

## Book Reviews

### THE DECLINE OF THE SOVEREIGN STATE

William Hooker: *Carl Schmitt's International Thought: Order and Orientation*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. Pp. xiii, 230. \$90.00.)

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William Hooker has written a stimulating introduction to the international thought of the Nazi political and legal theorist Carl Schmitt (1888–1985), whose writings have enjoyed a revival of interest in recent years. Hooker concludes that despite Schmitt's failed solutions to the problems of modern politics, his thought retains tremendous analytical power. Hooker persuasively contends that Schmitt deserves to be considered a major figure in international political theory. Hooker's aim is only to give an exposition of Schmitt's international thought and, aside from brief comments, he does not seek to put Schmitt in conversation with other schools of thought (though the book does contain a useful appendix sketching out how various recent schools of political thought have drawn on Schmitt). Nonetheless, given Schmitt's wide-ranging thought, this book will prompt most readers to draw connections to any number of disciplines.

Schmitt's major concern about world order is "the slow decline of the sovereign state, and with it the international system based on the formal equality of states" (2). Schmitt's concern over this decline arises out of his disapproval of the antipolitical nature of ascendant liberal universalism. For Schmitt the political is the distinction between friend and enemy, and the sovereign state decides friend and enemy. Thus, if liberalism were to triumph, there would be no more political, and the political is a giver of meaning (14–15, 197). However, the most extreme expression of enmity is war, and war can destroy the very collectivities that give meaning. Thus the question is whether there can be an international order that preserves the political by containing conflict. For Schmitt, the modern state system had come close to achieving this (13).

Schmitt's analysis of the decline of the sovereign state has two major components. First, Hobbes's attempt to secure the sovereignty of the state failed owing to the individualism that called into question the state's authority. Hobbes separates public and private belief; one need not believe any public truth put forth by the state—lip service is all that is necessary. However, this separation undermines the sovereign's supposedly authoritative

pronouncement of friend and enemy. Second, the rise of transoceanic seafaring challenged the spatial and territorial basis of the European states system (8–9). Crucial to Schmitt's thought is the importance of territory as a building block of sovereignty and in particular *Nomos*, the fundamental territorial ordering of the world (22). *Nomos* is a shared framework of understanding among states that provides the context in which enmity can take place; it controls enmity and prevents it from spiraling into anarchy.

Schmitt made two attempts to think about how the political could exist after the decline of the European sovereign state. His first response is the concept of *Großraum*, or the politics of large spaces. Rather than just the state itself, there is a dominant power in a larger, culturally homogenous area; it is charged with ideological definition of the *Großraum* and prevents other powers from intervening in the *Großraum* (133–34). However, it is not clear how Schmitt's concept of "large space" is any different from that of a bigger sovereign state or regional hegemony. After the perceived failure of the *Großraum* concept, Schmitt put forth the theory of the partisan; this was an attempt to think about the political apart from the state. The political and the state are not the same thing; the state is only a possible vehicle for the political (61).

Hooker correctly refuses to isolate Schmitt's theological framework from his political analysis, an error Hooker contends is particularly characteristic of Schmitt's leftist Anglophone interpreters. However, Schmitt's political theology is not fully coherent. If Schmitt believes the political is ineradicable (14), why is he so worried that liberalism will destroy the political? Why does he think there is an "unstoppable tide of depoliticisation" (8, 10) or have "the fear that man might cease to exist politically" (49)? Schmitt wrote of the triumph of liberalism in apocalyptic terms, even invoking the biblical idea of the Antichrist (49–54). It seems that in some way the apocalyptic can overcome the ineradicable. On the other hand, Schmitt seems to have faith that the political will indeed emerge (10). In fact, Schmitt believes, we ought to await the unpredictable emergence of the *Katechon*, the restrainer of world unity that delays the emergence of the Antichrist (51, 110; see 2 Thessalonians 2:6–7). For Schmitt, Nazi Germany was the *Katechon* of his day.

Hooker describes Schmitt's approach to history as Christological, but I came away unsure exactly how this was so. Christology is a branch of Christian theology that reflects on the person and work of Christ, yet Hooker's account does not make clear what role conceptions about Christ himself played in Schmitt's thought. If the triumph of liberalism is Antichristological, does that mean that the political is Christological? If so, how is the distinction between friend and enemy Christological? Is Christ the archetypal *Katechon* for Schmitt?

Schmitt's use of a theological framework to analyze history might be compared to the Christian realist movement (which included Reinhold Niebuhr and Martin Wight, among others) whose heyday was roughly coterminous (1950s–1960s) with Schmitt's major writings on world politics. However,

Christian realism was a reaction in part against the totalitarianisms of left and right that arose in the first half of the twentieth century. It was characterized by an Augustinianism that it deployed to deflate the pretensions of all human political and social arrangements, including those of liberal democracies. This Augustinianism seems to be lacking in Schmitt's thought, at least as Hooker describes it. For the Christian realists, politics is tragic; for Schmitt, politics gives meaning. Thus, both Schmitt and the Christian realists disdained progressivist accounts of history, interpreted history theologically, and so forth, yet Schmitt heartily supported the Nazis, while the Christian realists reviled Hitler as the very epitome of the pursuit of power unrestrained by any moral scruple whatsoever. Clearly, the mere analysis of history through a theological framework does not yield unitary results. What was present (or lacking) in Schmitt's theological vision that led him down his path to Nazism? I would venture that Schmitt's lack of Augustinianism as well as little sense of the church as a multinational fellowship of believers that trumps national particularity might well have been playing a role. Further scholarly investigation into any engagement of Schmitt with Augustine and ecclesiology would be illuminating.

Schmitt's thought is sprawling, drawing on history, political philosophy, jurisprudence, theology, and geography; this makes his thought difficult to summarize neatly. Hooker has given us a useful entry into Schmitt's international thought, although sometimes he fails to give clear definitions when introducing important Schmittian concepts (e.g., order and orientation, *Katechon*). All scholars of international political thought are well served by this volume and ought to heed Hooker's call to take Schmitt's ideas seriously.

—Daniel Edward Young

### COMPETING PRIVATE INTERESTS, NOW COMMON GOOD

Dylan Riley: *The Civic Foundations of Fascism in Europe: Italy, Spain, and Romania, 1870–1945*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010. Pp. 258. \$55.00.)

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Dylan Riley's comparative historical analysis of fascism in Italy, Spain, and Romania is a major and original contribution to the understanding of the origins of fascism, its varieties, and its relationship to civil society development. Indeed, this is the most innovative account of this historical phenomenon since Sheri Berman, Jason Kaufman, and Ariel Armony established that the development of civil society can foster authoritarian political regimes.