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THE CATHOLIC ORIGINS OF TOTALITARIANISM THEORY IN INTERWAR EUROPE*

JAMES CHAPPEL
Department of History, Columbia University
E-mail: jgc2110@columbia.edu

Totalitarianism theory was one of the ratifying principles of the Cold War, and remains an important component of contemporary political discourse. Its origins, however, are little understood. Although widely seen as a secular product of anticommunist socialism, it was originally a theological notion, rooted in the political theory of Catholic personalism. Specifically, totalitarianism theory was forged by Catholic intellectuals in the mid-1930s, responding to Carl Schmitt's turn to the "total state" in 1931. In this essay I explore the notion's formation and circulation through the Catholic public sphere in both France and Austria, where "antitotalitarianism" was born as a new form of the traditional Catholic animus against the nation state project.

INTRODUCTION

Totalitarianism theory has been, since the late 1930s, one of the organizing principles of Western political and moral thought. While academic historians have largely abandoned it as a viable research protocol, it lives on in political and cultural discourse; it is the epithet used by those who wish to connect current geopolitical struggles with the Cold War and the Second World War. This strategy grants a sheen of inevitability and virtue to "antitotalitarian" policy, which is allowed to claim the aureole of anti-Nazi forces in World War II and Eastern European dissidents of more recent decades. Since 1989, "totalitarianism" has primarily been ascribed to so-called "Islamo-fascist" regimes, which many believe pose an existential threat to the continued existence of Western democracy,

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as did Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia before them. "The various forms of radical Islamism," the historian Jeffrey Herf asserted in a speech at the US State Department in March 2010, "represent the third major form of totalitarian ideology and politics in modern world history."[1] More broadly, a complex of figures including Paul Berman, Azar Nafisi, Ron Rosenbaum, and Bassam Tibi, not to mention diplomats like Condoleezza Rice, have been attempting to tie Islamism to totalitarianism. In a manifesto that is perhaps the most striking manifestation of this phenomenon, a group of prominent intellectuals including Salman Rushdie, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, and Bernard-Henri Lévy cautioned Europe against the newest form of the old totalitarian menace. "After having defeated Fascism, Nazism, and Stalinism," they warn, "the world now faces a new global threat of the totalitarian type: Islamism."[2]

Totalitarianism, as the term is employed today, is often linked with religion. The 2005 manifesto pointedly confronts "religious totalitarianism," the province of "theocrats," "obscurantism," and "hatred." Antitotalitarianism is, by contrast, figured as a muscular, secular humanism: in the same manifesto, the antonyms of "religious totalitarianism" are "equality, freedom, and secularism [*laïcité*]." Ironically, though, it was not antifascists writing in the name of Enlightenment who created totalitarian theory, but rather Catholics writing against the Enlightenment tradition and the principles of 1789. Its first and most influential heralds were not exiled socialists, attempting to carve a space of modern freedom and light between Nazism and communism, but Catholics—French, German, and Austrian—who saw totalitarianism as the pathological consequence of modern freedoms. This essay will chart the rise of totalitarianism theory among Catholic intellectuals, who forged it in reaction to the theories of the "total state" proffered by the erstwhile Catholic political theorist Carl Schmitt. In particular, the theory's development in the work of three of interwar Europe's most prominent Catholic political thinkers and critics of Schmitt—Waldemar Gurian, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Jacques Maritain—will be considered. By tracking the meteoric rise of the idea in Catholic periodicals and monographs, it will be seen how, and why, Catholics became the founders of one of the most pervasive, and putatively secular, lodestars of twentieth-century moral and political thought.

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[1] J. Herf, "Killing in the Name," *The New Republic* (2010), available at www.tnr.com/article/world/killing-the-name. This essay is adapted from the speech.

[2] This manifesto, which appeared in French, Dutch, and English versions, is available in the reference section of L'Association Internet pour la promotion des droits de l'homme. See www.aidh.org/txtref/2006/isl-occ02.htm. For a dissenting voice see P. Beinart, *The Icarus Syndrome* (New York, 2010), esp. chap. 18.

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In its most influential form—the form of which Catholics were pioneers—totalitarianism theory argues that Bolshevism and Nazism, despite obvious differences in legitimating ideologies, are similar movements because each seeks to totally dominate its citizens, subjecting them to the party and its whims. Moreover, the theory holds that these regimes announce a new political form, different in nature from the authoritarian ones of the past. This marks a departure from the older notion of the *stato totalitario*, which had been used by both critics and defenders of Mussolini's regime since the 1920s. The novelty—the shift necessary to take the theory from a local description of Italy to a more general theory of the modern state and its pathologies—was marked by the inclusion of Bolshevism under its umbrella. That move, first made among Catholics in Germany, France, and Austria, marks the birth of totalitarianism theory as it would be used in the Cold War and beyond. Italy is, surprisingly, marginal to this story, although it certainly did produce forms of antitotalitarian thought: Don Luigi Sturzo decried Bolshevism as "left-fascism" as early as 1926, while the Vatican's Holy Office, ten years later, prepared a document entitled "Propositions [to be Condemned] on Racism, Nationalism, Communism, Totalitarianism."[3] These gestures, however, did not constitute a publicly available theory of totalitarianism: the Holy Office's document was never promulgated, while Sturzo's strident Christian Democracy assured that he did not emerge as a central figure in 1930s Catholic political discourse. The Italian story, that is to say, did not have a great deal of purchase on the European public sphere: unlike their Italian counterparts, the figures discussed in this essay oversaw an explosion of interest in totalitarianism theory, and were also, as will be explored in the final section, central to transmitting the concept into American political science.

The fact that neither liberals nor socialists arrived at a fully fledged totalitarianism theory in the mid-1930s is unsurprising. Whatever its social-scientific merit, the theory has always been a tool of political polemic. Who, at the moment of the theory's birth, had a political stake in drawing comparisons between Bolshevism and Nazism? British and American liberals could perfectly well oppose them both without concocting elaborate theories to do so. The socialist and communist left had no stake in the comparison, either: this was the great age of the Popular Front, predicated on the incompatibility between communism and any form of fascism. European Catholics, however, could receive political mileage from the comparison. In France, Catholics were responding to the rise of the hated Popular Front; any theory that could equate Bolshevism and Nazism delegitimized the very concept of a Moscow-backed, antifascist Front

[3] P. Godman, *Hitler and the Vatican* (New York, 2004), 199.

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populaire. In Austria, Catholic supporters of Dollfuss's *Ständestaat* were in a similar position: their two major enemies were the Austro-Marxists, just defeated in a civil war but still a threat, and the National Socialists, whose desire for *Anschluss* was finding worrying resonance within Austria itself. Totalitarianism theory allowed supporters of Dollfuss to undercut the National Socialists' claim to represent a bulwark against communism.

Previous scholarship, nonetheless, almost uniformly credits the theory's authorship to secularists. To be sure, there were a few liberals and socialists who were invoking totalitarianism theory in the mid-1930s. Although their scattered remarks pale in comparison with the theory's prominence in the Catholic public sphere, they have spawned two powerful bodies of scholarship crediting them with the theory's authorship.[4] Some have sought its origins in the German left wing in exile.[5] The two central early essays in this interpretation are Herbert Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View

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4 Many point to a 1929 article in the *London Times* as the founding moment of true totalitarianism theory, as Bolshevism is mentioned too. In a way, though, it becomes the exception that proves the rule. The article in question was not, as is often implied, written in the paper's editorial voice, but was a report of a lecture by Christopher Dawson, one of Britain's most reactionary Catholics. On this see M. Huttner, *Totalitarismus und säkulare Religionen* (Bonn, 1999), 30. Most instances of non-Catholic, mature totalitarianism theory before 1936 only mention Bolshevism as totalitarian in passing. I.L. Kandel, *The Making of Nazis* (New York, 1935), 131–8; W.E. Garrison, *Intolerance* (New York, 1934), 246; B. Souvarine, "Les journées de fevrier," *Critique sociale* 11 (March 1934), 201–5, 204. Souvarine does use it more often in his landmark *Staline, aperçu historique du bolchévisme* (Paris, 1935). He was essentially alone, however, among the French left. The more mainstream version of Souvarine's anti-Stalinism—André Gide's *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* (Paris, 1936), for instance, or the important pamphlet *Qu'est-ce que le fascisme?* (Paris, 1935)—does not make use of it.

5 See, among others, A. Rabinbach, "Moments of Totalitarianism," *History and Theory* 45 (2006), 72–100; I. Kershaw, *The Nazi Dictatorship*, 4th edn (New York, 2000), 23–5; H. Maier, "'Totalitarismus' und 'politische Religionen': Konzepte des Diktaturvergleichs," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 43 (1995), 387–405; and, more broadly, M. Schmeitzner, ed., *Totalitarismuskritik von links: Deutsche Diskurse im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2007) and W. D. Jones, *The Lost Debate: German Socialist Intellectuals and Totalitarianism* (Urbana, 1999). Abbott Gleason, while avoiding a univocal origin story, focuses on leftist figures and almost entirely ignores the Catholic narrative, as is belied by his assertion that the concept was "never very important" in 1930s France. A. Gleason, *Totalitarianism: The Inner History of the Cold War* (New York, 1995), 143. The major documentary collection of totalitarian theories, E. Traverso's *Le Totalitarisme* (Paris, 2001), does include some early Christian theorists, but does not provide a strong analytical framework and ignores the pre-1936 Catholic voices discussed in this essay. It is, of course, possible that earlier forms of non-Catholic totalitarian theory exist, undiscovered, but it seems definitive that, even if that were the case, totalitarianism theory did not rise to public prominence in liberal or socialist circles the way that it did in Catholic ones in the mid-1930s.

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of the State," and Paul Tillich, "The Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church," both of which appeared in 1934. Since they both use the category pioneered by the Italians to investigate the new German reality, while not considering the Soviet case (explicitly in Tillich's case, implicitly in Marcuse's), they cannot be considered as exemplars of mature totalitarianism theory.[6] The other interpretation, offered most prominently by Walter Schlangen, places the origins in American comparative political science, focusing on two 1935 essays by Max Lerner and Hans Kohn.[7] For similar reasons, this genealogy is inadequate: neither of them describes Bolshevism as totalitarian, and thus neither essay contains totalitarianism theory in its most significant form.[8]

Although totalitarianism theory cannot be understood apart from its domestic political context, it was more than a mere political convenience and rallying cry. The vision of political and civil society at its heart is deeply Catholic. Catholic political theory has, since at least the nineteenth century, argued for the decentering of sovereignty away from the nation state and towards a cluster of legitimate, nonpolitical institutions: notably the family, the profession, and the Church.[9] This was matched by a distrust of the "masses" and, more broadly, of the nation state's wresting of sovereignty away from traditional authority figures. The Catholic vision of society—of an overlapping set of hierarchies legitimized in the last instance by natural law, its organizing principle, and God, its supreme leader—is the one incarnated in totalitarianism theory. As we will see, the theory assumes a religious notion of citizenship and human selfhood, in which the subject's salvation and worth stem not from politics or society, but from faith and transcendence. This does not mean that more prominent totalitarian theorists like Hannah Arendt or Carl Friedrich were crypto-Catholics. It does mean, though, that they helped to translate a fundamentally theological notion into acceptably secular language.[10] While there were doubtless other streams of influence that

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6 P. Tillich, "The Totalitarian State and the Claims of the Church," *Social Research* 1 (1934), 405–33; H. Marcuse, "The Struggle against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State," in *idem*, *Negations: Essays in Critical Theory* (Boston, 1968), 3–42.

7 W. Schlangen, *Die Totalitarismustheorie* (Stuttgart, 1976), chap. 3. For an example that gives the liberal and left-wing versions together, while still ignoring the Catholics, see G. Lozek *et al.*, *Die Totalitarismus-Doktrin im Antikommunismus* (Berlin, 1985), chap. 2.

8 M. Lerner, "The Pattern of Dictatorship," in G. Stanton, ed., *Dictatorship in the Modern World* (Minneapolis, 1935), 3–25; H. Kohn, "Communist and Fascist Dictatorship: A Comparative Study," in ibid., 143–60.

9 For an overview of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century tradition see J. Corrin, *Catholic Intellectuals and the Challenge of Democracy* (Notre Dame, 2002).

10 The literature on the translation of theological ideas into secular language is, of course, enormous; for two recent versions of the argument that the process of secularization is always incomplete see T. Asad, *Formations of the Secular* (Stanford, 2003); and

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led to the Cold War hegemony of totalitarianism theory, Catholicism was a significant, and perhaps determining, one that has been largely overlooked. This is not merely a matter of speculation: as will be explored in the essay's final section, both Arendt and Friedrich were first introduced to the idea in its religious form, as they had ties to the Catholic public sphere in the 1930s. Although the American reception of the idea is beyond the scope of this article, these ties suggest that, when it comes to totalitarianism theory, the origins matter.[11]

CARL SCHMITT AND HIS CATHOLIC INTERLOCUTORS, 1926–1930

Totalitarianism theory was originally forged by Catholic intellectuals reacting to the incendiary writings of Carl Schmitt, and specifically his 1931 article on the "total state." He had not always been an object of such opprobrium in Catholic circles: a decade earlier, he had been widely celebrated in the Catholic press, primarily for his *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* (1923). At the time, he was fully ensconced in the world of Catholic journalism and politics. He delivered addresses to the German *Zentrum* (the centrist Catholic parliamentary party), and appeared in the party's newspapers. He published in respected Catholic cultural journals, notably *Hochland* and *Die Schildgenossen*, while the second edition of his 1923 volume was published in 1925 in the august Katholische Gedanke series, which included Catholics as prominent as Ildefons Herwegen, Engelbert Krebs, and Erich Przywara. In 1926, the influential Catholic journalist Paul Adams wrote to a friend that he had just read that volume "for the sixth or seventh time." "It seems to me," he added, giving voice to many young Catholics like himself, "that this work of Schmitt's is one of the most important and valuable in the impoverished theology of our day."[12]

In the late 1920s, though, many of his former Catholic friends turned on him: responding, perhaps, to his 1926 excommunication (for an unsanctioned divorce), but more explicitly to his famous writings from the period, which

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V. Pecora, *Secularization and Cultural Criticism* (Chicago, 2006). For the most canonical opposing view see H. Blumenberg, *The Legitimacy of the Modern Age*, trans. R.M. Wallace (Cambridge, MA, 1983).

[11] For the spread of totalitarianism theory into America see, in addition to Gleason's *Totalitarianism*, D. Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission* (Princeton, 2010), chap. 2; and T. Maddux, "Red Fascism, Brown Bolshevism: The American Image of Totalitarianism in the 1930s," *The Historian* XL (1977), 85–103.

[12] Paul Adams to Erik Peterson, 14 October 1926, quoted in B. Nichtweiß, "Apokalyptische Verfassungslehren: Carl Schmitt im Horizon der Theologie Erik Petersons," in B. Wacker, ed., *Die eigentlich katholische Verschärfung: Konfession, Theologie und Politik im Werk Carl Schmitts* (Munich, 1994), 37–88, 68.

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were difficult to square with the traditional concerns of Catholicism. Waldemar Gurian, Dietrich von Hildebrand, and Jacques Maritain, all of whom went on to become early Catholic theorists of totalitarianism, began to agitate against him at this time. They carried this animus into the 1930s, where it predisposed them to both consider and attack Schmitt's theory of the "total state," announced in 1931.[13]

Waldemar Gurian, a Russian Jew born in 1902, had fled the Russian pogroms to Germany, where he was baptized in 1914. He attended the Universities of Bonn and Cologne in the early 1920s, where he became one of Schmitt's protégés. Gurian was not a brilliantly original thinker; Schmitt was right when he judged Gurian to wield primarily "journalistic intelligence."[14] He was, however, perfectly placed—as one of few students of Schmitt to write directly about both Bolshevism and Nazism—to father totalitarianism theory. He was also the foremost German student of, and propagandist for, Jacques Maritain. The two met around 1925, and Gurian wrote a bevy of articles introducing Maritain to his first German audience.[15] Maritain, scion of a famous Protestant family who had converted to Catholicism in 1905, was a neo-Thomist philosopher and supporter of Charles Maurras's Action française until its papal condemnation of 1926. He was also one of Schmitt's most enthusiastic readers in France, and he helped to broker the translation of Schmitt's *Political Romanticism* into French (the two were personally close for a few years in the mid-1920s, as well).[16] He went on to become Catholic France's most prominent intellectual in the 1930s, and his *Integral Humanism* (1936) was one of the central texts of Catholic totalitarianism theory.

By 1928, Maritain had become well known among German Catholics, due largely to Gurian's work on his behalf. In that year, he traveled to Constance to give his first German lecture, and he used the occasion to meet Dietrich von Hildebrand, who would go on to join Gurian and Maritain as a persistent

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13 For information on them see H. Hürten, *Waldmar Gurian: Ein Zeuge der Krise unserer Welt in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Mainz, 1972); R. Ebneth, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift* Der Christliche Ständestaat, *deutsche Emigration in Österreich 1933–1938* (Mainz, 1976); J.-L. Barré, *Jacques and Raïssa Maritain: Beggars for Heaven*, trans. B. Doering (Notre Dame, 2005).

14 Carl Schmitt to Karl Muth, 15 Nov. 1927, Nachlaß Karl Muth, Ana390II.A.Schmitt, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

15 See, for instance, W. Gurian, "Bloy, Maurras, Maritain: Ein Nachwort," *Orplid* 3 (1926–7), 57–66.

16 Gurian describes Maritain's efforts in a letter to Schmitt on 22 June 1927, RSW 265 5510, Nachlaß Carl Schmitt, Landesarchiv Nordrhein-Westfalen Hauptstaatsarchiv Düsseldorf.

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Catholic critic of Schmitt.[17] Hildebrand, who had been one of Gurian's instructors at the University of Cologne a few years previously, was a desperately cosmopolitan Jewish Catholic philosopher (the son of the famous sculptor Adolf von Hildebrand). He spent the 1920s in Germany, largely in Bavaria, before fleeing to Italy and then to Austria in 1934. There, as founder and editor of the journal *Christliche Ständestaat*, funded by Dollfuss himself, Hildebrand introduced totalitarianism theory into Austria and the vibrant community of Catholic exiles who had, like him, bunkered there in response to Hitler.

All three of them were early theorists of personalism, a school of Catholic thought that, in terms of political theory, privileged "natural communities" at the expense of the nation state.[18] Although, philosophically speaking, there were differences between personalism in France and Germany, this political project was the same. The primary founder of personalism in Germany was Max Scheler, a Catholic philosopher of whom both Gurian and Hildebrand were disciples in the early 1920s (their work was at the time, and remained for decades, steeped in their mentor's ideas[19]). Scheler's basic project was to overturn the Kantian ethics then dominant in German philosophy. His most finished work, and the one that informed the classes that Gurian and Hildebrand took with him (and that Gurian took with Hildebrand), was *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values*, which appeared in Husserl's *Jahrbuch für Philosophie und phänomenologische Forschung* in 1913 and 1916.[20] Here, Scheler objected to the merely formal and a priori nature of Kantian ethical thought. Kant, Scheler argued, had remained indifferent to the content of morality; his only concern was the method—the categorical imperative—through which morality was acquired. Scheler theorized a set of values that would be objective, existing independently of the subjective means required to attain them. As these values objectively exist, they also have

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[17] On this as the earliest meeting of Hildebrand and Maritain, see 23 July 1928, Franz Xaver Münch to Maritain, Maritain Archives, Archives of the Centre d'études Jacques et Raïssa Maritain, Kolbsheim, France.

[18] In addition to its central role in the origins of totalitarianism theory, personalism could also be found at the origins of post-1945 human rights discourse. See S. Moyn, *The Last Utopia* (Cambridge, 2010), 64–5.

[19] See, for instance, Gurian's first work, *Die deutsche Jugendbewegung* (Habelschwerdt-Franke, 1923) or, in Hildebrand's case, "Max Scheler als Ethiker," *Hochland* 21 (1924), 626–37. Schmitt and Scheler, despite both teaching in the Catholic Rhineland in the early 1920s, seem never to have met or corresponded; according to Ludwig Feuchtwanger, Scheler was unimpressed with Schmitt's work. Feuchtwanger to Schmitt, 14 Oct. 1924, RSW 265 3479, Nachlaß Schmitt.

[20] Per his matriculation records at Universität Köln, Gurian took courses on Kant, metaphysics, and epistemology with Scheler, and another on the foundations of sociology from Hildebrand. See Waldemar Gurian Papers, Library of Congress, Box 18, Folder 4.

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objective relations: in the place of the categorical imperative, with its binary of right and wrong, Scheler posited a "hierarchy of values," ranging from the basest values we share with the animals to the heights of divine union available only to the saints. The agent of this objective morality was the embodied, historical "person," distinguished from the Kantian moral subject in that she was imbricated in a dense web of tradition, authority, and praxis.[21]

The political consequences were drawn out in a series of influential essays, entitled "Sociological Reorientation and the Task of German Catholics after the War," that appeared in *Hochland* in 1915. The articles suggested that Catholics, with their superior understanding of moral order, be charged with the postwar reconstruction of German society. The problem with Protestant Germany was that it tended to denude the person, enveloped in an overlapping set of legitimate communities, by reducing all communal life to a single, "originary form of bond": that between the individual and the nation state. This leads to a heretical nationalism, which sees "through the nation the only way to God." The Catholic Church, on the other hand, protects and ratifies all of the natural communities—"family, homeland, Volk, state, nation"—necessary to properly intersubjective moral life. If we are citizens only—and not believers, parents, workers, and so on—the web of community in which moral life and action takes place becomes too thin and unnatural. Scheler thus supported the notion, which he saw as fundamentally "Christian and Catholic," that human nature called for "definite, well-ordered relationships of authority and service between the historically constructed estates."[22]

Personalism in France, although expressed in a different philosophical language, partook of the same political imagination. Personalism there was rooted in the royalist, reactionary circle around Charles Maurras and the Action française. Jacques Maritain, associated with the movement until its condemnation in 1926, began discussing *la personne humaine* in an article in the Maurrassian journal *Revue universelle* in 1923.[23] By that point, the "person" had already appeared in the works of several figures associated with French reaction, notably

[21] See P. Spader, *Scheler's Ethical Personalism: Its Logic, Development, and Promise* (New York, 2002) for a far more nuanced philosophical account than I can provide here.

[22] M. Scheler, *Politisch–Pädagogische Schriften* (München, 1982), 379, 377, 381, 384, 456. He reiterated similar beliefs in *On the Eternal in Man* (1921), his last major work before breaking with the Church. M. Scheler, *On the Eternal in Man*, trans. B. Noble (Hamden, 1972), 368.

[23] J. Maritain, "Luther et l'avènement du moi," *Revue universelle* 12 (1923), 29–54.

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Father Réginald Garrigou-Lagrange, the prestigious Thomist philosopher, and Augustin Cochin, the Catholic historian of the French Revolution.[24]

The notion of the person is, Maritain proudly claims, a legitimately Thomist one. As Maritain understood Thomas, the sage had taught that man *qua* "person" possesses rationality and the ability to consciously and morally dwell in the hierarchy of being stretching from man to God. This notion of the stable hierarchy, existing outside the prison of the self, was central to Maritain's Thomism, as it was to Scheler's phenomenology. "It is only in the Church, herald of supernatural order and safeguard of natural order among men," Maritain wrote in 1922, "that order appears in plenitude, in its splendor and metaphysical purity."[25] Disaster occurs when man is shuttled out of this hierarchy of being: he then abandons his status as a "person" in favor of a new identity, as an "individual." The individual, unlike the person, is motivated by unconscious instinct and is ignorant of the spark of divine rationality in his soul. "As individuals," Maritain rhapsodizes, "we are subject to the stars. As persons, we rule them."[26] In other words, a true person is not subject to the whims of brute matter, but soars above it—at least in spirit—through the possession of reason.

As with Scheler and his followers, the notion of the "person" was employed in order to critique the state and its putatively unlimited abrogation of all legitimate authority for itself. Maritain's most influential statement of this position, published in a 1925 volume, deserves lengthy quotation:

> In the social order, the modern city sacrifices the *person* to the *individual*; it gives universal suffrage, equal rights, liberty of opinion, to the *individual*, and delivers the *person*, isolated, naked, with no social framework to support and protect it, to all the devouring powers which threaten the soul's life . . . If a State is to be built out of this dust of individuals, then . . . the individual will be completely annexed to the social whole.[27]

The resonance with Scheler's personalism, likewise dedicated to the preservation of multiple levels of sovereignty, should be clear: the person, as a denizen of a multivalent reality ("social framework"), has been transformed into an atomized mass man who can be dominated by the "devouring powers" of the state. The only solution, Maritain suggested elsewhere, was a return to a more local, federalist, and customary notion of legitimacy and law.[28]

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[24] A. Cochin, "Les sociétés de pensée et la Révolution: La liberté," *Le correspondant* 94 (25 Feb. 1922), 599–635, 635; R. Garrigou-Lagrange, *Le sens commun*, 3rd edn (Paris, 1922), 321–6.

[25] J. Maritain, *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, ed. Cercle d'études Jacques et Raïssa Maritain (Fribourg, 1984), 1280.

[26] J. Maritain, *Three Reformers* (Westport, CT, 1970), 21.

[27] Ibid., emphasis in original.

[28] J. Maritain, "Les idées politiques de Pascal," in *Oeuvres complètes*, vol. 3, 181–204.

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Carl Schmitt, who argued forcefully for the independence of the political from the ethical–religious in his 1927 *Concept of the Political*, was deeply opposed to this line of thought. Like his self-appointed master, Hobbes, he saw the maintenance of legitimate power centers outside the state as the antechamber to civil war. The differences between Schmitt's thought and the personalism of his coreligionists became especially glaring when the Pope controversially condemned the Action française in 1926. The royalist movement, although affiliated with many Catholics both within and without the official hierarchy, was explicitly secular (and its leader, Charles Maurras, a professed agnostic); many, notably Maurras himself, believed that the Pope was overstepping his bounds in forbidding Catholics to take part in the movement. The Pope argued, and many agreed, that Maurras had portrayed his movement as theologically orthodox, and he had, indeed, many times stated his belief in the natural compatibility between Catholicism and his own brand of royalism. Although Schmitt never publicly commented on the affair, his theories were clearly congenial to Maurras's own: he believed, that is, that the Pope had no right to intervene in the fundamentally secular sphere of politics. Maritain and Gurian, however, were among the most prominent defenders of the Pope's decision, and this moment marks the break between Schmitt and the personalists.

At issue was ecclesiology. The personalists, true to their political theory, believed that the Church had legitimate authority in the field of politics, while Schmitt disagreed. Schmitt's devotion to the Church had always been of a peculiar sort: even in *Roman Catholicism and Political Form* his argument had been that the Catholic Church admirably represented the *form* of the political, and not that the Church itself, as an institution devoted to control over issues like education, necessarily deserved a role in German politics. He expanded on this in his works and correspondence of the late 1920s, when he came to rely on the distinction, fundamental to Roman jurisprudence, between *auctoritas* and *potestas*. Simplifying slightly, the former represents moral or ethical authority while the latter represents binding legal power. For Schmitt, as he explained orally to Gurian in 1927 and more fully in his *Constitutional Theory* of the following year, the Pope legitimately wields only *auctoritas*, and oversteps himself when he makes binding commands in the field of politics.[29] As evidence, he cited the famous letter of Pope Gelasius: "Two there are, august emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled, the sacred authority [*auctoritas*] of the priesthood and the

[29] Gurian reports this conversation in a letter to Maritain, 27 Sept. 1927, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim. For the printed version, see C. Schmitt, *Constitutional Theory*, trans. J. Seitzer (Durham, 2008), 459.

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royal power [*potestas*]."[30] Schmitt drew the consequences of this doctrine in a revelatory letter he sent to Maritain in December 1928, criticizing his teachings and position in the Maurras affair (unsurprisingly, their friendship began to sour soon after). Slyly referencing Maritain's consistently negative accounts of Luther and Protestantism, Schmitt suggests that the Catholic Church, having abandoned political power, finds itself in the same conundrum. The Protestant Church, Schmitt writes, is "a frail and almost parodic analogue, turned on its head, to the case of the Roman Catholic Church since the collapse of the unified *Imperium Romanum*." The Wilhelmine state had been closely tied to the Protestant Church, and the Revolution of 1918 had thrust that church into an impossible situation, marked by an untenable "confusion of powers" that, Schmitt laconically wrote, was "not good."[31] Schmitt implied that this confusion was dangerously conducive to civil war; the Church had to renounce *potestas* altogether to stave off calamity.

Gurian, as he had already made clear in an article in January 1927, was firmly on Maritain's side of the debate, and had begun to turn against his former mentor.[32] Worries remained, however. "How would you respond," Gurian wrote to Maritain in that year, citing the same Gelasian text, "to Prof. Carl Schmitt's thesis that the Church has only *auctoritas*, and not *potestas*?"[33] Maritain could only reiterate the theory he had broached in *Primacy of the Spiritual* earlier that year: "the logically and legally impossible theory," as Schmitt called it, "of *potestas indirecta*."[34] The theory, putatively rooted deep in Catholic tradition, allowed the Church to remain totally independent of politics, while also granting it the right to interfere in the political realm if it begins to encroach on the Church's supremacy. Like Schmitt, Maritain held that there were "two powers," one headed by the sovereign and the other by the Pope (Maritain quotes the Gelasian text on this, too, conveniently leaving out the Latin phrases that clearly indicate Gelasius's denial of *potestas* to the Church[35]). The spiritual is superior, "infinitely so," to the temporal, and for that reason the Church chooses to leave the mechanics of governance to secular authorities. This does not mean, as Schmitt held, that the Roman Church is left only with the powers of moral persuasion: the Church, by virtue of occupying the superior plane of the spiritual, wields indirect power

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30 Schmitt quotes this in Latin; this translation is from J. Muldoon, "*Auctoritas, Potestas* and World Order," in R.C. Figueira, ed., *Plenitude of Power* (Burlington, 2006), 125–40, 125.

31 Schmitt to Maritain, 24 Dec. 1928, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim.

32 W. Gurian, "Bloy, Maurras, Maritain."

33 Gurian to Maritain, 18 Sept. 1927, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim.

34 Schmitt to Maritain, 24 Dec. 1928, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim. Maritain was not alone here, however; it was the party line for anti-Maurrassian Thomists. See C. Journet, "La pensée thomiste sur le pouvoir indirect," *La vie intellectuelle* 2 (1929), 630–82.

35 J. Maritain, *Primauté du spirituel* (Paris, 1927), 17.

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(*potestas indirectas*) over the political, which it had legitimately employed in the condemnation of Maurras.

Gurian wrote widely about the Action française controversy, never wavering from his support for Maritain's position. "The struggle of ecclesiastical authority against the Action française," he wrote in 1927, "is not merely an internal French affair." Gurian saw that it raised important issues for all Catholics about the nature of divine authority. The problem with the Action française, Gurian wrote, was not at all its monarchism: Catholics were, after all, free to support whatever political form they chose (as promised by the 1885 encyclical, *Immortale Dei*). The problem was that Maurras's organization attempted to align the Catholic faith directly with a particular political form—royalism—thereby denying the essential independence of the Church, *qua* institution, from all contingent political arrangements. Implicitly, Gurian condemns Schmitt along with Maurras: the Action française, Gurian writes in clear reference to Schmitt's *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, is interested in the Church only as "political form" and not as the earthly vessel of the infinite.[36] In an essay for the prestigious journal *Abendland* written the same year—probably the most prominent discussion of the affair to be published in Germany—Gurian relied heavily on Maritain's theory of *potestas indirecta*. "Jacques Maritain," Gurian wrote, "has done the service of using the Action française controversy to produce a fundamental contemplation on the relationship of the Church and the world."[37]

Hildebrand evinced a similar political–theological imagination in his 1929 article about Schmitt's political writings. His first significant article on political theory, entitled "On the Limitation of the State," was a contribution to a contentious debate about Schmitt's *Concept of the Political*, pitting the Catholic pacifist Franziskus Stratmann against Werner Becker, a priest and disciple of Schmitt's. Earlier, Stratmann had followed Gurian and Maritain in linking Schmitt with Maurras: the Action française, he wrote, had done no more than develop Schmitt's own theories "to the point of absurdity."[38] Hildebrand intervened to support Stratmann. Like his fellow personalists, Hildebrand was critical of Schmitt's desire to drain all legitimate *potestas* from the institutional Church, turning the spiritual Person into a slavish citizen of the nation state. "The individual," Hildebrand contended, "is not a citizen in the first instance!"[39] The

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36 W. Gurian, "Die Kirche und die *Action française:* Eine prinzipielle Darlegung," *Heilige Feuer* 14 (1927), 330–45, 330, 345.

37 W. Gurian, "Kirche und Welt," *Abendland* 2 (1927), 362–6, 363.

38 F. Stratmann, "Carl Schmitts *Begriff des Politischen*," *Der Friedenskämpfer* 4 (1928), 1–7, 1.

39 This originally appeared as D. von Hildebrand, "Zur Begrenzung des Staates," *Der Friedenskämpfer* 5 (1929), 8–16. It was reprinted in *idem*, *Zeitliches in Licht der Ewigen* (Regensburg, 1932), 187–200.

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state is, to be sure, a natural community, in the sense that it is in accordance with man's communal nature, but it is far from the only one, or even most important one. Marriage, the family, and, above all, the Church outrank it.[40] Like Scheler, Hildebrand saw ethics as a communal phenomenon, requiring an overlapping set of legitimate communities, from the marriage to mankind, by way of Church and state. The state had no right to transcend its limited place in this schema, and certainly no right to absolutize itself and its laws at the expense of the Church.

Already in the late 1920s, then, a gulf had opened between Schmitt and an influential stream of Catholic opinion. Whereas Schmitt thought that the dissolution of sovereignty into competing power centers was disastrous, the personalists believed that this very dissolution, which would siphon authority away from the state, was the only way to save Catholic religion and the complex web of social arrangements that made it possible. The stage was set for Schmitt's introduction of the "total state," and the personalist backlash that forged totalitarianism theory as we know it today.

WALDEMAR GURIAN AND THE BIRTH OF TOTALITARIANISM THEORY

Carl Schmitt introduced the "total state" and its linguistic derivatives into mainstream political discourse in 1931.[41] His former disciple, Waldemar Gurian, was the first to turn this into fully fledged totalitarianism theory. This took place against the backdrop of Weimar's collapse: Schmitt's original articles were designed to theoretically defend the economic authority claimed by Chancellor Heinrich Brüning. Schmitt's theory of the "total state," surprisingly enough, was meant to save the Weimar Republic, albeit in Brüning's authoritarian form, and not to underwrite its suspension by way of National Socialism (with

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40 Hildebrand, *Zeitliches in Licht der Ewigen*, 197–8.

41 As he reported decades later, "the expression 'total state'" was "not common, in either general consciousness or scholarly literature" before his 1931 invocation. Schmitt to Pierre Faye, 5 Sept. 1960, RSW 265 12957, Nachlaß Schmitt (I am grateful to Daniel Jenkins for this reference). He seems to have been right about this: the first volume with "total state" in the title, H. Ziegler's *Autoritärer oder Totaler Staat* (Tübingen, 1932), was written in direct response to Schmitt, while the second was written by Ernst Forsthoff, one of Schmitt's pupils and disciples (*Der Totale Staat* (Hamburg, 1933)). Several articles that appeared between 1932 and 1935 credited Schmitt with introducing the notion of the total into the political vocabulary in his articles for *Europäische Revue*, while more recent scholars have seconded this verdict. R. Behrendt, "Die Totalität des Politischen," *Der Christliche Ständestaat* 2 (1935), 395–7; F. Fuchs, "Der totale Staat und seine Grenze," *Hochland* 30 (1932–3), 558–60; K. Thieme, *Deutsche evangelische Christen auf dem Wege zur katholischen Kirche* (Zürich, 1934), 42; more recently, Gleason, *Totalitarianism*, 18.

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which Schmitt was not yet involved). In its origins, this debate was not about parliamentary democracy, about which both Schmitt and Gurian were highly skeptical. It was about what was to come after democracy: a total state, as Schmitt desired, or a personalist one, as Gurian did. Antitotalitarianism as a political strategy, that is to say, was not forged in defense of liberal democracy.

Many thought that Brüning was overstepping his bounds by becoming unduly involved in economics. Schmitt, however, believed that only by politicizing the economy could the Weimar Republic be saved and civil war precluded. The republic would become "total," he preached, or it would perish. He believed that the birth of mass politics had rendered the liberal state, predicated on a precarious distinction between state and society, untenable. As the parliamentary state of the nineteenth century gives way to the mass- and party-based democracies of the twentieth, these once firm divisions start to give way. The rise of the modern party, which conceives of itself as a representative of particular social interests and not merely as a guardian of civil society as a nonpolitical realm of intellectual and commodity exchange, leads to the overlap of the political and the social: "In the state that has become also the self-organization of society," Schmitt writes, "there is nothing that is not, potentially, political."[42] This monochromaticism leads Schmitt to the language of the "total," citing the recent invocations of "total mobilization"—*totale Mobilmachung*—by his friend Ernst Jünger. The age of division is over, and with the modern party and the modern state we are approaching the age of the "total state"—*totaler Staat*.[43] This is true, Schmitt suggested, whether we like it or not: our only choice is between the "qualitative total state," which would be truly organized and political, and the "quantitative total state," in which the state would simply expand indefinitely, remaining trapped in the debilitating logic of interest-group politics.

Echoing his concerns about the Church in his correspondence with Maritain, Schmitt emphasized that religion could no longer remain an independent power center in this settlement.[44] His bigger concern, though, was economics. He pointed out that the state/society distinction was already, as a matter of fact, collapsing: in 1928, 53 percent of the German economy was implicated, in some way or another, with the German state.[45] The failure to recognize the fact that political and civil society are already imbricated led, Schmitt believed, to the

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[42] C. Schmitt, "Die Wendung zum Totalen Staat," *Europäische Revue* 7 (1931), 241–50, 242.

[43] As Schmitt turned towards more institutional modes of thought as the 1930s wore on, he began to approach other Catholics more closely. On this, see D. Bates, "Political Theology and the Nazi State: Carl Schmitt's Concept of the Institution," *Modern Intellectual History* 3 (2006), 415–42.

[44] C. Schmitt, "Die Wendung zum Totalen Staat," 242, 247.

[45] Ibid. 243.

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misinformed outcries over Brüning's economic decrees, which are rooted in a failure to understand the nature of the modern state. To stave off civil war, the state would have to understand the truth about itself and assert its dominance over these competing interest groups, as Brüning was in fact then doing.

The Weimar Republic, whose ruins Schmitt had been attempting to shore, did, of course, collapse, and Schmitt and others used the "total state" to refer to the new regime's unflinching recognition that civil society could no longer go its own way apart from state oversight (this does not mean that Schmitt was an unvarnished "totalitarian" in our sense of the term: he remained deeply opposed to the Soviet experiment[46]). Schmitt was not the only one to latch onto the term: it enjoyed a short-lived vogue among the Nazi Party elite before Rosenberg attacked it as insufficiently racial. Many Catholics, in particular, who wished to support the new regime did so in terms of the total state, perhaps on account of Schmitt's luster in right-wing Catholic circles. Robert Grosche, a prominent priest from Cologne and a friend of Gurian's, praised the coming of the total state in a widely reprinted 1933 lecture.[47] A writer for *Schönere Zukunft*, a prominent Viennese reactionary journal, praised the "total revolution" in Germany, warning that those who overlooked the fact that Nazism aimed for *das Ganze* were sorely mistaken.[48] Eugen Kogon, one of that journal's former editors, praised the new state's "totalitarian" qualities in 1934.[49] That same year, Emil Ritter (former editor of *Germania*, a *Zentrum* organ) published a collection of essays called *The Catholic–Conservative Heritage*, which was designed to repackage the Catholic tradition as a long precursor to National Socialism. Liberalism, "the enemy," is defined as the heretical separation of Church, state, and Volk, which were being reunited in the "total state" of National Socialism.[50]

The most important supporter of the total state from a theological perspective was Karl Eschweiler, who had been, like Gurian, caught between Schmitt and Maritain. Eschweiler had been close with all three of them in the late 1920s—indeed, he baptized Gurian's children, and he organized the first translations of Maritain into German. Maritain, for his part, believed that Eschweiler was

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46 See, for instance, C. Schmitt, "The Age of Neutralizations and Depoliticizations," trans. M. Konzen and J. P. McCormick, in *idem*, *The Concept of the Political* (Chicago, 1996), 80–96.

47 R. Grosche, "Theologie des Reiches," *Schönere Zukunft* 8 (1933), 1037–8. This also appeared in *Kölnische Volkszeitung*.

48 O. W. Helltorff, "Die 'totale Revolution' in Deutschland und die Katholiken," *Schönere Zukunft* 8 (1933), 976–7.

49 E. Kogon, *Die Idee des Christlichen Ständestaates: Frühe Schriften, 1921–1940*, ed. M. Kogon (Berlin, 1999), 298.

50 E. Ritter, "Vorwort," in *Katholisch–konservatives Erbgut: Eine Auslese für die Gegenwart*, hrsg. von E. Ritter, (Freiburg, 1934), v–xi, vii, xi.

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the man to reproduce his own model of Thomist study circles in Germany.[51] Eschweiler, though, followed Schmitt instead of Maritain after their parting of the ways in the late 1920s, quickly following his friend into the language of the total state. In a May 1933 essay entitled "Nine Propositions on Catholic Action," Eschweiler claimed that Church and state can be defined as the two *societates perfectas* to which we have access on earth. The state has full control over the political, and thus, when allowed to develop to perfection (in the Thomist–Aristotelian sense), becomes the "total state," from which Catholics, Eschweiler counseled, had nothing to fear.[52]

Just as the "total state" was widely employed by Catholic supporters of Nazism, it was just as quickly wielded by its Catholic opponents, who opposed it from the pluralist, personalist perspective that informed much Catholic political thought. Waldemar Gurian, soon to be followed by Gustav Gundlach and others, turned against the total state as soon as Schmitt introduced the category.[53] Gurian quickly added it to his influential *Bolshevism: Theory and Practice*, which appeared in 1931 and had, by 1933, appeared in English, French, Italian, and Dutch. Fatefully, Gurian used the term "total state" to refer to Stalin's Bolshevik state, going so far as to claim that the "fascist state is far and away less 'totalitarian' than the Bolshevik."[54] He criticizes the Soviet state from a recognizably personalist point of view—claiming, for instance, that Bolshevik family policies are "false to life and human nature," leaving "no intermediary . . . between the individual and the state."[55] The volume only uses the concept of the total state briefly—Schmitt had, after all, only introduced it as Gurian was putting the finishing touches to the work—but the groundwork was already laid for his later and more influential invocations. Gurian quickly came to see it as fundamental to his mission: in his response to a negative review of *Bolshevism*, for instance, Gurian claimed that his work "attempts to point out the problematic of the total state."[56]

The breakthrough to mature totalitarianism theory took place the following year, in *On the Future of the Reich* (*Um des Reiches Zukunft*), a

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51 Eschweiler to Maritain, 20 May 1926, Maritain Archives, Kolbsheim.

52 K. Eschweiler, "Neun Sätze über Katholische Aktion." This is a typescript, dated May 1933, that Schmitt returned to Eschweiler with his letter of 4 July 1933, RSW 265 12948, Nachlaß Carl Schmitt.

53 For G. Gundlach see "Zur Arbeitsdienstpflicht," *Stimmen der Zeit* 124 (1932–3), 56–9.

54 W. Gurian, *Bolshevism: Theory and Practice*, trans. E.I. Watkin (New York, 1932), vii. In the original, Gurian hews to Schmitt's *totaler Staat* in lieu of *totalitärer*. W. Gurian, *Bolschewismus, Einführung in Geschichte und Lehre* (Freiburg im Bresgau, 1931), vii.

55 W. Gurian, *Bolshevism* 249, 104.

56 W. Gurian, "Erwiderung," *Religiöse Besinnung* 4 (1931–2), 93–6, 96.

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Cassandra-style account of Germany's present and future, prudently published under a pseudonym.[57] The volume marks, almost certainly, the first time that National Socialism and Bolshevism were equated under the rubric of the "total state" (remarkably, a year before Hitler had even taken power).[58] Gurian emphasizes the appellation's novelty, devoting a central chapter to the distinction between the total state and its authoritarian cousin. Two particular features of the total state, as portrayed by Gurian, are worthy of note, as they would become fundamental to Catholic totalitarianism theory. First, in its drive to politicize everything, and subdue it into a servant of the nationalist mythology, the total state cannot exist alongside the Catholic Church, which is a juridical entity with recourse to a source of legitimacy outside the state.[59] Here, Gurian parrots his and Maritain's position in the Action française debates of the late 1920s. The National Socialists might ally with the Church as an opponent of liberalism, Gurian suggests, "but not as a community dignified with its own laws, which are independent from the extant political and social order." In other words, the National Socialists could never accept "the visible Church"—*die sichtbare Kirche*—the pregnant formulation that Schmitt himself had used to defend the Church years earlier.[60]

Second, Gurian believed the total state to be a consummation of liberalism and disenchantment, reproducing their nihilist worldlessness; the trumpeted antiliberalism of National Socialism serves only to mask a fundamental similarity. During the bourgeois nineteenth century, Gurian argued, following Scheler, the transcendent order of value had been ignored in favor of a heretical focus on the immanent, and a hubristic belief in the self-sufficiency of man. The totalitarian regimes of the twentieth century bring this to its frightful apotheosis. "Marxism, and therefore Bolshevism," he had already written in 1931, "does but voice the secret and unavowed philosophy of the bourgeois society."[61] And, in his work

[57] Armin Mohler, in his dissertation, proclaimed this to be the first work of any value on the "conservative revolution." See A. Mohler and C. Schmitt, *Carl Schmitt: Briefwechsel mit einem seiner Schüler*, ed. A. Mohler *et al.* (Berlin, 1995), 94 n.

[58] W. Gerhart (i.e. W. Gurian), *Um des Reiches Zukunft* (Freiburg, 1932). Chapter 7 is devoted to Nazism as a "total state," and Bolshevism is discussed as the other example of totalitarianism (see 119, for instance).

[59] Ibid., chap. 9, "Der neue Nationalismus als religiös-metaphysische Bewegung."

[60] Ibid., 169. For Schmitt on "The Visibility of the Church" see his essay by that title, included as an appendix to *idem*, *Roman Catholicism and Political Form*, trans. G.L. Ulmen (Westport, 1996), 45–60.

[61] W. Gurian, *Bolshevism*, 237.

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on nationalism the following year, he claimed that "[t]he new nationalism flees from the optimistic immanence of the nineteenth century towards a pessimistic or fateful immanence, whose final realities are no longer individuality and reason, but *Volk* and fate."[62] The immanence, and the concomitant belief that humanity's goals are internal to the economic or political order, remains. "Antiliberalism," Gurian concludes, "proves itself to be the completion of liberalism."[63]

The time, though, was not yet ripe for totalitarian theory, and the 1932 book was widely ignored. However, his next major work—*Bolshevism as Global Danger* (*Bolschewismus als Weltgefahr*) (1935)—sent shock waves through Catholic intellectual culture in Europe and America.[64] It was read in German by at least three influential Catholic totalitarianism theorists—Robert d'Harcourt, Jacques Maritain, and Yves Simon—and by many more in its two French versions: a translation published in 1936, and a précis of the book's argument that Gurian published in *La vie intellectuelle*, a widely read periodical, in the same year.[65] Maritain was influential in organizing the work's French translation, of which d'Harcourt wrote a glowing front-page review in *L'écho de Paris*, a Catholic newspaper with a circulation of over a hundred thousand; this review was in turn excerpted in both *Figaro* and *La croix*, the most prestigious newspapers of French conservatism and Catholicism respectively.[66] Gurian's new work was celebrated in Austria, too: his 1935 volume was reviewed in *Vaterland* (a Viennese legitimist journal for which Hildebrand wrote), *Wiener politische Blätter* (edited by Dollfuss's friend, Ernst Karl Winter), and two separate issues of *Christliche Ständestaat* (edited by Hildebrand himself).[67] This flurry of interest in Gurian cannot be chalked up to novelties in presentation: Gurian, essentially, said nothing in 1935 that he had not already said in 1932. The world, though, had changed around him.

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62 W. Gurian, *Um des Reiches Zukunft*, 194–5.

63 Ibid., 201.

64 According to Gurian's collection of clippings, it was reviewed in at least twenty-seven journals and newspapers, of every conceivable political stripe. These can all be found in Gurian Papers, Box 11, Folder 7.

65 W. Gurian, "Bolchévisme rouge et bolchévisme brun," *La vie intellectuelle* 40 (1936), 53–67; for reader's responses see Maritain to Gurian, 20 Aug. 1935, Box 5, Folder 18; Simon to Gurian, 25 May 1936, Box 7, Folder 22; d'Harcourt to Gurian, 25 Sept. 1935, Box 4, Folder 10, Gurian Papers.

66 *La Croix* 16,226 (11 Jan, 1936), 5; *Figaro* 111/13 (13 Jan. 1936), 4.

67 W.R., review of *Bolschewismus als Weltgefahr*, *Christliche Ständestaat* 2 (1935), 947–8; L. Justi, "Bolschewismus und Nationalsozialismus," *Christliche Ständestaat* 2 (1935), 1063–4; Gurian's clippings for other Austrian reviews do not include page numbers, but they can be found in Gurian Papers, Box 11, Folder 7.

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THE SPREAD OF TOTALITARIANISM THEORY IN THE CATHOLIC PUBLIC SPHERE

By 1935–6, Europe's Catholic intelligentsia was predisposed to take Gurian's work seriously and adopt totalitarianism theory as its new rallying cry against the secular world. In France, the Popular Front was winning its first electoral victories and instilling Catholics with mortal fear of atheist Bolshevism on the march; meanwhile, Hitler was flexing his muscles across the Rhine and activating French Catholicism's traditional Germanophobia.[68] In Austria, Engelbert Dollfuss had taken power and was, with the full support of the Vatican and the nation's Catholic intelligentsia, attempting to mold Austria into a Catholic, corporatist society in line with the social encyclicals. Dollfuss's supporters were worried both about aggression from Germany and about communist upheaval from within. In each case, totalitarianism theory allowed Catholics to undercut their opponents' claims. Both the Popular Front in France and the National Socialists in Austria based their political propaganda on the absolute incompatibility of Nazism and communism, and the need for one as a bulwark against the other—by arguing for the identity of the two, Catholics sought to pull the ideological rug from underneath their antagonists. Against this tumultuous political backdrop, totalitarianism theory exploded into the Catholic public sphere in both France and Austria. Jacques Maritain and Dietrich von Hildebrand, friends and readers of Gurian, were at the forefront of this phenomenon.

Jacques Maritain first employed mature totalitarianism theory in 1936. He had used the word before—in the manifesto *Pour le bien commun*, for instance—but not until then did he include Bolshevism under its umbrella and arrive at the mature version of the theory, which would be omnipresent in his thought until his death. The breakthrough occurs in a chapter of his epochal *Integral Humanism* (1936) called "A New Humanism." This had been published twice before, once in 1934 (in Spanish) and once in 1935 (in French, in *Esprit*). In these versions, Maritain describes communism as "above all a religion assured of responding to all of the fundamental questions posed by life, and destined to replace all other religions." In the 1936 version, this reads exactly the same, except that "destined to replace all other religions" is replaced by "manifests an unequaled totalitarian power."[69] He thus added it sometime between the summers of 1935 and 1936,

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68 For overviews of Catholic responses to the Popular Front in France see P. Christophe, *1936: Les catholiques et le Front populaire* (Paris, 1979); for the best account of Austrian Catholics under Dollfuss and Schuschnigg see E. Seefried, *Reich und Stände* (Düsseldorf, 2006).

69 The original 1934 lectures were published as J. Maritain, *Problemas Espirituales y Temporales de una Nueva Cristianidad* (Madrid, 1935). It was reprinted again as the first part of Maritain, "Deux essais sur un nouvel humanisme," *Esprit* 37 (1935), 88–117. For the final

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when the final version of the essay appeared.[70] The other addition that was made to the same section was a critique of the Popular Front, which had experienced its electoral triumph a few months earlier. Maritain, like many others, came to antitotalitarianism as a means of opposing the Popular Front.[71]

In *Integral Humanism*, "totalitarianism" is the name that Maritain gives to the tragedy of secular modernity: the fate of a Europe that ignores Christian principles is, Maritain argues repeatedly, totalitarianism.[72] In Maritain's account, we can see the same major characteristics of totalitarianism that appear in Gurian's work: its absolute, formal incompatibility with Catholicism, and its rootedness in the modern, emancipatory project. "Atheism is not a necessary *consequence* of the [Marxist] social system," Maritain writes, "but rather is presupposed as its *principle*." Maritain had been arguing, at least since 1926, that the Church could not be equated with concrete political positions. How, then, can Bolshevism be equated with atheism? As in Gurian, the answer to this question is, simply, "totalitarianism": Bolshevism is more than a political or social system, but a new entity that, through its totalitarian claims to dominance, abolishes the possibility of Christian spirituality as understood from a personalist perspective. "The profound evils of the 'new civilization' in Russia," Maritain writes, "are summarized in Communist totalitarianism itself." To return to a previously cited passage, communism "is a complete system of doctrine and of life, which claims to unveil the meaning of existence, respond to all fundamental questions that life poses, and manifest an unequaled totalitarian power. It is a religion." The totalizing character of Communism leads to violence towards "the human person, whose dignity is fundamentally spiritual." In this way, Maritain squares the circle of Catholic politics: the believer should not enlist the Church in support of temporal political arrangements, but the Church can nonetheless take a stand against regimes that, through their "totalitarian requisition of the energies of man," make religion impossible.[73]

As in Gurian, totalitarianism was not understood as the rejection of modernity, but as its apotheosis: "a product of bourgeois decadence." Totalitarianism was, for Maritain, the apogee of the "tragedy of [anthropocentric] humanism" whose

version, including totalitarian language, see J. Maritain, *Humanisme intégral: problèmes temporels et spirituels d'une nouvelle chrétienté* (Paris, 1939), 44.

[70] "Totalitarianism" features in *Humanisme intégral* in three major places: chap. 2, chap. 4, and chap. 7. Each of these sections was added between the August 1934 lectures, on which the book was based, and the final version's publication in 1936.

[71] Ibid., 45–7.

[72] See, for instance, ibid., 294.

[73] Ibid., 44, 94, 48, 56, 75, emphasis in original. Maritain here clearly points forward to the "political religions" hypothesis of Raymond Aron, Erich Voegelin, and others.

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origins are to be found in the Renaissance and the Reformation.[74] This, too, might seem strange, as *Integral Humanism* is famous for its tentative acceptance of the secular, modern political settlement. While it is true that it partakes of none of the flamboyant atavism of his earlier works, Maritain's acceptance of post-Reformation trends is deeply hedged. He held out the hope that a "new Christendom" was in the offing that would not simply be return to feudalism, but this did not affect his reading of bourgeois modernity. In Maritain's philosophy of history, the secularism of the Industrial Revolution led to such massive *ressentiment* and inequalities that it birthed communism, fear of which led to fascism, the other totalitarianism. On a more fundamental level, too, "socialist humanism takes over from bourgeois humanism." For the bourgeoisie, God becomes no more than an idea legitimating the immanent power of man; socialism merely gives this process a final "reversal" by instantiating immanent power practically, in the order of social and economic reality.[75]

The following year, Denis de Rougemont could write that "everyone knows, or at least senses, the meaning of the *totalitarian menace*."[76] This was probably not true, as the concept had yet to truly enter the mainstream, but it was doubtless true in Rougemont's context: this statement appears in a volume called *Communism and the Christians*, dedicated to opposing the Popular Front from a Christian perspective (Rougemont was Protestant, but most of his fellow contributors were Catholic). Totalitarianism theory in the French Catholic public sphere began to appear in the spring of 1935, just as the Front was winning its first electoral victories. The anonymous editorialist for the aforementioned *La vie intellectuelle*—a priest known as "Christianus"—wrote a front-page article in February 1935 called, simply, "Totalitaire." "Fashionable word, dangerous word," as Christianus referred to the neologism. "What does totalitarianism mean? . . . [T]he class or the race which wants to ferociously be itself, one hundred percent proletarian or Aryan."[77] In the next issue, J. T. Delos wrote at length about totalitarianism. "The totalitarian state, understood in its exact meaning (that is, understood in light of the fundamental conception of man of society from which it is derived) is a new phenomenon that concerns the very notion of civilization."[78] By April the concept had become so entrenched

74 Ibid., chap. 1.

75 Ibid., 74, 295, 67.

76 D. de Rougemont, "Changer la vie ou changer l'homme," in *Communisme et les chrétiens* (Paris, 1937), 203–32, 228. Emphasis in original.

77 Christianus, "Totalitaire," *La vie intellectuelle* 33 (1935), 354–6, 354. Assuming that Christianus had a stable identity, he identifies himself as a priest in the unnamed article that opens up the first postwar issue of *La vie intellectuelle*. Christianus, [untitled], *La vie intellectuelle* 13 (1945), 1–16, 10.

78 J. T. Delos, "Pour un ordre catholique," *La vie intellectuelle* 34 (1935), 44–7, 45.

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that a student group could call a meeting with the theme "The Student in the Totalitarian State."[79] In the fall of 1935, Abbé Charles Journet, a close friend of Maritain's, published an article in his widely read *Nova et Vetera* entitled "The Church and the Totalitarian Communities."[80] Emmanuel Mounier's 1936 *Manifesto in the Service of Personalism* was, essentially, a book-length screed against totalitarianism. "We are," Mounier declared, "anti-*étatistes*." Like Gurian and others, he linked totalitarianism with liberal democracy: "just as the river into the sea, democratic *étatisme* slides into the totalitarian state."[81] By 1938—by which point, recall, the phrase had appeared only a few times on the left—Abbé Bruno de Solages was doing nothing new when he explained, "I am using the word 'totalitarianism' [*totalitarisme*] and not the word 'socialism' as the opposite of the word 'individualism' because, in our language, 'socialism' does not include the socialisms of the 'right', or fascisms."[82]

This was not merely a phenomenon of antifascist Catholics like Maritain: the reactionary cluster of ex-Maurrassian Catholics in the *Jeune droite* began to use totalitarian theory at the same time.[83] Pierre Lucius, one of the premier theorists of this milieu, provides an early version in his 1934 volume *Revolutions of the Twentieth Century*. Like others, Lucius's antitotalitarianism was personalist: "democracy," he claimed, "ignores persons with their character and their own values, it only knows individuals."[84] Once the person is abolished in the name of the individual, which requires the abolition of all the intermediary bodies that Lucius's corporatism sought to reinstate, the ground had been paved for totalitarianism, the menace common to Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, and Bolshevik Russia. In these regimes, "the state is everything for everyone: it is 'totalitarian.'"[85] It appears in *Demain la France* (1934), a manifesto of sorts collectively authored by three major figures of the *Jeune droite*: although the French state is in drastic need of reform, they argue, "the French should not, at any price, let themselves be seduced . . . by the barbarian myth of the totalitarian

79 Un Étudiant, "L'Étudiant dans l'état totalitaire," *La vie intellectuelle* 36 (1935), 137–40.

80 C. Journet, "L'église et les communautés totalitaires," *Nova et Vetera* 10 (1935), 431–9. I am grateful to René Mougel for this reference.

81 J. Maritain, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Cercle d'études Jacques et Raïssa Maritain, vol. 1 (1986), 618, 553, 614.

82 B. Solages, "Personnes et société: leurs rapports," in Cours et Conférences de la Semaine Sociale de Clermont-Ferrand, *La personne humaine en péril* (Lyon, 1938), 229–50, here 236.

83 For the classic work on these figures, see J. L. L. del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trente* (Paris, 1969).

84 P. Lucius, *Révolutions du XXème siècle* (Paris, 1934), 51.

85 Ibid., 85.

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State."[86] In the inaugural November 1934 issue of *Revue du XXème siècle*, a central journal of the Catholic right, Pierre Loyer, in the midst of an early critique of the Popular Front, refers to "the example of the totalitarian regimes: Russia, Italy, Germany."[87] Two months later, the same journal published Jacques de Broze's "Essay on the Notion of the State," in which he theorizes a personalist, corporatist state as the only antidote to the liberalism–totalitarianism nexus. "A state founded on the person," de Broze writes in familiar language, "is an organ superimposed onto pre-existing national communities"; the supreme example, for de Broze as for Maurras, was the French monarchy. But after 1789, all intermediary communities had been destroyed in the name of "the totalitarian states"—defined as Bolshevism, Nazism, and Fascism—which were marked by "the greatest contempt for the rights of the person."[88] That issue contained three other articles discussing "totalitarianism" in a similar way.[89]

France was not the only locus of Catholic totalitarianism theory: under the watchful eye of Dietrich von Hildebrand, Catholic intellectuals in Dollfuss's Austria adopted it as well. Its most important site was *Christliche Ständestaat*, a journal populated by Catholic German emigrés, funded by Dollfuss, and edited by Hildebrand. Joint opposition to Nazism and Bolshevism was the mission of the journal from its inception in 1934: "*Christliche Ständestaat*," the journal announced in one of its earliest numbers, "designates Austria as the state destined to serve as the Christian bulwark against Bolshevism and National Socialism."[90] This "bulwark," it goes without saying, was not to be confused with liberalism or democracy; Hildebrand and his colleagues were full believers in Dollfuss's authoritarian, corporatist experiment. As we have already seen in France and in Gurian, there was no necessary link, either logical or empirical, between antitotalitarianism and democratic politics.

Hildebrand came to totalitarianism theory in 1934, two years before Maritain and two years after Gurian. As with the others, his personalist political philosophy predisposed him to adopt it. In a 1933 article, entitled "The Corporative Idea and Natural Communities," Hildebrand relied on Scheler's approach to the person,

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86 R. Francis, T. Maulnier, and J.-P. Maxence, *Demain la France* (Paris, 1934), 175. Francis and Maxence were outspokenly Catholic, while Maulnier was a Maurrassian atheist. In context, it is clear that Bolshevism is understood as a form of totalitarianism.

87 P. Loyer, "Période de Transition," *Revue du XXème siècle* 1 (1934), 44–8, 44, 47. This journal, like others on the Catholic right, had some atheist collaborators; its overall tenor, thanks to Jean de Fabrègues's pious editorship, was nonetheless Catholic.

88 J. de Broze, "Essai sur la notion d'état," *Revue du XXème siècle* 2 (1935), 15–23, 18–19.

89 J. Saillenfest, "Pour un régime des libertés," *Revue du XXème siècle* 2 (1935), 24–31, 24; G. Verdeil, "Entre l'individu et l'état: les corps sociaux," *Revue du XXème siècle* 2 (1935), 32–8, 37; J. Loisy, "L'homme et l'état," *Revue du XXème siècle* 2 (Jan. 1935), 39–43, 39, 41.

90 Quoted in Ebneth, *Die österreichische Wochenschrift* Der Christliche Ständestaat, 67.

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drawing out its anti-*étatiste* implications, just as he had in 1929. The person is "ontologically 'prior' to his membership, and even 'prior' to these communities themselves . . . For the natural communities—including mankind, nation, state, and *Stand*—are not the *ontic* basis for the being of the individual, but rather individuals 'sustain [*tragen*]' these communities."[91] For the first time, Hildebrand describes Bolshevism as the clearest example of this modern antipersonalism, which denied natural communities, like the corporation, in the name of an overweening *étatisme*. Nazism is not named, presumably because Hildebrand—a Jew, after all, speaking in 1933—feared for his own safety; his reference to "nationalism" is nonetheless clear.[92]

Once Hitler came to power, Hildebrand fled, first to Italy and then to Vienna, where he quickly assumed the editorship of *Christliche Ständestaat*. Free, for the time being, from physical threat, he immediately equated Nazism and Bolshevism as both antipersonalist and both "totalitarian." Moreover, like every other Catholic totalitarian theorist, he saw the totalitarian threat as endemic to the logic of secular liberalism: "Modern antipersonalism, as it confronts us in Bolshevism and National Socialism, is, as we have already demonstrated time and again, not an overcoming of liberal individualism, but rather its last and most radical consequence."[93] Further, "This purely instrumental conception of the human person," Hildebrand explained in July 1934, "conforms with the idea of the totalitarian state, that is to say a state . . . which must speak the last word over all other communities, such as family, marriage and Church."[94] The following year, he attacked "the mania of the totalitarian state" in terms indistinguishable from those he had used in 1929: "The State," Hildebrand wrote, "has great dignity—but it is one natural community among others and not the highest."[95]

"Totality," wrote one contributor to *Christliche Ständestaat* in 1935, "is a concept that, today, everybody needs."[96] Hildebrand went out of his way to ensure that these needs were met: his journal was constantly filled with antitotalitarian invective. By 1935, the language had become ubiquitous in the journal: even dyed-in-the-wool traditionalists, like the aged nobleman Hans Karl Zessner-Spitzenberg, were wielding the term, and Hildebrand himself used it constantly

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91 D. von Hildebrand, "Die korporative Idee und die natürlichen Gemeinschaften," *Der Katholische Gedanke* 6 (1933), 48–58, 54.

92 Ibid., 56–7. Hildebrand was probably not referring to Mussolini's regime, of which he and his magazine were generally supportive.

93 D. von Hildebrand, "Masse und Gemeinschaft," *Christliche Ständestaat* 3 (1936), 31–3, 33.

94 D. von Hildebrand, "Die letzte Maske fällt," in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus, 1933–1938*, ed. E. Wenisch (Mainz, 1994), 236–40, 237–8. Taken from *Christliche Ständestaat*, July 1934.

95 D. von Hildebrand, "Staat und Ehe," *Christliche Ständestaat* 2 (1935), 1002–4, 1004.

96 S. Aigner, "Totalität," *Christliche Ständestaat* 2 (1935), 259–61, 259.

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in his articles. Karl Gustav Bittner emphasized the differences between the corporatist state and the total state in the summer of that year, while Nikolaus Dohrn, in September, warned against "pseudo-religious totalitarianism."[97] "G.P.U. and Gestapo," wrote another contributor in 1936, providing perhaps the first lexical totalitarianism theory, "begin with the same letters."[98] In 1937, when the Viennese art historian Leopold Zahn sought to characterize the difference between the two Germanies—i.e. between noble Austrian tradition and barbaric Nazism—he organized his thoughts around the theme of "The Totalitarian and the Universal German."[99]

This antitotalitarian animus was directed primarily against its progenitor, Carl Schmitt—to the extent that Schmitt's friend, Hans Barion, wrote to him in 1934, alerting him to the attacks streaming from Hildebrand's journal.[100] The first major article on Schmitt, written by the sociologist Richard Behrendt, was called simply "The Totality of the Political."[101] The journal's most extended attack on Schmitt appeared in a remarkable article, probably written by Schmitt's former friend Franz Blei and infused, as were Gurian's anti-Schmitt pieces, with emotion and disappointment. After a long discussion of Schmitt's increasing misanthropy and Protestant tendencies, Blei hones in on the crux of the problem: "As a publicist," Blei writes, "Schmitt has since 1933 restricted himself to doing everything possible to defend his indefensible theory of the total state."[102]

Austrian writers were also quick to pin the blame for totalitarianism on Othmar Spann, the neo-Romantic Catholic sociologist whose theories had brought him close to National Socialism. In this case, too, Scheler-style personalism provided the antidote to secular *étatisme*. Aurel Kolnai, a Hungarian Catholic who had studied with Scheler, explains this animus: "Spann is the philosopher of the total state in the most challenging and thoroughly metaphysical sense."[103] In

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97 H. Zessner-Spitzenberg, "Oesterreich, Habsburg und Föderalismus," *Christliche Ständestaat* 3 (1936), 5–7; K. G. Bittner, "Katholizismus gegen Kapitalismus," *Christliche Ständestaat* 2 (1935), 541–4; N. Heinrich (pseudonym for Nikolaus Dohrn), "Politischer Katholizismus und Illegalität," *Christliche Ständestaat* 2, 903–6.

98 Quoted in M. Kugler, *Die frühe Diagnose des Nationalsozialismus* (Bern, 1995), 146.

99 L. Zahn, "Der totalitäre und der universale Deutsche," *Christliche Ständestaat* 4 (1937), 1067–8

100 Barion to Schmitt, 20 Nov. 1934, RSW 265 687, Nachlaß Schmitt.

101 R. Behrendt, "Die Totalität des Politischen". Behrendt had written about Schmitt before, in *Politischer Aktivismus* (Leipzig, 1932), 129–31, and was clearly familiar with his entire *oeuvre*.

102 F.B. (probably Franz Blei), "Der Fall Carl Schmitt," *Christliche Ständestaat* 3 (1936), 1217–20, 1219–20.

103 Helsing (i.e. A. Kolnai), "Othmar Spanns Ganzheitlehre," *Christliche Ständestaat* 1 (1934), 4–8, 4.

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1934, Kolnai launched a two-part attack on Spann's theories. Kolnai had, in fact, already written against Spann in 1929, from a personalist perspective, and his arguments here are essentially unchanged. Spann, Kolnai argues now, as before, denies the "the fate of the person" by destroying the legitimate sovereignty of the intermediary bodies between man and the state. One novelty, though, is the new language of *Totalitarismus*. "Totalitarianism," Kolnai writes, "is that which destroys and atomizes the state."[104] Kolnai here references the longer personalist tradition of seeing the state as one natural community among others: totalitarianism, by allowing the state to hypertrophy and exceed its natural limits, paradoxically ends by destroying the state. The articles are primarily critical of Spann's Nazism, but he also emphasizes now that Spann's theories bring him close to Bolshevism, which Kolnai, like Hildebrand, considered to be "the brother of Nazism."[105] So like Gurian, Hildebrand, and Maritain, Kolnai parlayed his personalist political theory of the 1920s into antitotalitarianism in the mid-1930s; also like them, the animus against modernity and democracy remained.

CONCLUSION: DEMOCRACY (AND ANTITOTALITARIANISM) IN AMERICA

Totalitarian theory began to spread outside the Catholic public sphere during and after World War II. It retained its Catholic emphasis most clearly in West Germany, where antitotalitarianism became, as one German historian has claimed, "the quasi-official ideology" of the new state.[106] Konrad Adenauer, himself profoundly Catholic, embraced the discourse, as did many in his party: in his speeches and writings, the "totalitarian idols" of the German past were to be countered by "an awareness of the values of Occidental Christianity."[107] But there were links between the Catholic narrative traced here and the concept's fate in America, too. During World War II and the Cold War to follow, Catholic theorists of totalitarianism supported the Western powers, and enlisted their theory in the war effort.

Gurian, Hildebrand, and Maritain, our three major protagonists, all spent the war years in exile in the United States—mirroring the fate of the concept

[104] Helsing (i.e. A. Kolnai), "Othmar Spanns 'organische' Staatslehre," *Christliche Ständestaat* 1 (1934), 7–10, 9.

[105] D. von Hildebrand, "Der 'Sklavenaufstand' gegen den Geist," in *Memoiren und Aufsätze gegen den Nationalsozialismus*, 198–205, 199. This essay taken from *Christliche Ständestaat*, January 1934.

[106] Wolfgang Wippermann, quoted in Gleason, *Totalitarianism*, 153.

[107] K. Adenauer, *World Indivisible*, trans. R. and C. Winston (New York, 1955), 11. Interestingly, the first work in this series, called World Perspectives, was Maritain's *Approaches to God*.

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they had engendered. While there, they continued to spread the gospel of antitotalitarianism. Remarkably, they and their co-religionists did not shy away from it even as the Soviet Union entered the war against Hitler in 1941. In "The End of Machiavellianism," published in 1942, Maritain claimed that any politics that failed to subordinate politics to ethics would fall prey to "totalitarian rule and totalitarian spirit," which had lurked within the modern project since the despised Florentine himself.[108] Hildebrand, too, retained his earlier usage of the term as the name of the antipersonalism threatening Christian civilization: "In the present moment," he wrote in 1942, "we are called as Catholics firstly: to understand clearly what totalitarianism means."[109] Gurian remained the most prominent champion of totalitarian theory. He delivered an address in 1939 to the American Catholic Philosophical Association on the congenial theme of "The Totalitarian State," and wrote a report for the American Historical Association in 1942 about "The Rise of Totalitarianism in Europe."[110] Most significantly, he founded the *Review of Politics* in 1939, an influential journal that would publish multiple versions of totalitarianism theory during the war.

The reactionary kernel at the heart of the theory can most clearly be seen in *Devant la crise mondiale*, a 1942 manifesto signed by Gurian, Hildebrand, and Maritain, along with about forty other prominent Catholic exiles (published in *Commonweal* as, simply, "Manifesto on the War"). Maritain did not write the original draft, but he did revise it substantially, and he was the point of contact for the diverse group of participants. The manifesto went through multiple drafts, with signatories coming and going as the months dragged on (one referred to the "idiot manifesto" that Maritain had been forced to salvage[111]). The end result was a compromise among warring tendencies within the emigré community, and very few of its signatories, least of all Gurian, were completely pleased with it.[112] Gurian was, however, likely gratified to find that antitotalitarianism was the manifesto's most insistent theme—one of very few positions with which all of the Catholic exiles could agree. *Devant la crise mondiale* was an antitotalitarian *cri de coeur*, and a capstone to the intellectual developments traced above. The first section is entitled, "Totalitarianism and Its Threat to Civilization," and the first sentence reads, "Totalitarianism, apart from certain externals, holds nothing

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108 J. Maritain, "End of Machiavellianism," *Review of Politics* 4 (1942), 1–33, 33.

109 D. von Hildebrand, "Catholicism vs. Nazism," *Belgium* 3 (1942), 19–22, 19.

110 The lecture was reprinted later: W. Gurian, "The Totalitarian State," *Review of Politics* 40 (1978), 514–27; *idem*, "The Rise of Totalitarianism in Europe," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1942* (Washington, 1944), 297–304.

111 Y. Simon to Maritain, 6 Nov. 1941, Box 18, Folder 3, Maritain Archives, Jacques Maritain Center, Notre Dame.

112 Gurian to Maritain, 8 Feb. 1942, Box 18, Folder 3, Maritain Archives, Notre Dame.

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in common with the régimes based on authority which Christian peoples have known in the past."[113]

Like all mature totalitarianism theories, the manifesto portrayed Bolshevism and Nazism as unified. What it lacks is a commitment to democracy, in the normal sense of the word. Is this war, the manifesto asks, a war to save democracy?

If by the word democracy you mean the *political and social life of a community of free men*, the answer must be in the affirmative. Not so, however, if you mean thereby *some particular system or some particular political forms*, as they were known, for instance, to some European countries under pre-war conditions.[114]

Devant la crise mondiale evinces an antitotalitarianism that is, nonetheless, fearful of democracy and of the masses. This was the position taken by Gurian, Hildebrand, and Maritain in their other writings, too. In Hildebrand's consideration of "What Is at Stake" in the war, he clarifies that the war is not a war in defense of democracy, but rather in defense of the human person.[115] In his 1939 lecture on "The Totalitarian State," Gurian is clear that there are more forms of governance on earth than "totalitarianism" and "modern democracies": "the assumption that the totalitarian state is the alternative of modern democracy is erroneous."[116]

Maritain, praised by Gurian in 1943 as "the most prominent spokesman of those Catholics who looked for a new democracy under Christian inspiration," was the most influential figure in this regard, writing a short volume called *Christianity and Democracy* in 1944.[117] As he had throughout his career, Maritain argued here that the modern project—which he linked, in 1944 as in 1921, with Rousseau and the anthropocentric ideals of 1789—was coming to a crashing end, and that only a renewed Christian humanism could salvage Western civilization. "We are looking on," Maritain declared, "at the liquidation of the modern world."[118] Although this older position is repackaged as "democracy," it bears only incidental reference to that word's familiar referents. "The tragedy of the modern democracies," he writes, "is that they have not yet succeeded in realizing democracy."[119] Democrats, misunderstanding their creed, continue to believe that democracy is a matter of law and constitutional form. Maritain, like his fellow antitotalitarian Catholics, argued otherwise: democracy is a philosophy, a

113 "Manifesto on the War," *Commonweal* 26 (1942), 415–20, 416.

114 Ibid., 415, emphasis in original.

115 D. von Hildebrand, "What Is at Stake," Ana 514, XII.7, Nachlaß Hildebrand Bayerische Staatsbibliothek München.

116 W. Gurian, "The Totalitarian State," 516.

117 W. Gurian, "On Maritain's Political Philosophy," *Thomist* 5 (1943), 7–22, 8.

118 J. Maritain, *Christianity and Democracy*, trans. D. Anson (New York, 1944), 21.

119 Ibid., 25.

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state of mind, and a commitment to the rights of the person. "Thus a monarchic regime," Maritain concludes with a flourish, "can be democratic."[120] He continues to condemn the nineteenth-century parliamentary regimes that, from the legal perspective at least, were democratic: they had, after all, "paved the way for totalitarianism."[121]

The extent to which this theological antimodernism survived into later forms of totalitarianism theory is another question—in any case, the theory's Catholic, antidemocratic origins cannot be discounted. As an empirical matter, the later and more famous versions of totalitarianism theory, notably those of Carl Joachim Friedrich and Hannah Arendt, were developed in tandem with those described here.[122] Friedrich took part in a 1938 "Symposium on Political and Social Philosophy" at Notre Dame, along with Gurian and Maritain; moreover, his first major consideration of totalitarianism appeared in Gurian's *Review of Politics* in 1940.[123] Arendt was close friends with Gurian throughout the 1940s, eventually writing a lengthy and moving obituary for him, and an enthusiastic reader of both his works and Maritain's: "truly," she wrote of the French theologian in 1942, "an extremely clever man." Gurian's 1936 volume on the persecution of the churches in Nazi Germany, she wrote to him in the same year, had been "the first [work] which allowed me to imagine the political events" of 1930s Germany. "Nazism," she continued, "is the spawn of that hell known as liberalism, and into whose abyss both Christianity and Enlightenment came to ruin. But perhaps that is only my own opinion."[124] Gurian's reply does not survive, but he could have told her that the opinion was not Arendt's alone. He, along with many of his co-religionists, agreed.

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120 Ibid., 33.

121 Ibid., 72.

122 In addition to their ties with Gurian, they were each also concerned with Carl Schmitt: for Arendt and Schmitt, see A. Kalyvas, *Democracy and the Politics of the Extraordinary* (New York, 2008), chaps. 7–8; for Friedrich and Schmitt, see U. Greenberg's forthcoming book, *Cold War Weimar: German Emigré Intellectuals and the Weimar Origins of the Cold War.*

123 The program for the symposium was included in a letter from Maritain to Gurian, 22 July 1938, Box 5, Folder 18, Gurian Papers. C. Friedrich, "The Greek Political Heritage and Totalitarianism," *Review of Politics* 2 (1940), 218–25. He had used the term before, but to my knowledge this is his first extended discussion of it.

124 For the obituary, see H. Arendt, *Men in Dark Times* (New York, 1968), 251–62. Arendt to Gurian, 4 March 1942, Box 1, Folder 10, Gurian Papers. For her interest in, and this quotation about, Maritain, see her 2 May 1942 letter to Gurian, Box 1, Folder 10, Gurian Papers.

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