

The recent revival of interest in political theorist Carl Schmitt has subsequently placed the spotlight once again on one of his most seminal works, *The Concept of the Political*, which he first published in 1927 in Germany. As perhaps the clearest, and thus most controversial distillation of his political thought, recent efforts to expound on the fuller meaning of the most salient ideas in this work are certainly worthy of attention.

In the following essay it is my intention to more fully explore the potential meanings of several of Schmitt's fundamental ideas, with the input of some of the latest scholarship in that regard. In particular, my focus includes Schmitt's friend-enemy distinction in his description of the political and the state, and also specific criticisms of liberalism that he discussed.

THE FRIEND-ENEMY DISTINCTION

The friend-enemy distinction is perhaps the most well-known contribution from Schmitt to political theory. To be specific, the distinction is Schmitt's overarching understanding of the political realm: it is precisely the distinction "to which political actions and motives can be reduced..."¹ Despite potential economic trade or other everyday dealings with such an entity as the enemy, he is nonetheless "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."²

The key word for Schmitt is *possible*. "What always matters is only the *possibility* of conflict."³ Thus, the actual number of conflicts between two groups or nation-states throughout history is irrelevant. Simply the potentiality of violent action is sufficient for the friend-enemy scenario to become a reality between two or more groups. Moreover, Schmitt makes the link

¹ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 26.

² Ibid. 27.

³ Ibid. 39, emphasis mine.

between the conception of “enemy” and potential conflict unmistakably explicit: “For to the enemy concept belongs the ever present possibility of combat.”⁴ In stressing the literalness of these explanations, Schmitt proffers that such terms as “friend” and “enemy” have their true meaning specifically because “they refer to the real possibility of physical killing.”⁵ Therefore, “Conflict” here is not simply meant in a metaphorical sense, but with the understanding of an actual clash, with bloodshed in the fullest meaning of the term.

How does this fit with Schmitt’s understanding of the state? Schmitt’s description of the state, the closest he ever comes to an actual definition, is his famous statement that “[t]he concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political.”⁶ Although he admits the link between state and political as being an “unsatisfactory circle,” the friend-enemy distinction sheds at least some light on these terms. Gopal Balakrishnan astutely asks what was meant by Schmitt with the word “presuppose”.⁷ He notes in reply that “conflict” seems to be the primordial type of condition that designates the term “political,” and then “order, the state, is secondary—perhaps because order arises out of this primordial condition of conflict without ever fully suppressing it.”⁸ One immediately sees here a potential parallel with Hobbesian political theory, especially between Hobbes’ ‘state of nature’ and the sense of order that should arise from such a scenario after the Leviathan enters as the third party to keep the peace. However, Schmitt’s approach differs in several ways, as will be seen shortly.

Balakrishnan notes as well that Leo Strauss rejected the earlier interpretation above regarding the link between the state and the political since the Greek word *polis* could conceivably be translated either way, making neither term distinguishable from the other.⁹

⁴ Ibid. 32.

⁵ Ibid. 33.

⁶ Ibid. 19.

⁷ Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (New York: Verso, 2000), 103.

⁸ Ibid. 103.

⁹ Ibid. 103.

However, Balakrishnan argues that for Schmitt, “state” was not the same as “polis” but stood rather for a “specific ‘status’ of political relations—a condition approaching a territorial monopoly of legitimate violence.”¹⁰ Moreover, he asserts that the cryptic point here is that the classic model of the state of the early modern historical period in Europe was losing this “monopoly” and could not be “the natural centre of the political universe” in the future. Such an analysis as Balakrishnan’s, if correct, highlights the importance of the friend-enemy antithesis for understanding the essence of Schmitt’s political thought.

Yet, the contrast between other political options of that time and Schmitt’s own views is crucial for understanding the above point more completely. Schmitt decried the depoliticalizations of the liberal nineteenth century, which pitted various spheres (religious, cultural, economic, etc.) as antitheses of the state.¹¹ Nevertheless, he loathed perhaps even more the politicalizations that characterized the growth of the total state of the twentieth century¹² in which every part of life becomes connected to the state itself. As a matter of fact, as the new emerging political trend of the twentieth century, the growth of the total state in its control of every part of society became in some ways, a key target in Schmitt’s article. Balakrishnan’s summary statements place those themes in perspective:

It could be said, then, that there are two lines of attack running through *Der Begriff des Politischen*: against the hyperpoliticization which was undermining the centrality of the state by making ‘everything’ potentially political; and against the resulting drop in the level of political life which stemmed from the very same cause and had thoroughly adulterated politics with the language of moral platitudes, electoral campaigning, and litigation.¹³

If Balakrishnan is correct, then the importance of the friend-enemy distinction becomes clarified much more fully. The emphasis on the distinction is part of Schmitt’s effort to keep the line between state and society a sharply defined one, not only so the state could continue its mission

¹⁰ Ibid. 103.

¹¹ Schmitt, 23.

¹² Ibid. 22.

¹³ Balakrishnan, 105.

of warding off enemies from the outside, but also remain vigilant for the “enemy” on the inside--any particular group in the territory itself that may pose a threat to the state in some way. But besides arguing in favor of his model in both cases, Schmitt argues as well against the other options, especially against anarchist liberalism, which will be discussed later in this essay.

Perhaps an additional reason for Schmitt’s heavy development and defense of the friend-enemy connection with the political realm stems from the way, albeit an indirect one, in which it implicitly shows weaknesses in the starting point of liberalism. William E. Scheuermann observes that in Schmitt’s *Constitutional Theory*, written in 1928, he discusses how liberals “regularly presuppose the existence of a viable political apparatus” and how the stated goal of liberal constitutionalism itself is simply “the *limitation* of a (preexisting) institutional complex.”¹⁴ In other words, the central focus of the liberal political model rests simply on how to respond to the state in the position of power, but the purpose is never to explain, much less justify, *how* it got there to begin with.

Thus, liberals do “concede”, although in an indirect fashion, that “the existence of a functioning political entity is necessarily *prior* to any normativistic restraints on it,” which amounts to a tacit admission that “normativism can never provide an adequate basis for a political community.”¹⁵ Stated another way, “The very *differentiation* of a people from the ‘alien foe’ is inevitably supranormative;”¹⁶ Schmitt is doubtful that “political identity can rest meaningfully on ‘normativistic’ ideas,...because political conflict with ‘existential’ enemies reaches such a pitch of intensity that ‘normativities’ are likely to prove meaningless.” As a result, the very idea that Schmitt’s necessary point of departure transcends ethics has, of course, enormous ramifications for the liberal political models of his time with their particular notions of

¹⁴ William E. Scheuermann, *The End of Law* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 66.

¹⁵ *Ibid.* 66.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 69.

normativity. Schmitt's existential twist in his political theory renders liberal models essentially irrelevant right from the beginning from two angles: either the idea of how the state began is not covered in the model at all, or any serious proposal to answer that question would have to necessarily involve Schmittian concepts to justify the existence of any type of state.

Scheuermann elaborates on the second angle by delineating more precisely the connection Schmitt draws between the "enemy" concept and the inadequacies of normativism in this regard: "A people is 'constituted'¹⁷ first and foremost by means of possessing a capacity for undertaking violence against external threats, by the fact that it is 'awakened' and 'capable of action' against potential political enemies."¹⁸ Therefore, "only if a political entity can successfully ward off the 'stranger'¹⁹ and thus guarantee its survival do liberal legal normativities even have a chance to function successfully." A connection, then, arguably exists between external and domestic factors in justifying the existence and purpose of the state in Schmittian terms. Regardless of how liberals of Schmitt's time would construe what the ideal model of government would be for the inner workings of society within the territory in question, the presence of a reasonably powerful state, powerful enough to ensure the continued stability of the society under discussion, must be existentially present prior to a domestic scene that meets the liberal ideal popular in that period.

However, instead of a third party that might officially recognize or pronounce such a development or a "general norm" of some sort, Schmitt maintains that "only the actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict."²⁰ As a matter of fact, Balakrishnan argues further that it is precisely the existential component of Schmitt's thought that explains why Schmitt precludes judgements by a

¹⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Die Verfassungslehre* (Munich: Duncker and Humblot, 1928), 50. Quoted in William E. Scheuermann, *The End of Law* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 66.

¹⁸ Scheuermann, 66.

¹⁹ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1976), 27. Quoted in William E. Scheuermann, *The End of Law* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1999), 66.

²⁰ Schmitt, 27.

third party in this area: “But what constitutes an existential danger to one’s own form of life can be judged only by the participants in a potential conflict, because it is they who have experienced the challenge of the enemy. The specifically political perspective which informs this judgement emerges out of a first-hand encounter with the enemy.”²¹

Scheuermann goes even further in his interpretation of Schmitt’s stipulation by suggesting that “the very intensity of such ‘existential’ conflicts excludes the possibility of regulating them by liberal legal devices.”²² Thus, the very existential nature of conflict itself as well as the inadequacies of liberal normativities on this question very quickly limit the judgement to the very participants themselves. Although Schmitt never directly alludes to the League of Nations in this section of his article, it is very clear that Schmitt’s reasoning here applies on the international scene no less than in domestic disputes. For Schmitt, it would be ludicrous to expect the League to correctly make such evaluations, regardless of whether hostilities between two parties are at most only a potentiality or in cases in which actual violence has taken place. Either way, Schmitt felt that common liberal normative principles are utterly incapable of offering any insight into a potential conflict in terms of the “correct” outlook one should have toward the other participant.

Moreover, if one considers two theories of that time regarding the fundamental basis of political division, the first of which viewing history as being one of class struggles and the other as conflict between nation-states, with each as a subject in the history of world conflict, the implications of the results are interesting for what they imply about Schmitt. If Balakrishnan is correct, Schmitt leaned toward the second as the more plausible, but never totally ruled out the first option.²³ However, as Balakrishnan argues, a particular passage in *The Concept of the*

²¹ Balakrishnan, 108.

²² Scheuermann, 66.

²³ Balakrishnan, 111.

Political does seem to suggest that Schmitt felt that the class-struggle model would, over time, not prove to be the accurate explanation of history: “When the political significance of domestic economic associations had been recognized, in particular the growth of labor unions, the laws of the state appeared quite powerless against their economic weapon, the strike. Consequently, some have somewhat hastily proclaimed the death and the end of the state.”²⁴ Although not conclusive, Schmitt’s wording here suggests at the very least that current theories based on initial data on the history and potency of strikes mistakenly jumped to conclusions.

Furthermore, perhaps in Schmitt’s thinking, as Balakrishnan surmises, instead of class constituting the primary level of membership, with state membership only secondary, the failure of this interpretation in light of the events at the beginning of World War I seriously called into question the class-struggle thesis.²⁵ Thus, it is perhaps no surprise that Ernst Niekisch called *The Concept of the Political* “the bourgeois answer to the Marxist theory of class struggle.”²⁶

Yet, Schmitt even goes so far as to say that terms such as “state, republic, society, class, as well 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.”²⁷ The converse holds true for Schmitt as well: “When it [a political entity] no longer possesses the capacity or the will to make this [friend-enemy] distinction, it ceases to exist politically.”²⁸

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²⁴ Schmitt, 39.

²⁵ Balakrishnan, 111.

²⁶ Ernst Niekisch, *Widerstand*, Heft 12, 1932, 369-75. Quoted in Gopal Balakrishnan, *The Enemy: An Intellectual Portrait of Carl Schmitt* (New York: Verso, 2000), 111.

²⁷ Schmitt, 31.

²⁸ *Ibid.* 49.

Despite his disagreement with liberalism, Schmitt seems careful to distinguish between two types of liberalism: an authoritarian type and an anarchist branch.²⁹ He argues that the authoritarian approach presupposes the goodness of people, yet without going to the anarchist extreme of desiring the denial of the state. For these liberals, Schmitt said that the belief in the goodness of people is essentially used to argue for the state as a servant of the people and must be controlled as such.³⁰

Yet, although such liberals have not denied the state, Schmitt is quick to note that “it [liberalism] has, on the other hand, [not] advanced a positive theory of the state, but has attempted only to tie the political to the ethical and to subjugate it to economics.”³¹ Renato Cristi describes it with a more positive twist: “The liberal negation of the state only denied its priority and proclaimed its subordination to the interests of civil society.”³² However, as Schmitt notes, “[liberalism] has produced a doctrine of the separation and balance of powers, i.e. a system of checks and controls of state and government. [But] [t]his cannot be characterized as either a theory of state or a basic political principle.”³³ Thus, the system, at best, reflects how to tie the hands of the state (i.e. what the state cannot do) rather than a fundamental, proactively drawn up model of what the state *can* do.

Yet, in Schmitt’s view, the bigger danger involves the second, more radical kind of liberalism, individualist liberalism, since “[t]he negation of the political, which is inherent in every consistent individualism, leads necessarily to a political practice of distrust toward all conceivable political forces and forms of state and government, but never produces on its own a positive theory of state, government, and politics.”³⁴ Therefore, in Schmitt’s opinion, liberalism,

²⁹ Ibid. 60.

³⁰ Ibid. 60.

³¹ Ibid. 61.

³² Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1998), 173.

³³ Schmitt, 61.

³⁴ Ibid. 70.

when developed and followed to its logical conclusion, inevitably leads one to an overall denial of any and all types of government. In view of this indictment, it is of no surprise that Schmitt's harshest criticisms in *The Concept of Political* are reserved for this type of political thinking.

However, despite the problems that stem from individualism's failure to advance a theory of the state, the largest danger here, at least in a practical sense, is Schmitt's observation that "no consistent individualism can entrust to someone other than to the individual himself the right to dispose of the physical life of the individual."³⁵ Thus, this strand of liberalism was naturally against the idea of the state's prerogative to demand that its members give their lives in the fight against the enemy. Schmitt notes that the liberal's reasoning in this regard stems from the special emphasis on individual freedom: "To compel him [the private individual] to fight against his will...is,...lack of freedom and repression. All liberal pathos turns against repression and lack of freedom." The overall result is that "we...arrive at an entire system of demilitarized and depoliticalized concepts, thus forming the society of individualist liberalism."

Moreover, Schmitt is, of course, totally cognizant of the role that presuppositions play in both strands of liberal thought: "Ingenuous anarchism [the most extreme form of liberalism that Schmitt discusses] reveals that the belief in the natural goodness of man is closely tied to the radical denial of state and government."³⁶ Yet, Schmitt is careful to delineate a sharp contrast in his description of more mainstream liberals: "For the liberals [holding to ideals from nineteenth-century liberalism], on the other hand, the goodness of man signifies nothing more than an argument with whose aid the state is made to serve society."³⁷

³⁵ Ibid. 71.

³⁶ Ibid. 60.

³⁷ Ibid. 60.

More specifically, Cristi argues that Schmitt, in his recognition of a significant difference between nineteenth-century liberalism and individualist [anarchist] liberalism, felt that the former was able to supply at least a political view of the state.³⁸ Indeed, Schmitt feels, according to Cristi, that it could be seen as a politically conservative brand of liberalism that held at least to some notion of the political in its idea of democracy. As a result, he maintains that Schmitt's primary target in *The Concept of the Political* was the second notion of liberalism, the "humanitarian version" with its strong individualist bent. Cristi is very specific in the fundamental problem Schmitt saw in this individualistic approach: "By fomenting a generalized attitude of distrust against the state and the political, it compromised the minimal role it retained, namely the protection of individual freedom and private property. This attitude could give rise to a theory of the constitution, but not to a theory of the state."³⁹ Therefore, the ideas of this pure individualism were essentially self-defeating and unworkable in the development of an overall blueprint for how society and the state could logically coexist.

Scheuermann carefully outlines how the situation with the League of Nations was used by Schmitt to expand his assault on liberalism in *The Concept of the Political*.⁴⁰ In particular, the League endorsed the Allied occupation of the German Rhineland to prevent German rearmament, but the vagueness of the legal clauses enabled the Allies to justify almost any action that was taken. Even worse, any criticism of Allied actions, not to mention the League itself, could be labeled as "inhumane" and against "international law."⁴¹ The ensuing unfair dilemma for Weimar Germany was the perfect example for Schmitt to expose the actual injustice that was under the guise of "international justice" as Scheuermann makes clear in his own summation of Schmitt's

³⁸ Cristi, 174.

³⁹ Ibid. 174.

⁴⁰ Scheuermann, 145.

⁴¹ Ibid. 147.

thinking: “Liberal states use international law to mask their own acts of violence as expressions of legality, while discriminating against their opponents by describing their actions as criminal and inhumane.”⁴²

However, the worst aspect of this tendency would be the terrible results that are bound to ensue at some point: “Notwithstanding the claim of international law to seek universal peace, for Schmitt it is therefore destined to generate wars more horrible than those hitherto known to modern history.”⁴³ Thus, for Schmitt it is literally true to say that “[t]he Geneva League of Nations does not eliminate the possibility of wars...It introduces new possibilities for wars, permits wars to take place, sanctions coalition wars, and by legitimizing and sanctioning certain wars it sweeps away many obstacles to war.”⁴⁴ The horrific danger that Schmitt envisions involves the League or conceivably any powerful nation or group of nations using “humanitarian” reasons as the basis for almost any type of military action in connection with “international justice.” Undoubtedly, memories of World War I were fresh in Schmitt’s mind at the moment he penned such thoughts. If such a world war was easily started simply on the basis of simple alliances in Europe involving three or more nations, how easy would such a worldwide conflict be ignited by a league of nations that takes actions out of “justice” toward another country or region in the world?

Yet, even if one hypothetically has good intentions in using liberal norms to settle disputes, this approach is totally inadequate to deal with the situation of Weimar Germany and the Allies as well as situations of a like nature. Scheuermann points out Schmitt’s overall outlook on such a scenario: “Life-and-death political conflicts [such as the Rhineland situation, which rested on the assumption of normalcy in current territorial boundaries after WWI] cannot be

⁴² Ibid. 146.

⁴³ Ibid. 146.

⁴⁴ Schmitt, 56.

effectively solved by liberal legal devices. ‘Normal’ legal rules are inappropriate in a situation of crisis or abnormalcy,” which is undoubtedly how Schmitt saw the whole Rhineland affair.⁴⁵

However, Scheuermann goes even further by connecting such a conclusion to early political thinkers from the past: “In this spirit, early modern political theorists long recognized that the rule of law was a poor device for regulating the most fundamental political conflicts. They pictured relations between different states as representing an international ‘state of nature’ qualitatively distinct from the ‘rule of law’ sought within the domestic arena.”⁴⁶ The indirect allusion to Hobbes’ ideas (and dovetailing to some extent with Locke’s as well) reinforces how Schmitt’s views in this regard should come as no big surprise, given his affinity for this branch of political thought. Scheuermann elaborates further on Schmitt’s take on world affairs:

In Schmitt’s view, something akin to this state of nature still characterizes international politics. Although for Schmitt the idea of the state of nature is conceptually problematic, it gives expression to a crucial political verity: political communities in the international arena inevitably confront adversaries who ‘must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one’s own form of existence.’⁴⁷

In general, one might say that Schmitt projects the original Hobbesian idea of the state of nature (a lack of established order among individuals) onto the world stage in which a parallel condition of instability exists. However, although arranging “contracts” between individuals might be seen as analogous with the peace treaties or trade agreements that nations participate in, Schmitt is quick to realize that there is no equivalent to “Leviathan” in the world arena to enforce such agreements. Or, even if one perceives the League as this Leviathan, one would have to be foolish to preclude the possibility of the League misusing this power in view of its current abuse of it in the case of the Rhineland occupation. Therefore, not only did the then-current dilemma with the League showcase the unworkability and moral bankruptcy of universal liberal ideals, but

⁴⁵ Scheuermann, 146. My intermittent clarification within the quotation is a paraphrase of Scheuermann’s own clarifying remark.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 146-47.

⁴⁷ Ibid. 147.

Schmitt also intended his analysis to demonstrate once more that only his existential prescription for the reality of the political situation takes into account what is actually at stake in such scenarios.

Yet, Schmitt's own ties to liberalism are the most interesting observation made by Cristi. Besides distinguishing classical liberalism from the anarchic approach of purely individualist liberalism, Schmitt also trimmed its "association" with democracy, which would mean "grafting" in other political options, such as even monarchic or aristocratic options.⁴⁸ Thus, Schmitt is open to accommodating liberalism in a certain way in his system. Cristi supports this by observing Schmitt's discussion of this area in his *Verfassungslehre (Constitutional Theory)*. After outlining monarchy, democracy, and aristocracy as three *Staatsformen*, Schmitt observes: "The principles of liberal freedom are able to accommodate any form of state, so long as the limits imposed by the rule of law on governmental power are observed and the state is not conceived as absolute."⁴⁹

Moreover, according to Cristi, comparing various editions of *The Concept of the Political* shows that although the influence of political events of that time influenced Schmitt somewhat in tweaking his views, he was able to maintain a type of "neoliberal" approach throughout it all.⁵⁰ More specifically, Schmitt held to a liberal theory of the constitution, but a conservative view of the state, an overall view that Cristi calls "authoritarian liberalism."⁵¹ For example, in 1932 Schmitt argued for the dictatorial capacity of the position of the *Reichspräsident* in order to block the "total politicization" of society as the final result of a democratic state.⁵² However, Cristi maintains that even at this juncture, Schmitt held to a basic tenet of liberalism—a dualism of civil society and the state.

⁴⁸ Cristi, 175.

⁴⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Die Verfassungslehre* (Munich: Duncker and Humblot, 1928), 200. Quoted in Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1998), 175.

⁵⁰ Cristi, 177.

⁵¹ Cristi, 174.

⁵² *Ibid.* 175.

A comparison of the 1927 and 1932 editions of *The Concept of the Political* exemplifies a slight shift in Schmitt's accommodating position regarding liberalism, at least according to Cristi.⁵³ First, a specific passage from the 1927 edition serves as an example of Schmitt's acknowledgement of the politically conservative liberalism outlined earlier, instead of only viewing all liberalism as the anarchic type that advocated the abolition of the state:

For the liberals, by contrast, the goodness of humankind signifies nothing more than an argument by means of which the state is made to serve society; it only means that society is good and that the state is only its distrustingly controlled subordinate.⁵⁴

Although the basic position is also maintained by Schmitt in the 1932 edition, Cristi argues that Schmitt altered the text slightly to indicate his *rapprochement* with the neoliberal position:

For the liberals, by contrast, the goodness of humankind signifies nothing more than an argument by means of which the state is made to serve society; it only means that society has its own order in itself and that the state is only its distrustingly controlled subordinate, bound to precise limits.⁵⁵

The replacement of the phrase "society is good," with the phrase "society has its own order in itself" indicates Schmitt's accommodating stance with the German neoliberals' desire for a strong state according to Cristi.⁵⁶ Moreover, he maintains that the phrase "bound to precise limits" continued to outline boundaries with the rest of society that the state should respect. In the 1933 edition, additional changes were made but of a quite limited nature:

For the liberals, the goodness of humankind only signifies an argument by means of which they make the state serve society, because society has its own order 'in itself' and the state ought to be only its distrustingly controlled instrument, bound to precise rules.⁵⁷

⁵³ Ibid. 176.

⁵⁴ Carl Schmitt, "Der Begriff des Politischen," *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*, 58 (1927), 22. Quoted in Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1998), 176.

⁵⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker and Humblot, 1932, 1963), 60. Quoted in Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1998), 176.

⁵⁶ Cristi, 177.

⁵⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlag, 1933), 42. Quoted in Renato Cristi, *Carl Schmitt and Authoritarian Liberalism: Strong State, Free Economy* (Cardiff, Wales: University of Wales Press, 1998), 177.

Thus, Cristi argues that throughout all three editions Schmitt strove to hold to his basic neo-liberal position the entire time.

CONCLUSION

Unpacking Schmittian thought in the key areas of the friend-enemy distinction, the *jus belli*, problems with liberalism, and the nature of man reveal a complex commitment on Schmitt's part to the extensive development of a viable, consistent political theory of the state, one that strove to address the historical and political events of his day. Schmitt deftly aimed to showcase his existential approach as the most realistic appraisal of the actual essence of politics while simultaneously exposing what he felt were the weaknesses and inconsistencies in both types of liberalism of the time.

Schmitt's intellectual fascination with politics was arguably motivated, or at least reinforced, by what he felt were unfair political practices being exercised against his beloved Germany, both from within and without. The country's humiliation after World War I, the frustrating occupation of the Rhineland by French and Belgian troops in 1923, and the political unrest in the Weimar period conceivably distressed Schmitt a great deal and perhaps even played a powerful role in his allegiance to the Nazis after Hitler's rise to power. However, regardless of the historical background that gave rise to his political theory, it seems indubitable that Schmitt fully intended his understanding of politics to be viewed as the decisive theory for the explanation and application of politics for all of world history, with the hope that the future would be handled in a realistic way, to the extent that statesmen would take to heart his approach.

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