appointment to the General Staff in 1916 until the resumption of civilian government in 1918, which Ludendorff still maintained to be the cause rather than an effect of Germany's military defeat.

Total War was enormously successful and influential both in Germany, where it quickly sold hundreds of thousands of copies and supplied a vocabulary and conceptual framework to NSDAP and Wehrmacht leadership, and abroad, where swift translations into English and French established the terms 'total war' and '*guerre totale*' in those languages (Honig, 2012, pp. 37-38). Ludwig Beck, Chief of the General Staff from 1933 to 1938 – until Germany's open rearmament in 1935, under the cover of the *Truppenamt* front organization – expressly employed Ludendorff's theory and terminology both publicly and privately (Honig, 2012, p. 37); Joseph Goebbels' famous *Sportpalastrede* of 1943, also known simply as the 'total war speech', centred rhetorically on a call-and-response in which Goebbels asked "*wollt ihr den totalen Krieg?* [do you want total war?]" to an elated crowd who replied in unison "*Ja!*" (Goebbels, 1943/2019,

1:34:50).

In the procession of ideas from Clausewitz to Ludendorff there are two central trajectories to follow: the reaction against the subordination of war to politics, on the one hand, and the movement toward the paradigm of absolute war on the other, sometimes in the form of misunderstanding Clausewitz himself as advocating for it. Von Moltke the Elder contributed to both in arguing that the necessities of war considered in isolation – i.e. absolute or near-absolute war – were such that strategy had to be functionally independent of policy while remaining nominally subordinate. He was followed by von der Goltz, who turned the primacy of policy into that of the Kaiser personally and argued for the practical necessity of adopting an absolute approach to war. Schlieffen entrenched in practice the more or less complete autonomy of Germany's military leadership and, finally, Ludendorff took both of these paths to their conclusions, subordinating policy in its entirety to the needs of war and arguing expressly for an absolute – now 'total' – war framework and footing in all the cruelty usually elided from such arguments.

There are two principal points to take away from this: firstly, that the ideas of relatively incontrovertible fascists, such as Ludendorff, were in fact broadly continuous with pre-existing trends in German military thought, as Nazi racial theories were so with *Völkisch* thought in the Second Empire period; and secondly, that those trends are traceable more or less directly to the original invocation and deployment of the nation as an actor in war in revolutionary France. The following chapter examines the way in which the French extreme right arrived at consonant, if not commensurate, ideas with respect to violence in their very different national and political context, wherein the principal perceived danger and immediate polemical target was the softness and decadence of their own parliamentary regime, rather than the external foes on which the

theorists of this chapter focused.

2. The *Fin-de-Siècle*

As that trajectory in German military thought approached the supremacy of military imperatives over political ones, another one began anew – again in France, but this time among the cultural and intellectual *avant-garde*. A wide range of potential causal factors including a sense of national humiliation and amputation over the loss of Alsace-Lorraine to Prussia, aimlessness and discontinuity on the far right following multiple failed attempts at restoring the monarchy, and a pan-European cultural milieu of pessimism, irrationalism, and the closing of the frontiers of political possibility at the *fin-de-siècle* crystallized into the glorification of violence as the antiseptic of the soul and as the crucible in which the nations of the future would be forged or broken. The exact status of the characteristic thinkers of the French far right in this period with respect to the delineation of fascism is, as in most contexts outside Italy and Germany, a matter of some dispute; the argument for inclusion is most fully articulated in Zeev Sternhell's *Neither Left nor Right: Fascist Ideology in France* (1986) and *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (1989/94).

This chapter, like the last, has two central tasks. The first is to show and examine the introduction of two additional bodies of thought and trajectories of influence into the conceptual matrix of fascist ideology: antirationalist social science as exemplified in Gustave Le Bon's crowd psychology and Georges Sorel's conception of violence as historically productive and culturally purgative. The second is to show how the early French fascist movement converged on operationally similar ideas to the German trajectory of Chapter 1 despite their different contexts, concerns, influences, and problematics. As a bonus, it will demonstrate particularly starkly the kind of ersatz conceptual commensurability I discussed as characteristic of fascism in the introduction. The chapter begins with some historical background regarding the developments in

the French context after Napoleon before taking up the theories of Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras, two crucial figures in the ‘new’, post-dynastic French nationalism, their personal and intellectual encounters with Sorel, and the development of their thought thereafter. I show that prevalent interpretations of Barrès’ departure from fascism or protofascism prior to the First World War and of whether Maurras qualifies for either category at all are untenable, and that taking both thinkers within the model of fascist ideology I have proposed here offers better prospects for understanding and explaining them.

The Third Republic

By the late nineteenth century, the France that had faced and beaten all the other powers of Europe under Napoleon was a distant memory. Between 1814 and 1870, France was governed by two different royal dynasties – the absolutist Bourbon Restoration of 1814-30 and the constitutional July Monarchy of 1830-48 – one short-lived republic, and one empire. That Second Empire, established by Napoleon’s nephew Napoleon III in an 1852 coup against the Second Republic, seemed for a time to be a golden age for France; they celebrated resounding victories in the Crimean and Franco-Austrian wars of the late 1850s, undertook the great renovation of Paris under Georges-Eugène Haussmann, and hosted leaders and luminaries from across the globe in the 1867 *Exposition Universelle* (Bushman, 1939/70, p. 13).

That appearance was abruptly dispelled in 1870 when, goaded by Otto von Bismarck into declaring war on the Prussian-led North German Confederation, the French found themselves comprehensively outmatched in numbers, planning, training, and technology, winning only a single battle against an unprepared garrison in the border town of Saarbrücken (Strauss-Schom, 2018, p. 392). The Germans, under von Moltke the Elder, fielded a larger conscript army, impeccably drilled, supplied by rail, and armed with the latest technology – perhaps most

notably, steel breech-loading artillery accurate to a range of four miles, where French forces were still equipped with the bronze muzzle-loaders that had lost at Waterloo (Strauss-Schom, 2018, pp. 389-90). Following a brief siege of Paris, France capitulated in early 1871 and agreed to pay an indemnity of five billion francs – to match that demanded of Prussia by Napoleon I under the Treaty of Tilsit – as well as recognizing the newly declared German Empire and ceding it most of Alsace and Lorraine (Strauss-Schom, 2018, p. 412).

Napoleon III's Second Empire was replaced by the widely despised Third Republic, meant as a provisional government pending the restoration of the monarchy. Its first act, after surrendering to the Germans, was to crush the Paris Commune in *la semaine sanglante* of May 1871; its next, to defer the restoration of the monarchy until the death of the childless and impolitic pretender, the Comte de Chambord. Republicans saw it as a monarchy in all but name, as indeed it was intended to be, and advocated instead for plebiscitary democracy, abolition of the Senate, and direct election of the President – originally a placeholder for the monarch, elected by both legislative chambers (Passmore, 2013, p. 48). Royalists, beyond their basic opposition to the republican form, argued that the parliamentary supremacy of the Third Republic made its government indecisive and unstable, pointing to the twenty-four separate governments that had been formed and dissolved between 1870 and 1889.

For these reasons, antiparliamentary sentiment and agitation crossed traditional political boundaries of left and right, uniting both extremes against a narrow, bourgeois centre in parliament. By the mid 1880s, the Bourbon and Bonaparte claimants were dead and the Orléanist pretender Philippe VII's claim dead in the water. The dynastic squabbles that had divided the French right over the prior century were largely forgotten, giving way to the "sacred flame" of *revanche* for Alsace-Lorraine as the *raison d'être* of the French nationalist movement (Buthman,

1939/70, p. 16). It became popularly accepted on the French right that they had been defeated by the superior development of national consciousness, unity, and hierarchy in Germany, and that France's only hope of redeeming its humiliation and amputation began with rectifying that deficiency (Weiss, 1977, p. 107). An abortive movement to install the popular General Georges Boulanger, known as General *Revanche* for his open belligerence and antagonism against Germany, as President in 1889 failed to effectively unite the different strands of monarchist and republican nationalism, but that very failure became a unifying touchstone for those different strands and began the cross-pollination of ideas that would eventually result in a distinctively French form of fascism.

Alfred Dreyfus and Gustave Le Bon

Two central factors would solidify the intellectual foundations of the new French right in the 1890s: the rise of anti-rationalist social science and the Dreyfus affair. The eponymous Captain Alfred Dreyfus, a Jewish Alsatian, was convicted in 1894 of transmitting military secrets to the German embassy and sentenced to life imprisonment in the notoriously brutal Devil's Island penal colony off the coast of French Guiana. He was largely forgotten there until 1898, when novelist and playwright Émile Zola published an open letter castigating President Félix Faure and his government for falsifying the case against Dreyfus and subsequently suppressing evidence of his innocence (Passmore, 2013, p. 101). After a second court-martial in 1899 returned another guilty verdict and a sentence of ten years, Dreyfus was pardoned on the condition that he admit guilt, satisfying neither his supporters nor his detractors. The controversy divided French political discourse between the Dreyfusards, such as Zola, and the anti-Dreyfusards, a loose coalition of anti-Semites, political Catholics, and extreme nationalists and militarists that would become the breeding ground of the French fascist movement.

It was around the same time that Gustave Le Bon's theories of crowd psychology proliferated and gained traction in certain French intellectual circles. He published his most widely read and influential work, *Psychologie des Foules*, rendered in English as *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*, in 1895. In it, Le Bon argued that the advent of mass democracy had led, or would shortly lead, to the "era of crowds," in which old ideas and authorities would give way to the collective unconscious of the masses as the determinative force in politics (1895/2001, p. x). Left unchecked, he claimed, the masses would "utterly destroy society as it now exists" through union activity, economic nationalization and redistribution, and general thoughtlessness and barbarism (p. xi); though he often insisted that his work was intended to apply to any social agglomeration, such as juries or parliaments, the main thrust of his argument was directed squarely at mass democracy and working class organization. By studying and understanding the psychology of the crowd, Le Bon hoped to enable political elites to better control those masses and prevent them from undoing the gains of centuries of civilization.

Le Bon's work joined a wave of anti-rationalist, anti-individualist social science, dovetailing with increasingly well-articulated theories of eugenics and scientific racism as well as the nascent field of sociology, to be joined shortly by the 'Italian school' of elitist political sociology in particular. Zeev Sternhell usefully summarizes the significance of this scientific moment to the early fascist movement:

A conception of man as essentially motivated by the forces of the unconscious, a pessimistic idea that human nature is unchangeable, led to a static view of history: human conduct cannot change, since psychological motivations always remain the same.

According to this view, in all periods of history, whatever the current ideology, under whatever regime, human behaviour is unchanging, and therefore the character of a regime

is finally of little importance in itself. Moreover...the social sciences could not provide a basis for value judgments either of political structures or of ideologies. (Sternhell, 1986, p. 34)

Other prominent representatives of the anti-rationalist tendency in French social science included Georges Vacher de Lapouge, an influential eugenicist and racial phrenologist who advanced the theory of northern Europeans as a distinct and pure ‘Aryan’ race, and Édouard Drumont, a prominent anti-Dreyfusard and founder of the *Ligue antisémitique de France*, who attempted to provide a modern, scientific basis for racial anti-Semitism.

Le Bon’s influence on the budding fascist movement is emphasized principally by scholars who take fascism as essentially irrationalist or anti-modernist; two major examples are Zeev Sternhell’s *Neither Left nor Right: Fascist Ideology in France* (1986), quoted above, and Mark Neocleous’ *Fascism* (1997). Sternhell avoids, in this work and elsewhere, giving a clear definition of fascism, but traces its roots to a tradition of particularist, anti-Enlightenment counter-modernity beginning with eighteenth-century polymath Giambattista Vico, known among other things for his criticisms of Cartesian rationalism, and transmitted through more familiar and proximate figures such as Edmund Burke and Johann Gottfried Herder (Sternhell, 2010, pp. 1-2). This theoretical orientation is apparent in the passage above; as we will see in the remainder of this chapter and those to follow, not all fascists who invoked Le Bon and his fellows shared that “static view of history” and rejected the idea of a scientifically grounded state form, but Sternhell shows one way in which this scientific moment could be turned to political ends (Sternhell, 1986, p. 34). Neocleous, for his part, distinguishes the “revolt against positivism” from a strictly anti-Enlightenment tradition and identifies fascism with the former (Neocleous, 1997, p. 2). Contra Sternhell, Neocleous stresses the discontinuity between the

purely reactionary anti-Enlightenment thought of Burke, Thomas Carlyle, and Joseph de Maistre, on the one hand, and fascism as an active, mass-mobilizing project on the other, with the influence of thinkers like Le Bon positioned as a crucial turning point between the two.

Crowd psychology and the scientific and political moment of which it is emblematic nonetheless bear mentioning here, despite the different focus and framework of this study, for two central reasons. The first is that they provided a scientific grounding for already prevalent concerns about allowing the masses too much influence over politics and the politicians too much over policy. Le Bon's work helped to crystallize existing but heterogeneous antiparliamentary sentiments in the French context into a shared idea that strong, decisive, and hierarchical leadership was both transhistorically natural and desirable, on the one hand, and doable in a way that was modern and scientifically sound, rendering old squabbles about dynasty or republicanism decisively and provably obsolete, on the other. This is a pattern of argument which we will see repeated in the discourses with which we are centrally concerned here: that something is transhistorically true, but especially, provably, and perfectly so in the modern context and with the latest methods and technologies. The second point of relevance here is that Le Bon's work fed into schools of thought which embraced the irrationality and animality of the mob, celebrating its ostensible violence and barbarism – rightly guided and channeled – as the precipitant of its unity and collective identity.

Maurice Barrès and Charles Maurras

At the intersection of Le Bon's theories and the anti-Dreyfusard movement we find the seminal thinkers of the *fin-de-siècle* far right in France: Charles Maurras and Maurice Barrès, to be joined later by Georges Sorel. Sorel supported acquittal in the Dreyfus case and signed the 'Manifesto of the Intellectuals' calling for a retrial in 1898, but his claimed perceptions of

opportunism in the Dreyfusard movement, as well as his broader political and intellectual trajectory, would eventually lead him into Maurras and Barrès' circles (Jennings, 1985, p. 84). Maurras and Barrès – authors, friends, correspondents, and anti-Semites – helped to found the anti-Dreyfusard *Ligue de la Patrie Française* (LPF) in 1898, an unstable coalition of monarchist, nationalist, and otherwise conservative intellectuals which embraced Le Bon's collective psychology and flirted with ethnic nationalism (Passmore, 2013, pp. 107-09).

Maurice Barrès, a journalist and Romanticist novelist who entered French political life as a Boulangist deputy in the elections of 1889, was an early pioneer of the conjunction of nationalism and socialism into national socialism and perhaps the first to self-describe as such in 1896 (Weber, 1962, pp. 274-75). While he remained a nominal republican throughout his life, Barrès was close to and influential upon French monarchists in his own era and thereafter – most prominently, the aforementioned Maurras, with whom Barrès' extensive ideological disagreements on these and other matters did not preclude a close and enduring partnership. On the Dreyfus affair, Barrès infamously remarked in his short-lived newspaper *La Cocarde* that he could be assured of Dreyfus' guilt not on the basis of the facts, but from his Jewish race (Soucy, 1967, p. 78).

Barrès' nationalism was sufficiently extreme as to land him on the fringes of even the LPF, whose leadership forbade him from advocating the full extent of his ideas under their banner (Passmore, 2013, p. 116). In his writings and after his break from the LPF in 1899, Barrès advanced a conception of integral nationalism which was organic but not biological – as a Lorrainer, a biological doctrine of French nationality might have excluded him from it. For him, a nation as opposed to a race was an ongoing collective project by which each individual acquires and participates in the accumulated Frenchness of *le terre et les morts*, the soil and the

dead; he compared the process to the accumulation of rocks and sediment in a river:

When the mass is dragged along by the water, other stones attach themselves to it and become buried in it. Layer forms upon layer...[but] if a single stone breaks off from the whole, it rolls quickly, gets worn down and becomes dust; even if it attaches itself to another mass, it is still half worn, diminished in value (Barrès, 1902/70, p. 163)

The French had to wholeheartedly embrace that project and its history, he argued, to counter “the enormous power of the Jewish race...which threatens France with a total change in their nature” (Barrès, 1902/70a, p. 1168), abetted by Protestants, Kantians, and parliamentary liberals who lacked or disavowed the proper connection to the soil and the national character it would have imprinted upon them. The parliamentary regime, then, was effectively a foreign occupation, imposing an unnatural way of life on a people who instinctively yearned to follow in their ancestors’ hallowed footsteps and end up buried in the same earth.

Above all, Barrès saw in the French masses an animalistic vitality, drawn from the soil and opposed both conceptually and concretely to the cosmopolitan decadence and suspicious preponderance of Jews he saw in the intellectual classes (Soucy, 1972, p. 116). As he wrote in 1902’s *Leurs Figures*:

I may well have my individual peculiarities, for no flower which shows itself to the world is identical to any other flower, but I am part of something which is found in all men and which is apparent only after the closest scrutiny. I participate in animality. We are originally born to bite, to seize, to claw. (quoted in Soucy, 1972, p. 182)

He still envisioned a role for elites in guiding and shaping mass political activity, but thought it crucial that those elites purposively and ongoingly maintain their connection and fidelity to the rooted masses. Failure to do so was, for Barrès, one of the central reasons for the failure of

Boulangier's abortive antiparliamentary movement a decade earlier (Soucy, 1972, p. 120). The crowd, unlike Boulangier, was not afraid to take action; what they needed in order to overcome the decadence of the Third Republic was a hero to channel their energies and lead them into a new order. As Barrès' conception of '*la terre et les morts*' anticipated the later Nazi slogan of *Blut und Boden*, so too did his hero-worship anticipate their *Führerprinzip*.

Between the French masses and whatever hero might arise to lead, personify, and structure them, Barrès believed that they had above all to shock the country out of its decadence and delirium. The particulars of the agenda to be pursued mattered less to Barrès than the vigour of the pursuit itself – he venerated Vercingetorix, Napoleon, and Boulangier alike, despite his criticisms of the latter, as French heroes of the necessary stature and fortitude (Curtis, 1959, p. 137). Barrès' fiction became increasingly laden with imagery of animals and violence. Sturel, the author's alter ego in the *Le Roman de l'Énergie Nationale* trilogy, lies awake at night fantasizing of plunging a dagger into parliamentarianism as a bullfighter administering the *coup de grâce* to a defeated bull (Soucy, 1972, pp. 183-84).

As Barrès articulated and embraced his nationalism more and more deeply, his friend and sometime co-conspirator Charles Maurras did the same to his royalism. A longtime monarchist and deeply committed anti-Semite, Maurras saw the Dreyfus affair as evidence of rot at the heart not just of the Third Republic but of republicanism writ large, which had allowed the Jews to infiltrate the highest echelons of the French government. Like Barrès, Maurras quickly became disillusioned with the LPF and involved himself instead with *Action Française* (AF), another nationalist group loosely affiliated with LPF but broadly more extreme in its outlook (Passmore, 2013, p. 122). Before long, he had converted the rest of AF to the brand of hardline counterrevolutionary royalism which would remain its lodestar well into the twentieth century.

Maurrassian political thought borrowed haphazardly from the various traditions of the French right. From the Legitimists – supporters of Bourbon absolutism – he took integralism: “the notion that the individual acquired meaning in the natural order of family, profession, region, nation, and state” (Passmore, 2013, p. 123). He added the more belligerent statism of the Bonapartists and the dogmatism and traditionalism of political Catholicism. The most curious elements included were a deeply committed positivism and admiration for Auguste Comte. As Barrès wrote of him in 1905:

Maurras is driven by two obsessions, to combat Romanticism and to combat the Revolution. They are, for him, a break with our traditions. And so with pitiless clairvoyance he seizes on everything that encourages this double disorder. (quoted in Sutton, 1982, p. 1)

The ‘double disorder’ is a crucial phrase here, because Maurras saw the two as essentially the same, two tentacles of the octopus of individualism, which disturbed the traditional social order by making people believe that they were more than their place therein. He seized on Comte’s concept of submission to the natural order, as discoverable by positive science, and saw his own political ideas as the extension of Comte’s (Sutton, 1982, p. 16). A genuine positivism untainted by individualism, for Maurras, would invariably reveal the empirical truth of integralism and therefore the necessity of nationalism; it showed that the advancement of science and technology led to increasingly frequent and intense conflict and therefore that the strength, unity, and vitality of the nation would only become more crucial over time (Buthman, 1939/70, p. 275). He regularly referred to his doctrine as capital-P “Positive politics” and insisted that other thinkers he admired, such as Barrès and Ernest Renan, were also positivists in this specific sense (Sutton, 1982, p. 47; pp. 70-71).

While Barrès' early individualism had definitively given way to his nationalism by the 1890s, via a convenient, surgical substitution of the nation for the individual as the natural unit of political analysis and concern, it remained a stretch to call him a positivist. His intellectual fealty to the idea of rootedness, or *enracinement*, was such that he denied the very possibility of universal truth; truth was only interpretable through a rooted, national frame, leaving different sets of truths for different peoples. French truth, the one with which he was most regularly concerned, was whatever was good for France, "always relative to a situation and forged by emotional needs" (Weiss, 1977, p. 105). With respect to the Dreyfus affair, for example, Barrès argued openly that it did not matter whether Dreyfus was guilty in the naïve universal sense; it was better for France that he be judged guilty, and therefore it was French truth that he was so.

All this notwithstanding, the only point of serious disagreement which Barrès and Maurras acknowledged between themselves was the republican question. Maurras lamented Barrès' republicanism, and Barrès saw Maurras' royalism as unbecomingly doctrinaire, concerned too much with replicating traditional symbols and structures and not enough with the practical needs of the nationalist movement into the twentieth century (Curtis, 1959, p. 46). Le Bon's moment in social science seems to be what allowed them to perceive themselves as being more or less in agreement with respect to epistemology; both could feel scientifically vindicated in their otherwise more or less consonant integral nationalisms, despite Maurras taking the science in question as universally valid and Barrès as essentially and inescapably French.

Enter Georges Sorel

The connection between these two figures, principally Maurras, and Georges Sorel was fleeting but impactful. Sorel was an ideologically eclectic thinker, bouncing between Marxism, nationalism, and revolutionary syndicalism over the course of his intellectual life. His early work

in the late 1880s took place under the conceptual aegis of Ernest Renan and Hippolyte Taine, two of Maurras' great right-positivists, before he publicly converted to Marxism in 1893 and supported the Dreyfusard movement (Roth, 1980, pp. 4-6). By 1900, he renounced socialism and spent the following years developing theories of revolutionary syndicalism; it was in this period of his thought that he wrote the *Reflections on Violence* (1908/99), the work for which he is most centrally remembered, which will be discussed shortly. Sorel's turn to nationalism began in 1909, when he remarked to his lifelong correspondent Benedetto Croce – whose later account of Italian fascism we saw in the introductory chapter – that Maurras' *Action Française* had formed “an audacious *avant-garde* fighting against the scum who have corrupted everything they have touched” and commended them for taking a stand for morality and against democracy (quoted in Curtis, 1959, pp. 46-47). Sorel and Maurras, among others, attempted briefly to collaborate in the *Cercle Proudhon* political group and its associated journal, but it failed to garner any serious support and folded after selling only 300 copies of its second issue in 1912; by 1914, the two had publicly fallen out and denounced each other as unserious (Curtis, 1959, p. 48).

Though the *Reflections on Violence* were written and published in Sorel's syndicalist period, the text displays in full the characteristic eclecticism and polymathy of his thought, drawing extensively from figures as diverse as Marx, Nietzsche, Renan, Tocqueville, Pascal, Bergson, Le Bon, and the then-obscure Giambattista Vico, who we saw above as an inaugurator of the anti-Enlightenment tradition in Sternhell's analysis of the origins of fascism. Sorel and the *Cercle Proudhon* feature even more prominently in that analysis, appearing in *The Birth of Fascist Ideology* (1989/94) as the inaugurators of fascism proper. In the *Reflections*, Sorel developed a theory of political history which emphasized the continuity between the *ancien regime*, the various post-revolutionary regimes of France, and the then-contemporary socialist

movement as united by a belief in hierarchy and a faith in themselves as the interpreters of the general will. The workers' movement against that tradition of authority and hierarchy, for Sorel, had to be founded on the use of violence to maintain and broaden their social separation from their bourgeois masters and to lay the groundwork for the proletarian society and morality of the future.

Bourgeois society and morality, Sorel argued, attempted to exile violence from the political sphere, constructing it as "a relic of barbarism which is bound to disappear under the progress of enlightenment" (Sorel, 1908/99, p. 65). The dominance of the bourgeois mode of thought, further, was such that this framework extended even into those compromised segments of the socialist and syndicalist movements which recoiled at the notion or practice of proletarian violence. These attitudes, he argued – that peace is possible, and that progress is possible under the conditions of peace – were responsible for the decadence and degeneracy of the Third Republic and its timid, reformist socialist movement. Part of the function of proletarian violence, then, was and would be to renew the clarity of the opposition between the classes and remind each of them of their mutual antagonism. He wrote:

It would be very useful to thrash the orators of democracy and the representatives of the government in order that none of them should be under any illusion about the character of acts of violence. These acts can only have historical value if they are *the brutal and clear expression of class struggle*: the bourgeoisie must not be allowed to imagine that, aided by cleverness, social science or noble sentiments, they might find a better welcome at the hands of the proletariat. (Sorel, 1908/99, p. 77; emphasis in original)

Aversion to violence, for Sorel, was entirely an artifact of bourgeois modernity; historical peoples understood intuitively that nothing great happened without it, and every age and context

was characterized by the violent antagonism of its constituent groups.

Sorel distinguished between force and violence, associating the former with the efforts of the state to compel obedience and the latter with historically productive antagonisms and, in the then-contemporary context, the proletarian general strike (Sorel, 1908/99, pp. 165-66). He was, however, careful not to diminish the real, physical violence that would be entailed and his positive evaluation thereof. One section of the text consists of his approving observations of private violence directed toward what he regarded as moral ends, from vigilante lynchings of alleged bandits and mafiosi in the United States to fully decentralized, vendetta-based justice systems in Corsica and precolonial Algeria (Sorel, 1908/99, pp. 176-77). In another passage, he claims outright that “the blows exchanged between workmen and the representatives of the bourgeoisie...may beget the sublime” (Sorel, 1908/99, pp. 211-12). Fearing that he had still been misunderstood on this point, he added an appendix titled “Apology for Violence” to the *Reflections*; he wrote therein:

Men who address revolutionary words to the people are bound to submit themselves to high standards of sincerity, because the workers understand these words in their exact and literal sense and never indulge in any symbolic interpretation...I do not hesitate to declare that socialism could not continue to exist without an apology for violence. It is through strikes that the proletariat asserts its existence...The strike is a phenomenon of war; it is therefore a serious misrepresentation to say that violence is an accidental feature destined to disappear from strikes. (Sorel, 1908/99, p. 279)

Violence, for Sorel, was the engine of history and the ultimate, ongoing test of the spiritual vigour of nations and classes. Sorel’s thought in this area blended Vico’s cyclic, Renaissance-inflected conception of history with Marxist class theory and Bergson’s *élan vital*.

The rising bourgeoisie of earlier modernity had upended the aristocracy on the strength of their superior vitality and virility, but in usurping the nobles' place had made themselves vulnerable to the same decadence and degeneration that had made that coup possible (Horowitz, 1961, p. 118; Sorel, 1908/99, pp. 71-72). Again and again, the instinctually aggressive and violent character of the subordinate classes overcomes the regressive tendencies of society as such and its degenerative effects on the dominant classes. Attempts to defuse or decentre that violence, for Sorel, inevitably fail. He wrote, in an earlier work:

Ever since social democracy has become the centre of government policy it has inculcated the adoption of pacific tendencies in worker-management relations – it has sought to modify bourgeois violence³. But the contrary end has been achieved – economic antagonism and class violence have become sharper. (quoted in Horowitz, 1961, p. 122)

Violence being inevitable in human social relations, Sorel expresses his preference for it to take place in the open, where it cannot be denied or corrupted by private feelings of hatred or vengeance. He wrote, once more in the *Reflections*:

I have a horror of any measure which strikes the vanquished under a judicial disguise. War, carried on in broad daylight, without any hypocritical attenuation, for the purpose of ruining an irreconcilable enemy, excludes all the abominations which dishonoured the bourgeois revolution of the eighteenth century... Social war, by making an appeal to the honour which develops so naturally in all organized armies, can eliminate these evil feelings against which morality would remain powerless. If this were the only reason we had for attributing a high civilizing value to revolutionary syndicalism, this reason alone

³ Sorel may prefer 'force' here, in the terminology used by the time of the *Reflections*.

would seem to me to be decisive in favour of the apologists of violence. (Sorel, 1908/99, pp. 280-81)

Open, unapologetic violence appears here as having a purgative effect, stripping away negative emotional influences and instilling in their place honour, dignity, and vitality. If the working class can approach or approximate the character and organization of an army in their practice of violence, they will naturally and inevitably end up morally and civilizationally elevated for it.

By the outbreak of the first World War, Sorel's political interest was more in Italy than in his native France; he regarded the Italian national character as more direct, clear-sighted, and proletarian, and therefore more likely to effect world-historical change. He opposed Italy's entry into the war on the side of the Entente and criticized irredentism as a smokescreen of parliamentarism (Roth, 1980, pp. 183-84). Nonetheless, after the war, he was outraged by the Entente's failure to award Dalmatia to Italy and by the failure of the Italian syndicalist movement to take it up as a political issue, arguing that they were entitled to all the land promised under the Treaty of London and more besides (Roth, 1980, p. 185).

Sorel's commentary on the early fascist movement in Italy was fragmented and contradictory, seeming to change with the political affiliations of his various interlocutors, but he was consistently effusive in his praise for Mussolini; playwright Jean Variot, Sorel's friend and correspondent, reports that Sorel told him in 1912:

Our Mussolini is no ordinary socialist. Believe me: you will see him one day, perhaps, at the head of a sacred battalion saluting the Italian flag with a sword. He is an Italian of the fifteenth century, a *condotierre*! The world does not know him yet, but he is the only energetic man capable of redressing the feebleness of the government. (quoted in Roth, 1980, p. 183)

This prediction was somewhat remarkable given that, at this point, Mussolini was still a prominent socialist, the editor of the Socialist Party's newspaper, and had recently spent time in prison for his anti-war advocacy. After the war, and after Mussolini's political metamorphosis and foundation of the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento*, Sorel praised the fascists' willingness to use violence and their uncompromising attitude to social war; though they defended the interests of property, Sorel argued, they did so with violence rather than force, because they deepened and centred class antagonism rather than attempting to resolve or conceal it (Roth, 1980, p. 191).

Sorel died in 1922, before the March on Rome, but remained influential thereafter among fascist intellectuals and fellow-travellers in both Italy and France. Georges Valois, a cofounder of the *Cercle Proudhon*, spokesman on economic matters for *Action Française*, and, later, the founder of the *Faisceau* – the first self-identified fascist party outside Italy – developed a theory he called 'integral syndicalism' based explicitly on Sorel's work; Valois envisioned a corporatist form of economic organization in which workers, employers, and managers would each have their own syndicates, organized hierarchically under a "national economic council," which would nonetheless interact antagonistically through "mutual coercion" in a way that would engender patriotic sentiments and heroic values (Roth, 1980, p. 195). Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, later to become the editor of the fascist newspaper *L'Emancipation Nationale* in the late 1930s and of the collaborationist *Nouvelle Revue Française* during the German occupation of France, credited both his encounters with Sorel in the *Cercle Proudhon* and his own experience of the first World War for his political development. In Italy, Sorel's ideas were assimilated into the elitist political sociology of Vilfredo Pareto and Robert Michels in the notion of the continual degeneration and replacement of elites from below and in a general focus on violence and coercion in social relations. Pareto also wrote specifically of Sorel's influence on the fascist

movement, which he said had embraced Sorel's teachings on violence but divorced them from his focus on and esteem for the proletariat as a class (Roth, 1980, pp. 199-200).

We find again in Sorel all three discursive subtypes identified in the introduction: (1) violence as the arena or medium in which collective identity is forged, (2) violence as a necessary precondition to the possibility of a new politics or of politics as such, and (3) violence as independent from instrumental means-ends reasoning and valuable in itself. Contrary to some interpretations which took 'violence' to designate some kind of vital social energy, Sorel was quite explicit that he meant real, physical violence and that he valued it both for its consequences and in itself – violence appears in his work as serving a variety of historically productive ends, from sharpening and clarifying the lines of class antagonism to ultimately upending the dominant class and installing the subordinate in their place, but it is also imperative that the subordinate class wholeheartedly embrace it as their own.

Maurras and the *Camelots*

The specific extent to which Barrès and Maurras were influenced by their encounters with Sorel is unclear, particularly because their 1914 row coincided with the onset of the first World War, which also drew their theoretical attention to war and violence. In a 1912 article in AF's eponymous newspaper, Maurras expressly denied that he had needed Sorel's influence to recognize the political necessity of violence (Curtis, 1959, p. 144). What can be said with certainty is that, through the years of the war and those shortly thereafter, both Barrès and Maurras became increasingly preoccupied with violence and its effects on both individuals and nations.

Maurras retained in his writings an instrumental conception of violence as such, both against the Republic and by past and future monarchies, but vested a great deal of hope in the

military as an institution and as the instrument of French national glory. He saw it as a bulwark of order and hierarchy amid the chaos of parliamentary government, dishonoured and misused by the Republic but standing strong for the national reawakening to come, awaiting the order to redeem Alsace-Lorraine (Curtis, 1959, p. 250). Under a monarchy, he argued, the military would naturally be better used, organized, and inspired, because the interests of the monarch and of the nation were one and the same; they would not be divided by parliamentary squabbles or misled by the bumbling Bonapartes (Curtis, 1959, p. 245; Maurras, 1899/1970a, p. 233 note 1). Furthermore, it would end the disastrous experiment of mass mobilization; he wrote in 1899's "Dictator and King":

The King of France, who alone will possess the authority to undertake such a reform, will create the living symbol of his power and our unity, a professional army as large and well-trained as possible...The principle of the division of labour invalidates the concept of the whole nation under arms, based in its theory upon a historical error of grave proportions (the volunteers of 1792) and realized in practice by a botched and detestable imitation of the German system. (Maurras, 1899/1970a, pp. 232-33)

A different aspect of Maurras' views on violence, though, can be gleaned from the activities of *Action Française* under his guidance and leadership. When the *Ligue de la Patrie Française*, from which Maurras had broken to join AF, dissolved in 1905, Maurras and his fellows resolved to transform AF from a loose collection of café intellectuals to a new mass organization. Along with a party newspaper and a series of public lectures, they founded in 1908 the *Fédération Nationale des Camelots du Roi*, a youth wing charged initially with selling copies of the newspaper, but which became better known for its street violence.

The *Camelots* gained their initial notoriety by invading weekly lectures given at the

Sorbonne by Amédée Thalamas, who had attracted their ire by debunking the traditional mythology of Joan of Arc, using their knowledge of the university's layout to circumvent event security and publicly assault Thalamas at the podium (Tannenbaum, 1962, p. 96). The Sorbonne was divided and disrupted for months by street fighting between the *Camelots* and Thalamas' supporters among the student body. New recruits to the organization were made to pledge "to fight against every republican regime" and to restore the monarchy "by all the means in my power," including diligent preparation for a *coup d'état* (Davies, 2002, p. 83). Maurras reportedly refused an offer from an enthusiastic *Camelot* to assassinate Dreyfus on the grounds that anti-Dreyfusard sentiment and agitation, which had flared up again after Zola's remains were transferred to the Pantheon in 1908, was too important for inspiring converts to and martyrs for their movement (Osgood, 1970, pp. 82-83).

Camelot activity became particularly intense during the period of Maurras' collaboration with Sorel in the *Cercle Proudhon*. An elite formation known as the *Commissaires* was established in 1910, said by a party delegate to be "destined to form the cadres of troops for use in all possible eventualities," and an island in the Seine purchased as a training facility (Tannenbaum, 1962, pp. 99-100). Though their coup never came to fruition, their street violence would be a fixture of French political life up to their dissolution, along with the other paramilitary *ligues* of the far right, in 1936. In its later iteration, *Camelot* paramilitarism was largely directed at real and putative communists, including the two *cartel des gauches* governments of 1924-26 and 1932-34, but in the prewar period they organized around the principle of "*politique du pire*," or the 'politics of the worst': a kind of right-accelerationism under which the far left was regarded as an at least potential ally against the parliamentary regime, whose downfall was the real priority (Tannenbaum, 1962, p. 101). Maurras' book "*Si le*

Coup de Force Est Possible," published in 1909 but remaining his most popular work through the 1910s, argued that the best path forward was a coup by royalist generals, with AF action squads supporting regular military formations in suppressing backlash (Maurras, 1909/25). In order to lay the groundwork for that coup, it was crucial that AF, the *Camelots*, and the violence they practiced be as prominent and visible as possible, both to recruit new members and to reassure potential coup plotters in the officer corps that they enjoyed the support of the public.

Maurras' thought, as supplemented by his actions, with respect to violence displays some but not all of the hallmarks of the conception I have described in this work; in large part, I think, because he had specific visions of the ideal status quo ante, which of its characteristics could and should be replicated in the contemporary context, and how that could be effected. He saw the world as already essentially suffused with violence, but in the pattern of a Hobbes rather than a Sorel; he wrote in 1937's "The Politics of Nature":

Because the barbarian exists, ready for his chance to destroy societies and hold them to ransom – because these societies have within them the seeds of anarchy disposed to violence – because the compound of anarchy and the barbarian is perfect material for the task of bursting asunder all the contracts of social effort – because this two-edged sword is always suspended above us – our ancestors, citizens and soldiers, good citizens and good soldiers, closed ranks to preserve their peace, to protect their homes...Clear and tangible necessity dictated the construction of the pillars of order. (Maurras, 1937/70b, p. 279)

The simultaneous clarity and distance of Maurras' vision of a justly restored monarchy allowed him the double move of having one conception of violence in transhistorical principle, justifying the necessity of the state, and a different one in concrete practice, as it pertains to the conditions

of possibility for the establishment of a state with the necessary characteristics. The poisons of Romanticism, individualism, and the Revolution allowed the barbarians into France and effectively extended the anarchy of the international into the civil arena; in being transmuted between those contexts, the instrumental logic of foundational state violence is transformed into a more existential embrace of street violence as a way to prove and test the commitment of the royalist cadres to the destruction of the parliamentary regime and the restoration of the proper conditions of the relationship between the state and its exterior.

Outside of Ernst Nolte's *Three Faces of Fascism*, of which it is one of the titular faces, scholarship on AF is divided on whether it should be grouped under the fascist umbrella. An interesting variety of reasons are given by the exclusionist camp. In some versions, it is because they were too passive, failing as a mass organization in general and, in particular, to take advantage of the 6 February 1934 crisis, in which far right *ligues* rioted near the National Assembly but failed to realize the fears of the left and centre that a coup was imminent (Davies, 2002, p. 87); in others, because they were too closely tethered to traditional elites and religious institutions (Griffin, 1991; Payne, 1995, pp. 15-19).

René Rémond, the traditional authority on the typology of the French right more broadly, holds that AF is determinately locatable within longstanding French conservative, Bonapartist, and Boulangist traditions, whose strength made the import of fascism, as an essentially foreign doctrine, unnecessary as well as unworkable; he acknowledges, though, that AF "introduced, maintained, and confirmed some inclinations, sympathies, prejudices, and guiding ideas which indisputably prepared ground favourable to fascism" (Rémond, 1954/66, pp. 281, 247). Pierre Drieu la Rochelle, the fascist journalist we saw above as a Sorelian, wrote of Maurras that "a monarchist is never a true fascist, because a monarchist is never modern: he does not have the

brutality, the barbaric simplicity of the modern" (quoted in Soucy, 1972, p. 301), and many more recent accounts agree that Maurras' and AF's allegedly straightforwardly counterrevolutionary outlook disqualifies them from fascism as such (Eatwell, 2003; Winock, 1998, p. 183). It is worth noting here that Maurras himself, later in life, disdained German Nazism as an essentially and deleteriously backward-looking consequence of the naturally romantic and mystical German national character, in contrast to AF's modern, scientific positivism (McClelland, 1989, p. 94).

On the approach I have taken in this work, none of these moves are available. AF's relative passivity in the crises of the 1930s does not tell us about the character of their ideology; their continuity with Bonapartism and Boulangism and esteem for the traditional institutions of monarchy, aristocracy, and the church may tell us that they were not decisively influenced by Italian or German fascisms, but we knew already that movements in this political cluster take very different forms in different national and political contexts. It does not seem surprising that, in the context of the Third Republic, fascists should seize on the extant fragments of the old order they idealized.

With respect to the question of reaction, it seems too simple to cast Maurras and AF as one-dimensionally backward-looking, given their insistence on the scientific foundations and character of their movement. Whether or not they should ultimately be grouped as a fascist or protofascist party – for the purposes at hand, an ultimately meaningless distinction – it can be said with relative certainty that the *Camelots* anticipated and influenced the action squads that would so iconically characterize the fascisms of the interwar period – the *squadristi* in Italy, the *Freikorps* and *Sturmabteilung* in Germany, various counterparts in central and eastern Europe, and the French *ligues* of the 1930s, which may have failed to effect a coup, but numbered at their peak in the hundreds of thousands (Davies, 2002, p. 89).

Barrès and the First World War

Though Barrès' collaboration with Sorel was more fleeting and peripheral than Maurras', his embrace of Sorel's teachings on violence was direct and full-throated. He was elected to both the Chamber of Deputies and the *Académie française* in 1906 and was regarded in some respects as having been domesticated into traditional conservatism (Doty, 1976, p. 219), but his later writings bely the notion that he had tempered his doctrine; rather, he temporarily took Germany as a greater enemy than parliament and was led by the same radical nationalism he had already espoused to support the *union sacrée*, under which the bulk of the French political spectrum agreed to a truce for the duration of the first World War.

Barrès' writings between the outbreak of the war and his death in 1923 contain some of his most direct engagement with the concepts and practices of war and violence. He had long admired and glorified the military as virtuous and energetic, passing on good French values to new generations of soldiers (Curtis, 1959, p. 227). His rehabilitation into the French political and intellectual mainstream and the prestige and credibility afforded by his place in the *Académie* gave him the opportunity to be published and translated more widely than ever before; an American interlocutor wrote in the English-language foreword to Barrès' *The Undying Spirit of France* that "we are almost tempted to pronounce him the Roosevelt of France" (Barrès, 1917a, pp. vii-viii). Barrès approached the war and the resultant turmoil with a childlike wonder, writing of his eagerness and awe at seeing formations of Indian and African soldiers "which make up one of the overwhelming surprises in this War of the Nations" (Barrès, 1915, p. 3). He wrote, of a regiment of Gurkhas:

Did the rain and cold make them shiver in silence as our Africans so often do? Did they suspect some devilment in the appalling uproar of the German guns? Be that as it may,

the first ray of sunlight cheered them anew. It was an unexpected form of war, but still it was war. To-day they take their pleasure in it, and having got used to the Flemish climate, they creep at night through the mud towards the enemy's patrols like dripping tigers.

(Barrès, 1915, pp. 5-6)

Barrès' awe extended also to the prospects for French national unity and collective identity in the face of the war which, he thought, would lead Frenchmen of all creeds to understand their shared connection to the French soil. We see this in particular in 1918's *The Faith of France*:

What ball of fire, what burning torch is it that inflames these heroes? From whence comes their spirit? Where will it be revived? It is born of France, it is to France that it shall be restored. Never more than to-day have those sacred forces hidden in our people been more active and more pronounced. These young men, the pride and the salvation of France, are now answering the traditions of their race⁴ and of their soil. Our old provincial families have become electrified by danger and attack. 'Fine lads,' they say to their children, 'go in our name to defend our country.' (Barrès, 1918a, pp. 185-86)

He apparently saw no contradiction in at once blaming the war on Germany's "blind idolatry of force" and exalting the "furnace of fire" as "the glorious resurrection of our most beautiful epochs" (Barrès, 1918a, pp. 189, 206-07).

In line with his longstanding commitments to regionalism, particularism, and the idea of concrete, unmediated rootedness as the experiential basis of nationhood, Barrès' wartime writings largely took the form of individual anecdotes, allegedly related to him by wounded soldiers, and reproductions of letters from the trenches – "the verses of an eternal and national Bible" (Barrès, 1918a, p. 258). These anecdotes lacked any explicit theoretical analysis or

⁴ By this time, Barrès speaks readily of 'races' and refers at one point to a Sikh regiment as "our Aryan brothers" (Barrès, 1915, p. 7), but does not clarify the extent to or way in which his doctrine on race and nation has changed.

explication comparable to that found in his earlier works, but both the principles of those earlier works and the influence of Sorel can be detected throughout. Any trace of negativity in the war experience, as Barrès relates it, is euphemized away or immediately transmuted into glory. Both of these points can be seen in the following passage, which Barrès attributes to a letter from Henri Massis, “a young writer already wounded and decorated with the *croix de guerre*” (Barrès, 1918b, pp. 764-65) – in actuality, some thirty-two years of age at the time, but all soldiers are rendered young in Barrès' retelling:

On December 20 we arrived together at our destination – on a terrible night of cold and dread, which gave way to dawn only to reveal to us a ghastly charnel-house of mud. It was our first experience with the realities of war. That march down to Houlette, when we stumbled over dead bodies and rubbed against the unknown shapes of the men we were going to relieve, will live forever in my memory; it was our descent into hell. And yet, in the morning, we were light of heart, and glad to have reached at last that spot to which we had looked forward for three long months in the dreary idleness of a dépôt. (Barrès, 1918b, p. 765)

The results of war are always presented as glory, optimism, and nationalistic spirit, finally smashing the illusions of parliamentarism and cosmopolitanism. The soldiers quoted are identified almost universally by their specific town and department of origin – their soil, in the hyper-local regional sense of which Barrès was still fond in this period – and the always youthful age at which they died for France. Conveniently, soldiers who were older than twenty-four are referred to as ‘boys’ and ‘young warriors’ without that latter specification (e.g. Barrès, 1917b, pp. 18-21).

Youth, while not our principal focus here, is a key ingredient in Barrès' rhetorical formula

as it relates to war and nationalism. France, as he saw it, was “an old nation...France was when no such thing existed as Germanic consciousness, or Italian or English consciousness; in truth we were the first nation of all Europe to grasp the idea of constituting a home-land” (Barrès, 1917a, p. 2). Since the humiliation of 1871, he continued, many outsiders took France as being past its prime and drained of its vital energy,

like an old man in the evening of the most successful of lives, or still more like certain worldly aristocrats of illustrious lineage, who have preserved of their inheritance only their titles of nobility, charming manners, superb portraits, regal tapestries and books adorned with coats of arms, all denoting sumptuous but trivial luxury. (Barrès, 1917a, p. 3)

What those “undiscerning foreigner[s]” failed to grasp, Barrès argued, was that the youth of France were capable of reinvigorating their national consciousness through war (Barrès, 1917a, p. 3). He quotes, purportedly from a written assignment submitted by an enlisted trainee:

Tremble, Germans! France hastens to invoke her greatest hope, the class of 1914. They are twenty years old. Mere boys, you say; what chance have they against the ‘kolossal’ German army? What can they do, these young men whose strong hands, already trained, are lovingly fondling the stocks of their rifles? They will do as did their forefathers – the men of Valmy, of Austerlitz, of Rivoli, and of Solferino⁵! They will conquer! (Barres, 1917b, p. 16)

While it was, as always, crucial to Barrès’ nationalism that the nation is already historically and organically founded and therefore not originated in the war itself, it is clear that he saw in the war the potential for national rejuvenation and rebirth.

⁵ Infamous French victories won under the First Republic and First and Second Empires, spanning from 1792 to 1859.

The new France was even open to Jews, Protestants, and Freemasons, previously excluded as essentially rootless; Barrès makes a great show of the spiritual unity of the different sects represented in the French military, relating anecdotes of ecumenical chaplain-teams blessing the unknown dead together to ensure that all necessary rites were covered (e.g. Barrès, 1918a, p. 257). Through war, for Barrès, non-Catholics were able for the first time to achieve the concrete relationship to the French soil that centuries of dwelling on it had apparently been insufficient to establish.

We will shortly see Barrès' ideas on the relationship between war and national consciousness developed further and more explicitly by his admitted intellectual debtor, Ernst Jünger, in chapter 4, but they are clear enough here to summarize for analysis. We can usefully divide Barrès' thought into three periods: his early egoism, of principally literary interest and largely irrelevant here; a middle period characterized by extreme, antiparliamentary nationalism and involvement with the *Ligue de la Patrie Française* and the early, pre-monarchist *Action Française*; and his later rehabilitation and tenure in the Chamber and *Académie*, during which his jingoism came to predominate over antiparliamentarism, his encounter with Sorel marking the transition between the second and third periods.

Secondary scholarship on Barrès, at least with respect to politics rather than literature, concentrates almost exclusively on the middle period, between the Dreyfus affair and Barrès' election to the Chamber in 1906. While that represents his most intellectually productive period, during which he developed the ideas for which he is most centrally remembered, these accounts (e.g. Curtis, 1959; Soucy, 1967; Doty, 1976) understate both the conceptual continuity between the middle and late periods and the significance of the points of discontinuity between them. Doty's *From Cultural Rebellion to Counterrevolution: The Politics of Maurice Barrès* (1976),

the principal monograph on Barrès' life and thought as a whole, consigns everything after 1914 to an epilogue in which he appears as basically domesticated and his wartime writings as banal, sentimental propaganda, claiming that “he moved from proto-fascism to conservatism” in 1903 (Doty, 1976, p. 248).

Contra Doty *et al.*, Barrès' middle and late periods are intelligible as continuous and united with a relatively simple substitution, just as the transition between the early and middle periods simply substituted the nation for the self as the general unit of analysis: the subject of violence transforms from individual antiparliamentary intellectuals, an artefact of his early egoism in the middle period, to the nation, arguably *completing* rather than interrupting or reversing the nationalist project of that middle period. A baseline glorification of violence can be detected relatively early in his oeuvre, but there principally as metaphorical and performative, a demonstration of his political commitment to decisive action rather than a serious engagement with violence as actually practiced. Despite its transparency and sentimentality as propaganda, Barrès' wartime work demonstrates the real influence of Sorel's *Reflections on Violence* on his political thought, with large-scale, public violence appearing for the first time as an instrument of national consciousness and vitality.

Barrès' and Maurras' ability to feel that they were in broad agreement with one another, despite their strikingly different positions on both the republican question and the possibility of universal positive science and the purported centrality of those issues to their individual doctrines, demonstrates well the limited decontestation of concepts which I identified as a characteristic of fascist ideology in the introduction to this work. Maurras chose to believe that Barrès was a positivist, despite presumably being aware of his texts and positions. While the two both held positions which could be assimilated into a category of integral or organic nationalism

to explain their commonality, even those positions were or ought, in a sense, to have been incommensurable; for Maurras, true national unity was simply impossible except in the person of the king under the positively discoverable natural order of monarchy, where for Barrès it arose automatically and organically from their shared soil and way of life (Maurras, 1899/1970a, p. 228). Were this the only case of such purposive commensuration of the incommensurable, we might attribute it to their personal friendship or other factors unrelated to the character of their ideology or ideologies, but it represents only one example, if a particularly conspicuous one, of that broader pattern.

Despite the organizational affinity between *Action Française* and the later paramilitary formations of the interwar right, Sorel, Barrès, and Le Bon enjoyed more significant influence both on the explicit fascist movement in France and on fascist thinkers in other countries, as we will see over the remaining chapters. Chapter 3 will see Sorel's theories of violence taken up expressly by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti and Le Bon's crowd psychology by J.F.C. Fuller, while Chapter 4 covers Ernst Jünger, who credited Barrès for his conversion to nationalism and for the idea of rooted experience or lack thereof as the basis for differentiation of human types.

3. Future Warfare

This chapter concerns the development of the genre of future warfare, seeds of which we saw in Germany in Chapter 1, from Italian Futurism to the *blitzkrieg*. Early entries in this genre, such as von der Goltz' *The Nation in Arms*, tended to attribute the coming transformation to general political, cultural, and technical developments, rather than any particular one. In perhaps the first such example, the speculative novella *The Battle of Dorking*, published shortly after Germany's victory over France in 1871 and depicting a similar conquest of the United Kingdom, Germany is able to destroy the British navy with unspecified "fatal engines" to enable their ground invasion, but the complacency of the British government and military appears as the principal culprit (Chesney, 1871/1914, p. 30).

In the early twentieth century, predictions of the impending arrival of a new form of war began to attribute it to specific technologies – generally some combination of tanks, aircraft, and chemical weapons, sometimes with honourable mention to machine guns and barbed wire as the developments that made those other innovations necessary to break the stalemate. Though the fascists had no monopoly on the genre as a whole, a prominent subtype would specifically argue that the new form of war demanded a new form of decisive, hierarchical politics, compelling all nations to extend military discipline and self-sacrifice to the entire body politic or invite destruction by rivals willing to do so more fully. They also tended to implicate a broader, world-historical shift between stages as either the cause of or solution to the totalization of war.

I examine here two relatively representative thinkers of the fascist variant of the future warfare genre: Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the father of Italian Futurism and an ardent partisan of all new and prospective military technologies, and J.F.C. Fuller, among the first theorists of armoured warfare and a crucial influence on the development of the *blitzkrieg*. I show how these

theories and narratives of warfare were tethered to that world-historical transition and to a political imperative to rise above the alleged chaos and degeneracy of democracy and march in unison under unified hierarchy and command.

Technology and Violence in Futurism

Filippo Tommaso Marinetti is perhaps best remembered for his explicit glorification of war as “the world's only hygiene” in “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism” (1909/72d, p. 42) and for his intimate involvement in the nascent movement and regime of Italian fascism, whose manifesto he also authored in 1919. His works, both political and literary, persistently lionized speed, modernity, technology, and destructiveness as unambiguous social and artistic goods, celebrating even “the so-called ugliness of locomotives, trams, automobiles, and bicycles” as “the first outlines of the great Futurist aesthetic” (Marinetti, 1910/72a, p. 56). Even his own experience and injury in the first World War did not temper his enthusiasm for violence, inherited at least in part from his studies of Sorel, but more brutal and explicit than anything found in the *Reflections on Violence*. “The Founding and Manifesto of Futurism,” Marinetti's first major political work, consists of an extended anecdote about his excitement at crashing his car into a ditch the year prior, a numbered list of eleven commitments, and a final exhortation to destroy museums and libraries as temples to the past (Marinetti, 1909/72d). The numbered commitments include “to sing the love of danger,” “to exalt aggressive action,” and, the most noteworthy one, to “glorify war – the world's only hygiene – militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of freedom-bringers, beautiful ideas worth dying for, and scorn for woman” (Marinetti, 1909/72d, pp. 41-42).

Marinetti's politics, influenced by his studies of Marx, Nietzsche, Bergson, and Le Bon as well as Sorel, were fundamentally nationalistic and militaristic, but he rejected the *Associazione*

Nazionalista Italiana, an early predecessor of Mussolini's *Partito Nazionale Fascista*, as overly traditionalistic and conservative (Berghaus, 2009, pp. 25-27). He attempted instead to collaborate with anarchist groups, who he saw as kindred spirits in their similarly Sorelian approach to violence, but regarded his own futurism as a more complete version of their project; he wrote in "War, the Sole Cleanser of the World"⁶:

The anarchists are content to attack the political, juridical, and economic branches of the social tree, but we want something more... We want to dig out its deepest roots and burn them, those which are planted in the mind of man (Marinetti, 1911/2006c, p. 53)

Marinetti believed that human softness, sentimentality, and femininity – the roots of the social tree above, which he frequently scorned collectively as capital-*A Amore* – were holding the world back from embracing the man of the future, a kind of technologized *Übermensch* he called the 'multiplied man' (Marinetti, 1915/72e, p. 92). He wrote of that concept:

We must prepare for the imminent, inevitable identification of man with motor, facilitating and perfecting a constant interchange of intuition, rhythm, instinct, and metallic discipline of which the majority are wholly ignorant, which is guessed at by the most lucid spirits... We look for the creation of a nonhuman type in whom moral suffering, goodness of heart, affection, and love, those sole corrosive poisons of inexhaustible vital energy, sole interruptions of our powerful bodily electricity, will be abolished. (Marinetti, 1915/72e, p. 91)

He compared futurism to a digestive microbe, helping to clear the constipated bowels of Italian culture to permit this transformation to occur, and to "a destructive nitric acid that it would be well to throw over all political parties" (Marinetti, 1912/72f, p. 89; 1910/2006b, p. 61).

⁶ An alternate rendering of "the world's only hygiene," borrowed from the line in the Manifesto.

Marinetti's celebration and glorification of violence was not merely conceptual, but always intimately connected to real, ongoing military violence. He covered the Italo-Turkish War of 1911-12 and the First Balkan War of 1912-13 as a newspaper correspondent for *L'Intransigeant*, a prominent Boulangist and anti-Dreyfusard Paris daily (Berghaus, 2009, p. 34). He observed in Libya the first aerial bombardment in history, which he described as the most beautiful aesthetic spectacle of his life, and wrote experimental, onomatopoeic poetry inspired by the sounds of machine guns and exploding shells he had experienced during Bulgaria's capture of Edirne in 1913 (Berghaus, 2009, p. 34). After the outbreak of the first World War, Marinetti and the other futurists agitated for Italy to join the side of the Entente and reclaim their unredeemed territories from Austria-Hungary; when they finally did in 1915, he immediately volunteered, seeing some frontline engagement in the Alps and reportedly declaiming his poetry on the battlefield (Berghaus, 2009, pp. 36-37). Marinetti's war diaries reveal him rationalizing the destruction he had witnessed as a much-needed clearing of the old to make way for the new and taking solace in the teachings of Nietzsche's Zarathustra, who exalted voluntary death in battle as the best kind available (Berghaus, 2009, pp. 37-38; Nietzsche, 1891/2003, pp. 97-99). A 1917 essay, "Futurism and the Great War," claimed to have predicted the war in the Manifesto and praised its "gigantic, oft-repeated massacres" as the instrument of the impending total destruction of *Amore*, sentimentality, and "every kind of traditionalism [and] medievalism" (Marinetti, 1917/2006a, pp. 245-46).

Like Sorel, Marinetti is often read retrospectively as not really meaning *violence* in the literal sense of involving harm or aggression, but merely using the term to designate some kind of vital social energy. Günter Berghaus, the editor of Marinetti's *Critical Writings* (2006) and author of major secondary works on Marinetti's thought, claims in an endnote to "The Necessity

and Beauty of Violence” that “Marinetti’s concept of violence is based on Georges Sorel’s writings, which were highly influential in Italy...Sorel’s ‘violence’ was not an appeal to terrorist bloodshed, but rather a metaphysical principle that resembled Bergson’s *élan vital*” (Marinetti, 1910/2006b, p. 60, note 2). We saw, in the previous chapter, Sorel's own insistence that he had used the word under “high standards of sincerity, because the workers understand these words in their exact and literal sense and never indulge in any symbolic interpretation” (Sorel, 1908/99, p. 279); the case is even more difficult to make of Marinetti, whose attitudes towards and rhetorical deployments of violence remained strikingly constant before, during, and after his personal exposure to military violence in all its concrete immediacy. Marinetti wrote in “The Necessity and Beauty of Violence,” a work originally published before the war, but which he republished and remained committed to afterward:

As far as praising war is concerned, it certainly does not represent – as some have claimed – a contradiction in our ideals, not does it imply any regression to a barbaric age. To anyone who makes that sort of accusation against us, our response is that important questions of health and of moral health ought, of necessity, to be resolved precisely by having recourse to war, in preference to all other solutions. Is not the life of the nation rather like the individual, who fights against infection and high blood pressure by means of the shower and the bloodletting? Peoples too, in our view, have to follow a constant, healthy regime of heroism, and indulge themselves with glorious bloodbaths!...We know that a period of misery inevitably follows a war, whatever its outcome. Quite a short period, when the war has been won, and not as long as one would think, when it has been lost. (Marinetti, 1910/2006b, pp. 61-62)

It seems difficult to deny that Marinetti intends here to designate real, harmful violence, as

actually practised in interstate war, and this is borne out by the consistency of his work through personal experiences of armed conflict; he glorified every war he came into contact with, defending even the use of poison gas in the Second Italo-Ethiopian War as “in fact quite moral” (Ialongo, 2013, p. 412).

Going hand in hand with his glorification of violence, the sincerity of Marinetti’s commitment to fascism has also been questioned, with some scholars pointing to a 1922 interview in which he claimed to have renounced politics as proof that he was involved in the nascent fascist party only opportunistically (Ialongo, 2013, p. 394). Christine Poggi, for example, argues in *Inventing Futurism: The Art and Politics of Artificial Optimism* (2009) that although “Futurism eventually cast its lot with Fascism...the two movements cannot be collapsed into a single, ideologically coherent whole” (Poggi, 2009, pp. 231-32), because futurism understood itself as socially progressive, while fascism remained tethered to traditional images and institutions from the Roman Empire to the modern Italian monarchy; one will recognize this as the precise opposite of the reason given for why *Action Française* did not qualify. While Marinetti briefly left the *Fasci Italiani di Combattimento* and was not a member during its transformation into the *Partito Nazionale Fascista* in 1922, he rejoined shortly thereafter and pledged his allegiance to Mussolini upon the latter's appointment as Prime Minister (Ialongo, 2013, p. 395). Marinetti publicly disagreed with certain fascist policies, such as the Pact of Steel with Nazi Germany in 1939, but went to great lengths to accommodate his futurism to state doctrines and goals, toning down the republicanism and anticlericalism of his early work in a largely successful attempt to remain in Mussolini’s good graces (Ialongo, 2013, p. 399). After the fall of France, Marinetti went as far as to argue publicly that Hitler was himself a futurist and that his quick victory was owed to his skilful application of the futurist principles of war

(Ialongo, 2013, p. 400).

Marinetti's central relevance to the conceptual continuity at hand is his early and enthusiastic, if not entirely prescient, contribution to budding narratives of future warfare and its political consequences. Early in the First World War, he published "a futurist vision-hypothesis" of the consequences of electricity for future warfare, arguing that it would finally unleash the multiplied man (Marinetti, 1915/72c). It contained a flurry of feverish predictions, from the use of electricity to stimulate plant growth and end hunger to that of "pneumatic machines" to "thin...out the enemy's atmosphere" (Marinetti, 1915/72c, pp. 105-07). Illness would be decisively quarantined and eventually eliminated, "the sick and weak, crushed, crumbled, pulverized by the vehement wheels of intense civilization" (Marinetti, 1915/72c, p. 108). Armies of "steel elephants, bristling with shiny trunks pointed at the enemy" would be "easily driven by mechanics perched high up, like mahouts, in their glassed-in cabins"; the mechanics themselves would be powered by electricity to prevent them from needing to sleep (Marinetti, 1915/72c, p. 107).

Marinetti would return to the future warfare genre in 1929 as part of a propaganda push around Mussolini's modernization of the air force, in the manifesto of *Aeropittura*, a futurist sub-movement dedicated to painting from aerial perspective, as well as an article titled simple "*La guerra futura*" (Ialongo, 2013, pp. 402-03). He argued that flight would finally complete the transformation, begun by electricity and the automobile, from the static frames of time and space to "the new aesthetic of speed," as he had called it when he initially proclaimed that the transformation was underway (Marinetti, 1915/72b, p. 81). With respect to future warfare in particular, he argued that this transformation would be effected by the use of air power to break the inevitable stalemate of trench warfare on the ground, overcoming space with speed (Ialongo,

2013, p. 403).

Some of Marinetti's predictions, in hindsight, were quite fanciful, but elements thereof were surprisingly prophetic. "Electrical War" was written and published well before the first experimental tanks saw their debut in the Somme Offensive of 1916; tanks, of course, do not attack the enemy's atmosphere, and their operators need to sleep, but Marinetti's 'steel elephants' otherwise bear a striking resemblance. Similarly, he was quite wrong about trench tactics being a permanent feature of ground warfare, but on broadly the right track with respect to the rising importance of air power. Future warfare, as a genre, would be taken up through the interwar period by authors with military backgrounds and training, but who produced sometimes equally bizarre predictions of the culminations of ongoing trends. The following section will discuss the military and political thought of British armoured warfare theorist and esoteric fascist J.F.C Fuller, in which future warfare appears as the material precipitant of the new age of totalitarian politics.

Future Warfare on the Ground

While Italian military thought fixated on aircraft as the solution to the unique challenges of their mountainous borders, theorists in the United Kingdom focused instead on the tank as the determinative weapon of the future. Interwar theories of mechanized ground warfare, like those of war in the air, emphasized and valorized speed, youth, adaptability, and decisiveness, arguing that the British military had become ossified, conservative, and resistant to reforms of increasingly pressing necessity. Following the armistice of 1918, the United Kingdom rapidly demobilized, downsizing by nine-tenths within the first two years and cutting military spending in every subsequent year until 1932 (MacIsaac, 1986, p. 599). Strategic planning during this period was conducted under the 'Ten Year Rule', which stipulated that planning in any particular

year should assume that they would not be involved in a major war over the following ten, discouraging the innovation and experimentation that had characterized the later years of the First World War. It was against this background that the United Kingdom's foremost military theorist of the interwar period, Major General J.F.C. Fuller, arose and worked.

Fuller and fellow British armour pioneer Captain B.H. Liddell Hart were described in 1933 by Major General Ernest Swinton, a crucial pioneer of early armour in the First World War and coiner of the codename 'tank' for the then-secret vehicles involved, as "sort of Young Turks," though Fuller was by then fifty-five years of age (quoted in Reid, 2009, p. 147). A career officer, who had fought in the Second Boer War and First World War as an infantry subaltern, Fuller took an early interest in the tank corps and its training, organization, and doctrine, writing a series of tactical manuals and a much-heralded but ultimately unused proposal for a large-scale armoured assault to break the trench stalemate, called Plan 1919, before eventually turning to grander questions of strategy and of war as a political instrument. He spent the mid-1920s lecturing at the Camberley Staff College, where he assigned readings ranging from Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* to Le Bon's *The Crowd* to presumably befuddled classes of junior army officers (Trythall, 1977, p. 103).

Fuller was given command of the British Army's experimental mechanized force⁷ in 1931, but resigned when the General Staff refused even to hear his suggestions for reforming its organization (Trythall, 2002, p. 126). He was reassigned and withdrew his resignation, but spent the ignominious final years of his military career bouncing between unsatisfying staff appointments, ultimately making himself *persona non grata* when he refused an assignment to

⁷ Trythall says that this was the capital-letter Experimental Mechanized Force, which other sources indicate was dissolved in 1929 (e.g. Harris, 1995, p. 221); I have left it uncapitalized here to indicate that it was *an* experimental mechanized force, whether or not it was *the* E.M.F.

Bombay on the grounds that he lacked confidence in the Indian government, which was considered unacceptably political (Trythall, 2002, p. 127). Following his subsequent retirement, Fuller dedicated more of his time to writing both theoretical and editorial works and involved himself with the British Union of Fascists, where he drafted defense policy and was regarded as the clear choice for the ministry thereof in the event that they took power (Trythall, 1977, pp. 181-82). Fuller was also deeply committed to mysticism and the occult, corresponding and collaborating with Aleister Crowley in his youth and writing extensively on esoteric topics throughout his life (Trythall, 1977, p. 20).

Fuller is remembered principally for his influential account of the principles of war, developed through the 1910s and -20s, which have since become entrenched in the canon of military theory and still feature in officer training syllabi in the United Kingdom, United States, and elsewhere. He presented several slightly modified versions, but a broadly authoritative one appeared in *The Foundations of the Science of War* (1926/93), which blended Fuller's military and mystical interests into nine principles, organized into multiple overlapping sets of three with alleged mystical significance: direction, concentration, distribution, determination, surprise, endurance, mobility, offensive action, and security (Fuller, 1926/93, p. 221). His internal taxonomies of those principles included division into mental, moral, and physical spheres, corresponding to the first, second, and third blocks of three principles each, and into the categories of control, pressure, and resistance, corresponding to the first, second, and third principles of each block of three.

Military forces not organized according to the law of threes, for Fuller, inevitably became decadent and weaker for it. Ancient Greek warfare, he argued, observed a properly trinitarian distinction between heavy infantry, light infantry, and cavalry, while the early medieval variety

suffered decadence and ineffectiveness for its sole reliance on cavalry (Fuller, 1926/93, pp. 83-84). Eventually, he continued, gunpowder enabled the re-emergence of infantry and the rise of artillery, re-establishing a healthy trinity, but the continued ascendance of those other two elements eventually rendered cavalry immobile and hence obsolete; “consequently, tactics have entered a decadent stage, which was very noticeable during the Great War of 1914-18, for it was a war of tactical mediocrity” (Fuller, 1926/93, p. 84).

The early Fuller differs from some of the other theorists in the traditions under examination in that he distinguished clearly between war and peace and explicitly upheld the supremacy of the political over military objectives, citing Clausewitz’ continuity thesis, but there are significant continuities in other areas of his thought. He qualified his endorsement of the continuity thesis with the argument that both military and civil instruments should ideally be commanded by the same person, an autocratic *generalissimo* along the lines of Alexander, Caesar, Frederick the Great, or Napoleon, echoing von der Goltz’s case for uniting military and civil command in the Kaiser; he expressly cited von der Goltz on this point in a later work (Fuller, 1926/93, p. 87; 1932/69, p. 225). Fuller further criticized democracy in general for impeding the appointment and acceptance of such a figure, blaming the quagmire of the First World War on the Entente’s failure to centralize command; he wrote:

Though democratic government is government by mediocrity, it is useless kicking against these pricks, therefore it is useless suggesting autocratic control of the instrument, for this would necessitate the selection of a genius as the controller, and nothing a democracy hates and fears more than genius; to the democrat genius is a Satanic force...It is not possible to expect careful and progressive war preparation on the part of any democratic government. The masses do not like war, for they are cowardly; therefore their political

representatives shun its preparation. (Fuller, 1926/93, p. 89)

Fuller also emphasized the priority of the nation and its will over the government in initiating and sustaining war and the resultant imperative to target it directly, as we have seen from numerous relevant military theorists in Germany and elsewhere, and held that war was the ultimate test of racial character and spirit, though he made a point of denying that it forged or enhanced that spirit; rather, war *revealed* “the great static and foundational racial spirit... and a nation, according to its character, stands or falls” (Fuller, 1926/93, p. 71). A lifelong Germanophile, who had gone by Fritz rather than Frederick up to the First World War (Trythall, 1977, p. 1), Fuller's partial absorption of the *Völkisch* ideology prevalent in Germany during his late nineteenth-century upbringing is apparent in the blending of mystical faith in an inherent racial spirit with scientific certainty about its characteristics and tendencies.

In his later works, Fuller turned from transhistorical principles of war to the historical development and interrelation of military technologies and political forms. In *The Dragon's Teeth: A Study of War and Peace* (1932), published shortly before his retirement, and through several subsequent works he developed a theory of history according to which geographic, economic, and technological factors determined civilizational form, which in turn determined the form of war characteristic of each era and context. Gunpowder, he argued, had brought about the age of absolutism and of the ascendance of wealth over faith, which led to the professionalization of war in the *Kabinettskrieg* as the population became increasingly occupied with commerce rather than agriculture and hence less available to be mustered into military service on the medieval levy model (Fuller, 1932, p. 155). Following that, the steam engine led to democracy, but the peculiarities of democracy – to wit, the cowardly and inertial character of crowds and the rising importance of their opinions – had thus far inhibited the progression to a characteristically

democratic form of war (Fuller, 1932, p. 209).

Fuller at this point expressly denied that mass mobilization could constitute or precipitate such a form, comparing Napoleon's conscript armies to Mongol hordes and arguing that large armies, being impossible for a single commander to control, tended inevitably toward brutality, destruction, and the direction of war to total annihilation of the enemy instead of its proper object, the creation of a better peace (Fuller, 1932, pp. 209-10). He located both Napoleon and Clausewitz – of whom Fuller's evaluation varied widely over the course of otherwise largely continuous works – as artefacts of the pre-democratic period whose continued prominence in military thought, in contravention of the usual laws of history and in combination with the deleterious effects of democracy in particular, had led to the absolutization of the First World War and all the devastation and suffering which ensued (Fuller, 1932, pp. 210-11). Where military and political leaders should have governed themselves scientifically and accepted the best lessons and technologies of the new age, they attempted instead merely to clobber their enemies with larger and larger hordes which, "like swarms of locusts...not only destroyed the enemy's country but devoured the resources of their own" (Fuller, 1932, p. 212). Fuller would later temper his evaluation of Clausewitz as a thinker, but remained constant in reading his work as conceptually valorizing and empirically precipitating intensification and absolutization over convention and containment, calling *On War* "one of the great apocalyptic books in history" and its teachings "a kind of 'Spartanism' which turns the State into a military machine instead of merely providing it with a protective servant" (Fuller, 1936, pp. 101-03).

Fuller's solution, here in *The Dragon's Teeth* as elsewhere, was a small, scientifically ordered and disciplined force based around the newest technologies – most centrally, tanks, aircraft, and chemical weapons – and led by an unrestricted commander of genius, which could

conduct itself with maximal range and mobility and minimal collateral damage. Invoking the example of Alexander the Great, to whose conquests and leadership he dedicated another full volume in 1958, Fuller argued that such a force would allow “a country the size of Belgium...to rout an army similar to the one Germany possessed in 1914, or 1918, and drive it over the Urals” (Fuller, 1932, p. 212).

The appearance of the Urals in that otherwise nonspecific example reveals Fuller’s most persistent fear, concern, and civilizational framing, which would increasingly dominate his work after retirement: the threat posed by Russia to all of Europe, of which they were “never an essential but rather an accidental part” (Fuller, 1932, p. 185). Russia, for Fuller, represented a deadly combination of the revolt against materialism – which he saw as an epochal movement underway in different national guises worldwide, including Bolshevism and Italian fascism – and the essential “Asiatic impulse...which for thousands of years has driven wave after wave of Asiatics over the borderlands of Europe” (Fuller, 1932, p. 25; p. 185). As early as 1923’s *The Reformation of War*, Fuller railed against the “red slug of Bolshevism” and the impending westward march of “the Slavonic races” (1923, pp. 268, 272); in *The First of the League Wars* (1936), he would register his prediction that the Second League War – the first being Italy’s 1935 invasion of Ethiopia – would consist of an alliance of Germany, the United Kingdom, and like-minded nations of western and central Europe against the Soviet Union, possibly aided by the ever-suspect France.

Fuller became increasingly preoccupied not only with the Russian threat itself, but with the inability of democracy to adequately confront it; where his earlier works had accepted democracy as a *fait accompli* in the British context, decadent and distasteful but immovably lodged in their national consciousness, those written near and after his retirement were more and

more adamant that democracy and absolute warfare were inseparable and that fundamental political change could not be avoided or even delayed. He wrote in *War and Western Civilization* (1932/69):

[Strategic bombing with chemical weapons], a method of endowed with the power of bringing a war to a rapid termination and thereby vastly reducing the destructive nature of war, was in its turn anathematised. Nations refused to see that if they would continue to practise absolute warfare, that is, if they refused to shake off the democratic idea of 'the nation in arms,' then to attack the war-workers, whether they were men or women, was as justifiable an act as to attack the fighting-men themselves... If two men go into partnership, one making a knife for the other to cut somebody else's throat with, by the law of every civilized country both will be convicted of murder. (Fuller, 1932/69, pp. 236-37)

We see a curious double move here: on the one hand, it is the fault of democracy that war has become so destructive and that it is now necessary to attack civilians directly; on the other, it is the fault of democracy that nations refuse to embrace the superior, scientific, and unambiguously moral strategy of attacking civilians directly. It is also notable that absolute war appears here as an essentially democratic idea, where in *The Dragon's Teeth* Fuller had presented it as a consequence of the *inability* of democracy to produce a characteristic form of war.

Totalitarianism and the New Discipline

The coming war with Russia, Fuller believed, would finally force those reticent nations to accept the march of civilizational progress already underway in the East. He wrote:

Strange as it may seem, I believe that the aeroplane, more so than anything else, will compel all democratic countries, certainly in Europe, to adopt in one form or another the

totalitarian politics. That, whilst in the last century, war was the instrument of politics, today politics have become the instrument of war, and will remain so until in their totality European nations cultivate a new discipline...Instead of anathematising they should learn from their totalitarian opponents; for though their system of politics appears outwardly to be the apotheosis of force, within it palpitates a new spirituality – the control of human instincts and their compulsion under will to assume disciplined form. (Fuller, 1932/69, pp. 170-71)

The totalitarian ‘new discipline’ Fuller urged the nations of Europe to cultivate would permit them to withstand the moral damage of strategic bombing, if not the immediate material effects, as a well-drilled musket regiment of a past era remaining in formation under fire. This would engender in turn a new form of warfare, yet to be conceived, and continue the dialectical progression of political and military form. He would remain confident of the effectiveness of strategic bombing and the accordant need for total civil discipline even after personally observing the bombardment of Zaragoza in the Spanish Civil War and remarking on the surprising lack of damage and disorder (Reid, 1987, p. 191).

When the Second World War finally broke out, along lines very different from what he had envisioned, Fuller’s fascist and pro-German sympathies came into conflict with his allegiance to the British Empire. He remained convinced that western European unity against the Soviet Union was the key to their collective salvation and that Germany, France, and the United Kingdom had all erred gravely in fighting amongst themselves. In *Machine Warfare* (1942), he praised the wisdom of France’s capitulation to Germany, arguing that the static defensive strategy of the Maginot Line was doomed to failure against a mechanized army and that surrender had averted unnecessary bloodshed (Fuller, 1942, p. 143). The text consistently refers

to the British in the third person, usually in the context of criticizing their shortsightedness, and frames issues in terms of the obstacles and dilemmas facing ‘Herr Hitler’; in the most extreme example of both tendencies, he argued that Hitler must “master the Channel or...starve the Channel-holders” in order for history to advance (Fuller, 1942, p. 128).

Fuller quoted extensively from Hermann Rauschning’s *Hitler Speaks*, a text now regarded as being of questionable provenance, but which Fuller argued was essential to understanding the situation of 1942; “though that writer is a hostile witness,” Fuller wrote, “his picture of Hitler as General, or rather as War Prophet, shows him to be one of the most original soldiers in all history” (Fuller, 1942, p. 49). Fuller summarized Hitler’s impact as an actualization of the teachings of Ludendorff, who

took Clausewitz and inverted him, as in his day Karl Marx had inverted Hegel, who was also Clausewitz’s spiritual father. Instead of war being considered the instrument of politics, politics was now looked upon as the instrument of war; because, as the argument ran, both war and politics are subservient to the people’s instinct for self-preservation; therefore it follows that war is the supreme expression of the people’s will to live. (Fuller, 1942, p. 48)

Fuller approvingly quoted Rauschning’s Hitler on his alleged plans to win the war against France in advance with revolutionary propaganda and sabotage actions by both German infiltrators and French sympathizers, weakening public morale for a coordinated *coup de grâce* that would take only a few hours to deliver and secure victory. Fuller continued:

Such operations would not only reduce casualties, but increase the number of prisoners, and so provide their captors with an ever-increasing supply of labour. Hitler’s physical outlook on war was therefore that of a slave hunt. It was eminently common sense and

incidentally humane. (Fuller, 1942, p. 52)

Later in the text, Fuller further exalted Hitler as “a man possessed by a world idea,” who would bring about the new age of totalitarianism as Napoleon brought about the age of democracy (Fuller, 1942, p. 127).

Fuller ended *Machine Warfare* with a list of seventy dicta he regarded as “facts experience and reflection have revealed to us,” which paint the clearest and darkest picture in his oeuvre of the new age of total war and its ramifications for politics (Fuller, 1942, p. 177). The format – aphorisms of three to six lines, in no particular conceptual continuity – lends itself to claims and implications at which he might have balked in the body of the text, where the reader might expect them to be elaborated upon or justified by argument. Many of them are simply pithy restatements of positions he had taken elsewhere or complaints about popular and organizational resistance to military-technological progress, but they are intermingled with new claims and corollaries which, taken together, reveal a great deal about the presuppositions Fuller both makes himself and imputes to his readership.

One instructive set of maxims shows us Fuller’s vision of conflict and enmity as the basis for ingroup solidarity and spiritual actualization:

(16) Nothing unifies a nation more rapidly than a common danger. Religious differences, political bickerings, economic interests and all those things which separate a nation in peace dwindle into insignificance when the Ship of State plunges towards the rocks.

(17) Security is the antithesis of heroism. The wild boar in the jungle is a noble beast, yet the pig in its sty is utterly ignoble. Its one thought is swill and its sole end is bacon. Look at Napoleonic and Bourgeois France! (Fuller, 1942, p. 178)

We are to see, presumably, the might and glory of Napoleonic France as they faced down pan-

European coalitions, cast against the degeneration and decay which the French thinkers we saw earlier also identified in the Third Republic. Another set shows Fuller's belief in the fundamental inapplicability of principles of justice or morality to warfare:

(27) All warfare is retaliation, all acts of war are reprisals, and everything belonging or appertaining to the enemy is a legitimate military objective. Nevertheless they vary in importance, and the test of generalship lies in their choice.

(28) Good and evil things are for parsons. Actual and tangible things are for soldiers.

Therefore in heaven's name let us cease mixing theology with strategy and politics with tactics. Again, let the people and their leaders heed this advice. (Fuller, 1942, pp. 179-80)

That injunction is all the more telling for its inclusion in a list and, even more broadly, a body of work in which military and political factors so readily influence and even determine one another, as we see in the following discontinuous set:

(26) There is such a thing as discipline. Once it was the perquisite of armies, to-day, in this age of total war, it is the backbone of nations. The first sign of national discipline is not that the people obey, but that they cease to command.

[...]

(42) A virile nation demands leadership and not grandmothership. Therefore we are tired of the Valour of Ignorance, therefore we want the Sword of Truth. Our needs are deeds and not screeds. We are sick to death of the hire-purchase system of buying our loyalty in monthly instalments. We ask for marching orders. (Fuller, 1942, pp. 179-81).

These maxims, though they do not quite spell it out, seem to allude to Fuller's newfound belief in the urgent necessity of totalitarian politics. As the people must cease to command, so must the state cease to cater to them; they need not the illusion of self-government, but to be rightly

guided and instructed by an orderly, hierarchical state capable of organizing their collective efforts toward aggressive action and moral resilience.

The most extreme claim in the section, found nowhere else in Fuller's corpus, is the following, presented near the beginning of the list:

(5) In total war a nation can only be fully organized when all freedom is exorcised. Its blue-print is that of a factory under martial law. Logically it follows that all who are incapable of fighting or working should be liquidated. (Fuller, 1942, p. 177)

It was for this claim that Fuller's largely sympathetic biographer, Anthony John Trythall, called it "almost unbelievable that the publication of such a book was allowed" (Trythall, 1977, p. 223); Trythall claimed elsewhere that only Winston Churchill's personal intervention had prevented Fuller's imprisonment under Defence Regulation 18b, which suspended *habeas corpus* for suspected Nazi sympathizers in the United Kingdom (Trythall, 2002, p. 130).

Fuller had previously expressed concerns about the "differential birth-rate" of productive and degenerate stocks in Britain and lamented that "according to the morality of to-day, people, however inefficient and worthless, must not be allowed to starve, they must not be compelled to work, for this would be an infringement of the liberty of the subject" (Fuller, 1932, pp. 12-13). We see here, once again, the move from annoyed resignation to the conditions of democracy to an urgent imperative to overturn them. The younger Fuller of *The Dragon's Teeth* argued for sterilization of the allegedly unfit, restriction of the franchise to the employed, and compulsory physical exercises as a condition of unemployment benefits, but believed that even these lesser measures would be impossible "until civilization founders, and in its shipwreck sweeps away with it government of the people, by the people, for the people, which is, and ever has been, the dry rot of nations" (Fuller, 1932, p. 15); the elder Fuller of *Machine Warfare* believed that

moment to be at hand, and that it called for even more than he had predicted.

Fuller's impact and influence with respect to politics was largely limited to the British Union of Fascists, whose membership peaked at around forty to fifty thousand after its endorsement by the *Daily Mail* in 1934 (Linehan, 2000, p. 160). He wrote extensively for BUF-affiliated periodicals such as *Blackshirt*, the *Patriot*, and *Fascist Quarterly*, sometimes rehashing arguments from his books and sometimes going on new tangents about the sordid Jewish conspiracies he saw lurking behind cultural phenomena from psychoanalysis to erotic literature (Trythall, 1977, p. 184; Linehan, 2000, pp. 50, 236 note 94). As we have seen in part, Fuller's influence in military thought extended much further both chronologically and geographically. His principles of war remain standard and his theories of armoured warfare, while not well received in his native Britain, enjoyed a warmer reception in Germany. He was credited repeatedly throughout Heinz Guderian's *Achtung – Panzer!*, arguably the central theoretical work underlying German armoured strategy and tactics in the Second World War (Guderian, 1937/92, pp. 74, 111, 141, 191), and was a personal guest at Hitler's fiftieth birthday celebration in 1939; Fuller claimed in *Machine Warfare* that, following a parade of Germany's newly mechanized army, Hitler had asked him if he was "pleased with [his] children," to which he had replied, "Your Excellency, they have grown up so quickly that I no longer recognize them" (Fuller, 1942, p. 14). Many of his journalistic works were translated and republished in Nazi outlets (Trythall, 1977, p. 184).

After the war, Fuller was compelled to tone down the ideological components of his works and focused on military history. He published a much-heralded, revised, and updated version of his voluminous *Decisive Battles: Their Influence on History and Civilisation* (1940) in the mid-1950s, with most of the antisemitism carefully excised, his praise for Hitler tempered,

and his attacks on democracy in general replaced with milder versions targeted at parliamentary systems in particular (Trythall, 1977, p. 245). Nevertheless, Fuller remained firm in his belief that the Allies should have aligned with Germany against the Soviet Union and that failing to do so had compromised, perhaps fatally, their position in the early Cold War era; he wrote to Liddell Hart in 1956 that, “so far as I can see, our only possible hope is that Germany will produce another Hitler, and that next time we back him” (quoted in Trythall, 1977, p. 246).

On the whole, what we find in Fuller’s work combines a number of tropes common in the trajectories of thought under examination here, but in a new and unique way. He subscribed to a philosophy of history featuring distinct and determinative stages, two further versions of which we will see in Chapter 4, which are themselves subject to mystical, transhistorical laws, with the unique variation that some stages were represented as progressive and some as decadent according to whether they obey the mystical law of threes in their combined-arms organization. This allowed him to make a two-pronged argument under which democracy had to go for both historical and transhistorical reasons: it was to be replaced imminently by totalitarianism, on the one hand, and enabled the cowardice of the crowd to defy the law of threes, restrict military genius, and absolutize war, on the other. Fuller is unique among the thinkers investigated here in that he took war to have approached or entered a state of totalization, but saw that situation as positively *remediable* by means of decisive, hierarchical government, where others such as Ludendorff took it to require the same for its ongoing management. Total war appeared as a side effect of the fundamental degeneracy of the democratic period of history, to be treated in the subsequent one, rather than a component or instrument of the transition itself.

We see in this totalitarian subgenre of future warfare the intermingling and extension of the narratives of the absolutization of war from Chapter 1 with the influences of Sorel and Le

Bon from Chapter 2. Like the former, it identifies a fundamental change in military practices and predicts the consequences thereof, but it goes further in demanding not that the military should be enjoy autonomy from the political, but rather that the military and the political should be merged into a single decisive and disciplined unity – in a word, the ‘Spartanism’ that the younger Fuller had decried in Clausewitz (Fuller, 1936, pp. 103). The next and final chapter will discuss two further theories bearing many of the same marks: Ernst Jünger’s account of the First World War as a cataclysmic transition of historical stages and the birthplace of the new, totalitarian man, and Carl Schmitt’s spatio-legal theory of the absolutization of war as a consequence of the age of maritime hegemony.

4. Empires and *Großräume*

The final cases to be examined here are those of Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt, whose parallel trajectories of thought from 1918 to the postwar period may reveal something crucial about the mutability of fascist ideology and its limitations. Both Jünger and Schmitt are traditionally sorted with the conservative revolutionaries of the Weimar era, as distinct from the national socialists, though the exact typology of interwar far-right thought in Germany is hotly debated (Woods, 1996, p. 3; Mosse, 1964, p. 283; Bendersky, 1987). They were both undeniably products of the same generation as the conservative revolution: born in the final years of the nineteenth century – Schmitt in 1888, Jünger in 1895 – shaped by adolescent experience of the First World War, and determined to bring German nationalism past its Wilhelmine limitations and into the twentieth century. This section examines their first forays into political writing in the early Weimar period, their theoretical adaptations to the conditions of the Nazi regime, and their revisions and reactions following the downfall of that regime in 1945.

We find in the work of these two authors the culmination of the various trajectories of the previous chapters. Though they were not military theorists, both were concerned with the imminent or ongoing totalization of war, as we saw in Chapter 1, and with its causes and consequences. Both blame, in one way or another, the weakness and decadence of liberalism and parliamentary government which was so central a concern to the French theorists of Chapter 2, and Jünger expressly takes up Barrès' notion of nationhood as grounded in concrete experience. Finally, both thinkers link both of those lines of thought to an imminent or ongoing transition between world-historical stages, as we saw in Chapter 3.

Jünger and the *Fronterlebnis*

Of the two, only Jünger saw actual combat in the First World War; Schmitt deferred his

enlistment until he completed law school in 1915, suffered a back injury during basic training, and spent the remainder of the war at a comfortable administrative post which afforded him ample leave to study and lecture (Bendersky, 1983, pp. 15-16). Jünger had run away from home to join the French Foreign Legion in 1913, in an apparent act of rebellion against his bourgeois family and upbringing; he was released, following his father's intervention, on the grounds that he had illegally joined as a minor, but volunteered again for German service upon the outbreak of the First World War shortly thereafter (Bullock, 1992, pp. 21-22). He distinguished himself forcefully and immediately, receiving both the Iron Cross First Class and the *Pour le Mérite*, two of Germany's highest military honours; he was both the youngest and last recipient of the military *Pour le Mérite*, and among a small handful of junior officers so honoured (Marlantes, 2016). Wounded repeatedly, he chose each time to return to the front rather than receive an honourable discharge and was chosen in turn for an experimental stormtrooper division near the end of the war (Marlantes, 2016).

Jünger self-published his war diaries as *In Stahlgewittern*, or *Storm of Steel*, to prompt acclaim in 1920 (Bullock, 1992, p. 22). His output in the early Weimar period was principally literary, following *Storm of Steel* with *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* [*War as Inner Experience*⁸] (1922/26), a step-by-step guide to interpreting the war experience in the first person, and *Sturm* (1923/2015), a fictionalization of his trench experience and reflections on the prospects of art under the conditions of extreme violence. He would not turn to explicitly political work until 1930, but his early works are essential to understanding the role and place of violence in his worldview.

⁸ *Der Kampf*, in this title, is variously rendered as *War*, *Combat*, *Battle*, and *The Fight*; there is, to my knowledge, no existing English edition to follow. I have used *War*, but it should be noted that Jünger's use of *Kampf* rather than *Krieg* is likely intended to emphasize the subjective experience of war, rather than the fullness of the social phenomenon.

These early works are sometimes described as depicting the individual experience of violence in war “directly and dispassionately” or in “a factual, nonjudgmental, noneditorialized way” (Pan, 2015, p. xv; Marlantes, 2016). This may be owed in part to Jünger's 1934 revision of *Storm of Steel*, which excised much of its more explicit bloodlust and nationalism and which seems to have been the basis for the Penguin Books edition now dominant in English-language scholarship, but is plainly untrue of the original German and of the first English translation in 1929. I use the latter here, for its preservation of the rhetoric of the earlier version, despite some faults of translation.

Jünger began *Storm of Steel* with the enthusiasm he and his fellows felt on arriving to the front in December of 1918:

We had grown up in a material age, and in each one of us there was the yearning for great experience, such as we had never known. The war had entered into us like wine. We had set out in a rain of flowers to seek the death of heroes. The war was our dream of greatness, power, and glory. It was a man's work, a duel on fields whose flowers would be stained with blood. There is no lovelier death in the world...anything rather than stay at home, anything to make one with the rest... (Jünger, 1920/96, p. 1; ellipses in original)

Their expectations were quickly dashed by their first experience of artillery bombardment and the sight of a dying soldier being carried into a Red Cross facility, but the remainder of the book reflects Jünger's determination to find space for glory and heroism amid the muck, rather than the resignation to or genuinely dispassionate depiction of those conditions found in secondary interpretations such as Pan's and Marlantes'. Even Jünger's immediate reaction to the dying soldier reveals the mystical dimension he attributes to the experience of violence:

The war had shown its claws and torn off its pleasant mask. It was so mysterious, so

impersonal. One had scarcely given a thought to the enemy carrying on his secret and malignant existence somewhere behind. The impression of something arising entirely from beyond the pale of experience was so strange that it was difficult to see the connection of things. It was like a ghost at noon. (Jünger, 1920/96, p. 3)

Jünger's depiction of the anonymity and depersonalization of modern industrial warfare is one of the principal elements for which *Storm of Steel* achieved literary acclaim, but appears in the text as the background against which his search for meaning, the real focus of the text, is to be conducted. Ultimately, as we will see, Jünger took that very anonymity to be a crucial precondition of the birth in the trenches of a new kind of man and the herald of a new age.

The climax and longest chapter of *Storm of Steel* is the Spring Offensive of 1918, also known as the Ludendorff Offensive after its principal architect, during which Jünger and the soldiers under his command discovered the new man within themselves. He wrote:

The roar of the battle had become so terrific that we were scarcely in our right senses. The nerves could register fear no longer. Every one was mad and beyond reckoning; we had gone over the edge of the world into superhuman perspectives. Death had lost its meaning and the will to live was made over to our country; and hence every one was blind and regardless of his personal fate... The turmoil of our feelings was called forth by rage, alcohol, and the thirst for blood as we stepped out, heavily and yet irresistibly, for the enemy's lines. And therewith beat the pulse of heroism – the godlike and the bestial inextricably mingled... The overpowering desire to kill winged my feet. Rage squeezed bitter tears from my eyes. (Jünger, 1920/96, pp. 254-55)

Though Jünger's diplomatic preface to the English edition emphasized his respect and admiration for the English soldiers he had faced, calling them "not only the most formidable but

the manliest and most chivalrous” among the Allies (Jünger, 1920/96, pp. xii-xiii), much of his chapter on the Spring Offensive is dedicated to the bloodlust unleashed in the passage above and the many ways he and his fellows took it out on their English opponents. He wrote, in one striking but representative passage:

The lower trench...seethed with English. I fired off my cartridges so fiercely that I pressed the trigger ten times at least after the last shot. A man next me threw bombs among them as they scrambled to get away. A dish-shaped helmet was sent spinning high in the air.

A minute saw the battle ended. The English jumped out of their trenches and fled by battalions across the open. They stumbled over each other as they fled, and in a few seconds the ground was strewn with dead. Only a few got away.

A N.C.O. was standing near me gaping at this spectacle with mouth agog. I snatched the rifle from his hands in an uncontrollable need to shoot. My first victim was an Englishman whom I shot between two Germans at 150 metres. He snapped together like the blade of a knife and lay still. (Jünger, 1920/96, p. 258)

These two sentiments – esteem and bloodthirstiness – seem *prima facie* contradictory but, as we will shortly see, for Jünger were quite compatible.

Jünger split a portion of his war diaries off into a separate work, published as *Das Wäldchen 125.: Ein Chronik aus den Grabenkämpfen 1918* [*Copse 125: A Chronicle from the Trench Warfare of 1918*], in which he broaches the sort of contemplation and reflection on his place in the war whose absence had been so conspicuous in *Storm of Steel*. *Copse 125* depicted the events of the summer of 1918, including some combat but also several weeks of idleness, which afforded him and his fellows the opportunity to ruminate on their circumstances. He

wrote, in the preface, of his concerns at the time:

No – war is no material matter. There are higher realities to which it is subject. When two civilized peoples confront one another, there is more in the scales than explosives and steel. All that either holds of any weight is in the balance...The stake rises with the frightfulness of the battlefield on which it has to be upheld. How could we have found the strength for an achievement whose meaning was not plain to us? Hence the war is more to us than a proud and gallant memory. It is a spiritual experience too; and a realization of a strength of soul of which otherwise we should have had no knowledge. It is the point of focus in our lives. It decided our whole further development. (Jünger, 1925/2003, pp. ix-x)

From the very beginning of the body of the text, the spirit of courage and adventure that had been the sole focus of *Storm of Steel* is linked intimately to racial nationalism and the martial vigour of the *Volk*. Jünger claimed in his later diaries of the Second World War, published as *Strahlungen [Emanations]* (1962), to have come under Barrès influence with respect to the unmediated experience of nationhood in the early 1920s, and seems to have combined it with the war experience with which he was already concerned (Jünger, 1962, pp. 448-49). The adventurous spirits, baptized in the trenches as the men of the future, arrived at the centre of Jünger's lens in *Copse 125* and would remain there through his works of explicit political theory in the later Weimar period and beyond. "I think I shall be able after the war to pick out these fellows," he wrote, "or the members of the younger generation who have the same stuff in them, infallibly from a crowd of any size" (Jünger, 1925/2003, p. 10).

An encounter with a squadron of pilots at a celebratory dinner provided Jünger with further opportunity to reflect on the new human type; though he was an infantry officer and

committed to the idea that martial spirit remained ultimately decisive over material factors in war, he saw in aircraft and tanks two additional vectors toward the new man. Jünger distinguished between two types among the airmen:

They are like flame kindled from the mighty army that lies before them under continual fire. They are a band picked out by the impulse towards ever bolder and more exciting forms of war. There are cavalymen among them, hard-riding fellows whose blasé features stare in goggles... One can see in them that they belong to a race that has had mounted warfare in its blood for centuries, and that they look down upon all this business of motor transport and automatic guns as something not in their line. But there are others, too, who have been reared in the centres of modern industry and are true representatives of the new century. Young fellows of twenty whose faces have the imprint of hard fact. The ardour of speed, the tempo of the manufactory, the poetry of steel and reinforced concrete have been the natural surroundings of their childhood... Technical science is a joke to them. They have their aeroplanes under control as a bushman his boomerang. They are thoroughly accustomed to the enhancement of life by the machine. (Jünger, 1925/2003, pp. 87-88)

We will see shortly Jünger's explicit philosophy of history and the broader transition between stages to which this progression of types is central. In this early period of his work, though, the cavalryman and the factory man alike appear as avatars of racial spirit and of the natural impulse of humanity to conflict. He reflected specifically on the latter in an earlier passage from *Copse* 125:

To-morrow, perhaps, men of two civilized countries will meet in battle on this strip of land; and the proof that it must happen is that it does. For otherwise we should have

stopped it long ago, as we have stopped sacrificing to Wotan, torturing on the rack, burning witches, or grasping red-hot iron to invoke the decision of God. But we have never stopped it and never shall, because war is not the law of one age or civilization, but of eternal nature itself, out of which every civilization proceeds, and into which it must sink again if it is not hard enough to withstand the iron ordeal. (Jünger, 1925/2003, p. 56)

I take these passages together to get to the heart of Jünger's personal narrative in both *Storm of Steel* and *Copse 125*, though more explicitly articulated in the latter, which proceeds in more or less dialectical fashion. He departed for and arrived at war with an archaic and idealized picture in his mind of what it would entail; discovered, at first, the terrible reality of machine warfare; and realized at last that the truly valuable and impactful elements of courage, heroism, and proof of racial vigour would surface in any era, if in sometimes dissimilar forms, and that the anonymity and brutality of the trenches would breed them in greater quality and quantity than ever before. As he wrote of rifle grenades and other then-new infantry weapons:

I found it hard at first to reconcile myself to these methods, because I had joined up with quite another picture of battle in my head; but I have acquired the horrid taste for the concentrated force that they put at one's disposal... There is poetry there too. But it requires nerve. (Jünger, 1925/2003, p. 114)

Jünger's first foray into theory, though still closely tethered to the war experience and his interpretation thereof, was in *War as Inner Experience*. The text is organized into thirteen numbered sections, each covering a concept of significance to his interpretation both of the First World War and of war in general. The first, titled simply *Blut* [Blood], concerns the ideas we saw in *Copse 125* of war as a fundamental and inevitable law of nature, but also amenable to mastery by man:

It is war that makes people and their age what they are... War, the father of all things, is also our father. He has hammered and chiseled and tempered us to what we are...

However, war is not only our father, but also our son. We have begotten him and he us.

We are hammered and chiseled, but also those who swing the hammer and carry the chisel, both forge and sparkling steel, martyrs of our own deeds, driven by instinct.⁹

(Jünger, 1922/26, pp. 3-4)

Blut, for Jünger, encapsulated everything that needs to be said regarding the causes of war. It is a brute condition of human existence, an elemental force with which we are invariably forced to contend, which is constantly altered and shaped by our efforts but never entirely within our control.

From *Blut*, he continued, proceeds *Grauen* [Dread¹⁰], the second section of the text and “the first lightning-flash of reason” (Jünger, 1922/26, p. 11). Animals, he claimed, could feel *Angst* and *Schreck*, two other points in the constellation of fear, but not *Grauen*, a uniquely human faculty founded on the always-partial consciousness of the unknown and uncertain lurking in the future. *Grauen*, in turn, is followed by the trench – at first blush, a distinctly more historically situated heading and concept than *Blut* or *Grauen*, which are presented here as fundamental to the human experience, but the trench represented to Jünger the technical mastery of the war environment which “turned war into a craft [*Handwerk*] and warriors into day-labourers of death,” which had reached its greatest peak in the First World War, but was not unique to it (Jünger, 1922/26, p. 24). The trench thus represents the material realization of the

⁹ This and all subsequent quotations from *Der Kampf als Inneres Erlebnis* are my own translations from the 1926 E.S. Mittler & Sohn edition.

¹⁰ Segev (2014) renders this as ‘horror’ rather than ‘dread’, but Jünger’s *Grauen* is anticipative, linked elsewhere in the text to the intuitive sense of impending annihilation (Jünger, 1922/26, p. 10), for which ‘dread’ seems more appropriate in English.

structure of reason and will that gives war its social and civilizational form, elevating it above a merely instinctual interplay of *Blut* and *Grauen*.

Jünger continued in similar fashion through various cultural and instinctive forces that he saw at work in war before spending the last few headings on the man of the future, who at this point he calls the *Landsknecht*. In the *Landsknecht*, Jünger says,

the waves of time battered without discord, war was his very own element. He carried war in the blood, as Roman legionaries or medieval mercenaries carried it in theirs... He distinguished himself sharply, as if of a very different race, from the armed bourgeois and from the predominant type of the national army, the military expression of democracy... There are only two soldiers: the mercenary and the volunteer. The *Landsknecht* was both at the same time. As the son of war, he was not afflicted by that bitterness which rotted the body of the army, and whose expression could be read on the walls of every field latrine. He was born for war, and found in war the condition under which alone he could live. (Jünger, 1922/26, pp. 51-52)

This new man was destined, Jünger claimed, to bring about the “glowing sunset of a sinking age” and the dawn of a new age of war (Jünger, 1922/26, pp. 70):

Far behind [the front], the vast cities, the armies of machines, the rich, whose inner bonds are being torn apart in the storm, await the new man, the bold, the battle-hardened, the ruthless against himself and others. This war is not the end, but the beginning of the violence. It is the forge on which the world will be broken into new borders and new communities. New forms want to be filled with blood, and power wants to be grasped with a hard fist. War is a great school, and the new man will be shaped in it. (Jünger, 1922/26, pp. 70-71)

Jünger further argues that these special individuals act as conduits for the general will, converting its potential energy into kinetic energy through combat (Jünger, 1922/26, p. 89). They alone had the inner experience of war referenced in the title of the work; they acted, and were acted *through* by the nation they represented, where lesser men were merely acted *upon*. He concluded the work by writing:

All objectives are ephemeral, only the movement is eternal, and it constantly brings forth marvelous and merciless spectacles. To be able to immerse oneself in their sublime futility, as in a work of art or the starry sky, is granted only to a few. But he who in this war feels only negation, only his own suffering and not the affirmation, the higher movement, has experienced it as a slave. He had no inner but only an outer experience. (Jünger, 1922/26, p. 105)

“Total Mobilization” and *The Worker*

Jünger finally produced an explicit political treatise in 1930, “Die Totale Mobilmachung” [Total Mobilization] (1930/91), and expanded it into a book two years later, called *Der Arbeiter: Herrschaft und Gestalt* [*The Worker: Dominion and Form*] (1932/2017b). By this time, he had abandoned the term *Landsknecht* for the man of the future in favour of the eponymous *Arbeiter*, now a world-historical figure of the imminent age rather than a transhistorical figure finding new expression and significance, as in *War as Inner Experience*. The *Arbeiter*, Jünger says, “stands in a relation to elemental powers of whose bare presence the bourgeois never had an inkling” (Jünger, 1932/2017b, p. 10).

The term *Arbeiter* is significant not only for its clear socialist overtones, but also for the way Jünger carefully and consistently avoids similar socialist language such as ‘proletariat’, even favouring the uncommon construction of *Arbeitertum* over the Marxist *Arbeiterklasse* when

speaking of them collectively (Kittler, 2008, p. 80; Jünger, 1932/2017b, p. 10, note 4). The *Arbeiter* was for Jünger specifically the German worker, not the international proletarian, and his world-historical role was derived in part from Germany's unique historical and geographical situation between the bourgeois societies of western Europe and the Soviet Union in the east. As a matter both of historical contingency and of racial character, Jünger argued, Germany was never a properly bourgeois country; they had a natural impulse to "revolt against the values emblazoned on the shield of reason," and the lack of bourgeois comforts forced the German to drive his roots "down deep into barren soil in order to reach the wellsprings in which the magical unity of blood and spirit is embedded" (Jünger, 1932/2017b, p. 6).

Jünger's conception of the bourgeoisie is somewhat idiosyncratic in that he saw it as fundamentally tied to the age of absolute monarchy, and that age as only then, in the early 1930s, approaching its end. The French Revolution, he argued, had brought about the "bloody union of the bourgeoisie with power," obscuring rather than ending the age of monarchy (Jünger, 1932/2017b, p. 9). He wrote, of the transition between stages he saw as already underway:

Hidden in every improvement of firearms – especially the increase in range – is an indirect assault on the conditions of absolute monarchy. Each such improvement promotes firing at individual targets, while the salvo incarnates the force of fixed command... Partial mobilization thus corresponds to the essence of monarchy. The latter oversteps its bounds to the extent that it is forced to make the abstract forms of spirit, money, 'folk' – in short, the forces of growing national democracy – a part of the preparation for war. (Jünger, 1930/91, pp. 125-26)

Where older small arms technology, in the model here, had favoured the combination of an aristocratic or bourgeois officer caste with a well-drilled but tactically non-autonomous infantry

force, the increasingly accurate repeating rifles of the 20th century lent themselves better to small-unit initiative and manoeuvre. This, in turn, favoured larger-scale mobilization, culminating in the total mobilization of the First World War, “a historical event superior in significance to the French Revolution” (Jünger, 1930/91, p. 126). He continued, of the war’s lessons:

In order to deploy energies of such proportion, fitting one’s sword-arm no longer suffices; for this is a mobilization that requires extension to the deepest marrow, life’s finest nerve. Its realization is the task of total mobilization: an act which, as if through a single grasp of the control panel, conveys the extensively branched and densely veined power supply of modern life towards the great current of martial energy. (Jünger, 1930/91, pp. 126-27)

“Total Mobilization” was the first explicit popular application of the emerging discourse of totalization to war, among the first to use the phrase ‘total war’, and likely influential on Ludendorff’s *Der Totale Krieg*, to be published six years later (Honig, 2012, p. 35). Though the idea had been invoked some nine years earlier by Italian future warfare theorist Giulio Douhet, Jünger’s work had a much wider reach outside career military circles and did more to popularize the idea, particularly in Germany.

Jünger blamed both the First World War itself and its outcome on the clash between the archaic dynastic mode of political organization and the vigorous national-democratic mode in line to replace it. He saw this conflict at work in every stage of the war, from its proximate cause in the assassination of the Habsburg heir by a conspiracy of nationalists to the eventual triumph of the United States over Germany, which he attributed to their ability as a democracy to effect the total mobilization from which Germany, as a monarchy, had been structurally barred (Jünger,

1930/91, pp. 130-32). It should be noted that Germany in fact mobilized more fully than the United States, in both raw numbers and proportion of the population in arms (Bessel, 2000, pp. 438-39); though Jünger did not make the connection explicitly here, this seems to have been intended to invoke the *Dolchstoßlegende*: the myth that Germany had not been defeated on the battlefield, but fatally compromised on the home front by some combination of republicans, communists, and Jews, which would necessarily mean that the population was not totally mobilized.

Despite that defeat, Jünger argued, the war had not been a failure for Germany; it had awakened the *Arbeiter* and cleared the way for the *Arbeiterstaat* to come. As he concluded “Total Mobilization”:

Deep beneath the regions in which the dialectic of war aims¹¹ is still meaningful, the German encounters a stronger force: he encounters himself. In this way, the war was at the same time about him: above all, the means of his own self-realization. And for this reason, the new form of armament, in which we have already for some time been implicated, must be a mobilization of the German – nothing else. (Jünger, 1930/91, p. 139)

Though Jünger had claimed in *Copse 125* to “hate democracy as I do the plague” (Jünger, 1925/2003, p. 83), by the time of “Total Mobilization” and *The Worker* he advanced a specific conception of workers’ democracy [*Arbeitsdemokratie*] over both liberal and social conceptions of democracy, on the one hand, and pre-*Arbeiter* bourgeois nationalism, on the other (Jünger, 1932/2017b, p. 215). Despite his association of the *Arbeiter* with individual heroism, they appear in his vision of the *Arbeiterstaat* as entirely faceless, anonymous, and homogeneous; he wrote,

¹¹ Presumably a reference to the Clausewitzian model under which war aims are determined and resolved in the sphere of the political, with the purview of military leadership limited to the stage in between.

for example, that “the *typus*, in whom this transformation begins to be foreshadowed...[evokes] the very same uniformity that makes any individual differentiation in a class of relatively unknown animals or races of men very difficult” (Jünger, 1932/2017b, p. 80).

We see in Jünger’s early work the combination and refiguration of nearly every adjacent concept we have encountered in the course of this investigation. Like the future warfare theorists of Chapter 3, he believed that military technology had pushed history into a new stage which demanded a new form of politics, though for Jünger that new form was democracy, if a particular kind, where for Fuller *et al.* it was democracy that was to be transcended. He inherited from Barrès, at least in part, a focus on human types as founded or constituted by their concrete, unmediated experience, though he saw this at the foundation not just of nationhood but of at least notionally transnational class-types, such as the cavalymen and factory men we saw among the aviators. Finally, like Marinetti, he identified an emerging new type distinguished by its experiential relationship to technology, though it is unclear whether Jünger had any personal knowledge of Marinetti’s work; the two may have arrived independently at that innovation from the mutual influence of Nietzsche.

Schmitt, Decisionism, and Dictatorship

Carl Schmitt lacked Jünger’s literary flair and first-person source material, working primarily in legal and political theory, but converged on broadly similar ideas in the Weimar period. He advanced a comparable, but more detailed, vision of plebiscitary national democracy as the state form of the future, freed of the enervating effects of liberal parliamentarism. Though the Weimar constitution was parliamentary in form, borrowing extensively from those of the United Kingdom, United States, and France, Schmitt fixated on the office of the President and the emergency powers allotted to it as the mechanism by which that form might be brought about

in the German context.

Over a series of works between 1916 and 1924, Schmitt laid out his then-idiosyncratic interpretations of democracy, dictatorship, and Article 48 of the Weimar constitution, which allotted to the President the power to suspend certain civil rights and use armed force against recalcitrant federal units or in defense of ‘law and order’. Specifically:

If a state fails to carry out the duties imposed upon it by the national constitution or national laws, the President of the Reich may compel performance with the aid of armed force.

If public safety and order be seriously disturbed or threatened within the German Reich, the President of the Reich may take the necessary measures to restore public safety and order; if necessary, with the aid of armed force. For this purpose he may temporarily suspend in whole or in part the fundamental rights enumerated in Articles 114, 115, 117, 118, 123, 124 and 153. (*Constitution of the German Reich*, 1919)

The enumerated rights include inviolability of the person, dwelling, and private communications, peaceful assembly and association, and the right to property (*Constitution of the German Reich*, 1919). Schmitt argued that the authorization in this article was not limited to the suspension of those specific rights, but rather a “general authorization to take all the necessary measures and a specific authorization to suspend certain basic rights – the ones listed there,” resulting in an open-ended, if formally temporary, “commissary dictatorship” (1921/2014, pp. 194, 206). He further maintained that such a dictatorship was compatible with democracy, as opposed to liberalism or parliamentarism; democracy for Schmitt consisted in “the identity of governed and governing, sovereign and subject,” and in the realization of the general will, irrespective of the legal or political means by which this might be effected (1923/2000, pp. 26-27). He continued:

The will of the people is of course always identical with the will of the people, whether a decision comes from the yes or no of millions of voting papers, or from a single individual who has the will of the people even without a ballot, or from the people acclaiming in some way. (1923/2000, p. 27)

The insistence that the will of the people be carried out by and through representative structures, subject to the separation of powers, and so on, belonged for Schmitt to parliamentarism, not democracy; the two had historically been allies against the old, absolute monarchies in Europe, but had no essential relation or identity with one another.

Schmitt revisited and extended this line of thought through the early 1930s, as the Nazi party entrenched itself in German politics and the Weimar republic descended into its final crisis. His essay “The Guardian of the Constitution” (1931/2015) criticized the concept and practice of judicial review and argued that the preservation of parliamentary pluralism, paradoxically, demanded a powerful, unitary executive to safeguard the very possibility of the rule of law. Similarly, *Legality and Legitimacy* (1932/2004a) argued that the roots of the then-present crisis lay in overly strict adherence to and high valuation of mere legality, and that the restoration of popular faith and unity in the state required the plebiscitary legitimacy of the President. Later in 1932, Schmitt provided legal counsel to the federal government in a lawsuit resulting from President Paul von Hindenburg’s invocation of Article 48 to dissolve the state government of Prussia and place it under the direct control of Chancellor Franz von Papen as *Reichskommissar* (Bendersky, 1983, pp. 156-57).

The ultimate end of this line of argument becomes apparent in Schmitt’s 1934 article “The Führer Protects Justice,” a legal apologia for the Night of Long Knives, in which SS and Gestapo forces summarily executed several hundred people including members of the

anticapitalist Strasserist wing of the Nazi party, leaders of the *Sturmabteilung* (SA) mass paramilitary, and an assortment of other perceived threats and political opponents. Schmitt argued that the state of emergency declared retrospectively to legalize the purge was both valid and well-founded, praising Hitler for his keen judgment in identifying internal enemies of the state and his decisive action in eliminating them (Vagts, 2012).

War was, through the bulk of this period, less central to Schmitt's thought than to Jünger's, but the former's investigation into the general principles of sovereignty and the political led him into engagement with it by the mid-1920s and it would occupy an increasingly central position in his thought throughout the remainder of his life. The culmination of the early period of this line of thought was *The Concept of the Political* (1932/2007), in which Schmitt criticized traditional conceptions of the political that reduced it to an identity with or relation to the state, arguing that these were ultimately circular – defining the political as that which pertains to the state, and the state as the political entity (Schmitt, 1932/2007, p. 20). In their place, he advanced an agonistic theory of the political as that which pertains to the distinction between friend and enemy, as the aesthetic is that which pertains to the distinction between beautiful and ugly (Schmitt, 1932/2007, p. 26). The state, then, is that entity which draws and engages itself in the friend/enemy distinction. He wrote:

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. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. (Schmitt, 1932/2007, p. 28)

In other words, the very essence of politics is the concrete possibility of war; ‘politics’ in the sense in which the word is ordinarily understood is merely that which takes place in the field defined by the entity which draws the friend/enemy distinction.

Jünger, Schmitt, and the Postwar Order

Both Schmitt and Jünger had complicated relationships with the Nazi party and regime, disillusioning them about the prospects for the kinds of national states they had envisioned and leading them to revise their positions. Jünger refused to join the party after they took power in 1933 and spent the remainder of their tenure quietly writing anti-Nazi fiction, mostly unpublished until after the war, and manning an administrative post in occupied Paris (Armitage, 2003, p. 192); Schmitt, despite the efforts he made to ingratiate himself with the party, eventually found himself in the crosshairs of their more ardent partisans for his conservatism, Catholicism, and the 1936 rediscovery of a First World War-era publication in which Schmitt had mocked the idea of biological race and of politics based thereon, leading to his withdrawal from public life in 1937 (Bendersky, 1983, pp. 237-38). Nevertheless, both Jünger and Schmitt refused to submit to denazification after the war. Jünger refused even to fill out the *Fragebogen* questionnaire used by the Western powers to identify and sort former Nazis, and was forbidden to publish for a period of four years (Loose, 1974, p. 80). Schmitt, for his part, was arrested and interrogated by both Soviet and American forces and detained into the spring of 1947 pending a decision on whether to indict him at Nuremburg, but was ultimately released without charge (Bendersky, 1983, pp. 264-73).

Jünger returned to theoretical work with *The Peace* (1946/48), a work of flowery prose composed during the war and initially published abroad, owing to his ban on doing so in Germany, in which he both obscured and distanced himself from the extreme nationalism of his

interwar period and predicted a post-national world order to come. He wrote:

As in the first world war the monarchies were conquered by the democracies, so in this second and greater struggle the old-fashioned national states will be vanquished by the imperial powers. As a step towards this, the national element in the peoples is being consumed by fire – one of the ultimate sacrifices and one which cannot be repeated in this form. The positive aspect of this process is that it loosens the old frontiers and makes possible spiritual planning which oversteps their confines. (Jünger, 1946/48, pp. 38-39)

Through supranational unity, Jünger argued, the nations of Europe could ensure that they all emerged “greater and mightier” and therefore all won the war; only if they all won the war could they prevent another to follow, as the second followed the first (Jünger, 1946/48, pp. 39-40).

Though apparently impressive to some at the time – the introduction to the 1948 translation of *The Peace* employed here praises it as a “definite break from the values of his past” and the “[most] poignant denunciation – in German or in any other language, for that matter – of the evil that was Nazism” (Clair, 1948, p. 12) – Jünger's account of German conduct in the war was soft-pedalled and key parts of his interwar politics survive intact. He portrayed Germany as having merely ‘erred’, not even in starting the war, but in failing to use their period of near-total control of the European continent to transform it into one of his prophesied post-national empires (Jünger, 1946/48, pp. 49-50); he argued that “the occupation [of France], in spite of all the sufferings it brought, also left seeds of friendship” and blamed both Germany and France for “deeds of violence of all kinds” (Jünger, 1946/48, p. 51); most importantly for the purposes at hand, he continued to maintain that “war is the great forger of nations as it is of hearts” (Jünger, 1946/48, p. 56). The net effect of this obscurantism was to efface the particular political conditions of the war and portray it as an inevitable, if in certain respects regrettable,

consequence of technological development.

The new, supranational imperial powers he envisioned were to be established by strictly peaceful, cooperative means, but he used the obviously politically fraught term *Lebensraum* to designate them in the German, leaving questions of the interpretation thereof conspicuously unanswered (Hohendahl, 2008, p. 34). As late as 1963, in the preface to a republication of *The Worker*, Jünger referred to Nazi Germany as the "great protagonists" of the war, though he criticized them for not "orient[ing] themselves according to the principles developed here" and blamed their failure to do so for "the further dissolution of the nation state and the orders associated with it" (Jünger, 1963/2017a, p. 3).

Schmitt's thought with respect to the nation underwent a strikingly similar transformation, if one that left him and Jünger with essential and irreconcilable theoretical disagreements. Schmitt's began somewhat earlier, around the time of his fall from the Nazis' good graces in 1937, though their eventual defeat reinforced his conviction that the era of the nation-state was reaching its end. In *The Leviathan in the State Theory of Thomas Hobbes* (1938/96) and *Land and Sea* (1942/97), Schmitt presented an account of world history as driven by conflict between maritime powers, such as the United Kingdom and classical Athens, and continental powers such as Russia and Germany – a distinction we have seen elsewhere, including in the work of Fuller, but more fully articulated here (Schmitt, 1942/97, pp. 5-6). These geographical orientations, he argued, define the state's outlook in general and their approach to war in particular. Conventional, intra-European wars, conducted in accordance with the laws and customs of war and respectful of the distinction between combatant and civilian, were for Schmitt characteristic of the continental state form (Schmitt, 1938/96, pp. 47-48). These wars are neither just nor unjust, but morally neutral instruments of state policy emerging from the context

of states in close, terrestrial proximity to one another, who needed a method to decisively resolve their differences without fully descending into mutual slaughter and destruction.

Maritime warfare, for Schmitt, had an altogether different character, and he blamed the predominance of British and later American sea power for the decline of the international legal order which sanctioned and regulated war as an instrument of policy – what he called the *jus publicum Europaeum*. He located the seeds of both the *jus publicum Europaeum* and its eventual downfall in the ‘spatial revolution’ of the sixteenth century, wherein Russian fur trappers reached the end of the terrestrial Earth in the East, whaling ships scoured the extremities of the oceans, and “the spheric shape of our planet was becoming tangible reality” (Schmitt, 1942/97, p. 34). Around the same time, the development of square-rig sails and long range, anti-ship naval artillery made ‘true’ naval warfare possible; previously, Schmitt claimed, “the clashes between the crews of oar ships had been but land combats ‘on board’” (Schmitt, 1942/97, p. 18). There had always been maritime polities – he provides a brief history in which he cites Athens, Carthage, and the Byzantine Empire as earlier examples (Schmitt, 1942/97, p. 7) – but these new developments made possible a fuller realization of maritime power on a global scale. The opening of the sea as an operational space in its own right, rather than an extension, if a unique one, of terrestrial space, opened the other continents to European appropriation and expansion and gave the maritime powers of western Europe access to the wealth and resources that would allow them to eclipse their continental rivals and bring about an elemental “shift of historical existence from firm land to the sea” (1942/97, p. 46). Nonetheless, for Schmitt, a kind of balance was possible – the *jus publicum Europaeum*, wherein wars within Europe were treated as morally neutral and regulated by convention on the continental model, and wars overseas left unrestricted and morally charged with discourses like the ‘civilizing mission’.

As the wealth and power of the maritime states increased, so too did their dependence on maritime commerce for their national well-being. The maritime approach to warfare, for Schmitt, encompassed both the asymmetric colonial wars that seized that wealth in the first place and tactics like privateering and the blockade employed by the maritime powers against each other (Schmitt, 1942/97, p. 48). What these modes shared, he argued, was a rejection of the conventions and restrictions characteristic of continental warfare. They treated their enemies not as worthy counterparts of equal standing, but as economic competitors to be undermined or savages to be subdued. Despite the relative stability offered by the spatial order of the *jus publicum Europaeum*, with its clean geographic separation between the domains of the continental and the maritime, the latter perspective's fundamental hostility to limitation made the dissolution of that order inevitable.

Schmitt extended this analysis in *The Nomos of the Earth* (1950/2006), an account of the disintegration of the *jus publicum Europaeum* by the early twentieth century. He argued that the Monroe Doctrine, under which the United States guaranteed the independence of the other states of the Americas against European re-colonization, excepted the entire hemisphere from the interior/exterior dynamic of the *jus publicum Europaeum* (see Schmitt, 1939/2011b). In Schmitt's model and terminology, the Monroe Doctrine made the Americas a separate *Großraum* – a spatio-legal area dominated by a *Reich*, “the leading and bearing power whose political ideas radiate into a certain *Großraum* and which fundamentally exclude the interventions of spatially foreign powers into this *Großraum*” (Schmitt, 1941/2011a, p. 101). Schmitt's earlier work on the *Großraum* concept, quoted here, tended to focus on the American precedent for German hegemony over the European *Großraum*; in *The Nomos of the Earth*, he turned his attention to the process by which the American *Großraum* developed its own body of international law,

troubling the primacy of its European counterpart, previously considerable as international law *tout court* (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 228). Where the European character of that body, and with it the European character of civilization as such, had previously been implicit, the existence of a rival order in the Americas drew it into the fore. The ensuing debate about whether it was possible to have continentally delimited bodies of international law ended in a broad consensus that it was not, that international law had to be universal and consequently that American and European international law had to be reconciled with one another (Schmitt, 1950/2006, pp. 229-30). Though they remained separate *Großräume*, in Schmitt's view, liberal universalism occluded the relationship between space and law, making possible the incorporation of Asian states into the international – but, up to this point, still covertly European – order in the early 20th century (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 231).

With the Ural barrier, which had previously separated the true subjects of international law from its mere objects, breached, the erstwhile *jus publicum Europaeum* ceased to be European at all, becoming

a disorganized mass of more than 50 heterogeneous states, lacking any spatial or spiritual consciousness of what they once had had in common, a chaos of reputedly equal and equally sovereign states and their dispersed possessions, in which a common bracketing of war no longer was feasible, and for which not even the concept of 'civilization' could provide any concrete homogeneity. (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 234)

This shift was supported and enabled, Schmitt claimed, by the English, whose maritime empire and worldview was fundamentally hostile to the spatial differentiation of law, preferring a global law to go along with a global free market (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 235). Schmitt remained ambiguous about whether it might have been possible for them to maintain a pacific global order

by balancing the different *Großräume*, but in any event, they did not (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 238). International law was left without either a strong guarantor – a *katechon*, in Schmitt’s political-theological terminology – or a concrete spatial grounding. Without those, he argued, a proliferation of exceptions and provisos had overwhelmed what remained of the substantive content of international law; clinging to legal positivism, jurists of international law thus dismissed the substantive questions as unjuridical (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 239). Without substance, the law was unable to hold back the unrestrained slaughter of the world wars and Europe lost its place at the “center of the earth” forever (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 239).

The transformation of law and war continued, for Schmitt, in the interwar period, as the victorious powers and their League of Nations attempted to prevent another outbreak without returning to a spatially grounded *Großraum* order. Once again, a truly universal order was out of reach, with neither the United States nor the Soviet Union meaningfully participating (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 245). For Schmitt, lacking either spatial grounding or genuine universality doomed their efforts to failure from the beginning, but they tried nevertheless. The Treaty of Versailles referenced not only war crimes as traditionally understood under the terms of the *jus publicum Europaeum* – that is, offenses against *jus in bello* – but also demanded that Germany surrender any of their citizens accused of such crimes and personally indicted the Kaiser for the “supreme offense against international morality and the sanctity of treaties,” without further elaboration (quoted in Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 262).

There remained some question about the criminalization of war as such, particularly as applied to an individual rather than a state – the Kaiser was sheltered by the Netherlands and the case against him ultimately dropped – but by 1928 the universalists prevailed with the Kellogg-Briand Pact, officially the General Treaty for the Renunciation of War as an Instrument of

National Policy (1928). The effect, says Schmitt, was not to abolish war but to radically change its character and put the final nail in the coffin of the *jus publicum Europaeum*. If it is illegal to use war as an instrument, then in any given war one party has broken the law, making “one side just and the other unjust” (Schmitt, 1950/2006, p. 268). War thus transformed from a duel between equals to a police action in which it is presumed that the enemy is fundamentally illegitimate and must be subdued, not only for protection or advantage, but for the sake of the law itself.

Schmitt extended the analyses of *The Concept of the Political* and *The Nomos of the Earth* in his last major political work, *The Theory of the Partisan* (1963/2004). Originally a speech delivered in Francoist Spain, one of the last places Schmitt was still welcome after his refusal to participate in denazification, this text dealt with the proliferation of small wars in the 1950s and 60s and presented a taxonomy of partisanship on the basis of the relationships of different forms of partisanship to law and territory. All partisanship, for Schmitt, is defined in opposition to the conventions of the *jus publicum Europaeum*, which above all revolved around the distinction between combatants and non-combatants that is troubled in and by the figure of the partisan. It was for this reason that the laws of war largely ignored civil and colonial wars, despite their frequency; they did not fit the distinguishing model and had to be relegated to the legal and spatial periphery – that is, outside Europe (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 7).

As the old conventions and restrictions on war broke down in the world wars of the 20th century, as well as in the legally marginal cases of partisan, civil, and colonial war, the enmity between the combatants intensifies accordingly into what Schmitt calls ‘real enmity’ (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 7). Real enmity does not recognize the enemy as a legitimate competitor of equal standing, or *justus hostis*, expecting “neither justice nor mercy from [the] enemy” and rising

“through terror and counter-terror, up to annihilation” (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 7). This form is, more or less, what he had earlier valorized as the essential core of the political as such; by this later point in his thought he seems somewhat nostalgic for the days of containment and mutual recognition, but grudgingly respectful of the partisan for remaining spatially grounded in an age of liberal universalism (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 50).

Whatever his concerns with the breakdown of restricted, conventional forms of enmity, Schmitt saw in the Russian Revolution something that troubled him far more. Irregular forms of war, he believed, had hitherto retained a concrete connection to the territory in dispute and, accordingly, an ultimately defensive character on the part of the irregulars (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 13). The enmity of the emergent figure of the international revolutionary, typified for Schmitt by Vladimir Lenin, was class enmity, unrestricted and unrestrictable not only by the laws of war but by any particular spatial grounding – in Schmitt’s terminology, a form of ‘absolute enmity’ (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 36). Where the traditional partisan’s war ended at the borders of her occupied country, if nowhere else, the international revolutionary’s was universal – as we have seen, always troubling for Schmitt.

Schmitt focused on two additional figures in his history of partisanship: Mao Tse-tung and Raoul Salan. Mao, Schmitt says, succeeded in uniting the absolute enmity of the international revolutionary with the spatially grounded enmity of the defensive partisan (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 41). Schmitt sees in this a tacit operation of the *Großraum* concept, casting Mao as defending the East Asian *Großraum* against capitalist universalism (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 41). Salan, a French officer who fought in Africa and Indochina before founding a clandestine paramilitary dedicated to preventing Algerian independence, represents the incorporation of the lessons of partisan war back into the state (Schmitt, 1963/2004, p. 44). For Schmitt, Salan

represented the lesson that one can only fight partisans with partisan means. Once real enmity is introduced into the ecosystem, the conventional cannot compete. If we want to avoid further escalation to absolute enmity, then, we will have to accept the occasional necessity of real enmity and the extralegal means attendant thereto.

Peter Uwe Hohendahl (2008) reads *The Theory of the Partisan* as a direct rebuke to Jünger's late work and, in particular, the idea that the supranational shift both Schmitt and Jünger prophesied could and should aim for peace as the ultimate goal, rather than the containment of conflict. Where in his postwar writings Jünger distanced himself from the idea of war as a natural and inevitable component of human social intercourse, if ambiguously and to questionable degree, Schmitt remained as convinced as ever of the fundamental identity of the political with the real possibility of combat and, accordingly, of the impossibility and counterproductivity of attempting to abolish war. The highest attainable form of interstate organization, for Schmitt, was not a peaceful one but one in which war is acknowledged, accepted, and regulated as a morally neutral instrument of policy; to attempt to banish it entirely was inevitably to transform it into something worse.

Jünger and Schmitt represent, for the purposes at hand, the culmination of the various trajectories analyzed in the previous chapters. They both subscribe to a historical theory of the totalization or absolutization of war as we saw in Chapter 1, though largely without the Clausewitzian framework and vocabulary dominant there. They combine that with the radical antiparlamentarism and, for Jünger, the Barrèsian experiential perspective which we saw in Chapter 2. The most extensive links and affinities, though, are with the future warfare theorists of Chapter 3, from which there are several interesting takeaways. One is the surprising diversity of the theories of history, which are nonetheless directed in unison at the same conclusion. For

Marinetti, it was a simple division into past and future, with no apparent interest in any internal variegation within the past. For Fuller, the totalization of war was a temporary consequence of the era of democracy – of its inability to produce a characteristic form of war, in *The Dragon's Teeth*, and of its characteristic form of war itself, in his later works – to be remedied by the totalization of politics; for Jünger, it was the death rattle of the era of monarchy, to be embraced by the totalitarian democracy of the future. For both Jünger and Schmitt, a warlike orientation to politics proved to be more central even than nationalism, which both readily shed when it failed to live up to their expectations. For Fuller and Schmitt, the threat of the Soviet Union was the principal impetus for a new form of politics; for Fuller and Jünger, the Soviets were equally engaged in a world-historical transformation of which they happened to be the Russian expression. The sole constant is war as an ineradicable feature of the human experience, sometimes even a moral good in itself, and as the guiding principle of the political organization necessary even to see, let alone survive, the storm of the future.

Conclusion

In this thesis, I have proposed and employed a model of fascist ideology as an ersatz or pseudo-ideology, which fulfills some of the political functions of an ideology proper without engaging in the central organizational function of fully decontesting its core concepts. I developed a historical-morphological approach centred on constructing and analyzing an adumbration of fascist political thought while bearing in mind that it is not identical with the phenomenon so adumbrated. Through the body of the work, I investigated a series of relatively coherent and intelligible discursive traditions with respect to violence in fascist thought, broadly construed, in order to get a sense of their regularities, variations, continuities, and discontinuities, and thereby to witness the mutability and refigurability which so restricts and challenges the creation of an appropriate model in the first place. I identified three principal subtypes of fascist theories of violence: (1) violence as the arena or medium in which collective identity is forged, (2) violence as a necessary precondition to the possibility of a new politics or of politics as such, and (3) violence as independent from instrumental means-ends reasoning and valuable in itself. These go hand in hand with an adjacent complex of situated historical narratives: that sometime between 1870 and 1914, history approached or entered a period in which war would become totalized or absolutized; in some versions, that a specific technology or technologies was responsible for that shift; and in some partially overlapping versions, that this corresponded also to a generalized shift in political or civilizational form.

Chapter 1 explored the roots of the idea of the totalization or absolutization of war in German military thought of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, where we found it linked to newly introduced practices of mass conscription as constituting the entry of the nation itself into the arena of war as a direct actor. We saw how Clausewitz' concept of absolute war

was appropriated from its context as a thought experiment and recast as a state not only attainable in reality but imminently to be thrust upon us by the advancement of technology and civilization in general. This early version of the totalization narrative was linked to an imperative to unshackle the military from political oversight and, eventually, from any form of legal or conventional restriction. We saw later how a concern with the removal of legal and conventional restrictions reappeared in the work of Schmitt, but appeared there as already effected and as a legal consequence of the liberal initiative to banish or abolish war as a political instrument, rather than as a more or less value-neutral, practical consideration for the military.

In Chapter 2, we saw how France's different political situation and historical trajectory begat an early fascist movement with very different theoretical frameworks and concerns, which would eventually comingle with those of Chapter 1. We saw how the traditionally dynastically divided French right coalesced with strands of republican nationalism into a single heterogeneous movement, internally variegated and occasionally divided but considerable as a substantial unity. Versions of all three discursive subtypes were apparent there, with Sorel's theories of proletarian violence as the engine of a historically productive class antagonism being readily adapted into Barrès' and Maurras' pre-existing radical antiparlamentarism and general but shapeless affinity for violence. With Maurras, we saw the idea of ongoing violence as a way to sharpen lines of social conflict adapted into antiliberal paramilitarism, explicitly intended to both rally and demonstrate support for a military coup. With Barrès, we saw Sorelian violence transmuted to the national level, with interstate military violence appearing both to forge a new national consciousness, on the one hand, and as glorious and desirable in itself, on the other.

In Chapter 3, the budding narratives of totalized future warfare from Chapter 1 combined with the notion of violence as the instrument of national consciousness and renewal from

Chapter 2 into several distinct forms. We saw Marinetti's zealous extension of Sorel's theories of violence combined with Nietzsche's *Übermensch* and his own passion for new technologies into the figure of the multiplied man, whose increasing capability for destruction Marinetti exalted as a good in itself. Finally, Fuller provided one of the most fully articulated theories of the totalization of both war and politics, linking it to an explicit and well developed philosophy of history under which democracy, as a stage of non-trinitarian decadence, had brought about the totalization of war, from which only the totalization of politics could deliver us.

All of these strands coalesced in Chapter 4, where we saw the very different but broadly thematically harmonious theories of Ernst Jünger and Carl Schmitt. Of the two, Jünger's work was the more continuous with the traditions examined in the previous chapters, weaving together threads from Barrès, Sorel, Maurras, von der Goltz, and many other thinkers implicated more peripherally, such as Nietzsche and Le Bon. Of particular importance, we find all three subtypes there with respect to violence: it appears in Jünger's work as immediately valuable in itself and for its effects on the individual spirit, as a necessary precondition to a future politics, and as the crucible in which the nations of the future would be forged or broken. Schmitt approached violence as a problematic from the perspective of legal theory, of almost entirely distinct theoretical provenance, but arrived at ideas oddly consonant with Jünger's in spite of those differences. He saw the concrete possibility of violence as the necessary grounds for any phenomenon or organization to be acknowledged as political and hence as necessary for any collective political identity, but in a transhistorical sense rather than one linked to the empirical totalization of war. In his and Jünger's later, postwar works, both readily discarded the nation-state and invested their hopes in supranational forms of political organization, empires and *Großräume*, and both more or less deliberately obscured the extent to which that reflected a

broader transformation in their thought. Schmitt, in particular, readily assimilated the idea of the *Großraum* as the political formation of the future into his existing conviction that law must be tied fundamentally to space in order to remain effective and that the liberal project to universalize and despatialize law was what had led to the totalization of war. We might draw a line of affinity here back to Barrès' concept of rootedness, though there is no evidence of direct influence.

Where does all of that get us with respect to a theory of fascism? First, it can be concluded that adumbrating fascism as centred on theories of violence is relatively successful – that is to say, that it produces an image about as coherent or intelligible as what we would get from any other such adumbration. We might conceptualize this as certain conceptual matrices having a kind of second-order, pseudo-core status: specifically, those whose targeted adumbrations produce such intelligible images. At this time, this is the thing nearest to core status which I am prepared to acknowledge in fascism, and I believe I have demonstrated that violence has it. Secondly, a greater understanding of where fascism's conceptual threads fell in 1945 should enhance our ability to detect them in later fabrics. Today's fascists cloak themselves in euphemism, irony, performative disavowal of the fascist label and history, and general plausible deniability to an extent far greater than their forebears, making them much more difficult to identify and examine. If we want to understand as much as we can of that very contemporary danger, I think, we need all available groundwork in a wide variety of fields, and one sort that political theory can offer is an understanding of the thought and ideology of those forebears who produced texts more direct and reflective of their actual beliefs.

The principal anticipatable objection, to my mind, is that by hand-picking maximally coherent and continuous theories and theorists I have foreclosed the possibility of gaining insight

into a phenomenon other than one of my own creation. There is an extent to which this is merited, but I have done my best to bake an awareness of its limitations into the framework itself. If I am correct, though, about the general character of fascist ideology and the limits it places on prospective analysis, then we have little choice but to approach it as the theoretical terrain permits. Furthermore, even the adumbration I have produced here includes a staggering diversity of positions, concepts, and configurations thereof, which nonetheless interact with and influence one another as if they were much more similar and commensurable than in fact they are – precisely what we would expect to find if my initial framing of the problem was broadly reflective of the discursive reality.

A more specific version of that objection would say that the particular image I have produced is not reflective of fascist thought or ideology more broadly – perhaps specifically that I have neglected the actual regime and party positions and messaging in favour of explicit political and military theorists, many of whom had reservations about or objections to those regimes and parties. This too is valid, but the solution is more work to build on this one, so I do not consider it seriously compromising; it may and most probably will be that further work will prompt modifications to my analysis as I made it here, but the inverse is also true and one has to start somewhere. Had I more space for digression, this work would also have included, *inter alia*, consideration of party and regime propaganda as well as of more representatives of the traditionalist or reactionary wing of fascist thought and organization. A prominent example of the latter who wrote specifically on war and violence is Julius Evola – see especially his 1950 essay “The Decline of Heroism,” which specifically takes up questions from Jünger’s “Total Mobilization” and *Der Arbeiter* (Evola, 1950/2011, p. 138).

It may seem that today’s fascists, if they merit the name at all, have little in common with

either the reactionaries, like Evola, or the technological modernists we saw in this work, and therefore that understanding these predecessors does not meaningfully help us to understand their descendants. This concern is misplaced, I think, for two reasons. The first is that much of the contemporary extreme right consciously cultivates links to their predecessors, even where it is not immediately apparent in their external messaging. For instance, the list of suggested reading offered by altright.com, operated by notorious white nationalist Richard Spencer, includes Carl Schmitt's *The Concept of the Political*, *Political Theology*, and *The Theory of the Partisan*, an assortment of Jünger's literary texts including *Storm of Steel*, and works by a variety of other thinkers of the early twentieth century who could fruitfully have been examined here, including Evola, Oswald Spengler, Francis Parker Yockey, and Yukio Mishima ("Reading List," n.d.). One potential avenue for future work concerns how these theories and theorists are taken up in the present day, both at the grassroots level and by contemporary authors such as Alain de Benoist and Aleksandr Dugin, both of whom also feature prominently in Spencer's recommended reading.

The second reason is that even those elements of contemporary far right thought without a theoretical lineage traceable to pre-1945 fascism seem to display a worldview intelligible as consonant with their forebears' once we account for a broad shift in concern away from the nation-state and near-peer interstate warfare to the nation proper and perceived population-level threats to the health of the national organism. This is, of course, a greater interpretive leap and one which I cannot fully broach or justify in these concluding remarks, but I think it offers the most direct route for work building on this one to approach immediate contemporary relevance. This avenue could also investigate the continuities and discontinuities between European and North American contexts; North American examples often point to the European *Nouvelle*

Droite in articulating their theoretical foundations, but are generally obliged also to invoke well entrenched North American traditions of white nationalism, settler colonialism, and scientific racism to complement those European ideas in the North American context. One may refer again to Spencer's reading list, which includes a section on the "French New Right" as well as numerous works by American racist and anti-Semitic authors such as Jared Taylor, Sam Francis, and Kevin MacDonald ("Reading List," n.d.).

What ultimately motivated this work and what continues to interest me moving forward is the intuitive sense, thus far borne out under scrutiny, that there is some important commonality or regularity at work in the fascisms of different contexts that makes them worthy of the name. To the extent that this work was an attempt to find it in their theories of violence, it succeeded only to the extent I discussed above of demonstrating a second-order adumbral intelligibility. Depending on their depth, character, and significance, regularities between the contemporary North American phenomenon and the canonical fascisms of interwar Europe could be grounds to alter the model of fascism I have constructed here to acknowledge core or essential features, or something closer to them. The elusiveness of the quarry, though, is precisely what makes the hunt worthwhile.

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