EXPLORING THE WORLD OF HUMAN PRACTICE

READINGS IN AND ABOUT THE PHILOSOPHY OF AUREL KOLNAI

EDITED BY
ZOLTÁN BALÁZS & FRANCIS DUNLOP

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Contents

Preface

This volume took its original impetus from the first international conference to be held on the work of Aurel Kolnai, the "Aurel Kolnai Memorial Conference", which was sponsored by the Central European University, Budapest, and the Lajos Batthyány Foundation. It was held at the university on 8 and 9 December 2000, a few days after the one-hundredth anniversary of Kolnai's birth at 10 Báthory Street, Budapest. We are glad to have this opportunity of repeating our thanks to the sponsors in print.

Because the Central European University Press does not, as a matter of policy, publish conference proceedings, they agreed last year to publish an introductory volume on Kolnai's work, which would include a variety of papers both by Kolnai and about his thoughts. This collection is the first of its kind and gave us, the editors, the chance of including some little-known but important and representative papers by Kolnai, including some previously unpublished ones, together with some papers delivered at the conference and some others which would serve to fill out a little more the reader's knowledge of his oeuvre. We have added an introduction, which sets out the main events of his life, the character of his philosophy, and a brief survey of the papers which, respectively, exemplify and explore it.

We should like here to thank all those concerned for allowing us to reprint already published papers, and David Wiggins for his additional permission to publish hitherto unpublished material from the Kolnai Nachlass. Unfortunately we were unable to trace those entitled to be asked about "The Indispensability of Philosophy".

However, we are glad to end this businesslike preface by expressing our conviction that, after decades of relative neglect, the world of professional philosophy may be gradually coming round to the view that, in ethics and political philosophy, there are few more remarkable thinkers in the twentieth century than the one who is the focal point of this collection.

Zoltán Balázs
Francis Dunlop

About the Contents of This Volume

Papers by Kolnai
(in order of composition)

What Is Politics About? (1933)—translated for this volume by Francis Dunlop. Originally published as "Der Inhalt der Politik", *Zeitschrift für die Gesamte Staatswissenschaft,* Tübingen, XCIV, 1, 1933, pp. 1–38.

The Indispensability of Philosophy (1947)—translated for this volume by Francis Dunlop. Originally written in English or French at the suggestion of Manuel Mendoza, who was studying at Laval University, Quebec, and attending Kolnai's lectures. It was published in Mexico in Mendoza's translation as "Necesidad de la Filosofía", *Estilo* (San Luis Potosí), VII, 3, 1947, pp. 151–64. The original does not survive.

A Note on the Meaning of Right and Wrong (1955)—in *Scientiis Artibusque*, an anthology of essays published by Herder & Co., Rome, July 1958, for the Hungarian Catholic Academy of Science and Art in exile.

Erroneous Conscience (1957)—first published in the *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 1957–58, pp. 171–98, and republished in *Ethics, Value, and Reality*, edited by Francis Dunlop and Brian Klug (London: Athlone, 1977), pp. 1–22.

The Concept of Practical Error (1959)—published here for the first time. Written as a paper to be read to a philosophy group at King's College, University of London, on 19 February 1960.

Agency and Freedom (1966)—commissioned by the Royal Institute of Philosophy, London, to be delivered as a lecture during the winter of 1966/67, and then published in *The Human Agent* (London: Macmillan; New York: St Martin's Press, 1968), pp. 20–46.

Are There Degrees of Ethical Universality? (1968)—published here for the first time. Written for delivery as a "special lecture" to the Philosophy Faculty at Marquette University, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where Kolnai was Visiting Professor in 1968.

Actions and Inactions (1970–71)—published here for the first time. Written for a Staff Seminar in the Philosophy Department of Bedford College, University of London.

Papers about Kolnai

("*AKMC*" indicates papers invited as contributions to the *Aurel Kolnai Memorial Conference* held in Budapest at the Central European University, in December 2000.)

Ambrus-Lakatos, Lóránd, "Aims in Games and Moral Purposes", *AKMC*, first publication.

Balázs, Zoltán, "Kolnai and Kant on (Human) Dignity", *AKMC*, first publication.

Beach, John D., "The Ethical Theories of Aurel Kolnai", first published in *The Thomist,* 45, 1, 1981, pp. 132–43.

Congdon, Lee, "Kolnai's Mature Political Philosophy", *AKMC*, first publication.

Dorschel, Andreas, "Is Love Intertwined with Hatred?", *AKMC*, first published in the *Journal of the British Society for Phenomenology*, XXXIII, 2002, pp. 273–85.

Dunlop, Francis, "Kolnai's Dissertation *Der ethische Wert und die Wirklichkeit*: A 'Completion' of Scheler's Value-Ethics", *AKMC*, first publication.

Hittinger, John P., "The Democratic Subversion of Political Liberty and Participation". An earlier version was published in *Appraisal*, 2, 1, 1997, pp. 26–36, but the paper has been extensively rewritten and abbreviated for this volume.

Mahoney, Daniel J., "Liberty, Equality, Nobility: Aurel Kolnai and the Moral Foundations of Democracy", *AKMC*, first published in *Perspectives on Political Science*, vol. 30, no 4, 2001, pp. 206–12.

Manent, Pierre, "Aurel Kolnai: A Political Philosopher Confronts the Scourge of Our Epoch", first published as the introduction to *The Utopian Mind and Other Papers*, ed. Francis Dunlop, London: Athlone, 1995, pp. xiii–xxvi.

Norgaard, Thomas, "Kolnai's Idea of Emotional Presentation", *AKMC*, first publication.

Radford, Robert, "Aurel Kolnai's 'Disgust': A Source in the Art and Writing of Salvador Dalí", first published in the *Burlington Magazine*, January 1999, pp. 32–33.

Stone, M. W. F., "The Nature and Scope of Ordinary Morality: Some Reflections in the Spirit of Aurel Kolnai", *AKMC*, first publication.

Wiggins, David, "Aurel Kolnai and Utopia", *AKMC*, first publication.

Introduction

FRANCIS DUNLOP

For some time now there have been a small number of Hungarian philosophers, historians and other academics who know something of the life and work of Aurel Kolnai (1900–1973),[1] but it cannot be said that Kolnai is as yet well known in his native land, despite the efforts of Zoltán Balázs, György Litván,[2] Endre Kiss and others. There is, firstly, the fact that most of Kolnai's relatives and friends from his youth were victims, direct or indirect, of Hitler's Final Solution, since his family was Jewish. Secondly, Kolnai moved to Vienna before his twentieth birthday, only returning occasionally to visit his parents up to 1937, when he said a definitive goodbye to Central Europe. Certainly he published in Hungary during that time. *Századunk* brought out several papers of great interest by him. But the historian Ferenc Fejtő told me that he thought his own review of *The War against the West* (1938), Kolnai's ideological accounting with Nazi thought, was probably the only one to be published in Hungary.[3]

Kolnai had, in fact, severed his emotional ties with Hungary after his youthful hopes for the "Chrysanthemum revolution" had been so quickly shattered in 1918–19, and he never returned after 1937. However, he still kept in touch with Hungarians, both in Hungary and elsewhere, and with what was happening in his old homeland. A significant example of Hungarian contact was his correspondence and reunion with his former mentor Oszkár Jászi in 1941, after he reached the United States. However, he refused to get involved with any "national committee", or similar patriotic organisation, at any stage of the Second World War. Apart from this voluntary withdrawal, the strong and resolute anti-Communism of this former Galilei Circle member ensured that, after the war and the Communist take-over, there could never be anything like "official" recognition. Nevertheless, as he got older, the old emotional ties with Hungary grew stronger again, and he began to use his native tongue more frequently for personal notes and memoranda.

Kolnai never regarded himself as an "academic" in the modern sense, that is, as a person hired, probably by a university, to teach and do "research"

in some specialist area of a particular subject. As the paper "The Indispensability of Philosophy" reveals, Kolnai regarded philosophy as far too important to be counted merely as a "subject" taught in educational institutions. As he argues in that paper, the level of thinking, and hence of debate, publication, and even conduct, in any society depends to a great extent on the quality of philosophical thinking in that society. But one does not have to be employed as a university teacher to engage in it. He himself, being passionately concerned about the reinvigoration of the best rational and spiritual traditions of the West after the First World War, but also under the necessity of earning a living, was faced with a real choice about what to do with himself after graduating *summa cum laude* from Vienna University in 1926.

He had already tried to support himself as an independent scholar and writer in 1921–22, before entering the university, but had not forgotten the "sobering experiences of unsuccess"[4] the attempt had brought, despite some moments of glory in the ambit of psychoanalysis.[5] On the other hand, a university career in philosophy "was both an uncertain affair in itself and certain to yield no income whatever before many years had passed". His banker father in Budapest, poorer than he once was, would hardly have been willing to support him totally for so long, even if his son had wanted him to. Kolnai was also acutely aware (long before this was generally known) of the real threat posed by the growth of Nazism in Germany, even in Austria, and of the urgency of the task of trying to fight it. For these reasons he decided to turn more actively to political journalism.

Accordingly, with the help of Karl Polányi, Kolnai won for himself a "permanent connection" with *Der Oesterreichische Volkswirt*, was for a time on the editorial staff of *Schönere Zukunft*, and contributed to various other periodicals, both in Vienna and in Berlin. Later, in the early thirties, he wrote for *Der Oesterreichische Ständestaat*, founded to combat Nazism at the instigation of Chancellor Dollfuß, and edited by Dietrich von Hildebrand. But these articles never brought in an adequate income, even when supplemented by his earnings from more strictly philosophical writing. Although his revised dissertation *Der Ethische Wert und die Wirklichkeit*[6] had received some excellent reviews, especially in Germany, his earnings fell short of the publication expenses. However, it led to the commissioning of his *Sexualethik*,[7] also very well received, followed by a "textbook of phenomenological ethics", but, as luck would have it, the publication of the textbook was indefinitely postponed by the publisher because of the political situation, and its text destroyed during the war. What he received for those two books, or for various substantial papers, including "Der Ekel" (one of the best-known of Kolnai's papers today)[8], "Der Inhalt der Politik"[9] and "Versuch über den Haß"[10], is not recorded. But, in any case, Kolnai felt in later life that his early decision to concentrate on politics

rather than philosophy, for which he was far better equipped, had been "over hasty", and had shed a "deadening air of unreality over (his life)". "Politics interested me in their ideological aspect alone", he wrote; he was not concerned with politics in a properly "functional" way. There is, he explained, an intrinsic tension between the phenomenological attitude (the basis of his philosophy) and the active outlook of politics. Though he could employ his philosophical talent in many of his analytic articles for political journals, political thinking "requires a certain capacity for 'arbitrary' decision 'here and now', a reasonable but not properly rational response to the 'thisness' of a situation", which went against his grain. The result was that, while he failed to influence political thought in Austria and Germany, he also failed to work properly towards the production of a philosophical *magnum opus*, which would certainly have been within his reach. Nevertheless, he consoled himself, his having "borne witness" to the high values of Western civilisation during an age plunging ever faster into barbarism may not have been entirely in vain.

Having decided against a university teaching career in 1926, Kolnai found it difficult to change course in later life. Once he had left Vienna in 1937, both to see his anti-Nazi book, *The War against the West,* through the press[11], and because he knew that, unless he left Vienna, the Nazis there would, sooner or later, dispose of such a pernicious opponent, he lived the life of a refugee for about eight years. This "homelessness" (in French and Swiss hotels and boarding houses, and later in American apartments) was soon compounded by statelessness. Kolnai had become an Austrian citizen in the early twenties. When the Germans swallowed up Austria in 1938, he found himself, to his disgust, "a citizen of the Third Reich", and immediately hurried to Paris to renounce the privilege, creating in the process new difficulties for himself.

French internment as an "enemy alien" in 1939, followed by marriage to Elisabeth Gémes in 1940, to whom he probably owed his personal survival on at least one occasion, and then more internment, were major distractions. But the eventual escape of the Kolnais (both of Jewish birth, though also Catholic converts) from Vichy France, where Jews were now being rounded up for deportation to extermination camps, and their eventual arrival in the United States, might have been expected to bring with it opportunities for university teaching. Unfortunately, the supply of posts had now dried up and Kolnai had to pursue his writing career largely on a research grant and charitable handouts.[12]

But all this changed at the end of the war, when he was invited to apply for some teaching at the Catholic University of Laval, Quebec, where, to Kolnai's great satisfaction, he was soon recognised as a full-time "professeur". This was in fact the only time that Kolnai ever held such a position. Unfortunately, the religious, political and cultural climate in Quebec began to weigh so heavily on him, who saw in it another form of the total-

itarianism he had so strenuously combated in the forms of Nazism and, after the war, Communism, that he felt forced to resign in 1955. He went to England, supported by a handsome Nuffield Foundation Travel Grant, to do research on utopian thought, having resolved that, come what may, he would never return to live in Quebec. When the grant ran out he secured another one, and then another after that, but he had still not finished the book, since he was beset by anxieties about how he would live when the grants ran out and was, in any case, in very poor health. By now he had realised that he could only settle in a British academic environment, yet, despite an impressive list of publications (most of them in foreign languages), no British university seemed willing to take the risk which the appointment of this highly eccentric, diffident, shabby and philosophically unorthodox foreigner seemed to present. However, eventually he secured some part-time teaching in London. Thanks to Professor Harry Acton, and to Acton's successors Bernard Williams and David Wiggins, this was gradually converted into a secure part-time "Visiting Lectureship" at Bedford College, part of London University. Kolnai, however, who had now been haunted by the fear of real poverty for at least thirty years, was in constant fear of its being withdrawn, despite his year's research fellowship at Birmingham (1961–62) and a Visiting Professorship at Marquette University, Wisconsin, in the USA, in 1968. It was in fact maintained up to the year of Kolnai's fatal heart attack.

One Hungarian whom Kolnai got to know well in Quebec was Mgr Francis Ibrányi. Ibrányi had been closely associated with Cardinal Archbishop Mindszenty, who was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1949 by the Hungarian Communist regime for "treason".[13] Kolnai and Ibrányi met frequently and had long conversations together in Quebec and elsewhere, and, when the former applied for his Nuffield grant, Ibrányi wrote a testimonial which included the following:

> Aurel Kolnai is a scholar, a thinker and a writer. It is his personality that largely supplies the key to his scientific and literary oeuvre. Kolnai lives in a state of inmost mental response to his environment—its stimulating and enlivening, its provocative and oppressive factors. On the one hand, he becomes aware, with unusual sensitivity, of every aspect, down to the smallest details, of his ambit of life. On the other hand, all experiences interest him by reference to their objective meaning and their content of value only. He applies to everything the test of ideas and ponders all things with a passionate objectivity devoid of pragmatic compromise. …(Thanks to) his fastidious integrity of mind…no kind of "party line", whether so styled or not, has ever been able to bend Kolnai into its service.[14]

Ibrányi puts strong emphasis here on Kolnai's receptiveness and sensitivity. This was indeed a constant in Kolnai's life from a very early age, when one of his main occupations was walking the streets of Budapest and systematically recording the different "atmospheres" of its districts. It is this same receptiveness to the "feel" or "sense" of things, coupled with a desire to record these intuitions, "rectified" where necessary by further intuitions, which enables him to talk in such detail and with such assurance of moral *experience*,[15] and to pass "behind" or "beneath" the tendencies of moral language, especially in moral philosophy, towards uniformity and reductionism, to reveal a far more variegated "world" than most moral philosophers have been willing or able to acknowledge. His concept of moral "emphasis", in its various modes, ranging from strict obligation to a range of "obligation-like" tensions, is a case in point.[16] For Kolnai this was a genuinely objective phenomenon; his acute ear for what lay behind people's *claims* about moral matters encouraged him to assume that it was a phenomenon familiar in some form to all moral agents.

Contemporary moral philosophers sometimes talk as though morality were a human, "social", *invention*, devised for a purpose and thus capable of being revised. Whether we are to take this seriously or not is unclear, but what we are actually faced with in "morality" is a humanity-wide phenomenon, with surface differences but considerable underlying uniformity.[17] Kolnai points out that all human beings come into a world where morality, in some form, is simply "given"; in so far as we are talking of human persons, then morality is part of our constitution. On the other hand, whereas moral values and moral emphases are both aspects of moral experience, and therefore a human datum, moral rules for realising them *are* in some sense "devised". This raises the problem of how we talk philosophically about what is directly experienced. Kolnai started from the assumption that ordinary language was, as far as it went, a fairly reliable guide, but one that lacked conceptual subtlety and needed to be supplemented in various ways. Once he had settled in England, in the orbit of "linguistic analysis", for which he had a great respect, he was concerned to add that this method was much more fruitful when the thinker could appeal to more than one language. But he knew that the fundamental analysis of experience meant the use of metaphor (see his discussion of *fiat* in "Agency and Freedom"), and a willingness to use several alternative ways of referring to phenomena, in the attempt to get the reader to recall or imagine the salient features of what is under investigation. Hence, also, Kolnai's habit of immediately qualifying some observation he has made, in his anxiety not to mislead the reader, so that he sometimes seems like one walking a knife-edge between two contrary beliefs.[18] In all this he was much influenced in his university days by the phenomenologist Max Scheler, who talked of the philosopher's attempt to get people to "see what can only be seen", and preferred, with other early phenomenologists, to

talk about pointing to things rather than defining them. As Kolnai puts it: "…Philosophy is precisely about what is *not* accessible to…rigorous logical clarification."[19]

This receptivity to the phenomena underlying language,[20] and the attempt to convey them adequately in words, goes with an exceptional *strength* of feeling, of powerful loves and hates, and strong preferences between things which many observers might hardly distinguish at all. In many ways this was a tremendous handicap, one that could only have been compensated for if his life had been lived in a more settled age and without the "urgent pressure of material cares". Kolnai, it could well be said, was, to an unusual extent, *at the mercy of* events in the outside world and of the powerful (predominantly moral) feelings and preferences that welled up from his own depths (hence his inability to continue in Quebec). Tolerance was not a virtue that could have come easily to him, though his general devotion to the moral good was such that he could be just and fair to students whose ideologies he found abhorrent, and even to the Nazi thinkers he analysed so searchingly in *The War against the West*.[21]

Kolnai's natural phenomenological method,[22] and his belief in the importance of philosophy for *human life*, went closely with a belief that it not only arises out of the everyday reflection of the "plain man" (not to be confused with the "common man"),[23] but must remain in close touch with it. "Common sense is the metaphysics of the Stone Age", said Bertrand Russell. Kolnai was as far as one could be from this belief. Without for a moment disregarding the contradictions, lack of conceptual subtlety, and other defects to which it is subject, he regarded it as a source of real knowledge, though of course it needed much clarification and correction. In thus respecting the beliefs which arise again and again in the predominantly practical life of man, he may have shown himself a truer democrat than most of the thinkers who would despise his qualified praise of, say, social privilege and hierarchy. In keeping with this, Kolnai never goes deeply into metaphysics or epistemology as usually understood. Where he did have occasion to say something about, say, free will or knowledge-claims, he might approach them from the practical point of view, or phenomenologically, as he does with the difference between evaluative and factual cognition. In the same way, though much of his writing exhibits acute psychological and sociological insights based on everyday experience,[24] he rarely touches on physics, chemistry or mathematics, branches of knowledge whose pursuit quickly removes us from the world of shared human experience altogether. Such was his unshakeably robust sense of the *reality*, or *objectivity*, of, say, ordinary material objects and living things, moral values and practical emphases, that he could never have surrendered his common-sense grasp of them. It is not that he lacked imagination to appreciate the "evidence" for, say, idealism, or various forms of scepticism. Rather, he never ceased to regard these considerations as clearly

outweighed by the ordinary and manifold evidence of the "given". John Mackie's "error theory" of values would have been for Kolnai a further example of what he somewhere calls the post-Renaissance "suicide" of Western thought.

Kolnai's exceptional strength as a moral philosopher, taking "moral" in the broad sense in which it encompasses human practice in general, including politics and the general features of the human condition, lies, then, in his ability to bring to light and hence illuminate the underlying phenomena; his supporting "argument" is precisely the appeal to human experience and intuition, "necessarily" supported by the appeal to consensus. It can be no surprise that Kolnai does not produce moral or ethical "theory" in the sense of a moral calculus.[25] Recall now, in Ibrányi's striking phrase, Kolnai's "objectivity devoid of pragmatic compromise". In a review of one of Bernard Williams's works, Martha Nussbaum argues that Williams's well-known refusal to produce ethical theory is a defect because only the "illuminating simplicity and systematising power" of theory is likely to make the "radical critique of existing judgements and the experiences which are their basis" effective. She had in mind Catherine MacKinnon's feminist theory, which made people see what had previously been "avoided or suppressed".[26] The effect of all this is to suggest that moral philosophers *ought* to produce ethical theory *because of* its "practical function" (even though she implies that MacKinnon's theory ignores "the nuances of individual human lives"). In his review of *Ethics, Value and Reality,*[27] W. D. Hudson suggests that the attentive reader may be led to ask himself whether Kolnai, with his continual qualifications, re-phrasings, and so on, "is…muddying the waters, or have I been oversimplifying things in order to get them clear?" It sounds very much as though Hudson would have adopted the first alternative. But, as Kolnai frequently points out, the desire for neatness and clarity at the cost of oversimplifying is an intellectual vice.[28]

Kolnai is perfectly well aware that moral education and political and social influence are important. But he insists that there is a hard and fast distinction between the philosophical intention on the one hand and the practical one of the politician, pedagogue and reformer on the other. He saw himself as a philosopher, primarily concerned with truth,[29] not with any useful or even noble extra-philosophical end the truth might serve (though he did also think that the calling to mind of moral truth would itself activate moral impulses and moral energy). If, despite this, it should still be thought that he was actually making any waters muddier than they already are,[30] then the proper response is to ask for chapter and verse. The generalising impulse of philosophy is important, but only when the object under investigation is respected.

In fact, Kolnai, who recognised early on his own penchant for "structure analysis", is continually trying to bring order into his data by classifying

them in various ways and exhibiting various relations between them. Good examples are his frequent recourse to the complicated relation between the "moral emphasis" and the "practical emphasis",[31] his distinction between "emphatic" and "implicit" morality,[32] and the apparent "paradox" of "erroneous conscience".[33] The point is that, where he can, Kolnai does "draw logical lines", as Ernst Mally said in his review of Kolnai's doctoral dissertation,[34] but he does not impose them *on* otherwise unrelated, or not clearly related, phenomena for some extrinsic practical end (even the moral improvement of institutions); he simply points to relations already *in* the phenomena. Philosophers who are used to dealing with clear-cut logical distinctions, which, in the prfessional ethics, are often of the "imposed" kind, may well talk of "muddying the waters", but that is probably because they are unused to the sustained examination of moral phenomena themselves.

The last element of Ibrányi's analysis I would like to dwell on is the inability of Kolnai to toe a "party line". Kolnai was a highly unusual person, a thinker of exceptional originality and integrity, but, as we have emphasised, of very strong loves and hates, one who saw almost everything in terms of values and universal meanings, especially moral ones. But the moral and ethical values of real things are partly conditioned by changing circumstances (this is the main theme of his doctoral dissertation). Hence the changes of political allegiance that marked his life. As he said himself in a letter to Oszkár Jászi: "I couldn't say whether I am Left or Right, or between the two, since I think too much about the question. So much is clear, that I am both Left and Right and an opportunist, and that I could not be any of them without qualification and balance…My world-view is centrist and its directing value is personalism."[35] A similar difficulty may strike anyone trying to classify Kolnai's moral philosophy. The safest course is to acknowledge not only that he is primarily a thinker who stands alone, often on territory not previously occupied, but that he actually felt driven to do so. The price of this has, of course, been that, although one meets increasingly with discussion of isolated Kolnaian themes, there is rarely any attempt to engage with his moral or political philosophical position as a whole.

But, above all, the fact has to be faced that Kolnai is difficult, especially for an age which lacks the time and patience to read his often highly demanding papers, and in the absence of any philosophical *magnum opus* which could gather everything together and reveal its order. Kolnai sometimes writes plainly enough, but he always has to be read meditatively and probably repeatedly. He may be dealing with familiar areas of philosophy, and with what look like familiar problems and questions, but the approach is likely to be eccentric, the fastidious use of language may be off-putting, the asides may well irritate the still wary reader. He has nothing of the laboratory researcher, neatly laying out his novel theory or applica-

tion, or cleanly advancing a new schematic *argument*. He does not exhaustively analyse the work of others.[36] He addresses us, in a leisurely fashion, as one cultivated thinker speaking to another, but about important matters that he hopes will be *recognised* as true. For every philosopher who is deeply influenced by the (still unfashionable) content of Kolnai's philosophy, there will be many more who find his approach stimulating and thought-provoking.[37] For, even if Kolnai sometimes sounds like a lonely and isolated voice (the early phenomenological writers mentioned above are still almost unknown in the United Kingdom), he will have done what he set out to do if he contributes, ever so little, to raising the standard of thought and intellectual culture among his readers. At the very least, he will have shown us the range and extent of the moral and social data that would have to be accommodated in any philosophically adequate moral or political theory.

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Finally, a brief word about the papers that follow. The Kolnai selections were chosen to exhibit the range of his characteristic concerns, with a bias towards papers little known or unknown. I have already said something about "The Indispensability of Philosophy", which, though it is a translation of a translation and hence lacks many of the marks of his style, is nevertheless a highly characteristic production of Kolnai's Quebec period as regards content. This introduction to "the abstract science of objects inserted just as they are in reality" can be compared with the better-known paper "The Sovereignty of the Object".[38] The other translated paper, "What is Politics About?", is a response in a German periodical to Carl Schmitt's (at the time) influential attempt to define politics. "The essential mark of the political sphere is not the relation between friend and foe [as Schmitt had argued] but the coexistence of opponents on the basis of a [shared] social unit of reference." Far from its being the case that "…with liberalism the state became perverted and ceased to be,…'politics' in its real essentials only begins with liberalism and its building of general discussion into the form of the state". This long paper is an important statement of Kolnai's political position when, out of concern for what was happening to democracy in Austria in the early thirties, he had joined the Marxist Socialist Party. But his acceptance of an "irrational element" in politics shows that his liberalism was always in need of some qualification, and anticipates his later fears (explored by several contributors to this volume) that unrestrained liberalism would inevitably produce a form of totalitarianism.

Of the three papers previously published in English, the least known must be "A Note on the Meaning of Right and Wrong". Here Kolnai illuminatingly compares and contrasts two theoretical descriptions of the "high-principled" or "virtuous" man: "the scrupulous duty-performer of

Kant (and) the Aristotelian virtuoso of 'prudence'". This paper has much to teach the champions of both deontology and "virtue ethics". It is also important as an early exposition of what Kolnai calls "emphatic" and "implicit" morality. "Erroneous Conscience" explores the apparent "paradox" that people are generally commended for acting according to conscience, even though their conduct may be objectively wrong. In the course of this paper, Kolnai explores many of the basic features of his commonsense view of morality. The last section is relevant to his exploration of morality under totalitarianism. The third of these republished papers is "Agency and Freedom". Kolnai here puts forward "an experiential account of free will in terms of a positive and indispensable 'decree' or 'fiat'". Although he accepts that there may be something "illusory" about free will, he argues that it "cannot, in common sense, repose on mere illusion or misinterpretation".

The earliest of the three hitherto unpublished papers is "The Concept of Practical Error". The distinction between Morality, here glossed as "submission to a specified set of demands on me, conceived in universal terms", and Practice, "the management of my concerns", together with detailed considerations about their "convergence", is a major theme of Kolnai's moral philosophy. The paper published here, for all the "unfinished" impression it gives, is the best and clearest examination of these relations from the negative point of view. The "universality" characterising the moral theme is, in Kolnai's understanding, subject to several kinds of qualification. "Are There Degrees of Ethical Universality?", which explores them, does justice to R. M. Hare's insistence on the basic universality, but criticises it for being "purely formal": "Universality is…a distinctive feature of our ethical dimension of being: not merely a logical precondition of its being possible for moral judgements, just like any other judgements, to have a truth value; (Hare's) insistence on 'universalisability' is 'a misdescription of moral experience as it really is'." The third previously unpublished paper, "Actions and Inactions", is an interesting attempt to argue that, in many contexts, it really matters whether we use positive or negative language to describe something, despite the fact that, in purely formal terms, the two sentences would mean the same. The last two sections of the paper show the importance of the question for moral philosophy.

Of the papers written *about* Kolnai's philosophy, it might help readers new to Kolnai's philosophy to know that both John Beach's "The Ethical Theories of Aurel Kolnai" and Lee Congdon's "Kolnai's Mature Political Philosophy" are clear and helpful surveys of their subject matter and can serve as introductions to the moral and political aspects of Kolnai's thinking. Congdon's paper is especially useful for relating the themes of utopia, morals and politics fruitfully together, to show the coherence of his thought.

But if we take these papers as a whole, pride of place must be given to the two devoted to the theme of the Utopian Mind, not only because of the distinction of their respective authors but also because of the intrinsic importance of the theme. David Wiggins's "Aurel Kolnai and Utopia" and Pierre Manent's "Aurel Kolnai: a Political Philosopher Confronts the Scourge of our Epoch" approach the topic in very different ways, which makes their close agreement on essentials all the more striking. Wiggins's detailed analysis of Kolnai's main anti-utopian argument is set against a useful sample and refutation of the ways in which well-known contemporary thinkers evade or even blur over this vital matter. Manent's broader and more historical treatment of the theme contains a valuable section on the significance of Kolnai's "phenomenological conservatism", comparing his approach to the social and political world with that of his contemporaries Karl Popper and Michael Oakeshott.

Kolnai's positive political thinking in his American and Canadian period is given special attention by Daniel J. Mahoney and John P. Hittinger. Both writers stress that Kolnai was not in the least averse to equality and democracy, but was concerned that the moral and social preconditions of the Western democratic tradition were being too easily forgotten. Mahoney, in "Liberty, Equality, Nobility: Aurel Kolnai and the Moral Foundations of Democracy", compares Kolnai illuminatingly with de Tocqueville, whereas Hittinger's "The Democratic Subversion of Political Liberty and Participation" puts more stress on Kolnai's argument that the rise of the "common man" (as opposed to the "plain man") spells death to freedom; he ends his paper by stressing the Catholic elements of his social thought, associating Kolnai's philosophy with that of Pope John Paul II (himself a disciple of Scheler), and with Maritain, Gilson, Newman and Edith Stein.

Kolnai's meditations on the various "logics" of human practice may have started with his theoretical interest in games (especially chess). In the course of his thinking he brought to light many instances of human institutions where the participants can only serve the personal, social and cultural ends the institutions serve by focussing on some subordinate end standing in a "paratelic" relation to the primary end. Loránd Ambrus-Lakatos's informative paper "Aims in Games and Moral Purposes" explores the relations between games and morality in this perspective. Zoltán Balázs's "Kolnai and Kant on (Human) Dignity" expounds Kolnai's well-known article "Dignity", arguing that, just as Kolnai found the specific concept of *human* dignity "deeply problematic", so Kant himself, to whom many contemporary writers on human dignity appeal, fails to show that human dignity is "a solid or thick concept, i.e. more than a weak metaphor", though he does "establish[es] the concept of *human sublimity*". Francis Dunlop's paper, which introduces Kolnai's little-known dissertation *Der ethische Wert und die Wirklichkeit*, looks at the most prominent

themes of this remarkable and definitely non-naturalistic work. It concentrates on the idea of "moral emphasis", which reflects the claim that what is morally important (in various modes) for an agent here and now cannot be simply "read off" from some universal maxim or table of values but is heavily dependent on particular facts about the agent's real situation and character, in a way which invites some systematisation. The last primarily ethical work is M. W. F. Stone's "The Nature and Scope of Ordinary Morality: Some Reflections in the Spirit of Aurel Kolnai". He argues that, although both Aristotle and Kant intended their ethical works to uphold "ordinary morality", most contemporary moral philosophers assume that morality can only serve the modern world if it is systematised in a reforming spirit. With the help of a careful analysis of Sartre's famous example of the would-be resistance-fighter's dilemma, Stone argues that the modern assumption is not justified, since it ignores the problem-solving resources already available within ordinary morality.

Thomas Norgaard's paper is primarily epistemological. As he writes himself, it expresses an aspect of "a broader interest in cognitivist axiology and ethics" and is inspired by the hope that it "may be of help to those of us interested in affectivity's role in evaluation and motivation". Such painstaking analytic work has an important part to play in showing how unjustified is the disdain still often shown to ethical thinkers who rely to a great extent on intuition. Andreas Dorschel introduces Kolnai's paper "Versuch über den Haß" (An Essay on Hatred). Although Dorschel's primary interest is in the substantive question of whether love and hate are "intertwined", a good deal can be learnt about Kolnai's method and style in the course of this systematic analysis. Lastly, Robert Radford discusses the surrealist painter Salvador Dalí's interest in the phenomenological method of Kolnai's paper "Disgust". Although Kolnai would himself have been disgusted, had he learnt of Dalí's interest in this essay[39]—better known, probably, than any other of his works—we may be thankful that Radford, who is not himself a philosopher, has brought this most interesting relation to our attention.

Notes

1 The most complete account of Kolnai's life and work is Francis Dunlop, *The Life and Thought of Aurel Kolnai*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.

2 Litván, one of the very few relatives of Kolnai's still living, and Endre Kiss, entitled their joint introduction to the issue of *Világosság* devoted to Kolnai and his work (Vol. 38, 5-6, 1997) "Az itthon ismeretlen Kolnai" (Kolnai, unknown in his own country).

3 "Háború a Nyugat ellen", *Korunk*, IV, pp. 362–65, 1939.

4 Quotations in this and the following paragraph come from the unedited text of Kolnai's memoirs.

5 Notably, the publication of *Psychoanalyse und Soziologie: zur Psychologie von Masse und Gesellschaft*, Vienna–Leipzig: Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1920, translated into English by Eden and Cedar Paul as *Psychoanalysis and Sociology*, London and New York: Allen & Unwin, 1921.
6 Freiburg im Br.: Herder & Co., 1927.
7 Paderborn: Schöningh, 1930.
8 Now translated as "On Disgust" by Barry Smith and Carolyn Korsmeyer, Chicago: Open Court, 2004. See also Robert Radford's contribution to this volume.
9 Translated for this volume as "What is Politics About?"
10 *See* Andreas Dorschel's paper in this volume.
11 It was published by Gollancz of London and finally appeared in 1938.
12 The grant was for a projected book *Liberty and the Heart of Europe*, which examined the principles which Kolnai hoped would inspire the Western powers in influencing the political arrangements in Germany and the Central European countries they had occupied, now that an allied victory seemed probable. But once the likely victors, including, of course, the Soviet Union, had agreed on their respective "spheres of influence" he abandoned the half-completed book as "overtaken by events".
13 Ibrányi left Hungary in that year. He had been Professor of Moral Theology of Esztergom and for ten years Prefect of the Seminary there.
14 *See* the Kolnai Nachlass, awaiting transfer to a university library.
15 *See* especially "A Note on the Meaning of Right and Wrong" and "Are There Degrees of Ethical Universality?", both in this volume, where the appeal to experience is very prominent.
16 *See* §3 of my paper on Kolnai's dissertation in this volume. It is vital to grasp that Kolnai's appeal to differences of moral experience is not supposed to be of merely "psychological" relevance. *See* "Are There Degrees of Ethical Universality?" towards the end of §3.
17 *See* "Moral Consensus", in *Ethics, Value and Reality*, ed. Francis Dunlop and Brian Klug, London: Athlone, 1977.
18 As in his many attempts to distinguish between "morality" and (the rest of) "practice".
19 "Moral Consensus", p. 166.
20 Explored from the epistemological point of view in Thomas Norgaard's paper in this volume.
21 *The War against the West*, p. 19.
22 This is poles apart from Husserl's obsession with "constitution", and from anything to do with existentialism, but close to the method of Pfänder, Reinach, Hildebrand and the early Scheler.
23 *See* the papers by Daniel J. Mahoney and John P. Hittinger in this volume.
24 *See* especially "Agency and Freedom" in this volume.
25 *See* the last section of the addendum to "Erroneous Conscience" (in this volume) for Kolnai's view of the uncertainty of moral cognition in particular situations.
26 *See Ethics*, vol. 107, pp. 526–29.
27 *Times Higher Educational Supplement*, 10/2/78 (page unknown).
28 On the concern to "reform" "ordinary morality", see M. W. F. Stone's paper in this volume.
29 Or rather with "submission to the sovereignty of the object".
30 If there is a grain of truth in Hudson's insinuation, it is more likely the result of Kolnai's literary style.

31 Discussed in "The Concept of Practical Error", in this volume.
32 *See* §2 of "A Note on the Meaning of Right and Wrong", reprinted in this volume.
33 *See* the paper of that name in this volume.
34 Translated, almost in full, in Francis Dunlop, *Early Ethical Writings of Aurel Kolnai*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004, pp. xii–xiii.
35 Letter from Kolnai to Oszkár Jászi, 15 Sept. 1942, Columbia University Library, New York. Printed in *op. cit.*, note 2. *See* p. 80.
36 His discussions of Carl Schmitt's *Der Begriff des Politischen* and of R. M. Hare's early theory are not typical.
37 Karl Popper was among their number. *See op. cit.*, note 1, p. 236.
38 *See* Ethics, Value and Reality, pp. 23–43, ref. in note 16.
39 *See* "Moral Consensus", p. 145.

I. PAPERS BY KOLNAI

What Is Politics About?

AUREL KOLNAI
1933

(Translated from the German by Francis Dunlop)[1]

I

1. There was a time when "politics" simply meant the way a country is governed, or, as an object of study, the theory of the state. Today the discriminating usage of the intelligentsia receives full confirmation from the systematic disciplines, and there is a general concern for a *sociology of politics*. This is definitely not supposed to be about constitutional law, the art of government or reasons of state, but about the mysteries of politics in the most confined sense. Carl Schmitt, whose work[2] has become a model for the most recent studies of this kind, has even tried to interpret the state as "*the purest example of political existence*".[3] However, "political existence" is still given a very specific, and questionable, meaning here. In view of the enormous influence that this unusually profound and spirited work of Schmitt's has had, and of its obvious connection with a very definite and tendentious interpretation of both state and politics, the champion of a different view must work out especially carefully where he stands in relation to it.

Speaking very generally, one may place Schmitt among those thinkers very widely represented among German-speaking intellectuals today, who can be briefly described as "*irrationalists of life and power*". The members of this group appeal to thinkers like Nietzsche, Klages, Scheler (?),[4] Bergson (?),[5] Sorel, Pareto, Spengler, Heidegger and so on, in this or that respect and with more or less justice from case to case. In terms of the history of ideas one might link them *inter alia* with Vitalism, the Youth Movement, Bolshevism and Fascism. Naturally this is not the place to produce a philosophical critique of this complex movement of thought. We can only indicate in the barest outline and with special reference to political theory the fundamental ideas of this way of thinking: "life" and "existence" do not serve any rational purpose, or any values, ethical or logical, which could be understood as normative; they exist simply for their own sake. It is in principle impossible to rationalise life completely, that is, to give it a pervasive structure of rational considerations and normative responsibilities; the attempt to do so falsifies and weakens life, leads to hypocrisy, half-measures and atrophy. Rational justifications of this "life-centred attitude" are mere pretences, ideological will o' the wisps. Nothing that takes

place in the human world, or even the spiritual world, is really the attainment of purposes, but the unfolding of the life-drive. In the social sphere life takes the form of power. Moral legitimations of power are futile and superfluous. Since power justifies itself, conflicts between powers whose spheres of action intersect are natural and unavoidable—indeed the true test and highest intensification of vigorous life. Power can be concealed by means of laws and humanitarian ideologies—perhaps cleverly disguised or made really impotent—but there is no substitute for it as a fundamental category of social existence. Liberalism and democracy, public discussion and a plurality of parties are, on the one hand, the cover for capitalist power seizures, on the other, passing phases of weakness in the lives of states.

It would be a mistake to think that all attention to irrational motives, all criticism of customary rationalistic constructions, all sociological interpretation and relativisation of points of view and systems of ideas, must be irrational in this sense. Indeed, as we shall see, this cannot be said of all Schmitt's points. His distinction between that aspect of the life of states which can be given the quite general name of "administration", and that consisting of "politics" in the narrower sense[6], is of inestimable benefit to political science (as an example of the narrowly political we may take the basic political orientation of the regime, on the basis of which the rules of administration are worked out; this is in a *certain* sense irrational, since it cannot be unequivocally derived from normative considerations). So is his demonstration that the contemporary rationalisation of life is a historical process of a specific kind, which gives rise to distinct kinds of claim and provokes irrationalist reactions. We should also add his critique of all "rational" social theories, with their naïve pseudo objectivity and their uncouth pretensions to truth.[7] But this is quite different from putting the main emphasis on what is purely vital, irrational, and "a-spiritual", or—let us be frank—"barbaric", when writing about social existence.

2. Schmitt *bases politics, and hence the state, on the idea of enmity*. What leads him to this singular outlook, this quasi "Copernican Revolution"?

The argument goes like this: the state is the product of community-forming political groupings. (From this point of view, "in the beginning" really was "action"—not "being"!) A political grouping exists when human groups confront one another "concretely and existentially", that is, they do not represent rationally explicable points of view or value preferences, but ultimate forms of being. To help them establish themselves their members are prepared to give their own lives and to annihilate their enemies. Forms of being as such do not necessarily create community in this sense, just as not every group is a state. Politics begins where there is a readiness to die and kill, where collectives confront one another as enemies. The enmity in question is, of course, not a private, anarchic one, but a matter

of groups. Jesus's commandment in the Sermon on the Mount, "Love your enemies", has no bearing on this.[8] Clearly therefore politics presupposes comradeship, kinship, community, but only when there is war and antagonistic grouping does a social collective really become a political one, that is, a state. Just as a man becomes Christian through baptism, so social existence becomes political through enmity. It is clear that the more fundamental idea here is not friendship but enmity, since the latter phenomenon is regarded as constitutive for friendship itself in the strongest sense, for the political unity of human beings.[9] It is not peaceful, economic and cultural coexistence that founds the state and brings "friendship" into being as a political phenomenon, but standing together in the face of the enemy—in other words, war.

Corresponding to the basic value polarities "good and evil" in the ethical sphere, "beautiful and ugly" in the aesthetic, and "beneficial and harmful" in the utilitarian, Schmitt *makes the distinction between "friend and foe" central to the political sphere* (pp. 14ff). Is his argument circular, when he confines the political application of this idea to "public" friendship and enmity, and at the same time reintroduces his definition of politics as a public affair? It is not, to the extent that he presupposes the fundamental phenomenon of the "Public", and emphasises the unity of conflict as the defining feature of public existence in its political form. His treatment of the contrasting ideas of friend and foe, good and evil, and so on, as analogous pairings, seems more open to question. For the contrasting pairs of good and evil, etc., quite apart from the height of the values concerned, take an ultimate objectivity of value for granted which is completely absent from the category of friend and foe. Certainly the beneficial and the harmful, and even more so the pleasant and the unpleasant, are relative to the individual person, the accidents of his body and soul and even his momentary condition; but they represent value-qualities of a general and arguable kind, so that one may justifiably speak of useful books and pleasant forest air, even though the books referred to are of no use to many, and person after person takes no pleasure in forest air. By contrast "friend and foe"—not to be confused with "friendliness" and "malevolence" as qualities of character—do not refer to value-qualities, but merely to relationships and groupings. The individual's standpoint (or that of a particular group) is in this case not only the presupposition of and criterion for his feelings and judgement, as in the case of values, but its own proper *content*. It means something to say that an upright man is in favour of good and against evil; it is less important, but still means something, to say that the hedonist is in favour of what he finds pleasant in the given case and in general, and against what is unpleasant; but does it mean anything at all to say that political man supports what he is for, and opposes what he is against? *Can a grouping that is in itself purely accidental determine the creation of a realm of meaning?*[10]

Schmitt leaves us in no doubt about this; friend-foe relations, or political antagonisms, are "neither purely normative nor purely 'spiritual' antagonisms" (pp. 14ff).[11] The friend, or better one's own group-existence, does not represent what ought in some way to be, or what is right or in order; nor does the foe in any way represent what ought not to be, what is wrong or destructive of order. The opposition is not normative, and hence not discussible; it cannot be settled through explanation or understanding; it is existential, resting, so to speak, on the collision between self-asserting forms of existence, and can only be resolved through the destruction of what exists, through the removal of one of the parties by physical conflict. Schmitt does not say that every political antagonism that arises necessarily leads to real war, but it is part of its nature that it can lead to it, and it does tend to lead to it,[12] and it can really only be properly resolved in this way. It is not so much perpetual war with all its possible foes that makes a state a real state, as a continuous readiness for war—not, of course, preeminently in the technical and organisational sense, but in a sociological, psychological and legal one.

We shall return to this sociological assessment of war. But first we must investigate the nature of political, "*existential*", antagonisms more closely.

3. Schmitt's concept of "the existential negation of another existent" is equivocal. Is the incompatibility of the two "existents" supposed to be based on their radically *different qualities*, or on their *rival claims to possess*, say, territory or raw materials? In the latter case the antagonism would be entirely or predominantly an economic one, which Schmitt expressly excludes from the category of existential antagonism. But in the first case it is pertinent to ask why the two forms of existence "collide spatially", and why they do not go on simply existing alongside one another. I only need to risk my life in standing up for my own form of existence when its presence, that is, the existence of my community, is threatened in its given form. Certainly it can come to this; a difference in form of existence can coincide with competition for the physical space needed for effective existence. Clearly this is the case Schmitt has in mind. But as soon as one makes this clear, one at once sees that it is not simply a matter of the mystical enmity of antagonistic forms of existence, of different tribal deities, perhaps, but necessarily of situations that on one side border on interests, economics and property—on what is quantitative. War is normally also a struggle *for something*. But an analysis of the antagonism of the forms of existence seems even more important. Schmitt asserts that wars conducted for religious, moral or economic reasons are unthinkable.[13] But it is not obvious why two peoples should not fight for the possession of a piece of fertile land from the very first day they find themselves existing as separate entities. But again, if their "existential" opposi-

tion cannot be a religious or moral one either, one must seriously ask whether the two foes are really likely to confine their mutual reproaches to the scandalous charge of "otherness". A glance at the facts of history teaches us that even in wars where territory disputes play a minor part and where none of the participants is really defending its threatened political autonomy, the fighting is about *something specific*, such as religion, honour, the organisation of society. In those cases where no objective and impartial judgement can easily or, in my view, possibly be pronounced in favour of one, and against the other party, the reason is not the absence of arguments, that is, of objectively valid principles, on either side, but their actual presence. Let no one suppose that these considerations are idle. They are indispensable, should anyone wish to obtain a more accurate picture of the content of political life.

Schmitt, of course, is not unaware of the well-known motives for waging war that history provides. He concedes that "religious, moral and other antagonisms are *used* for political ends, in order to *bring about* the hostile alignment that really counts. Once this grouping for war has really taken place, however, the decisive antagonism is no longer religious, moral or economic, but political." Considerable agreement is possible with the second proposition; sociologically speaking, it is highly informative. It points to the existence of a *special political sphere* in the social world, and to the fact that its *concerns* are *derived* from value spheres more directly accessible to the senses. But in the first proposition the anthropomorphic terms "used" and "bring about" (our italics) are symptomatic. They recall the hoary old story of cunning clerics using men's fear of the dark, or of thunder and lightning, to secure for themselves fat benefices, as intimates of the deity. But such tactical and demagogic "use" of religious and other antagonisms is a secondary procedure, and it is highly questionable whether groupings for war can be deliberately "brought about" at all. Schmitt sounds more plausible when he says (pp. 25ff): "Every religious, etc. antagonism changes into a political antagonism when it is powerful enough to divide men effectively into friends and foes." This sociological insight is further refined, when he adds that "at the very moment when this realignment is effected (that is, realignment into friend and foe), the non-political antagonism, with its hitherto accepted criteria, fades into the background and the parties concerned become subject to the completely new, specific and…often very illogical and 'irrational' conditions and consequences of what has now become a political situation."

If this is true—and one may go a long way towards accepting it—one may nevertheless refuse to accept unqualified the arrogant assertion that "there are no normative and no 'spiritual' conflicts". We can rather talk of "normative and 'spiritual' conflicts" now being represented by concrete powers of a particular kind, and which, correspondingly distorted and re-accented, make themselves felt in a play of concrete power mechanisms

of a particular, "political" kind. The political antagonisms are now, however, not completely irrational, not impervious to meanings and objective value-qualities; their expression is no mere trial of the other's strength, no mere carnage between opponents who can only be characterised as "this one here" and "that one there". This, again, is worlds apart from Schmitt's assumption that the change from a pre-political, let us say a "material", antagonism to a political one is *brought about* simply by one party's "becoming strong enough"; and that the politicisation of the antagonism really *consists in* its new power "to divide men effectively into friends and foes".

The transformation of a material antagonism into a political motive, its attainment of political actuality, depends not only on its inherent strength, but also on a number of further conditions—how far such an antagonism can link up with current political concerns, how far leading political groups feel it and, once aware of it, actually consider it "exploitable", or how far several material antagonisms converge in one political focus, or admit of polarisation round one political axis. The political is by no means *simply* equivalent to what is most intensive, serious or weighty, although at the bottom of every great political struggle (there is also routine skirmishing of a diplomatic kind and within political groupings) there lies a selection of definite antagonisms, experienced as intensive and weighty, involving both spiritual matters and interests.

Schmitt is mistaken in his claim that the politicisation of an antagonism signifies the friend and foe groupings based on it. If friend and foe are to be taken simply as "opposed" social groups (like different churches and schools of philosophy, competing economic units, or artistic movements) his definition is too wide. But if, as he apparently will have it, they are to signify no less than totalities ready for war, death and destruction, his definition is too narrow. Can it really be maintained (to anticipate a later point) that party antagonism in the modern state is really only political when armed "party militia" stand behind each side, or their formation is somehow imminent? On the other hand it can be objected that this over-narrow criterion of the Political is quite insufficient! Do not a well-organised band of criminals and the police, or two great criminal concerns in a state of feud, equally deserve to be called "warring totalities", and does this really make their antagonism a genuinely political one? The spiritual antagonism of the supporters and opponents of prohibition in the USA today seems to us to be an antagonism that has "become political", since it is frequently at the centre of national politics, although it is hardly likely ever to lead to civil war; whereas the perpetual physical struggle between the officials of prohibition and the extensively organised bands of smugglers can scarcely be described as a political one.

It seems to us, then, that Schmitt essentially exaggerates the relationship between *politics* and *war*. This is clearly related to the striking fact that in his work *politics is treated almost entirely as a matter of external relations*;

internal relations completely vanish from sight. His sole mention of the class struggle relates to its power to push national antagonisms into the background and bring about a state of civil or international class war.[14] This neglect of internal relations on the part of one so outstandingly well informed about the problems of internal politics, as Schmitt is, obviously has a deeper meaning and cannot be the result of inattention or insensitivity.[15] Indeed, we may venture to suggest that this averting of the gaze from internal politics has without doubt an *internal political meaning*. This almost exclusive concern with external politics, this rigid holding fast to the primacy of foreign affairs, nicely corresponds to a *definite* view of internal politics, to the structure of power *within the state*!

War, then, is the cornerstone of the life of the state; and this derivation of the state from external relations, together with this, as Schmitt himself says, pluralist picture of the world as an essential multiplicity of sovereign states, and the sharp polemic we also find in this work directed against *discussion*, an essential category of internal relations, as a basic category of civic life—these things are logically very closely related and show the way in which the primacy of external relations and, as it were, the repression of internal, are both in fact directed towards the solution of questions of internal politics.

4. The *defining feature* of the state is, for Schmitt, the *jus belli* (pp. 33ff). It is from this point of view that he attacks Cole's and Laski's theories, according to which the state is one form of grouping among others. He denies that the state is any kind of grouping, "society", or, so to speak, contingent assemblage of comfortable sovereign individuals (to render Schmitt's indignant scorn in yet more drastic terms); in Tönnies's language, it is not an "association", but an absolutely real entity, a "community". This seems to us correct, in so far as we also regard the state as a special kind of community which conditions the forms of association and possesses considerable metaphysical dignity.[16] But the "state" in its developed form (such as the monarchical empire, the ancient *polis* and the modern constitutional state) is surely a poor example of Tönnies's idea of "community", an outstanding feature of which is an element of natural growth, of the familial and tribal. But a more important question is whether the state and the political sphere are really constituted by the *jus belli*. A secret society with clearly defined goals, which orders its members to kill its "enemies" and subjects them to its internal courts of justice, is not necessarily a political body in any important sense, and certainly not a state. An international movement, which makes similar claims on its adherents, though with only partial success, is certainly a political force of the first rank, but again not a state.

Nevertheless, the claim that every community at war has something political about it, and even forms a kind of "state", or perhaps only a "state

within a state", when its power is really considerable and its exclusiveness well marked, is more plausible than the corresponding claims that politics only makes sense *when it embraces the possibility of asserting its own and annihilating another's existence through warfare*, and that *the state is necessarily a sovereign warrior community* confronting other such communities. But this is what Schmitt actually says. A people which devotes itself to peace and wants to have no enemies is not doing anything political but doing away with itself as a political subject (p. 41). An "idyllic" world where mankind was united and free of the possibility of war, whether or not it could ever come to pass, would nevertheless be a world containing "neither politics nor state" (p. 42). Not only would the peoples subject to a League of Nations with powers of decision not form states; the world-state itself would not be a state, "it would be neither state nor empire, but would completely lose its political character". For in respect of its earthly environment it could have no more enemies. It could not be organised for the struggle against a foe. The "friendship" of those individuals and peoples united within it could not constitute a political community, since the correlate of "antagonism" would be missing.[17]

It is hard to be polemical in the face of such exaggerated constructions, since the risk of sounding a banal note is all too great. Nevertheless, the thinker must always be mindful of his subject and take no heed of the glorious or lamentable nature of his own task. But are we really expected to nod agreement when told that in the world-empire there would be no more distribution of power, no more hierarchy, rivalry or resolution of public antagonisms? No more ups and downs in the cultural, economic and even the straightforward power relations of the federated nations and their appointed personnel? Would there be no more disagreement about how certain central decisions (of a religious kind, for example, or concerned with the planning of the world economy) were to be resolved, or how the individual nations and districts were to be governed? Would there be no more state taxes, no legislation for state education, no state courts and police? It seems to us much more likely that politics would simply acquire a new dimension, that of the organised super-state, although it would, in exchange, lose important, though not unreservedly "pleasant", elements. There would certainly be no more armaments debates or diplomatic alliances, as we know them.

One might object (as we ourselves do): Even a world-state cannot completely do away forever with the possibility of enemies, revolutions and armed collective action. Indeed, no! Schmitt adds the bitter comment that, in the future, man will not speak of wars but of "means of compulsion" and of "executions" (pp. 64f).[18] But he never completely denies the possibility of a world-embracing organisation at perpetual peace, his concern being the thesis that such a condition would signify the end of the state and of politics. But it is by pressing our first objection that we come

to the really important point. It may be generally acknowledged that every state-like formation, and every political power, must be prepared to consider rising up in arms (not necessarily only "defensively") should the need arise, or be capable of considering it in an emergency. An absolute rejection of this possibility seems in fact tantamount to the dissolution of all civil society. For a single man who is "of another mind" could then overturn the whole defenceless world-state. Even the existence of party groupings of any kind, in even the best-balanced and most freedom-loving democracy, would probably make no sense unless it were at the same time "thinkable" that if the impossible happened and an attempt to suppress them completely were made, it could be met with forceful resistance. *But this is not the essence or heart of the matter.* Schmitt's ghastly vision of a united world-empire helps us to see this clearly. Here too "war" would still be part of the picture, but its possibility would be so small and remote that it would be quite obvious that war and the concern for war, that is, the "friend-foe" relation in Schmitt's sense, have very little to do with the basic determination of politics and the state. (In the same way it would be manifestly false to speak of a civilisation dying out or fading away simply because crimes were so rarely committed that only a feeble remnant of its police and law-courts still continued to function.)

Let us now leave consideration of the "world-state" and go on to consider the relation between municipality and state and, in particular, the federal state. The supreme authorities for taxation and police, for example, in the large municipalities resemble and stand in for the state itself, but in no way are they organised for possible wars against other regions of the same state. Apparent exceptions turn out to prove our point. Paris in Jacobin days, "Red" Vienna in contemporary Austria, in their pointed struggles for power with the rest of the country do not simply represent themselves as demographic or residential units, but as the political Left at state level, a party division intended to embrace the state as a whole. The important regional power struggles in the German Empire furnish an almost vanishing prospect of military engagement between the states concerned—for example, Bavaria and Prussia—and one that bears no relation to the political weight of the antagonisms. One might perhaps put forward the American Civil War, the largest post-Napoleonic military operation of the nineteenth century, as evidence that even regional antagonisms in a federal state lead on to the "real thing" (so Schmitt), that is, to war, once they achieve real political significance. But in fact the Civil War was by no means an abstract collision between Northern "existence" and Southern "existence" as such, but resulted from the combined effects of various antagonisms, those, namely, between the different cultures of North and South, between a factory and a plantation economy, and between the moral and the utilitarian, racial and aristocratic attitudes to slavery (thus providing a superb example of how political oppositions develop).