

THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL  
EXPANDED EDITION

CARL SCHMITT

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*Translation, Introduction, and Notes by George Schwab  
With "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations"*

*(1929) translated by Matthias Konzen and John P.*

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*With Leo Strauss's Notes on Schmitt's Essay, translated by*

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THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO PRESS  
Chicago and London

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## THE CONCEPT OF THE POLITICAL

*In memory of my friend, August Schaetz of Munich, who  
fell on August 28, 1917, in the assault on Moncelul*

### I

The concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political.

According to modern linguistic usage, the state is the political status of an organized people in an enclosed territorial unit. This is nothing more than a general paraphrase, not a definition of the state. Since we are concerned here with the nature of the political, such a definition is unwarranted. It may be left open what the state is in its essence—a machine or an organism, a person or an institution, a society or a community, an enterprise or a beehive, or perhaps even a basic procedural order. These definitions and images anticipate too much meaning, interpretation, illustration, and construction, and therefore cannot constitute any appropriate point of departure for a simple and elementary statement.

In its literal sense and in its historical appearance the state is a specific entity of a people.\* Vis-à-vis the many conceivable kinds of

\* Schmitt has in mind the modern national sovereign state and not the political entities of the medieval or ancient periods. For Schmitt's identification with the epoch of the modern state see George Schwab, *The Challenge of the Exception: An Introduction to the political Ideas of Carl Schmitt between 1921 and 1936* 2d ed. (New York: Greenwood Press, 1989), pp. 27, 54; also,

entities, it is in the decisive case the ultimate authority. More need not be said at this moment. All characteristics of this image of entity and people receive their meaning from the further distinctive trait of the political and become incomprehensible when the nature of the political is misunderstood.

One seldom finds a clear definition of the political. The word is most frequently used negatively, in contrast to various other ideas, for example in such antitheses as politics and economy, politics and morality, politics and law; and within law there is again politics and civil law,<sup>1</sup> and so forth. By means of such negative, often also polemical confrontations, it is usually possible, depending upon the context and concrete situation, to characterize something with clarity. But this is still not a specific definition. In one way or another "political" is generally juxtaposed to "state" or at least is brought into relation with it.<sup>2</sup> The state thus appears as something political, the political as something pertaining to the state—obviously an unsatisfactory circle.

George Schwab, "Enemy oder Foe: Der Konflikt der modernen Politik," tr. J. Zeumer, *Epirrhosis: Festgabe für Carl Schmitt*, ed. H. Barion, E.-W. Böckenförde, E. Forsthoff, W. Weber (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1968), II, 665-666.

<sup>1</sup>The antithesis of law and politics is easily confused by the antithesis of civil and public law. According to J. K. Bluntschli in *Allgemeines Staatsrecht*, 4th ed. (Munich: J. G. Cotta, 1868), I, 219: "Property is a civil law and not a political concept." The political significance of this antithesis came particularly to the fore in 1925 and 1926, during the debates regarding the expropriation of the fortunes of the princes who had formerly ruled in Germany. The following sentence from the speech by deputy Dietrich (Reichstag session, December 2, 1925, *Berichte*, 4717) is cited as an example: "We are of the opinion that the issues here do not at all pertain to civil law questions but are purely political ones. . . ."

<sup>2</sup>Also in those definitions of the political which utilize the concept of power as the decisive factor, this power appears mostly as state power, for example, in Max Weber's "Politik als Beruf," *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, 3rd ed., ed. Johannes Winckelmann (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1971), pp. 505, 506: "aspiring to participate in or of influencing the distribution of power, be it between states, be it internally between groups

Many such descriptions of the political appear in professional juridic literature. Insofar as these are not politically polemical, they are of practical and technical interest and are to be understood as legal or administrative decisions in particular cases. These then receive their meaning by the presupposition of a stable state within whose framework they operate. Thus there exists, for example, a jurisprudence and literature pertaining to the concept of the political club or the political meeting in the law of associations. Furthermore, French administrative law practice has attempted to construct a concept of the political motive (*mobile politique*) with whose aid political acts of government (*actes de gouvernement*) could be distinguished from nonpolitical administrative acts and thereby removed from the control of administrative courts.<sup>3</sup>

Such accommodating definitions serve the needs of legal practice of people which the state encompasses," or "leadership or the influencing of a political association, hence today, of a state"; or his "Parliament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland," *ibid.*, p. 347: "The essence of politics is . . . combat, the winning of allies and of voluntary followers." H. Triepel, *Staatsrecht und Politik* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter & Co., 1927), pp. 16-17, says: "Until recent decades politics was still plainly associated with the study of the state. . . . In this vein Weitz characterizes politics as the learned discussion of the state with respect to the historical development of states on the whole as well as of their current conditions and needs." Triepel then justly criticizes the ostensibly nonpolitical, purely juristic approach of the Gerber-Laband school and the attempt at its continuation in the postwar period (Kelsen). Nevertheless, Triepel had not yet recognized the pure political meaning of this pretense of an apolitical purity, because he subscribes to the equation politics = state. As will still be seen below, designating the adversary as political and oneself as nonpolitical (i.e., scientific, just, objective, neutral, etc.) is in actuality a typical and unusually intensive way of pursuing politics.

<sup>3</sup>. . . For the criterion of the political furnished here (friend-enemy orientation), I draw upon the particularly interesting definition of the specifically political *acte de gouvernement* which Dufour . . . (*Traité de droit administratif appliqué*, V, 128) has advanced: "Defining an act of government is the purpose to which the author addresses himself. Such an act aims at defending society itself or as embodied in the government against its internal or external enemies, overt or covert, present or future. . . ."

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tice. Basically, they provide a practical way of delimiting legal competences of cases within a state in its legal procedures. They do not in the least aim at a general definition of the political. Such definitions of the political suffice, therefore, for as long as the state and the public institutions can be assumed as something self-evident and concrete. Also, the general definitions of the political which contain nothing more than additional references to the state are understandable and to that extent also intellectually justifiable for as long as the state is truly a clear and unequivocal eminent entity confronting nonpolitical groups and affairs—in other words, for as long as the state possesses the monopoly on politics. That was the case where the state had either (as in the eighteenth century) not recognized society as an antithetical force or, at least (as in Germany in the nineteenth century and into the twentieth), stood above society as a stable and distinct force.

The equation state = politics becomes erroneous and deceptive at exactly the moment when state and society penetrate each other. What had been up to that point affairs of state become thereby social matters, and, vice versa, what had been purely social matters become affairs of state—as must necessarily occur in a democratically organized unit. Heretofore ostensibly neutral domains—religion, culture, education, the economy—then cease to be neutral in the sense that they do not pertain to state and to politics. As a polemical concept against such neutralizations and depoliticalizations of important domains appears the total state, which potentially embraces every domain. This results in the identity of state and society. In such a state, therefore, everything is at least potentially political, and in referring to the state it is no longer possible to assert for it a specifically political characteristic.

[Schmitt's Note]

The development can be traced from the absolute state of the eighteenth century via the neutral (noninterventionist) state

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of the nineteenth to the total state of the twentieth.<sup>4</sup> Democracy must do away with all the typical distinctions and depoliticalizations characteristic of the liberal nineteenth century, also with those corresponding to the nineteenth-century antitheses and divisions pertaining to the state-society (= political against social) contrast, namely the following, among numerous other thoroughly polemical and thereby again political antitheses:

religious	as antithesis of political
cultural	as antithesis of political
economic	as antithesis of political
legal	as antithesis of political
scientific	as antithesis of political

The more profound thinkers of the nineteenth century soon recognized this. In Jacob Burckhardt's *Weltgeschichtliche Betrachtungen* (of the period around 1870) the following sentences are found on "democracy, i.e., a doctrine nourished by a thousand springs, and varying greatly with the social status of its adherents. Only in one respect was it consistent, namely, in the insatiability of its demand for state control of the individual. Thus it blurs the boundaries between state and society and looks to the state for the things that society will most likely refuse to do, while maintaining a permanent condition of argument and change and ultimately vindicating the right to work and subsistence for certain castes." Burckhardt also correctly noted the inner contradiction of democracy and the liberal constitutional state: "The state is thus, on the one hand, the realization and expression of the cultural ideas of every party; on the other, merely the visible vestures of civic life and powerful on an *ad hoc* basis only. It should be able to do everything, yet allowed to do nothing. In particular, it must not defend its existing form in any crisis—and after all, what men want more

<sup>4</sup> See Carl Schmitt, *Der Hüter der Verfassung* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1931; Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1969), pp. 78–79.

than anything else is to participate in the exercise of its power. The state's form thus becomes increasingly questionable and its radius of power ever broader."<sup>5</sup>

German political science originally maintained (under the impact of Hegel's philosophy of the state) that the state is qualitatively distinct from society and higher than it. A state standing above society could be called universal but not total, as that term is understood nowadays, namely, as the polemical negation of the neutral state, whose economy and law were in themselves nonpolitical. Nevertheless, after 1848, the qualitative distinction between state and society to which Lorenz von Stein and Rudolf Gneist still subscribed lost its previous clarity. Notwithstanding certain limitations, reservations, and compromises, the development of German political science, whose fundamental lines are shown in my treatise on Preuss,<sup>6</sup> follows the historical development toward the democratic identity of state and society.

An interesting national-liberal intermediary stage is recognizable in the works of Albert Haenel. "To generalize the concept of state altogether with the concept of human society" is, according to him, a "downright mistake." He sees in the state an entity joining other organizations of society but of a "special kind which rises above these and is all embracing." Although its general purpose is universal, though only in the special task of delimiting and organizing socially effective forces, i.e., in the specific function of the law, Haenel considers wrong the belief that the state has, at least potentially, the power of making all the social goals of humanity its goals too. Even though the state is for him universal, it is by no means total.<sup>7</sup> The decisive step is found in Gierke's theory of association (the first volume of his *Das deutsche Genossenschaftsrecht* appeared

<sup>5</sup> Kröner's edition, pp. 133, 135, 197.

<sup>6</sup> *Hugo Preuss: Sein Staatsbegriff und seine Stellung in der deutschen Staatslehre* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1930).

<sup>7</sup> *Studien zum Deutschen Staatsrecht* (Leipzig: Verlag von H. Haessel, 1888), II, 219; *Deutsches Staatsrecht* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1892), I, 110.

in 1868), because it conceives of the state as one association equal to other associations. Of course, in addition to the associational elements, sovereign ones too belonged to the state and were sometimes stressed more and sometimes less. But, since it pertained to a theory of association and not to a theory of sovereignty of the state, the democratic consequences were undeniable. In Germany, they were drawn by Hugo Preuss and K. Wolzendorff, whereas in England it led to pluralist theories (see below, Section 4).

While awaiting further enlightenment, it seems to me that Rudolf Smend's theory of the integration of the state corresponds to a political situation in which society is no longer integrated into an existing state (as the German people in the monarchical state of the nineteenth century) but should itself integrate into the state. That this situation necessitates the total state is expressed most clearly in Smend's remark about a sentence from H. Trescher's 1918 dissertation on Montesquieu and Hegel.<sup>8</sup> There it is said of Hegel's doctrine of the division of powers that it signifies "the most vigorous penetration of all societal spheres by the state for the general purpose of winning for the entirety of the state all vital energies of the people." To which Smend adds that this is "precisely the integration theory" of his book. In actuality it is the total state which no longer knows anything absolutely nonpolitical, the state which must do away with the depoliticalizations of the nineteenth century and which in particular puts an end to the principle that the apolitical economy is independent of the state and that the state is apart from the economy.

## 2

A definition of the political can be obtained only by discovering and defining the specifically political categories. In contrast to the various relatively independent endeavors of human thought and

<sup>8</sup> Rudolf Smend, *Verfassung und Verfassungsrecht* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1928), p. 97, note 2.

action, particularly the moral, aesthetic, and economic, the political has its own criteria which express themselves in a characteristic way. The political must therefore rest on its own ultimate distinctions, to which all action with a specifically political meaning can be traced. Let us assume that in the realm of morality the final distinctions are between good and evil, in aesthetics beautiful and ugly, in economics profitable and unprofitable. The question then is whether there is also a special distinction which can serve as a simple criterion of the political and of what it consists. The nature of such a political distinction is surely different from that of those others. It is independent of them and as such can speak clearly for itself.

The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy.\* This provides a definition in the sense of a criterion and not as an exhaustive definition or one indicative of substantial content.† Insofar as it is not derived from other criteria, the antithesis of friend and enemy corresponds to the relatively independent criteria of other antitheses: good and evil in the moral sphere, beautiful and ugly in the aesthetic sphere, and so on. In any event it is independent, not in the sense of a distinct new domain, but in that it can neither be based on any one antithesis or any combination of other antitheses, nor can it be traced to these. If the antithesis of good and evil is not simply identical with that of beautiful and ugly, profitable and unprofitable, and cannot be directly reduced to the others, then the antithesis of friend and enemy must even less be confused with or mistaken for the others. The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theo-

\* Since Schmitt identified himself with the epoch of the national sovereign state with its *jus publicum Europaeum*, he used the term *Feind* in the enemy and not the foe sense.

† Of the numerous discussions of Schmitt's friend-enemy criterion, particular attention is called to Hans Morgenthau's *La Notion du "politique" et la théorie des différends internationaux* (Paris: Sirey, 1933), pp. 35-37, 44-64. The critique contained therein and Schmitt's influence on him is often implied in Morgenthau's subsequent writings.

retically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party.

Only the actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict. Each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence. Emotionally the enemy is easily treated as being evil and ugly, because every distinction, most of all the political, as the strongest and most intense of the distinctions and categorizations, draws upon other distinctions for support. This does not alter the autonomy of such distinctions. Consequently, the reverse is also true: the morally evil, aesthetically ugly or economically damaging need not necessarily be the enemy; the morally good, aesthetically beautiful, and economically profitable need not necessarily become the friend in the specifically political sense of the word. Thereby the inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political becomes evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the friend-enemy antithesis independently of other antitheses.

## 3

The friend and enemy concepts are to be understood in their concrete and existential sense, not as metaphors or symbols, not

mixed and weakened by economic, moral, and other conceptions, least of all in a private-individualistic sense as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies. They are neither normative nor pure spiritual antitheses. Liberalism in one of its typical dilemmas (to be treated further under Section 8) of intellect and economics has attempted to transform the enemy from the viewpoint of economics into a competitor and from the intellectual point into a debating adversary. In the domain of economics there are no enemies, only competitors, and in a thoroughly moral and ethical world perhaps only debating adversaries. It is irrelevant here whether one rejects, accepts, or perhaps finds it an atavistic remnant of barbaric times that nations continue to group themselves according to friend and enemy, or hopes that the antithesis will one day vanish from the world, or whether it is perhaps sound pedagogic reasoning to imagine that enemies no longer exist at all. The concern here is neither with abstractions nor with normative ideals, but with inherent reality and the real possibility of such a distinction. One may or may not share these hopes and pedagogic ideals. But, rationally speaking, it cannot be denied that nations continue to group themselves according to the friend and enemy antithesis, that the distinction still remains actual today, and that this is an ever present possibility for every people existing in the political sphere.

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. The enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus* in the broader sense; πολέμιος, not ἐχθρός.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> In his *Republic* (Bk. V, Ch. XVI, 470) Plato strongly emphasizes the contrast between the public enemy (πολέμιος) and the private one (ἐχθρός), but in connection with the other antithesis of war (πόλεμος) and insurrec-

As German and other languages do not distinguish between the private and political enemy, many misconceptions and falsifications are possible. The often quoted "Love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27) reads "diligite inimicos vestros," ἀγαπᾶτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν, and not *diligite hostes vestros*. No mention is made of the political enemy. Never in the thousand-year struggle between Christians and Moslems did it occur to a Christian to surrender rather than defend Europe out of love toward the Saracens or Turks. The enemy in the political sense need not be hated personally, and in the private sphere only does it make sense to love one's enemy, i.e., one's adversary. The Bible quotation touches the political antithesis even less than it intends to dissolve, for example, the antithesis of good and evil or beautiful and ugly. It certainly does not mean that one should love and support the enemies of one's own people.

The political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping. In its entirety the state as an organized political entity

tion, upheaval, rebellion, civil war (στάσις).<sup>\*</sup> Real war for Plato is a war between Hellenes and Barbarians only (those who are "by nature enemies"), whereas conflicts among Hellenes are for him discords (στάσεις). The thought expressed here is that a people cannot wage war against itself and a civil war is only a self-laceration and it does not signify that perhaps a new state or even a new people is being created. Cited mostly for the *hostis* concept is Pomponius in the *Digest* 50, 16, 118. The most clear-cut definition with additional supporting material is in Forcellini's *Lexicon totius latinitatis* (1965 ed.), II, 684: "A public enemy (*hostis*) is one with whom we are at war publicly. . . . In this respect he differs from a private enemy. He is a person with whom we have private quarrels. They may also be distinguished as follows: a private enemy is a person who hates us, whereas a public enemy is a person who fights against us."

<sup>\*</sup> *Stasis* also means the exact opposite, i.e., peace and order. The dialectic inherent in the term is pointed out by Carl Schmitt in *Politische Theologie II: Die Legende von der Erledigung jeder Politischen Theologie* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1970), pp. 117-118.

decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction. Furthermore, next to the primary political decisions and under the protection of the decision taken, numerous secondary concepts of the political emanate. As to the equation of politics and state discussed under Section 1, it has the effect, for example, of contrasting a political attitude of a state with party politics so that one can speak of a state's domestic religious, educational, communal, social policy, and so on. Notwithstanding, the state encompasses and relativizes all these antitheses. However an antithesis and antagonism remain here within the state's domain which have relevance for the concept of the political.<sup>10</sup> Finally even more banal forms of politics appear, forms which assume parasite- and caricature-like configurations. What remains here from the original friend-enemy grouping is only some sort of antagonistic moment, which manifests itself in all sorts of tactics and practices, competitions and intrigues; and the most peculiar dealings and manipulations are called politics. But the fact that the substance of the political is contained in the context of a concrete antagonism is still expressed in everyday language, even where the awareness of the extreme case has been entirely lost.

This becomes evident in daily speech and can be exemplified by two obvious phenomena. First, all political concepts, images, and terms have a polemical meaning. They are focused on a specific conflict and are bound to a concrete situation; the result (which manifests itself in war or revolution) is a friend-enemy grouping, and they turn into empty and ghostlike abstractions when this situation disappears. Words such as state, republic,<sup>11</sup> society, class, as well

<sup>10</sup> A social policy existed ever since a politically noteworthy class put forth its social demands; welfare care, which in early times was administered to the poor and distressed, had not been considered a sociopolitical problem and was also not called such. Likewise a church policy existed only where a church constituted a politically significant counterforce.

<sup>11</sup> Machiavelli, for example, calls all nonmonarchical states republics, and his definition is still accepted today. Richard Thoma defines democracy as a nonprivileged state; hence all nondemocracies are classified as privileged states.

as sovereignty, constitutional state, absolutism, dictatorship, economic planning, neutral or total state, and so on, are incomprehensible if one does not know exactly who is to be affected, combated, refuted, or negated by such a term.<sup>12</sup> Above all the polemical character de-

<sup>12</sup> Numerous forms and degrees of intensity of the polemical character are also here possible. But the essentially polemical nature of the politically charged terms and concepts remain nevertheless recognizable. Terminological questions become thereby highly political. A word or expression can simultaneously be reflex, signal, password, and weapon in a hostile confrontation. For example, Karl Renner, a socialist of the Second International, in a very significant scholarly publication, *Die Rechtsinstitute des Privatrechts* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1929), p. 97, calls rent which the tenant pays the landlord "tribute." Most German professors of jurisprudence, judges, and lawyers, would consider such a designation an inadmissible politicalization of civil law relationships and would reject this on the grounds that it would disturb the purely juristic, purely legal, purely scientific discussion. For them the question has been decided in a legal positivist manner, and the therein residing political design of the state is thus recognized. On the other hand, many socialists of the Second International put much value in calling the payments which armed France imposes upon disarmed Germany not "tribute," but "reparations." "Reparation" appears to be more juristic, more legal, more peaceful, less polemical, and more apolitical than "tribute." In scrutinizing this more closely, however, it may be seen that "reparation" is more highly charged and therefore also political because this term is utilized politically to condemn juristically and even morally the vanquished enemy. The imposed payments have the effect of disqualifying and subjugating him not only legally but also morally. The question in Germany today is whether one should say "tribute" or "reparation." This has turned into an internal dispute. In previous centuries a controversy existed between the German kaiser (and king of Hungary) and the Turkish sultan on the question of whether the payments made by the kaiser to the sultan were in the nature of a "pension" or "tribute." The debtor stressed that he did not pay "tribute" but "pension," whereas the creditor considered it to be "tribute." In the relations between Christians and Turks the words were still used in those days more openly and more objectively, and the juristic concepts perhaps had not yet become to the same extent as today political instruments of coercion. Nevertheless, Bodin, who mentions this controversy (*Les Six Livres de la République*, Paris, 1580, p. 784), adds that in most instances "pension"

termines the use of the word political regardless of whether the adversary is designated as nonpolitical (in the sense of harmless), or vice versa if one wants to disqualify or denounce him as political in order to portray oneself as nonpolitical (in the sense of purely scientific, purely moral, purely juristic, purely aesthetic, purely economic, or on the basis of similar purities) and thereby superior.

Secondly, in usual domestic polemics the word political is today often used interchangeably with party politics. The inevitable lack of objectivity in political decisions, which is only the reflex to suppress the politically inherent friend-enemy antithesis, manifests itself in the regrettable forms and aspects of the scramble for office and the politics of patronage. The demand for depoliticalization which arises in this context means only the rejection of party politics, etc. The equation politics = party politics is possible whenever antagonisms among domestic political parties succeed in weakening the all-embracing political unit, the state. The intensification of internal antagonisms has the effect of weakening the common identity vis-à-vis another state. If domestic conflicts among political parties have become the sole political difference, the most extreme degree of internal political tension is thereby reached; i.e., the domestic, not the foreign friend-and-enemy groupings are decisive for armed conflict. The ever present possibility of conflict must always be kept in mind. If one wants to speak of politics in the context of the primacy of internal politics, then this conflict no longer refers to war between organized nations but to civil war.

For to the enemy concept belongs the ever present possibility of combat. All peripherals must be left aside from this term, including military details and the development of weapons technology. War is armed combat between organized political entities; civil war is armed combat within an organized unit. A self-laceration endangers the survival of the latter. The essence of a weapon is that

is paid not to protect oneself from other enemies, but primarily from the protector himself and to ransom oneself from an invasion (*pour se racheter de l'invasion*).

it is a means of physically killing human beings. Just as the term enemy, the word combat, too, is to be understood in its original existential sense. It does not mean competition, nor does it mean pure intellectual controversy nor symbolic wrestlings in which, after all, every human being is somehow always involved, for it is a fact that the entire life of a human being is a struggle and every human being symbolically a combatant. The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity, <sup>feeling of</sup> War is the existential negation of the enemy.\* <sup>cond. of</sup> It is the most extreme <sup>host-/</sup> <sup>hatred</sup> consequence of enmity. It does not have to be common, normal, something ideal, or desirable. But it must nevertheless remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid.

It is by no means as though the political signifies nothing but devastating war and every political deed a military action, by no means as though every nation would be uninterruptedly faced with the friend-enemy alternative vis-à-vis every other nation. And, after all, could not the politically reasonable course reside in avoiding war? The definition of the political suggested here neither favors war nor militarism, neither imperialism nor pacifism. Nor is it an attempt to idealize the victorious war or the successful revolution as a "social ideal," since neither war nor revolution is something social or something ideal.<sup>13</sup> The military battle itself is not the

\* Schmitt clearly alludes here to the foe concept in politics.

<sup>13</sup> Rudolf Stammler's thesis, which is rooted in neo-Kantian thought, that the "social ideal" is the "community of free willing individuals" is contradicted by Erich Kaufmann in *Das Wesen des Völkerrechts und die clausula rebus sic stantibus* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1911), p. 146, who maintains that "not the community of free willing individuals, but the victorious war is the social ideal: the victorious war as the last means toward that lofty goal" (the participation and self-assertion of the state in world history). This sentence incorporates the typical neo-Kantian liberal notion of "social ideal." But wars, including victorious wars, are something completely incommensurable and incompatible with this conception. This idea is then joined to the notion of the victorious war, which has its habitat in the

"continuation of politics by other means" as the famous term of Clausewitz is generally incorrectly cited.<sup>14</sup> War has its own strategic, tactical, and other rules and points of view, but they all presuppose that the political decision has already been made as to who the enemy is. In war the adversaries most often confront each other openly; normally they are identifiable by a uniform, and the distinction of friend and enemy is therefore no longer a political problem which the fighting soldier has to solve. A British diplomat correctly stated in this context that the politician is better schooled for the battle than the soldier, because the politician fights his whole life whereas the soldier does so in exceptional circumstances only. War is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics. But as an ever present possibility it is the leading presupposition which determines in a characteristic way human action and thinking and thereby creates a specifically political behavior.

The criterion of the friend-and-enemy distinction in no way implies that one particular nation must forever be the friend or enemy of another specific nation or that a state of neutrality is not

Hegelian-Rankian philosophy of history, in which social ideals do not exist. The antithesis which appears at first glance to be striking thus breaks into two disparate parts, and the rhetorical force of a thunderous contrast can neither veil the structural incoherence nor heal the intellectual breach.

<sup>14</sup> Carl von Clausewitz (*Vom Kriege*, 2nd ed. [Berlin: Ferd. Dümmlers Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1853], Vol. III, Part III, p. 120) says: "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means." War is for him a "mere instrument of politics." This cannot be denied, but its meaning for the understanding of the essence of politics is thereby still not exhausted. To be precise, war, for Clausewitz, is not merely one of many instruments, but the *ultima ratio* of the friend-and-enemy grouping. War has its own grammar (i.e., special military-technical laws), but politics remains its brain. It does not have its own logic. This can only be derived from the friend-and-enemy concept, and the sentence on page 121 reveals this core of politics: "If war belongs to politics, it will thereby assume its character. The more grandiose and powerful it becomes, so will also the war, and this may be carried to the point at which war reaches its absolute form. . . ."

possible or could not be politically reasonable. As with every political concept, the neutrality concept too is subject to the ultimate presupposition of a real possibility of a friend-and-enemy grouping. Should only neutrality prevail in the world, then not only war but also neutrality would come to an end. The politics of avoiding war terminates, as does all politics, whenever the possibility of fighting disappears. What always matters is the possibility of the extreme case taking place, the real war, and the decision whether this situation has or has not arrived.

That the extreme case appears to be an exception does not negate its decisive character but confirms it all the more. To the extent that wars today have decreased in number and frequency, they have proportionately increased in ferocity. War is still today the most extreme possibility. One can say that the exceptional case has an especially decisive meaning which exposes the core of the matter. For only in real combat is revealed the most extreme consequence of the political grouping of friend and enemy. From this most extreme possibility human life derives its specifically political tension.

A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood, and kill other human beings. For the definition of the political, it is here even irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics.

War as the most extreme political means discloses the possibility which underlies every political idea, namely, the distinction of friend and enemy. This makes sense only as long as this distinc-

tion in mankind is actually present or at least potentially possible. On the other hand, it would be senseless to wage war for purely religious, purely moral, purely juristic, or purely economic motives. The friend-and-enemy grouping and therefore also war cannot be derived from these specific antitheses of human endeavor. A war need be neither something religious nor something morally good nor something lucrative. War today is in all likelihood none of these. This obvious point is mostly confused by the fact that religious, moral, and other antitheses can intensify to political ones and can bring about the decisive friend-or-enemy constellation. If, in fact, this occurs, then the relevant antithesis is no longer purely religious, moral, or economic, but political. The sole remaining question then is always whether such a friend-and-enemy grouping is really at hand, regardless of which human motives are sufficiently strong to have brought it about.

Nothing can escape this logical conclusion of the political. If pacifist hostility toward war were so strong as to drive pacifists into a war against nonpacifists, in a war against war, that would prove that pacifism truly possesses political energy because it is sufficiently strong to group men according to friend and enemy. If, in fact, the will to abolish war is so strong that it no longer shuns war, then it has become a political motive, i.e., it affirms, even if only as an extreme possibility, war and even the reason for war. Presently this appears to be a peculiar way of justifying wars. The war is then considered to constitute the absolute last war of humanity. Such a war is necessarily unusually intense and inhuman because, by transcending the limits of the political framework, it simultaneously degrades the enemy into moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster that must not only be defeated but also utterly destroyed. In other words, he is an enemy who no longer must be compelled to retreat into his borders only.\* The feasibility of such war is particularly illustrative of the fact that war as a real

\* Also here Schmitt clearly alludes to the enemy-foe distinction.

possibility is still present today, and this fact is crucial for the friend-and-enemy antithesis and for the recognition of politics.

## 4

Every religious, moral, economic, ethical, or other antithesis transforms into a political one if it is sufficiently strong to group human beings effectively according to friend and enemy. The political does not reside in the battle itself, which possesses its own technical, psychological, and military laws, but in the mode of behavior which is determined by this possibility, by clearly evaluating the concrete situation and thereby being able to distinguish correctly the real friend and the real enemy. A religious community which wages wars against members of other religious communities or engages in other wars is already more than a religious community; it is a political entity. It is a political entity when it possesses, even if only negatively, the capacity of promoting that decisive step, when it is in the position of forbidding its members to participate in wars, i.e., of decisively denying the enemy quality of a certain adversary. The same holds true for an association of individuals based on economic interests as, for example, an industrial concern or a labor union. Also a class in the Marxian sense ceases to be something purely economic and becomes a political factor when it reaches this decisive point, for example, when Marxists approach the class struggle seriously and treat the class adversary as a real enemy and fights him either in the form of a war of state against state or in a civil war within a state. The real battle is then of necessity no longer fought according to economic laws but has—next to the fighting methods in the narrowest technical sense—its political necessities and orientations, coalitions and compromises, and so on. Should the proletariat succeed in seizing political power within a state, a proletarian state will thus have been created. This state is by no means less of a political power than a national state, a theocratic, mercantile, or