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Wartime Pamphlets, Anti-English Metaphors, and the Intensification of Antidemocratic Discourse in Post-WWI Germany

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Introduction

Wars typically have unforeseeable domestic implications. In Germany, the interpretation of World War I as a cultural struggle against the English intertwined with the question of the suitability of democracy for the German nation. This article establishes novel links between wartime Anglophobia and antidemocratic political theory in the early Weimar Republic by engaging with the key argumentative forms in the two distinct but overlapping discourses. I first focus on pejorative depictions of the English commercial spirit at the beginning of the war and note how these ideas were later utilized in the antidemocratic discourse after the German defeat. Next I scrutinize the popular depictions of English civilization in mechanical terms and German culture as organic growth – a contrast intensified by the enmity in the war. I then analyze the discourse of right-wing antidemocracy in light of the anti-English commercial and mechanical/organic metaphors. These metaphorical identifications, I argue,

facilitated the transfer of standard arguments or *topoi* between the two discourses, from debates on war to antidemocratic political theory.

I understand “discourse” in Pocock’s sense—as uses of available linguistic resources for political purposes.¹ In studying political thought, we should ask, first, for the discourses and sub-languages available to the authors and, second, for the actual uses and implications of these resources in particular contexts that help us unearth their intellectual – and sometimes directly political – functions. Such an approach is easily extendable onto metaphors. Rather than stable idea-substances, metaphors should be seen as long-term linguistic resources, at the disposal of all participants in the discourse, essentially open-ended, and widely usable. As soon as we cease treating metaphors as stable ideological substances so that a given ideology necessitates the use of certain metaphors or that, vice versa, particular metaphors *per se* convey ideological positions, it becomes unsurprising that there were supporters of parliamentary democracy who utilized organic metaphors (e.g. Hugo Preuß) or alternatively opposed them (Hans Kelsen) just as there were antidemocratic conservatives exploiting them (Othmar Spann) and those with misgivings about their ambiguity (Carl Schmitt). Rather, these were predictable variations in the use of shared linguistic material.

This perspective, utilizing elements from Pocock and Hans Blumenberg, also helps us grasp how antidemocratic agendas may rise from discursive spaces that have little or nothing inherently antidemocratic about them. Not all proponents of German particularity were against democratization and parliamentarization: Troeltsch, Weber, Meinecke, and others who supported the war effort with strong cultural theses, accepted Western institutional forms, albeit with reservations. One criterion demarcating relative moderates from vehement

¹ J. G. A. Pocock, *Political Thought and History: Essays on Theory and Method* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 87-88 and *passim*.

antidemocrats is the former group's relatively low emphasis on the organic/mechanical divide. Troeltsch, Meinecke, and other "republicans by reasons" did not build extensively on such background metaphors as the wartime pamphleteers and subsequent antidemocrats. The difference between democrats and antidemocrats, however, does not typically lie in the kinds of metaphors they use, but rather in *how* these metaphors are used and in the intensity of their ramifications. Instead of inventing completely novel metaphors, Weimar-era antidemocrats mostly rather *intensified* existing ones to bring out their political potential, I argue.

The wartime pamphlets include Werner Sombart's *Händler und Helden* and Max Scheler's *Der Genius des Krieges* – two notorious 1915 texts that were the foremost theoretical analyses of the war, and also provided paradigmatic formulations for anti-English sentiments. The war discourse further includes comments made at the war's end by Oswald Spengler and Thomas Mann (who also belong to the antidemocratic strand). In analyzing antidemocratic discourse, I draw examples from them but also Othmar Spann, Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, Edgar Julius Jung, Hans Freyer, and Carl Schmitt – all major figures of the Weimar conservative Right, sometimes grouped together as "the conservative revolution."²

By analyzing argumentative forms, I seek to capture the discursive significance of WWI enmity in the early- and mid-Weimar Republic on the level of political thought more precisely than previous scholarship. Steffen Bruendel analyzes German wartime pamphlets comprehensively vis-à-vis military-political events,³ while Matthew Stibbe shows the swift

² For problems in this term, see Stefan Breuer, "Die 'Konservative Revolution': Kritik eines Mythos," *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 31 (1990): 585–607.

³ Steffen Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat: Die 'Ideen von 1914' und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie, 2003).

emergence and dissemination of Anglophobia in propagandist pamphlets.⁴ Neither author, however, links wartime argumentation with postwar antidemocratic discourse. Christoph Jahr usefully emphasizes the domestic functions of anti-British enemy images in countering the challenge of Western political ideas, such as liberalism and pluralism, albeit with little attention to argumentative forms.⁵ Marcus Llanque generally studies how the war experience catalyzed Weimar democracy debates, but only addresses democratic thought.⁶ Moreover, while WWI allegedly “brutalized” or “militarized” practical politics,⁷ we should consider parallel intellectual effects, albeit, *pace* Mosse and others, without assuming ideological rigor or unilinear causality from events to ideas. Not only is enmity constructed linguistically and by means of metaphors, but it also catalyzes further discourse and causes intra-discursive shifts of emphasis. When enmity is transmitted by metaphors, they, as inherently flexible media, become generalized argumentative forms capable of being filled with new content according to need and applicable to constantly new targets, including external enemies (the English) and internal ones (Jews or Liberals).

Scholars have noted the centrality of the war and the organic imagery for emergent Weimar antidemocracy. Stefan Breuer argues that the war experience produced a sense of apocalyptic doom, a readiness to endorse violence, and an overemphasis on masculinity amongst radical conservatives, but he does not analyze anti-English or antidemocratic elements or how these

⁴ Matthew Stibbe, *German Anglophobia and the Great War, 1914–1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10–79.

⁵ Christoph Jahr, “‘Das Krämervolk der eitlen Briten’: Das deutsche Englandfeindbild im Ersten Weltkrieg,” in *Feindbilder in der deutschen Geschichte*, ed. Christoph Jahr, Uwe Mai and Kathrin Roller (Berlin: Metropol, 1994), 140–1.

⁶ Marcus Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken im Krieg: Die deutsche Debatte im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie, 2000).

⁷ George L. Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers: Reshaping the Memory of the World Wars* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 159–61; Bernd Weisbrod, “Die Politik der Repräsentation: Das Erbe des Ersten Weltkrieges und der Formwandel der Politik in Europa,” in *Der Erste Weltkrieg und die europäische Nachkriegsordnung*, ed. Hans Mommsen (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000), 13–41.

were mediated by metaphors.⁸ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel underlines the emergence of the Germany/West opposition in WWI propaganda and notes how National Socialism later deployed this idea against democracy, but does not, however, scrutinize how the discourse was maintained during Weimar.⁹ Kurt Sontheimer famously identified organicism as a leading idea of Weimar antidemocracy, while Wolfgang Durner notes the 19th-century origins of the organic model and suggests continuities with right-wing antiparliamentarisms. Neither scholar analyzes the utilization of the organic/mechanical dualism in detail.¹⁰ Steven Aschheim reads the transition from WWI to radical Weimar conservatism as mediated by Nietzsche's reception by Scheler, Sombart, Spengler, Mann, and others.¹¹ Nitzan Lebovic maps the gradual politicization of organic *Lebensphilosophie* and its contribution to interwar radical conservatism, but not its antiparliamentary aspects and WWI intensification.¹² Anne Harrington analyzes organic holism in German science, and suggests that its metaphors facilitated transfers from scientific propositions to radical political conclusions, causing "holism to 'speak' with a conservative, antidemocratic accent."¹³ Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers parallelly identify the early-20th-century emergence of integrationist physiology as a pivotal source for integrated body images, provoked by WWI and repeated in social and political analogies thereafter.¹⁴

⁸ Stefan Breuer, *Anatomie der Konservativen Revolution* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993), 37–42.

⁹ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, "Perception of the West in Twentieth-Century Germany," in *Germany and 'The West': The History of a Modern Concept*, ed. Riccardo Bavaj and Martina Sterber (New York: Berghahn, 2015), 81–93.

¹⁰ Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: DTV, 1978[1962]), 255–9; Wolfgang Durner, *Antiparlamentarismus in Deutschland* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 1997), 20–25, 94–116.

¹¹ Steven E. Aschheim, *The Nietzsche Legacy in Germany 1890-1990* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 128–63.

¹² Nitzan Lebovic, *The Philosophy of Life and Death: Ludwig Klages and the Rise of a Nazi Biopolitics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

¹³ Anne Harrington, *Re-Enchanted Science: Holism in German Culture from Wilhelm II to Hitler* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), xx, 186, 208.

¹⁴ Stefanos Geroulanos and Todd Meyers, *The Human Body in the Age of Catastrophe: Brittleness, Integration, Science, and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018).

These perspectives set the stage for my more specific argument. My approach builds upon, and partly transcends, them. First, I argue for the necessity of linking organic/mechanical opposition with analysis of WWI Anglophobia. Second, I scrutinize how these elements amalgamated with the criticism of British commercialism, and I examine the interaction between these two sets of metaphors. Third, I adopt the perspective of discourse and language rather than rigid ideologies per se. This enables mapping continuities and discontinuities of thought by engaging with their habitual linguistic manifestations and without assuming that certain modes of speaking would be substantially and deterministically linked with certain ideological positions. Fourth, I integrate the systematic study of political metaphors into the analysis, which enables me to identify otherwise inaccessible points of convergence between the discourses on war and democracy.

We need to distinguish language as resource from its uses in argumentation. As I will show, right-wing antidemocratic thinkers in the early Weimar Republic capitalized on wartime Anglophobia, which in turn had mobilized 19th-century oppositions and imagery in a novel argumentative situation. The anti-Englishness of the 1910s and 1920s was not a mere belated epilogue to the dispute between German Romanticism and British economic liberalism, but a self-contained controversy with immense political stakes; yet the stereotypic images were old and persuaded a large audience precisely on account of being so conventional. Rather than reading metaphors in terms of their substance, we should therefore focus on their uses and the argumentative functions they served. To conceptualize this aspect, I borrow from Andreas Musolff the idea of “metaphor scenarios” which refers to ways of organizing the available metaphorical material into coherent mini-narratives in order to highlight certain implications whilst suppressing others.¹⁵

¹⁵ Andreas Musolff, *Political Metaphor Analysis: Discourse and Scenarios* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016), 30–1.

The respective languages of 19th-century organic social theory (launched by Adam Müller, Friedrich List, Lorenz von Stein, and others), on the one hand, and WWI Anglophobia, on the other, were so widely diffused that their phraseology became common *topoi*, utilizable with all kinds of implications. However, such flexibility does not preclude elective affinities between certain arguments and certain metaphors within a given discursive community. Weimar antidemocratic conservatives typically opposed the shallow commercialism, mechanization, massification, egoism, and egalitarianism which they associated with Western “civilization.” Together these interconnected arguments made up the specific language of Weimar antidemocracy, which extensively capitalized on the languages of wartime Anglophobia and earlier 19th-century organic social theory.

In addition to the above perspective of metaphors as resources and the corresponding need to clarify argumentative functions, my approach is, secondly, characterized by attention to *interaction* between different metaphors. I focus on the intricate interplay, and occasional amalgamation, of organic/mechanical metaphors and those derived from commerce, both of which, though completely distinct in terms of substance, served anti-English and antiparliamentary arguments in the two discourses. The third element of my resource and use-oriented approach to metaphors is *intensification*. Scholars have noted the capability of metaphors to become intensified in historical circumstances so that their implications become more acute.¹⁶ I propose the WWI events and enmity particularly intensified the traditional anti-English metaphors of peddling, weighing, balance, and mechanical accumulation into propagandistic instruments, which were then adopted in antidemocratic discourse. Wartime enmity and subsequent occupation were amongst the chief triggers of extreme nationalism

¹⁶ Gabriel Motzkin, “On Koselleck’s Intuition of Time in History,” in *The Meaning of Historical Terms and Concepts*, ed. Hartmut Lehmann and Melvin Richter (Washington: German Historical Institute, 1996), 42–3.

and antidemocracy in Weimar; rather than performing detailed biographical analysis on individuals, however, I treat intensification here as a discourse-level phenomenon, mapping some of its notable vehicles.

Against the Merchant Spirit and the “Inner England”

Armed with this methodological toolkit, let us travel back to the summer of 1914. The long-awaited war caused exhilaration on all sides, and German thinkers with divergent backgrounds anticipated a rupture vis-à-vis the stagnated Wilhelmine culture. The war was expected to remedy the earlier barren materialism and to reconcile conflicting domestic interests into a unified war effort. Many Germans saw the conflict as a war of ideas.¹⁷ Troeltsch regarded the war as one of “pencils and spirit” and a “culture war” by the West against the German “metaphysical-religious spirit.”¹⁸ Sombart interpreted WWI as “a holy war” between opposing convictions rather than interests.¹⁹ Scheler denied that “interests” or biological necessity guided it: the war manifested a “spirit” and Germany’s power to expand and shape her environment.²⁰ The war’s epochal significance lay in the anticipated liberation from “all neo-capitalist forms of life,” brought upon Germany by English culture, Scheler argued.²¹

Contrasting the world-views of English merchants and German military heroes, Sombart mocked the English merchant spirit for interpreting the present war in terms of bargaining

¹⁷ For an overview of German intelligentsia’s attitudes, see Kurt Flasch, *Die geistige Mobilmachung: Die deutschen Intellektuellen und der Erste Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Fest, 2000).

¹⁸ Ernst Troeltsch, *Das Wesen des Deutschen* (Heidelberg: Winter, 1915), 5–6, 26, http://reader.digitale-sammlungen.de/de/fs1/object/display/bsb11125286_00005.html.

¹⁹ Werner Sombart, *Händler und Helden: Patriotische Besinnungen* (Munich: Duncker & Humblot, 1915), 4, <https://archive.org/details/hndlerundhelde00sombuoft>.

²⁰ Max Scheler, *Der Genius des Krieges und der deutsche Krieg* (Leipzig: Weiße Bücher, 1915), 10, 38, <https://archive.org/details/dergeniusdeskrie00scheuoft>.

²¹ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 74.

and private gains, whereas Germany exemplified the Prussian soldierly virtues of courage, obedience, and self-sacrifice.²² Precisely herein manifests the radicalizing and intensifying effect of the war. Sombart was critical of capitalism throughout, but while he earlier invoked Marx approvingly and was close to Social Democracy, his late work in the 1930s rather resembled National Socialism.²³ A crucial element in this transition was the experience of German exceptionality and the country's mission of holding back international capitalism – hence the defense of German 'heroes' against English 'merchants,' 'grocers,' 'shopkeepers,' or 'peddlers.' In his prewar theory of capitalism, Sombart sketched caricatures from heroic entrepreneurs to soulless grocers, still depicting both Germans and the English as heroes in contradistinction to the commercial spirit of the Florentines, Scottish, Jews, and Alemanni; at the outbreak of WWI, he, however, altered his framework, now representing the English as calculating merchants.²⁴ There is a detectable anti-Semitic layer in Sombart's argumentation. In 1911, he maintained that Jews were particularly inclined to become merchants (*Händler*) due to their "abstract disposition," "calculative talent," and predisposition to "considerations of utility."²⁵ In his infamous 1915 treatise, Sombart simply projected these anti-Semitic propositions upon the English, producing further imagery of remarkable endurance.

The *topos* of the English merchant was old *per se*: Adam Smith had described the English positively as "a nation of shopkeepers,"²⁶ and the pejorative use of the phrase is usually, inaccurately, attributed to Napoleon.²⁷ Nietzsche similarly mocked 'the grocer' in an anti-

²² Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 14, 22, 35, 66–7, 85.

²³ Rolf Peter Sieferle, *Die Konservative Revolution: Fünf biographische Skizzen* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1995), 74–105.

²⁴ Sieferle, *Konservative Revolution*, 87–90.

²⁵ Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig: Duncker & Humblot, 1911), 332–3, <https://archive.org/details/diejudenunddaswi00sombuoft/page/n5>.

²⁶ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: A Selected Edition*, ed. Kathryn Sutherland (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998[1776]), 358.

²⁷ Paul F. Boller, Jr. and John George, *They Never Said It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 100.

English rant.²⁸ In the WWI context, Troeltsch lauded the German soldierly spirit untouched by puritanism, “peddling” (*Krämerwesen*),²⁹ or “commercialistic philosophy,”³⁰ while the poet Stefan George described the current war as one of “peddling” (*krämern*) on all sides,³¹ a formulation Mann cited favorably in his plea for a “non-political” Germany.³² Building on gradually accumulated material, both ‘merchant’ (*Händler*) and ‘peddler’ (*Krämer*) became catchwords during WWI, not the least because of Scheler’s and Sombart’s contributions. On the German side, Scheler argued, WWI was a just war on account of being purely “political,” waged for the existence and liberty of Germany, and emphatically *not* initiated by economic considerations.³³ In fact, the war served to liberate Germany from the need to compete with England and was thus anti-capitalistic.³⁴ But the English, Scheler vitriolically huffed, interpreted the war in terms of competition and economic gains, confused “warriors” with “robbers” and sought to turn all nations into “commissioners of the trading house Old England & Co.” – a formulation resembling Sombart’s sarcastic remark that Germany was at war with a “department store.”³⁵

Such biting imagery reflected the authors’ concern over the alleged British attempt to turn the political war regarding world-views into one of interests, fought primarily by economic means. Sombart noted that armed warfare was but a part of the British offensive:

“commercial and monetary war,” waged by the means of “commercial oppression and chicaneries[,] ... boycotting, theft of patents, privateering, driving out customers, [and]

²⁸ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Sämtliche Werke, Band 12: Nachgelassene Fragmente 1885–1887*, ed. Giorgio Colli andazzino Montinari (Munich: DTV, 1980), 357, 525.

²⁹ Troeltsch, *Wesen des Deutschen*, 23.

³⁰ Troeltsch, “Der Geist der deutschen Kultur,” in *Deutschland und der Weltkrieg*, ed. Otto Hintze et al. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1915), 71–2.

³¹ Stefan George, *Der Krieg* (Berlin: Bondi, 1917), 7, https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/c/c9/Der_Krieg.pdf.

³² Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: Fischer, 1920[1918]), 234, <https://archive.org/details/betrachtungenein00mannuoft>.

³³ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 168–9.

³⁴ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 74.

³⁵ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 29, 36, 74; Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 41.

bribery” played a larger role. Such a change in the means of warfare reflected the general British tendency toward the “commercialization” of war.³⁶ This is the setting both Sombart and Scheler challenged by smoothing away, or even inverting, the normative differences between military and economic contestation. Scheler argued that “dumping and overpricing, unjust monopolization, cartels and trusts, sabotage, strikes with breaches of contract, [and] fraudulent and unscrupulous advertisements” were “forms of violent battle in peace time” and equally condemnable as “directly physical violence.” In fact, the economic forms were *more* reprehensible because they reflected private rather than public interests and utilized justice for fraudulent purposes instead of being openly violent like state warfare.³⁷ The modern principle of “free competition” had intensified such acts of “economic and moral violation” and made them more frequent, Scheler claimed.³⁸

This was simultaneously an argument regarding how the current war should (not) be waged or interpreted and how society should (not) be organized. Intertwined with the anti-capitalist point was the normative discrediting of competition as a social category. The concomitant antidemocratic and antiparliamentary implications are obvious: a society based on the “free competition” of ideas, political programs, and parties would be only apparently peaceful and hence inherently unstable and morally reprehensible. The military, economic, and political permutations of the liberal principle of free competition were equally to be rejected, and the patriotic raving by both Sombart and Scheler on the “commercialization” of war intensified the argument’s antidemocratic strand, too.

Let us therefore turn from the war discourse to the discourse of Weimar antidemocracy, beginning with authors who participated in both. With WWI interpreted as a war of world-

³⁶ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 45, 48.

³⁷ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 45–6.

³⁸ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 45.

views, it was logical to perceive domestic parliamentary democracy as a fruit of liberalism and a British political form. While the Germans generally blamed France for revolutionary and anarchistic tendencies, parliamentarism was ascribed mainly to the British. For the historian Arnold Oskar Meyer, whoever deemed English foreign policy hostile to genuine freedom should also renounce “the inner England” (*innere England*): parliamentarism and England’s war effort were but two forms of the same spirit.³⁹

“Inner England” returned in Oswald Spengler’s pamphlet *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (1919), which advanced a non-Marxian, Prussian form of socialism. The recently-ended war reverberated unmistakably in Spengler’s polemics, and rhetorically Spengler continued where Sombart and Scheler left off, for instance rebuking the “pirate instincts of the insular people.”⁴⁰ Not only did Spengler transfer arguments from the war experience to domestic matters, however; he actively theorized this link. “When arms fall silent between nations, men raise them in civil war,” he posited, referring to an English-minded coalition in economic policy, and in fact he described any non-German influences in politics as “the invisible English army that Napoleon left on the German soil.”⁴¹ The Versailles Treaty had not terminated the war of ideas that Sombart, Scheler, Troeltsch, and others propagated at the outset of WWI. Spengler assailed the “commercial” way of thinking, which was typical of merchants (*Händler*), relied on the abstract mechanicality of money, gradually infiltrated all domains of life, and climaxed with the identification of money and political power in democracy.⁴² It was thus essential to fight against “the inner England, the capitalistic and parliamentary liberalism,” which was “a specifically English outgrowth” and in Germany

³⁹ Arnold Oskar Meyer, *Deutsche Freiheit und englischer Parlamentarismus* (Munich: Bruckmann, 1916), 27.

⁴⁰ Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus” [1919], in *Politische Schriften: Volksausgabe* (Munich: Beck, 1933), 49.

⁴¹ Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” 54.

⁴² Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte. Band 2: Welthistorische Perspektiven* (Munich: Beck, 1922), 604–8, <https://archive.org/details/deruntergangdesa00spen2>.

either “non-sense or treason.”⁴³ For Spengler, parliamentarism equaled high treason and its advocacy, stupefyingly, amounted to civil war. With logic reminiscent of contamination, the hostile anti-English metaphors, intensified by the war, further intensified the political theories they were integrated into.

Although French civilization was Mann’s main enemy in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (1918), he also observed a cultural chasm with England, framing Germany as “England’s adversary in spirit” rather than a mere “competitor in power politics.”⁴⁴ WWI had been a “war of ideas,” and it now raged on the German soil as a “civil war and fraternal strife” – admittedly in the “intellectual sphere,” yet with “weapons” that “in their advanced atrocity” equaled those “raging on the front.”⁴⁵ The arguments were almost identical to those by Scheler and Spengler. For Mann, the key struggle was between political ‘civilization’ and unpolitical German culture. To accept the ‘politicization’ of the nation (in practice, democracy and parliament) would compromise German exceptionality and produce a world inhabited by “merchants [*Händler*] and literates” but not “warriors,” Mann noted, alluding to Sombart’s dichotomy.⁴⁶

Mann explicitly forged the link between domestic democratization and the war’s metaphysical meaning. He declared the current war merely a “stock-exchange war” and a “bourgeois competition-war [*Konkurrenzkrieg*]” serving the interests of export and trade, on the assumption that a democratic constitution allowed one to “peddle” (*krämern*) more effectively, thus recycling the anti-English *topos*.⁴⁷ Mann explicitly noted that while the “principle of ‘free competition’” was to blame for “the global rule of economic interests,”

⁴³ Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” 57, 69.

⁴⁴ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, XXXVI.

⁴⁵ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 149, 172.

⁴⁶ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 471.

⁴⁷ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 234, 337.

democracy was responsible for the “degradation and de-spiritualization of the war.”⁴⁸ The meaning of the cultural war on the German side was precisely to resist the democratization driven by economic considerations – the successful implementation of which would facilitate the pursuit of private gains at the expense of national unity and eventually seal the fate of Germany. The conservatives were right, Mann posited, in judging that should universal suffrage be implemented, Germany would have lost the war of minds.⁴⁹

Merchants and peddlers became standard figures in the antidemocratic Right’s *dramatis personae*. Discussing the reaction against British economic theory by the 19th-century economist Friedrich List, Freyer described List’s target as “merchant materialism” (*Händler-Materialismus*) – a wording unavailable in List’s work and coined by Freyer, probably inspired by Sombart.⁵⁰ Jünger mocked the democratization of war by noting how popular warfare, reflecting the egalitarian values of the mass society, had turned “peddlers or glovemakers” (*Krämer oder Handschuchmacher*) into soldiers, yet predicted that the war would eventually sweep aside the petty-bourgeois “peddler.”⁵¹ Jung claimed that Germany had assumed “foreign state forms” in 1919 and now wanted to be more western than the West, specifying that the commonplace of the English as a “nation of peddlers” (*Krämervolk*) was questionable as the Germans, in adopting parliamentarianism, were rapidly becoming even “more peddler-like” (*krämerhafter*). Jung also disclosed the latent anti-Semitism of these *topoi*, warning that should Germany adopt Jewish manners, those elements would later

⁴⁸ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 234, 242.

⁴⁹ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 247.

⁵⁰ Hans Freyer, *Die Bewertung der Wirtschaft im philosophischen Denken des 19. Jahrhunderts* (Hildesheim: Olm, 1966[1921]), 121, https://www.forgottenbooks.com/en/download/DieBewertungderWirtschaftimPhilosophischenDenkendes19Jahrhunderts_10356374.pdf

⁵¹ Ernst Jünger, *Feuer und Blut* (Magdeburg: Frundsberg, 1926[1925]), 17; Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin: Mittler, 1922), 55.

have to be repressed violently.⁵² Irresponsible, living of other people's work, and interested only in profit, the merchant (*Händler*) was "the king of civilization"; he further epitomized modern politics, given that parties, too, were unprincipled and merely engaged in "useful haggling."⁵³ In these arguments, the anti-English merchant figure facilitated argumentative shifts between economic activity, parliamentary politics, and war. They thus supported the general theses that WWI had been fought for British financial gains, that parliamentary politics was the culmination of "civilization" and calculating British rationality, and that the democratic spirit had banalized even warfare, the most German and aristocratic of cultural domains.

Once this imagery was in operation, another projection followed effortlessly. In resisting the British widening of economic principles onto war and politics, Weimar conservatives sought to label the ostensibly peaceful economic categories as aggressive like Scheler and Sombart had done earlier. Mann, for instance, considered it naïve to presume that the absence of war meant peace and fraternity, as the bloodless but utterly inhuman destruction of people by driving them to bankruptcy was still possible.⁵⁴ In his criticism of parliamentarianism, Schmitt lashed Western liberals for hypocritically seeking to turn enemies into mere "competitors" (*Konkurrenten*) with the intention of thereby eradicating enmity from the world, while actually upholding enmity by aggression in occupied German areas.⁵⁵ Spengler's verdict was customarily harsh: for the nation ruled by pirate instincts, economy was merely a cultivated form of robbery, and the principle of free trade relied on the "battle of all against all."⁵⁶ With equally overblown rhetoric, Freyer identified Darwinism as the

⁵² Edgar Julius Jung, *Die Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, Zweite Auflage (Berlin: Deutsche Rundschau, 1930[1927]), 69, 270. "fremde Staatsformen."

⁵³ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 43, 299, 495, "König der Zivilisation," "nützliches Handeln."

⁵⁴ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 476–7.

⁵⁵ Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1963[1927/1932]), 28.

⁵⁶ Spengler, "Preussentum und Sozialismus," 49, 50, 52.

intellectual background of Manchester liberalism, whose reality was “struggle for existence.”⁵⁷ By stating that the British economy was another form of war, these thinkers bolstered their claim that democracy, which allegedly reflected the same predatory mentality, would ruin inner unity. To extend the economic logic of competition onto the political field was to surrender to the inner England. The pejorative connotations of economic competition as a principle of the civil society rather than true communality, reflecting shallow individualism and the *bellum omnium contra omnes*, were old,⁵⁸ yet they gained new poignancy in the post-WWI context.

Organic Growth and Mechanical Weighing

The mechanical/organic dualism, I claim, facilitated the transition of anti-English arguments from war to Weimar democracy. In substantial terms, this metaphorical opposition derives from the old rivalry between mechanical Enlightenment calculability and the metaphysical organicity of German Romanticism.⁵⁹ For instance, Adam Müller, the leading theorist of German political romanticism, demarcated between “inorganic” states that resembled rocks and were merely “mass,” on the one hand, and “organic, living states” that could be compared with growing plants that exploded such rocks, on the other.⁶⁰ The organic view had implications for the state’s internal structure: Hegel described the estates as “a mediating organ” which ensured that individuals were properly integrated into “the state organism” and “segmented” into corporations instead of appearing as a mere “crowd dissolved into its

⁵⁷ Freyer, *Bewertung der Wirtschaft*, 108–10.

⁵⁸ G. W. F. Hegel, *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts*, ed. Georg Lasson (Leipzig: Meiner, 1911), §289.

⁵⁹ Alrich Meyer, “Mechanische und organische Metaphorik politischer Philosophie,” *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte* 13, 1969, 128–99; Giuseppa Saccaro-Battisti, “Changing Metaphors of Political Structures,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, no. 1 (1983): 31–54.

⁶⁰ Adam Müller, *Die Elemente der Staatskunst, Erster Theil* (Berlin: Sander, 1809), 276–7, http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/mueller_staatskunst01_1809/?hl=organifche;p=7.

atoms,” an “unseparated mass” characterized by “inorganic opinions and wills.”⁶¹ These organic arguments against atomism and individualism became standard *topoi*, and reverberated in early-20th-century antiparliamentarianism.

Although the imagery had accumulated for a century, WWI lent it novel intensity: it was re-employed in a concrete political context and utilized as a means of discrimination against political adversaries both internationally and domestically. The struggle against the mechanical carried additional Anti-Semitic undertones,⁶² which were transferred onto the analysis of Englishness, as exemplified by Sombart’s case. Further, WWI polemics gave rise to a more general metaphysical opposition between Germany and “the West,”⁶³ and in practice “England” was frequently used as a synecdoche for “the West.” Despite these parallel oppositions against the West and the Jews, particularly the juxtaposition with the English appears to have intensified the metaphors.

The identification of Englishness with mechanicality was prepared in a subtle shift of emphasis. Müller still included Great Britain into his catalogue of classic European organic states, alongside Italy, France, Spain and Germany.⁶⁴ Gradually, however, Englishness in particular came to be pejoratively identified with mechanicality. In his preference for organic imagery, Goethe criticized Newton’s mechanistic view of the universe as a machine,⁶⁵ and Nietzsche re-described this endeavor as the struggle by Goethe, Hegel, and Schopenhauer against “the English-mechanistic stultification of the world.”⁶⁶ The WWI enmity intensified

⁶¹ Hegel, *Philosophie des Rechts*, § 302–303, §308.

⁶² Harrington, *Reenchanted Science*, xx-xxi, 21, 181–5.

⁶³ Marcus Llanque, “The First World War and the Invention of ‘Western Democracy,’” in Bavaj and Sterber, eds., *Germany and ‘The West’*, 69–80.

⁶⁴ Müller, *Elemente der Staatskunst*, 278.

⁶⁵ H. B. Nisbet, “Goethe and Newton,” in *Goethe and the English-Speaking World*, ed. Nicholars Boyle and John Guthrie (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2002), 38.

⁶⁶ Nietzsche, *Jenseits von Gut und Böse: Vorspiel einer Philosophie der Zukunft* (Leipzig: Naumann, 1900), §252, <https://archive.org/details/jenseitsvongutun00niet>.

this setting, first, in the sense of raising the stakes by linking the stereotypical cultural interpretations to matters of literal life and death and the eventuality of national peril, and second, by polarizing these interpretations, for Englishness was now reduced to mechanicality and vice-versa, while Germany alone was identified with organic culture.⁶⁷

Sombart's juxtaposition of the German and British states exemplifies this tendency paradigmatically: the state, in German understanding, was not an "aggregate of individuals," but a *Volksgemeinschaft* with existence above and beyond that level⁶⁸ – "an organically structured ... community" whose elements had "grown organically out of their life instinct," and whose "every organ, every member" maintained a harmonious relation to the other ones.⁶⁹ The British imperium, by contrast, consisted of merely "accumulated" elements that had been "put side by side mechanically" and had only loose ties with the mother country.⁷⁰

The distinction between self-interested merchants and self-sacrificing soldiers built directly on this basis. British calculating rationality, always on the lookout for financial gain, saw the state as a "giant business deal," as exemplified by social contract theories, and all the key concept of British politics derived from mercantilist politics.⁷¹ This applied to "contract," but also to "balance" – the central concept of parliamentarianism: Sombart mockingly traced the image of balance to the commercial setting of a "grocer" (*Krämer*) weighing "raisins and pepper" on "the scales."⁷² As noted, this image relied on the old depiction of England as a nation of shopkeepers. In Sombart's usage the image went beyond commercial transaction to become a mechanical metaphor building on the opposition with organic life. Here manifested

⁶⁷ The articulations of anti-English sentiments remained relatively consistent through the war: Bruendel, *Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat*, 83–5, 207–8.

⁶⁸ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 76.

⁶⁹ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 35, 80.

⁷⁰ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 35.

⁷¹ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 22, 37.

⁷² Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 39.

the “life-destructive character of the merchant spirit”; the commercial ethos was “a purely mechanical apprehension of everything related to the state” and fundamentally unsuitable as an approach to politics. “One can only weigh dead substances, not living creatures which states genuinely are.”⁷³

By implication, the idea of a balance of power preventing European wars was a mere reflection of the English state and its underlying principles. In reality, Sombart continued, wars between nations were inevitable because they reflected the fact that states lived, and no “grocer-image” of “a dead balance” could change that.⁷⁴ Here Sombart clearly leaned on Müller’s ideas on the “scales of the world” bringing about a “standstill,” a “dead balance” or a “dead peace” at most, but nothing properly corresponding to the living organic growth of states.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the idea that scales were a misleading image for justice in the context of a “balance of power” can be found in Nietzsche’s posthumous fragments, albeit without any mention of the mechanical/organic opposition.⁷⁶ While the imagery may have been recycled, Sombart’s shopkeeper metaphor, in its concrete context and supported by the organic/mechanical opposition, served to indirectly justify the German war effort by discrediting balance-of-power as an English rhetorical weapon. Sombart constructed this argument skillfully by metaphorically identifying, first, the commercial spirit with mechanism and, secondly, mechanicality with lifelessness or death.

In parallel, Scheler considered balance of power a mere extension of the liberal doctrine of the balance of prices on the market. Linked essentially with the image of the scales, the balance image was problematic, first, because it represented political tensions as “raw,

⁷³ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 40.

⁷⁴ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 81.

⁷⁵ Müller, *Elemente der Staatskunst*, 293–5.

⁷⁶ Nietzsche, *Nachgelassene Fragmente*, 221.

mechanical and calculable,” while in reality states related to one another by ethical forces.⁷⁷ War was a result of the states’ natural tendency to expand and shape their environment.⁷⁸ A state not seeking to grow would be “a dead, congealed, sinking state renouncing its essence,” for “everything dead, mechanical” only aimed at preservation, while life “grows or perishes.”⁷⁹ The imagery of balances and scales thus fundamentally contradicted the living essence of statehood, as Sombart equally argued. Second, the image was actively dangerous. Like Sombart, Scheler invoked the imagery of dead weight and mechanicality in his assault on British political discourse. Seeing continental states as merely “dead weight” in the “scales,” the British represented themselves as neutral outsiders carrying the scales and mechanically adding smaller states to the weighing pans until ‘balance’ was reached, arguably on account of a duty to uphold the European balance.⁸⁰ Scheler’s criticism of the balance and scales metaphors thus served to underpin his criticism of British hypocrisy in utilizing their position on the brink of the European community to further their own interests behind bold phrases. In reality, besides being the counterpoint of Germany, England was the “enemy” of a unification of Europe upon a shared identity. While France was a “momentary enemy,” Scheler argued, England was the “constitutive enemy” of Europe.⁸¹

Anti-English Metaphors in Post-WWI Antidemocratic Theory

After the war, antidemocratic authors recycled many of these Anti-English arguments. Particularly the proposition of parliamentary democracy, like all British culture, being mechanical, aggregative, and dead in opposition to German organic life, loomed large –often in interaction with pejorative commercial metaphors and their antidemocratic and anti-

⁷⁷ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 32.

⁷⁸ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 42.

⁷⁹ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 42.

⁸⁰ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 32.

⁸¹ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 310–11.

Semitic connotations. Many Weimar antidemocrats had literary aspirations and used metaphors purposefully.⁸² They scarcely theorized political metaphors directly, however, apart from Schmitt who, in the same antiparliamentary treatise which proposed the mechanicality of parliamentary procedures, also called for the systematic study of images like the state as machine/organism or the king as a keystone of an arch.⁸³

In the antidemocratic discourse, we discern at least the following, largely overlapping arguments that were arguably intensified by WWI enmity and built on specific Anti-English *topoi*. First, many antidemocratic authors invoked organic metaphors to underscore *inner unity and wholeness*. Parliamentary democracy was seen as splintering the political unity into atomism and individualism, whereas its true form was that of an organism, depicted in terms of the human body. All life had the shape of an “unity of an organism,” that is, a “segmented figure” comparable to “a body with its unique organs,” Freyer observed, and in the living state each individual was “integrated as a member into a suprapersonal unity,” which secured a victory of the spirit of 1914 over the harmful “battle of parties.”⁸⁴ While in England individuals ruled, in Germany sovereignty rather lied with “the whole,” Spengler argued, and internal conflicts existed only insofar as they helped citizens to climb in the social rank system and take more “responsibility within the organism of the whole.”⁸⁵

⁸² Elfriede Üner, *Soziologie als “geistige Bewegung”*: Hans Freyers System der Soziologie und die “Leipziger Schule” (Weinheim: VCH, 1992), 72–3; Hans Verboven, *Metapher als Ideologie: Eine kognitive-semantische Analyse der Kriegsmetaphorik im Frühwerk Ernst Jüngers* (Heidelberg: Winter, 2003); Jan Müller, “Carl Schmitt’s Method: Between Ideology, Demonology and Myth,” *Journal of Political Ideologies* 4, no. 1 (1999): 61–85.

⁸³ Schmitt, *Die geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1996[1923/1926]), 50.

⁸⁴ Freyer, *Der Staat* (Leipzig: Rehfelden, 1925), 6, 10, 140, 151, “Einheit eines Organismus,” “gegliederte Gestalt,” “Leib mit seinen unverwechselbaren Organen,” “Kampf der Parteien,” “seiner überpersönlichen Einheit als Glied eingefügt.”

⁸⁵ Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” 15, 45.

The organic analogy thus did not rule out conflicts categorically, but only when their internal strife endangered national unity; however, precisely therefore no political parties “in the current sense” could inhabit the community envisioned by Spann or Jung, but only ones that put the interests of the whole before their particular wills.⁸⁶ Like Jung, Moeller used bodily metaphors to underscore political unity against party democracy, which posed the danger of the “disintegration of the whole” and the “danger of the members becoming autonomous.”⁸⁷ In fact, party spirit within the nation caused the ties between the limbs and the torso to loosen so that the limbs more easily fell prey to foreign powers: if a nation is torn into parties, Moeller noted, “its torso atrophies, its limbs mortify, and what still remains available along the borders of valuable land, becomes violently integrated into alien national bodies.”⁸⁸ Moeller’s grotesque image linked domestic democratization with a weakened position in foreign politics, suggesting that inner disunity had caused the military defeat and the loss of areas, or “limbs” (*Glieder*).⁸⁹ Jung similarly described the centralized Western state as “a degenerated organism” constantly threatened by a “process of dismemberment [*Zerstückelung*]” in which “the head sucks all the strength of the limbs, the limbs shrink, the members atrophy.”⁹⁰ By linking democratization with either military weakness or undesirable centralization, the age-old body politic imagery became a tool of antidemocratic agitation in a concrete argumentative context, and both authors anticipated the weak republic to be overcome by a strong Reich.

⁸⁶ Othmar Spann, *Der Wahre Staat* (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1921), 289; Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 344.

⁸⁷ Moeller, *Das Dritte Reich* (Toppenstedt: Uwe Berg, 2006[1923]), 113, “die Gefahr der Selbstständigmachung der Teile.” Arthur Moeller van den Bruck, “Der Außenseiter als Weg zum Führer,” [1919], in *Der politische Mensch*, ed. Hans Schwarz (Breslau: Korn, 1933), 73, “die Gefahr einer Zersetzung des Ganzes.” Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 132.

⁸⁸ Moeller, “Parteiendämmerung,” [1922], *Das Recht der jungen Völker*, ed. Hans Schwarz (Berlin: Nahe Osten, 1932), 139, “...sein Rumpf verkümmert, seine Glieder sterben ab, und was etwa noch längs der Grenzen an wertvollem Lande lebensfähig vorhanden bleibt, das wird fremden Volkskörpern gewaltsam eingefügt.”

⁸⁹ Moeller, “Einheit,” [1922], in *Das Recht der jungen Völker*, 146.

⁹⁰ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 355. “...der Kopf saugt alle Kräfte der Glieder auf, sie schrumpfen, die Teile verkümmern.”

Second, the organic imagery frequently implied that the whole had emergent properties beyond mere parts – i.e. *holism*. Here the dead mechanicality attributed to the British resurfaced subtly. Rather than a “conglomerate” or “compound of individuals” or “a pile of stones” based on “mere summarization of things,” Spann called for a community conceptualized as a “whole” or “an organism” in which “the parts are not really independent, but ... organs” like hands, hearts, or cells that only live because of the living powers of the whole.⁹¹ In early 1914, Spann mentioned the organic school as only one sociological theory amongst others; in the revised 1923 edition he credited it with correctly observing the organic rather than mechanical connections of all parts of society and with noting how “the whole transcends the part and, logically, is prior to the part.”⁹² Mann similarly characterized organism as “more than the sum of its parts”: this “more” was “spirit” and “life” but was precisely what democratic mass politics could not attain.⁹³ What was particularly ‘human’ was, for Mann, not represented by humankind as the mere “addition” or “sum” of individuals, for this would only produce a “mass” typical of democracy, but by the metaphysical nation on the basis of its “organic depth.”⁹⁴ The people should not be mistaken for “a mass compiled out of individual-atoms,” Mann argued.⁹⁵ Moeller noted that “Western man” always only “summarizes” (*summiert*): after the adoption of parliamentarism in the 19th century, the German state was no longer constructed as a “body” (*Leib*) consisting of “limbs” or “members” (*Glieder*), but in the “mechanical adding up of votes” (*mechanische Zusammenzählung der Stimmen*)⁹⁶ – thus turning the argument into a direct criticism of the democratic procedures. Spengler equally noted that a political party was only “an

⁹¹ Spann, *Wahre Staat*, 11–12.

⁹² Spann, *Kurzgefaßtes System der Gesellschaftslehre* (Berlin: Guttentag), 5; Spann, *Gesellschaftslehre*, Zweite, neubearbeitete Auflage (Leipzig: Quelle & Meyer, 1923), 14, “daß das Ganze über den Teil geht, logisch vor dem Teil ist.”

⁹³ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 267.

⁹⁴ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 232.

⁹⁵ Mann, *Betrachtungen*, 261–2.

⁹⁶ Moeller, *Dritte Reich*, 61, 115.

accumulation of heads” as opposed to “grown corporative segmentation,”⁹⁷ while Jung’s theory of society as a “segmented order” (*gegliederte Ordnung*) rejected “the adding up of individuals” (*Zusammenzählung Einzelner*) which could only produce a “sum” (*Summe*), but never a “totality” (*Ganzheit*).⁹⁸

Third, as the emergent properties of organic wholes remained unattainable in the allegedly mechanistic democracy, the contrast between the supposed lifelessness of party democracy and German liveliness followed effortlessly. Democracy was comparable to the accumulation of stones: no matter how many were added, the substance remained inanimate. On this basis, Sombart spoke of dead substances and balances, while Scheler again invoked the dead, congealed nature of states refusing to grow. In his philosophy of cultural decay, Spengler identified culture with life/organism and civilization with death/mechanicality, noting that as culture inevitably became mere civilization, the previously living turned “rigid and cold.”⁹⁹ The historical turning point for the West is unsurprising: the French rococo still belonged to culture, but “with England began civilization.”¹⁰⁰

The metaphor scenario of organic dying also had antidemocratic uses. Directly related to his organic criticism of democracy, Moeller noted that political parties were perhaps an acceptable technical means for a transition period, but during their rule life “halts” (*stockt*) as action is replaced by hesitation.¹⁰¹ Scheming with the West, German democrats had brought about a condition in which the German people could only “vegetate” (*vegetieren*) but not

⁹⁷ Spengler, *Untergang des Abendlandes* 2, 561.

⁹⁸ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 96–7.

⁹⁹ Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” 23; Spengler, *Untergang des Abendlandes: Umriss einer Morphologie der Weltgeschichte, Band 1: Gestalt und Wirklichkeit* (Munich: Beck, 1920), 488, <https://archive.org/details/deruntergangdesa01spen>; Spengler, *Untergang des Abendlandes* 2, 58.

¹⁰⁰ Spengler, “Preussentum und Sozialismus,” 29.

¹⁰¹ Moeller, “Außenseiter,” 73–4.

“live” (*leben*).¹⁰² This depiction of party rule as lifelessness or vegetation contradicts Sombart’s opposite conclusion, equally derived from an organic basic metaphor but via an alternative scenario, that “animated party life is certainly necessary and desirable,” for it is “a sign that the whole body of the people and the state is alive.”¹⁰³ The organic/mechanical background metaphor allows for either kind of conclusion: one can argue that internal strife jeopardizes the unity any living organism needs to stay alive, or alternatively identify domestic political activity with healthy metabolism and allow conflicts as long as the interests of the whole are guaranteed. This exemplifies how political languages are essentially “plural, flexible, and non-final.”¹⁰⁴ Although both Moeller and Sombart were directed by the same background metaphors, they eventually produced different outcomes from their common language, and the difference in their metaphor scenarios reflects the difference in their degrees of political radicalism. Spann sided with Sombart in noting the “vigorous movement” and “considerable animation [*Leben*]” of party life, yet diagnosed its eventual “emptiness,” blaming this on “mechanized action,” which in party democracy typically took precedence over proper will-formation.¹⁰⁵ The dominant tone in Moeller’s and Spann’s depictions was that parliamentary democracy only appeared to be a living form; in reality it was mechanized and dead. Jung reasserted this by depicting English and French “civilization” as “soulless mechanism” and by identifying individualism with “the killing of the living by the mechanical.”¹⁰⁶

Fourth, while organic argumentation underscored unity, holism, and liveliness, it also carried potential antidemocratic undertones in stressing *inequality*. When merged with the human

¹⁰² Moeller, *Dritte Reich*, 166.

¹⁰³ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Pocock, *Political Thought*, 74.

¹⁰⁵ Spann, *Gesellschaftslehre*, 395.

¹⁰⁶ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 119, 378. “entseelter Mechanismus”, “Tötung des Lebendigen durch das Mechanische”

body image, organic metaphors implied different functions for body members, if not a rank order. For instance Moeller utilized this metaphor scenario, calling for a genuinely German form of socialism based on a “corporative” (*körperschaftlich*) model. This order would be “organic” (*organisch*) rather than “atomistic” (*atomistisch*) and based upon “rootedness, gradation, [and] segmentation” (*Verwurzelung, Staffellung, Gliederung*).¹⁰⁷ This corporative mode of political organization, only comprehensible in the bodily analogy, had allegedly existed in pre-liberal Germany. Early-19th-century German democracy was “a body in which all members were in a living relationship with each other” and “occupied its own place” so that “the head did the head’s duty, the arm the arm’s duty, and every other member did its particular duty.”¹⁰⁸ Spann equally derived the idea of “organic disparity” or “inequality” (*organische Ungleichheit*) from the body model. The heart, the lungs, the stomach, and the intestines were coordinated and attuned to each other, and precisely here the organic model transcended the merely atomistic and mechanistic. Yet, although their functions were differentiated and achievements varied, all body members were equal insofar as the bad performance of any member made the whole suffer. Precisely here lay the organic model’s limitations: it provided an insufficient degree of disparity, and Spann transcended it in societal terms by emphasizing the unequal inherent value of each part of society – values which could only be derived from the non-bodily sphere of ethics and intellect.¹⁰⁹ For both Moeller and Spann, the organic model carried antidemocratic implications by underlining the inherent inequality of humans, which they pointedly juxtaposed to the mechanical equality of democracy. Jung too lashed democratic egalitarianism for leveling productive differences and thereby causing “the death of liveliness.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Moeller, *Dritte Reich*, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Moeller, *Dritte Reich*, 112–13, “Sie war ein Körper, in dem alle Glieder miteinander in lebendiger Beziehung standen”, “Ein jede Glied befand sich an seinem Orte”, “vielmehr tat der Kopf die Dienste des Kopfes, der Arm die Dienste des Armes, jedes andere Glied tat seinen besonderen Dienst...”

¹⁰⁹ Spann, *Wahre Staat*, 189–91.

¹¹⁰ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 47, “Tode der Lebendigkeit,”

Fifth, and relatedly, antidemocratic authors steadily invoked *weighing and balance*, again activating the organic/mechanical division but also construing subtle links with the anti-English commercial metaphors. A direct ramification of organic disparity was the criticism of universal suffrage – whereby the contrast with the alleged mechanistic nature of democracy resurfaces. Spann mockingly assailed democracy for applying “the mechanical doctrine of majority” instead of acknowledging natural disparity: “Each individual an atom of equal value; Nietzsche and his boot-cleaner have the same vote, and each is thrown into the weighing pan with equal weight and included in the weighing: *the majority must rule!*”¹¹¹ That voting power was not differentiated qualitatively in proportion to wealth, influence, or merit reflected the Western mechanical presumptions. In democracy, each citizen was “a similar atom, a similar mechanistic part of the political machinery”¹¹² and each vote “an atom of the same weight [*gleichwichtiges Atom*]” and of identical “inner values” and could only be “mechanically weighed”¹¹³ – “not the value, but the number” ruled “according to mechanical weight.”¹¹⁴ The pejorative image of a grocer weighing dead substances thus returns in a setting related to domestic politics. Because of the equal weight of its basic units, the overall will of the people could only be a sum, a conglomerate comparable to a pile of stones. The non-holistic nature of democratic societies thus followed from their voting procedures. The link between these arguments – one regarding the structure of the political community and one regarding its metaphysics of will-formation – was forged by mechanical metaphors. Dead mechanicality merged once more with the calculating rationality of English merchants.

¹¹¹ Spann, *Wahre Staat*, 108.

¹¹² Spann, *Wahre Staat*, 86.

¹¹³ Spann, *Wahre Staat*, 109.

¹¹⁴ Spann, *Wahre Staat*, 109.

The imagery of balance and weighing also served to undermine liberal parliamentarism more generally. Schmitt criticized liberalism as a metaphysical system of balancing opposing forces: not only did the doctrine of the separation of powers rely on the assumption that what was “correct” would “emerge out of this balancing as an equilibrium” so that the parliament was involved in a balance, but intra-parliamentary balancing was also required between the houses and between the government and the opposition.¹¹⁵ Schmitt further mentioned a variety of balances in commerce, international relations, cosmology, and the philosophy of emotions,¹¹⁶ particularly noting how the idea of a European balance of powers benefited England.¹¹⁷ Besides mechanical associations, what guided this argumentation was the idea of the merchant spirit being unduly extended onto politics. Liberalism expected overall societal utility to arise from “the free economic competition of private individuals” and, in politics, “truth” similarly to “emerge out of the free struggle of opinions as the harmony which by itself arises out of the competition,”¹¹⁸ Schmitt posited, utilizing identical wordings as in discussing balances above. Scheler had similarly mocked the English for considering “‘truth’ merely a result of the free competition of the expressions of opinions by many.”¹¹⁹ No compromises or dialectics like those witnessed in parliamentarism—but only creative vision—would be necessary to bring out “the correct” in Jung’s organic society.¹²⁰

Further still, they argued, parliamentarism could not live up to its own standards of open and public discussion on the truth, but rather turned into mere negotiation of interests and “calculation of changes for profit” as if “two merchants” after a “competitive struggle” would

¹¹⁵ Schmitt, *Parlamentarismus*, 46, 51, “...aus welcher Balancierung sich das Richtige als Gleichgewicht von selbst ergeben soll.”

¹¹⁶ Schmitt, *Parlamentarismus*, 50.

¹¹⁷ Schmitt, *Die Kernfrage des Völkerbundes* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1926), 56.

¹¹⁸ Schmitt, *Parlamentarismus*, 45–6, “...aus der freien wirtschaftlichen Konkurrenz privater Individuen”, “...aus dem freien Kampf der Meinungen die Wahrheit entsteht als die aus dem Wettbewerb von selbst sich ergebende Harmonie.”

¹¹⁹ Scheler, *Genius des Krieges*, 419.

¹²⁰ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 345.

reach a mutually beneficial “commercial compromise.”¹²¹ Free competition mapped onto politics was thus not only a problematic mechanistic principle to begin with, but also not genuinely free, rather resembling an unfair cartel between sellers. The criticism of the mechanical and the commercial amalgamated completely here, and the compound derived from Schmitt’s general criticism of the “economic-technical rationalism” (*ökonomisch-technischer Rationalismus*) of the private “merchant” (*Kaufmann*).¹²² Although Schmitt’s anti-English attitudes climaxed only during WW2 and with regard to war and *Völkerrecht*, thus transcending the scope of this essay, also his antiparliamentary Anglophobia is clearly perceivable: the Weimar constitution was an “English off-the-rack suit” (*englischer Konfektionsanzug*) and liberal constitutionalism a tool of English world politics.¹²³ Schmitt is relatively overemphasized in scholarship on interwar conservatism. A topos-oriented reading of the antidemocratic discourse in which he operated, however, serves to relativize the myth of Schmitt as an intellectual *sui generis*. In addition to speaking the language of German governmental military doctrines,¹²⁴ he employed the collective languages of wartime Anglophobia and Weimar antidemocracy. Although he did not adopt organic metaphors wholeheartedly, still he utilized the antiparliamentary mechanical-cum-commercial imagery to underpin his antiparliamentary agenda like other Weimar conservatives. Schmitt’s contribution also upheld the discourse as it was utilized for further organic theorizing: explicitly citing Schmitt, Jung criticized the balance of powers, the “mechanical way” of majority rule, which “led to chaos,” and other constitutional solutions which opened up “the

¹²¹ Schmitt, *Parlamentarismus*, 9–10, “Gewinnchancen zu berechnen”, “Zwei Kaufleute, die sich nach einem Konkurrenzkampf einigen, sprechen über die beiderseitigen wirtschaftlichen Möglichkeiten, jeder sucht selbstverständlich seinen Vorteil wahrzunehmen, und so kommen sie zu einem geschäftlichen Kompromiß.”

¹²² Schmitt, *Römischer Katholizismus und politische Form* (Hellerau: Hegner, 1923), 30, 43, 50, 58

¹²³ Schmitt, “Der bürgerliche Rechtsstaat,” [1928], in *Staat, Großraum, Nomos: Arbeiten aus den Jahren 1916 bis 1969*, ed. Günter Maschke (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1995), 47; Schmitt, “Staatliche Souveränität und freier Meer: Über den Gegensatz von Land und See im Völkerrecht der Neuzeit,” [1941], in *ibid.* 420–1.

¹²⁴ Isabel Hull, “Zwischen Konservatismus und Revolution: Carl Schmitts völkerrechtliche Schriften,” in *Perspektiven konservativen Denkens: Deutschland und die Vereinigten Staaten nach 1945*, ed. Peter Uwe Hohendahl and Erhard Schütz (Bern: Peter Lang, 2012), 105–18.

abyss of mechanical disintegration.”¹²⁵ Despite his own reservations, Schmitt’s arguments were thus devoured into the dominant organic discourse.

Conclusions

Many German intellectuals were notoriously active in the “war of minds” after 1914. As demonstrated, their anti-English arguments commonly had antidemocratic domestic ramifications, suggesting the profound unsuitability of democratic forms of government for Germany. The commercial and organic/mechanical metaphors interacted and served to underline the incompatibility between the German and English national characters. They also mediated arguments from the war discourse to antidemocratic theorizing.

The perspective of “languages” or “discourses” put forth by Pocock is useful for conceptualizing these relations. Any complex society possesses numerous concepts, argumentative forms, and stereotypes to discuss political affairs, and these are invariably combined into special languages, consisting of “idioms, rhetorics, ways of talking about politics, distinguishable language games of which each may have its own vocabulary, rules, preconditions and implications, tone and style.”¹²⁶ The Pocockian perspective does not rule out that thinkers make intentional moves with the available resources, oftentimes putting old language to novel uses. To understand a metaphor, we must, rather than focusing on the metaphor itself, meticulously unearth the argumentative functions it served.

While these points have previously not been systematically extended onto political metaphors, Blumenberg’s historically oriented metaphorology comes closest to providing a

¹²⁵ Jung, *Herrschaft der Minderwertigen*, 332-5, “die Abgründe mechanistischer Zersetzung.”

¹²⁶ Pocock, *Political Thought*, 14, 17, 89.

consistent methodological framework. Blumenberg conceptualized metaphors as vast argumentative resources supporting precise conceptual language, and his approach also entailed the task of mapping the accumulating metaphoric material in its various framings, usages, and functions, including creative reinterpretations and occasional revaluations.¹²⁷

Blumenberg, who read organic and mechanical metaphors as general “background metaphors” which we cannot do without, nevertheless emphasized how particular renderings of such metaphors encapsulate past wishes to know: metaphor “conserves or restores the motivating context of the life-world, the context in which an interest in theory originates.”¹²⁸

Metaphorological analysis shows how Weimar antidemocratic theorists by no means theorized *in abstracto*. While the key metaphors predated the WWI debate, they had been intensified by concrete wartime enmity and, when transferred to domestic contexts, further sharpened political-theoretical arguments. This is a prime example of how political thought gets radical: argumentative forms may be old, but their intensity grows, divisions turn categorical, and thought becomes increasingly black-and-white. The dualistic identifications of England and Germany with the mechanical and the organic, or with shallow commercialism and profound culture, respectively, became rigid and non-negotiable – and the implied task of renouncing English political forms significantly more acute. Once the metaphysics of national character is invoked, reasons of expediency tend to fall silent.

The effects might be drastic, but the mechanisms of such intensification are typically subtle, and the almost invisible metaphorical identifications frequently play a key role. My case thus exemplifies not only the phenomenon of the intensification *of* metaphors but also

¹²⁷ Hans Blumenberg, *Paradigms for a Metaphorology*, trans. Robert Savage (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010[1960]).

¹²⁸ Blumenberg, *Paradigms*, 62–76; Blumenberg, *The Genesis of the Copernican World*, trans. Robert M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987[1975]), 79.

intensification *by means of* metaphors. It is, however, crucial to note that there was nothing *substantially* antidemocratic in the metaphors themselves, for some supporters of parliamentary democracy similarly employed organic and/or mechanical metaphors. Here the perspective of metaphors as linguistic resources in Pocockian languages/discourses, rather than as idea-substances, is crucial.

In the cases analyzed, metaphors – contingently – supported the diffusion of arguments across the Anglophobic and antidemocratic discourses, contributed to the intensification of positions, enabled linkages between previously unconnected points, and thereby co-created permanent argumentative structures which in the absence of the metaphorical dualisms might have dissolved earlier. The effects of historically contingent intensification typically go beyond the events that brought it about. After the military defeat, parliamentary democracy replaced imperial order almost overnight, which was widely perceived as an infiltration of foreign ideas into domestic matters. Key to this was the framing of English civilization and parliamentary politics as mechanical, piled-up, structurally disintegrated, and dead in spirit—in contradistinction to genuinely organic culture, characterized by structural density, integrity, and animation. In this opposition, metaphors played a decisive catalytic and supportive role.