

values that are to be shared. This consciousness can never be imparted unless a movement of ready acceptance comes from below; it must, however, be imparted from above.

The democrat, who always leans towards cosmopolitan points of view, and still more the proletarian who hankers after international trains of thought, both like to toy with the thought that there exists a neutral sphere in which the differences between the values of one people and of another vanish. The nationalist instead holds that its own peculiar values are the most characteristic and precious possession of a nation, the very breath of its being. These give a nation form and personality; they cannot be transferred or interchanged. [ . . . ]

129

CARL SCHMITT

### [On the Contradiction between Parliamentarism and Democracy]

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The situation of parliamentarism is critical today because the development of modern mass democracy has made public discussion an empty formality. Many norms of contemporary parliamentary law, above all provisions concerning the independence of representatives and the openness of sessions, as a result function like a superfluous decoration, useless and even embarrassing, as though someone had painted the radiator of a modern central-heating system with red flames in order to give the appearance of a blazing fire. The parties (which according to the text of the written constitution officially do not exist) do not face each other today discussing opinions, but as social or economic power groups calculating their mutual interests and opportunities for power, and they actually agree on compromises and coalitions on this basis. The masses are won over through a propaganda apparatus whose maximum effect relies on an appeal to immediate interests and passions. Argument, in the real sense that is characteristic for genuine discussion, ceases. In its place there appears a conscious reckoning of interests and chances for power in the parties' negotiations; in the treatment of the masses, posterlike, insistent suggestion or—as Walter Lippmann says in his very shrewd, although too psychological, American book *Public Opinion*—the “symbol” appears. The literature on the psychology, technique, and critique of public opinion today is very large. One may therefore assume as is well known today that it is no longer a question of persuading one's opponent of the truth or justice of an opinion but rather of winning a majority in order to govern with it. What [Camillo di] Cavour identified as the great distinction between absolutism and constitutional regimes, that in an absolute regime a minister gives orders whereas in a constitutional one he persuades all those who should obey, must today be meaningless. Cavour says explicitly: I (as constitutional minister) persuade that I am right, and it is only in this connection that his famous saying is meant: “The worst chamber is still preferable to the best antechamber.” Today parliament itself appears a gigantic antechamber in front of the bureaus or committees of invisible rulers. It is like a satire if one quotes [Jeremy] Bentham today: “In Parliament ideas meet, and contact between ideas gives off sparks and leads to evidence.” Who still remembers the time when [Lucien-Anatole] Prévost-Paradol saw the value of

parliamentarism over the “personal regime” of Napoléon III in that through the transfer of real power it forced the true holders of power to reveal themselves, so that government, as a result of this, always represents the strongest power in a “wonderful” coordination of appearance and reality? Who still believes in this kind of openness? And in parliament as its greatest platform?

The arguments of [Edmund] Burke, Bentham, [François] Guizot, and John Stuart Mill are thus antiquated today. The numerous definitions of parliamentarism which one still finds today in Anglo-Saxon and French writings and which are apparently little known in Germany, definitions in which parliamentarism appears as essentially “government by discussion,” must accordingly also count as moldy. Never mind. If someone still believes in parliamentarism, that person will at least have to offer new arguments for it. A reference to Friedrich Naumann, Hugo Preuss, and Max Weber is no longer sufficient. With all due respect to these men, no one today would share their hope that parliament alone guarantees the education of a political elite. Such convictions have in fact been shaken and they can only remain standing today as an idealistic belief so long as they can bind themselves to belief in discussion and openness. [ . . . ]

The belief in parliamentarism, in government by discussion, belongs to the intellectual world of liberalism. It does not belong to democracy. Both liberalism and democracy have to be distinguished from one another so that the patchwork picture that makes up modern mass democracy can be recognized.

Every actual democracy rests on the principle that not only are equals equal but unequals will not be treated equally. Democracy requires therefore first homogeneity and second—if the need arises—elimination or eradication of heterogeneity. To illustrate this principle it is sufficient to name two different examples of modern democracy: contemporary Turkey, with its radical expulsion of the Greeks and its reckless Turkish nationalization of the country, and the Australian commonwealth, which restricts unwanted entrants through its immigration laws and like other dominions only takes immigrants who conform to the notion of a “right type of settler.” A democracy demonstrates its political power by knowing how to refuse or keep at bay something foreign and unequal that threatens its homogeneity. The question of equality is precisely not one of abstract, logical, arithmetical games. It is about the substance of equality. It can be found in certain physical and moral qualities, for example, in civic virtue, in *arete*, the classical democracy of *vertus* (*vertu*). In the democracy of English sects during the seventeenth century, equality was based on a consensus of religious convictions. Since the nineteenth century it has existed above all in membership in a particular nation, in national homogeneity. Equality is only interesting and valuable politically so long as it has substance, and for that reason at least the possibility and the risk of inequality. There may be isolated examples perhaps for the idyllic case of a community in which relationship itself is sufficient, where each of its inhabitants possesses this happy independence equally and each one is so similar to every other one physically, psychically, morally, and economically that a homogeneity without heterogeneity exists, something that was possible in primitive agrarian democracies or for a long time in the colonial states. Finally one has to say that a democracy—because inequality always belongs to equality—can exclude one part of those governed without ceasing to be a democracy, that until now people who in some way were completely or partially without rights and who were restricted from the exercise of political power, let them be called barbarians, uncivilized, atheists, aristocrats, counterrevolutionaries, or even slaves, have belonged to a democracy. Neither in the Athenian city democracy nor in the British Empire are all inhabitants of the state territory politically equal. Of the more than

four hundred million inhabitants of the British Empire more than three hundred million are not British citizens. If English democracy, universal suffrage, or universal equality is spoken of, then these hundreds of millions in English democracy are just as unquestionably ignored as were slaves in Athenian democracy. Modern imperialism has created countless new governmental forms, conforming to economic and technical developments, which extend themselves to the same degree that democracy develops within the motherland. Colonies, protectorates, mandates, intervention treaties, and similar forms of dependence make it possible today for a democracy to govern a heterogeneous population without making them citizens, making them dependent upon a democratic state, and at the same time held apart from this state. [ . . . ]

Until now there has never been a democracy that did not recognize the concept *foreign* and that could have realized the equality of all men. If one were serious about a democracy of mankind and really wanted to make every person the political equal of every other person, it would be an equality in which every person took part as a consequence of birth or age and nothing else. Equality would have been robbed of its value and substance, because the specific meaning that it has as political equality, economic equality, and so forth—in short as equality in a particular sphere—would have been taken away. Every sphere has its specific equality and inequalities in fact. However great an injustice it would be not to respect the human worth of every individual, it would nevertheless be an irresponsible stupidity, leading to the worst chaos and therefore to even worse injustice, if the specific characteristics of various spheres were not recognized. In the domain of the political, people do not face each other as abstractions but as politically interested and politically determined persons, as citizens, governors or governed, politically allied or opponents—in any case, therefore, in political categories. In the sphere of the political, one cannot abstract out what is political, leaving only universal human equality; the same applies in the realm of economics, where people are not conceived as such, but as producers, consumers, and so forth, that is, in specifically economic categories.

An absolute human equality, then, would be an equality understood only in terms of itself and without risk; it would be an equality without the necessary correlate of inequality, and as a result conceptually and practically meaningless, an indifferent equality. Now such an equality certainly does not exist anywhere, so long as the various states of the earth, as was said above, distinguish their citizens politically from other persons and exclude politically dependent populations that are unwanted on whatever grounds by combining dependence in international law with the definition of such populations as alien in public law. In contrast it appears that, at least inside the different modern democratic states, universal human equality has been established; although there is of course no absolute equality of all persons, since foreigners and aliens remain excluded, there is nevertheless a relatively far-reaching human equality among the citizenry. But it must be noted that in this case national homogeneity is usually that much more strongly emphasized, and that general human equality is once again neutralized through the definitive exclusion of all those who do not belong to the state, of those who remain outside it. [ . . . ]

The equality of all persons as persons is not democracy but a certain kind of liberalism, not a state form but an individualistic, humanitarian ethic and *Weltanschauung*. Modern mass democracy rests on the confused combination of both. Despite all the work on [Jean-Jacques] Rousseau and despite the correct realization that Rousseau stands at the beginning of modern democracy, it still seems to have gone unnoticed that the theory of the state set out in *The Social Contract* contains these two different elements incoherently next to each other. The facade is liberal: the state's legitimacy is justified by a free contract.

But the subsequent depiction and the development of the central concept, the "general will," demonstrates that a true state, according to Rousseau, only exists where the people are so homogeneous that there is essentially unanimity. [ . . . ]

A popular presentation sees parliamentarism in the middle today, threatened from both sides by bolshevism and fascism. That is a simple but superficial constellation. The crisis of the parliamentary system and of parliamentary institutions in fact springs from the circumstances of modern mass democracy. These lead first of all to a crisis of democracy itself because the problem of a substantial equality and homogeneity, which is necessary to democracy, cannot be resolved by the general equality of mankind. It leads further to a crisis of parliamentarism that must certainly be distinguished from the crisis of democracy. Both crises have appeared today at the same time and each one aggravates the other, but they are conceptually and in reality different. As democracy, modern mass democracy attempts to realize an identity of governed and governing, and thus it confronts parliament as an inconceivable and outmoded institution. If democratic identity is taken seriously, then in an emergency no other constitutional institution can withstand the sole criterion of the people's will, however it is expressed. Against the will of the people especially an institution based on discussion by independent representatives has no autonomous justification for its existence, even less so because the belief in discussion is not democratic but originally liberal. Today one can distinguish three crises: the crisis of democracy (M. J. Bonn directs his attention to this without noticing the contradiction between liberal notions of human equality and democratic homogeneity); further, a crisis of the modern state (Alfred Weber); and finally a crisis of parliamentarism. The crisis of parliamentarism presented here rests on the fact that democracy and liberalism could be allied to each other for a time, just as socialism and democracy have been allied; but as soon as it achieves power, liberal democracy must decide between its elements, just as social democracy, which is finally in fact a social, liberal democracy inasmuch as modern mass democracy contains essentially liberal elements, must also decide. In democracy there is only the equality of equals, and the will of those who belong to the equals. All other institutions transform themselves into insubstantial social-technical expedients that are not in a position to oppose the will of the people, however expressed, with their own values and their own principles. The crisis of the modern state arises from the fact that no state can realize a mass democracy, a democracy of all people not even a democratic state.

Bolshevism and fascism by contrast are, like all dictatorships, certainly antiliberal but not necessarily antidemocratic. [ . . . ]

Even if bolshevism is suppressed and fascism held at bay, the crisis of contemporary parliamentarism would not be overcome in the least. For it has not appeared as a result of the appearance of those two opponents; it was there before them and will persist after them. Rather the crisis springs from the consequences of modern mass democracy and in the final analysis from the contradiction of a liberal individualism burdened by moral pathos and a democratic sentiment governed essentially by political ideals. A century of historical alliance and common struggle against royal absolutism has obscured the awareness of this contradiction. But the crisis unfolds today ever more strikingly, and no cosmopolitan rhetoric can prevent or eliminate it. It is, in its depths, the inescapable contradiction of liberal individualism and democratic homogeneity.

## Carl Schmitt, "The Concept of the Political" (1927)

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From: Carl Schmitt. 2007. *The Concept of the Political*. Transl. with an introduction by George Schwab. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. Pp. 26-32, 34-37, 45, 48f., 51, 53, 56f. First published as "Der Begriff des Politischen" in August 1927.

The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy. This provides a definition in the sense of a criterion and not as an exhaustive definition or one indicative of substantial content. Insofar as it is not derived from other criteria, the antithesis of friend and enemy corresponds to the relatively independent criteria of other antitheses: good and evil in the moral sphere, beautiful and ugly in the aesthetic sphere, and so on. In any event it is independent, not in the sense of a distinct new domain, but in that it can neither be based on any one antithesis or any combination of other antitheses, nor can it be traced to these. If the antithesis of good and evil is not simply identical with that of beautiful and ugly, profitable and unprofitable, and cannot be directly reduced to the others, then the antithesis of friend and enemy must even less be confused with or mistaken for the others. The distinction of friend and enemy denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation. It can exist theoretically and practically, without having simultaneously to draw upon all those moral, aesthetic, economic, or other distinctions. The political enemy need not be morally evil or aesthetically ugly; he need not appear as an economic competitor, and it may even be advantageous to engage with him in business transactions. But he is, nevertheless, the other, the stranger; and it is sufficient for his nature that he is, in a specially intense way, existentially something different and alien, so that in the extreme case conflicts with him are possible. These can neither be decided by a previously determined general norm nor by the judgment of a disinterested and therefore neutral third party.

Only the actual participants can correctly recognize, understand, and judge the concrete situation and settle the extreme case of conflict. Each participant is in a position to judge whether the adversary intends to negate his opponent's way of life and therefore must be repulsed or fought in order to preserve one's own form of existence. Emotionally the enemy is easily treated as being evil and ugly, because every distinction, most of all the political, as the strongest and most intense of the distinctions and categorizations,

draws upon other distinctions for support. This does not alter the autonomy of such distinctions. Consequently, the reverse is also true: the morally evil, aesthetically ugly or economically damaging need not necessarily be the enemy; the morally good, aesthetically beautiful, and economically profitable need not necessarily become the friend in the specifically political sense of the word. Thereby the inherently objective nature and autonomy of the political becomes evident by virtue of its being able to treat, distinguish, and comprehend the friend-enemy antithesis independently of other antitheses.

The friend and enemy concepts are to be understood in their concrete and existential sense, not as metaphors or symbols, not mixed and weakened by economic, moral, and other conceptions, least of all in a private-individualistic sense as a psychological expression of private emotions and tendencies. They are neither normative nor pure spiritual antitheses. [. . .]

The enemy is not merely any competitor or just any partner of a conflict in general. He is also not the private adversary whom one hates. An enemy exists only when, at least potentially, one fighting collectivity of people confronts a similar collectivity. The enemy is solely the public enemy, because everything that has a relationship to such a collectivity of men, particularly to a whole nation, becomes public by virtue of such a relationship. The enemy is *hostis*, not *inimicus* in the broader sense; *πολέμιος* [*polemios*], not *ἐχθρός* [*echthros*]. As German and other languages do not distinguish between the private and political enemy, many misconceptions and falsifications are possible. The often quoted "'Love your enemies" (Matt. 5:44; Luke 6:27) reads "diligite inimicos vestros," ἀγαπάτε τοὺς ἐχθροὺς ὑμῶν, and not *diligite hostes vestros*. No mention is made of the political enemy. Never in the thousand-year struggle between Christians and Moslems did it occur to a Christian to surrender rather than defend Europe out of love toward the Saracens or Turks. The enemy in the political sense need not be hated personally, and only in the private sphere only does it make sense to love one's enemy, i.e., one's adversary. The biblical quotation touches the political

antithesis even less than it intends to dissolve, for example, the antithesis of good and evil or beautiful and ugly. It certainly does not mean that one should love and support the enemies of one's own people.

The political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism becomes that much more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping. In its entirety the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction. [ . . . ]

The ever-present possibility of conflict must always be kept in mind. If one wants to speak of politics in the context of the primacy of internal politics, then this conflict no longer refers to war between organized nations but to civil war.

For to the enemy concept belongs the ever-present possibility of combat. All peripherals must be left aside from this term, including military details and the development of weapons technology. War is armed combat between organized political entities; civil war is armed combat within an organized unit. A self-laceration endangers the survival of the latter. The essence of a weapon is that it is a means of physically killing human beings. Just as the term *enemy*, the word *combat*, too, is to be understood in its original existential sense. It does not mean competition, nor does it mean pure intellectual controversy nor symbolic wrestlings in which, after all, every human being is somehow always involved, for it is a fact that the entire life of a human being is a struggle and every human being symbolically a combatant. The friend, enemy, and combat concepts receive their real meaning precisely because they refer to the real possibility of physical killing. War follows from enmity. War is the existential negation of the enemy. It is the most extreme consequence of enmity. It does not have to be common, normal, something ideal, or desirable. But it must nevertheless remain a real possibility for as long as the concept of the enemy remains valid.

It is by no means as though the political signifies nothing but devastating war and every political deed a military action, by no means as though every nation would be uninterruptedly faced with the friend-enemy alternative vis-à-vis every other nation. And, after all, could not the politically reasonable course reside in avoiding war? The definition of the political suggested here neither favors war nor militarism, neither imperialism nor pacifism. Nor is it an attempt to idealize the victorious war or the successful revolution as a "social ideal," since neither war nor revolution is something social or something ideal. The military battle itself is not the "continuation of politics by other means" as

the famous term of Clausewitz is generally incorrectly cited.<sup>1</sup> War has its own strategic, tactical, and other rules and points of view, but they all presuppose that the political decision has already been made as to who the enemy is. In war the adversaries most often confront each other openly; normally they are identifiable by a uniform, and the distinction of friend and enemy is therefore no longer a political problem which the fighting soldier has to solve. A British diplomat correctly stated in this context that the politician is better schooled for the battle than the soldier, because the politician fights his whole life whereas the soldier does so in exceptional circumstances only. War is neither the aim nor the purpose nor even the very content of politics. But as an ever-present possibility it is the leading presupposition that determines in a characteristic way human action and thinking and thereby creates a specifically political behavior. [ . . . ]

A world in which the possibility of war is utterly eliminated, a completely pacified globe, would be a world without the distinction of friend and enemy and hence a world without politics. It is conceivable that such a world might contain many very interesting antitheses and contrasts, competitions and intrigues of every kind, but there would not be a meaningful antithesis whereby men could be required to sacrifice life, authorized to shed blood and kill other human beings. For the definition of the political, it is here even irrelevant whether such a world without politics is desirable as an ideal situation. The phenomenon of the political can be understood only in the context of the ever-present possibility of the friend-and-enemy grouping, regardless of the aspects which this possibility implies for morality, aesthetics, and economics.

War as the most extreme political means discloses the possibility that underlies every political idea, namely, the distinction of friend and enemy. This

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<sup>1</sup> Carl von Clausewitz [*On War* (1853)]. "War is nothing but a continuation of political intercourse with a mixture of other means." War is for him a "mere instrument of politics." This cannot be denied, but its meaning for the understanding of the essence of politics is thereby still not exhausted. To be precise, war, for Clausewitz, is not merely one of many instruments, but the *ultima ratio* of the friend-and-enemy grouping. War has its own grammar (i.e., special military-technical laws), but politics remains its brain. It does not have its own logic. This can only be derived from the friend-and-enemy concept, and [a later] sentence reveals this core of politics: "If war belongs to politics, it will thereby assume its character. The more grandiose and powerful it becomes, so will also the war, and this may be carried to the point at which war reaches its absolute form."

makes sense only as long as this distinction in mankind is actually present or at least potentially possible. On the other hand, it would be senseless to wage war for purely religious, purely moral, purely juristic, or purely economic motives. The friend-and-enemy grouping and therefore also war cannot be derived from these specific antitheses of human endeavor. A war need be neither something religious nor something morally good nor something lucrative. War today is in all likelihood none of these. This obvious point is mostly confused by the fact that religious, moral, and other antitheses can intensify to political ones and can bring about the decisive friend-or-enemy constellation. If in fact this occurs, then the relevant antithesis is no longer purely religious, moral, or economic, but political. The sole remaining question then is always whether such a friend-and-enemy grouping is really at hand, regardless of which human motives are sufficiently strong to have brought it about.

Nothing can escape this logical conclusion of the political. If pacifist hostility toward war were so strong as to drive pacifists into a war against nonpacifists, in a war against war, that would prove that pacifism truly possesses political energy because it is sufficiently strong to group men according to friend and enemy. If, in fact, the will to abolish war is so strong that it no longer shuns war, then it has become a political motive, i.e., it affirms, even if only as an extreme possibility, war and even the reason for war. Presently this appears to be a peculiar way of justifying wars. The war is then considered to constitute the absolute last war of humanity. Such a war is necessarily unusually intense and inhuman because, by transcending the limits of the political framework, it simultaneously degrades the enemy into moral and other categories and is forced to make of him a monster that must not only be defeated but also utterly destroyed. In other words, he is an enemy who no longer must be compelled to retreat into his borders only. The feasibility of such war is particularly illustrative of the fact that war as a real possibility is still present today, and this fact is crucial for the friend-and-enemy antithesis and for the recognition of politics. [ . . . ]

To the state as an essentially political enemy belongs the *jus belli*, i.e., the real possibility of deciding in a concrete situation upon the enemy and the ability to

fight him with the power emanating from the entity. [ . . . ]

To demand seriously of human beings that they kill others and be prepared to die themselves so that trade and industry may flourish for the survivors or that the purchasing power of grandchildren may grow is sinister and crazy. It is a manifest fraud to condemn war as homicide and then demand of men that they wage war, kill and be killed, so that there will never again be war. War, the readiness of combatants to die, the physical killing of human beings who belong on the side of the enemy—all this has no normative meaning, but an existential meaning only, particularly in a real combat situation with a real enemy. There exists no rational purpose, no norm no matter how true, no program no matter how exemplary, no social ideal no matter how beautiful, no legitimacy nor legality which could justify men in killing each other for this reason. If such physical destruction of human life is not motivated by an existential threat to one's own way of life, then it cannot be justified.

If a part of the population declares that it no longer recognizes enemies, then, depending on the circumstance, it joins their side and aids them. Such a declaration does not abolish the reality of the friend-and-enemy distinction. [ . . . ]

If a people no longer possesses the energy or the will to maintain itself in the sphere of politics, the latter will not thereby vanish from the world. Only a weak people will disappear. [ . . . ]

The Geneva League of Nations does not eliminate the possibility of wars, just as it does not abolish states. It introduces new possibilities for wars, permits wars to take place, sanctions coalition wars, and by legitimizing and sanctioning certain wars it sweeps away many obstacles to war. [ . . . ] A league of nations as a concrete existing universal human organization would, on the contrary, have to accomplish the difficult task of, first, effectively taking away the *jus belli* from all the still existing human groupings, and, second, simultaneously not assuming the *jus belli* itself. Otherwise, universality, humanity, depoliticalized society—in short, all essential characteristics—would again be eliminated.