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World War I was a source of hope for those German cultural pessimists who believed in the possibility of a radical reversal of the process of degeneration they felt was threatening the nation's body and soul. Their message was not primarily that the world was godforsaken but that it could be redeemed and the deterioration halted and reversed. These hopes put the nationalists of the postwar era at odds with antiindustrial themes in German nationalism. A limited incorporation of technology into nationalist imagery and language had occurred in the late nineteenth century, but mainly on the part of engineers.

The novelty in the postwar discussions of technology and culture in Germany was that for the first time the nontechnical intellectuals were trying to integrate technology into nationalist language. Like the rest of National Socialism – and European fascism – these nationalist ideas took on a tougher tone as a result of the *Fronterlebnis* of World War I, incubated in the hothouse cultural controversies of the postwar years, and came to political fruition in Nazi propaganda. The confrontation between *Technik und Kultur* did not begin in the Weimar Republic. The major technological advances of the first and second industrial revolutions based on steam, electricity, and chemistry had been introduced to Germany in the nineteenth century, and the jargon of authenticity, German romanticism, the apolitical tradition, and mistrust of the Enlightenment also accompanied the rise of the Prussian Reich.

Yet although the confrontation between technology and culture did not begin in Weimar, it certainly came to a head in those years. It even had a name of its own, *die Streit um die Technik*, the debate about technology.¹ Hundreds of books, lectures, and essays emerged from both the technical universities and nontechnical intellectuals from all

¹ Friedrich Dessauer, *Die Streit um die Technik* (Frankfurt, 1958).

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points along the political spectrum dealing with the relation between Germany's soul and modern technology. The confrontation between technological advance and the traditions of German nationalism was sharper in Weimar than at any time before or since in modern German history, as well as in any other place in Europe after World War I. The battle over *Technik und Kultur* took place against a background of military defeat, failed revolutions, successful counterrevolution, a divided Left, an embittered and resentful Right, and Germany's famous illiberalism, which could not withstand the challenges of the political extremes. Weimar culture was the crucible in which the cultural synthesis I am calling reactionary modernism was both forged and given a new, harder edge that would eventually bring it into line with the cultural revolution Hitler promised. The story of the rise and collapse of the Weimar Republic has been told often and well. The following will remind the reader of the events that set the background for the reactionary modernist upsurge in the postwar period.

The history of the Weimar Republic is customarily divided into three periods. The first begins in November 1918 with the defeat in World War I followed by the imposition of the Versailles treaty, revolutionary upheavals from the Left, civil war and counterrevolutionary armed response from the Right, ultimately fatal divisions between the reformist and revolutionary Left, foreign occupation of the Ruhr, and the inflation of 1923. The workers' revolts did not succeed in shaking the social and political power of the Junkers, industrialists, army, and state bureaucracy – the pillars of the prewar Prussian coalition – and inflation embittered the middle class and weakened the strength of the republic's strongest defenders in the trade unions and in the Social Democratic party (SPD). A formally republican, democratic political experiment began in the midst of the authoritarian legacies of German industrialization.

The second period, usually called the stabilization phase, began with the fiscal stabilization of 1924, which brought hyperinflation to an end, warded off, at least for a time, the challenges of the far Right and far Left, and inaugurated a period of expanded investment and rationalization in industry. It was during this period of relative prosperity and political stability that Americanization, Fordism, and class harmony based on corporatist arrangements fostering expanded productivity reached their zenith. But the underlying gap between Weimar's formal republican and democratic political institutions and Germany's still unsurmounted illiberal social, economic, and ideological legacies surfaced again from 1929 to 1933 when the depression

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proved too much for the German political system to handle. In this last period, unemployment and the political extremes grew, the center parties shrank, the lower middle class was attracted to the Nazis, the Communists continued to attack the Social Democrats as "social fascists," the right-wing intellectuals dreamed of smashing the republic, and finally the conservatives turned to Hitler to perform the last rites.²

Weimar was a republic without republicans for a number of reasons. First, from the beginning the right-wing intellectuals and political parties attacked it as the symbol of national humiliation and military defeat. The Right rejected parliamentary democracy as simply un-German and called for authoritarian rule to crush the Left, abrogate the provisions of the Versailles treaty, and expose the slanders of the "November criminals" of 1918 who had implicitly accepted German responsibility for the war. Hitler was able effectively to exploit the gulf between army and republic and to present destruction of parliament and the trade unions as an act of national redemption, political emancipation, economic recovery, and technological advance. It is no wonder that the right-wing intellectuals referred to the policy of destroying the republic as the rebirth and breakthrough of the nation.³

A second reason for calling Weimar a republic without republicans has to do with the disappointments of the Left. Because Weimar was an effort to establish political democracy on conservative social foundations, the Social Democrats found themselves turning to the Right to crush the threat of revolution from the Left. This only deepened the split between Social Democrats and Communists that had opened wide during the war, thereby weakening the Left while reinforcing the nationalist Right.⁴ As Charles Maier has recently put it, the dilemma of the political centrists, such as Stresemann, or the Social Democrats was that "the government must choose to contain social tension on conservative terms or not contain it at all." It proved impossible to oppose the army, big industry, Junkers, the paramilitary right-wing groups, and anti-Semites and still overcome inflation and

² On the history of the Weimar Republic see Karl Dietrich Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik: Eine Studie zum Problem des Machtverfalls in der Demokratie*, 2d ed., (Stuttgart, 1957); and *The German Dictatorship* trans. Jean Steinberg (New York, 1970), pp. 124-227; Gordon Craig, *Germany: 1866-1945* (New York, 1980), pp. 396-568; Peter Gay, *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York, 1968); and Walter Laqueur, *Weimar: A Cultural History, 1918-1933* (New York, 1974).

³ Ernst Jünger's essay collection *Krieg und Krieger* (Berlin, 1930) was representative of these views. Joachim Fest's discussion of "the great dread" in *Hitler*, trans. Richard Winston and Clara Winston (New York, 1974), contains insightful comments on the spirit of rebirth and cultural revolution on the German Right.

⁴ On this see Craig, *Germany*, pp. 396-433.

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avoid economic collapse and territorial fragmentation without breaking with prolabor forces that were most sympathetic to Weimar's political institutions. Hence, those whose social interests were defended by the republic detested its political institutions, and those who might have been more sympathetic to its political institutions were embittered because they had not achieved the social gains they hoped for.⁵

Within the German Right after World War I, there were a number of writers who argued for a nationalist ideology more in keeping with modern times and less restricted by traditional Prussian conservatism. Known collectively as the "conservative revolution," they were vehement opponents of the Weimar Republic, identifying it with the lost war, Versailles, the inflation of 1923, the Jews, cosmopolitan mass culture, and political liberalism.⁶ They envisaged a new reich of enormous strength and unity, rejected the view that political action should be guided by rational criteria, and idealized violence for its own sake. They denounced what they believed were the boredom and complacency of bourgeois life and searched for renewal in an energizing "barbarism." Gordon Craig has aptly characterized them as "the intellectual advance guard of the rightist revolution that was to be effected in 1933," which, although contemptuous of National Socialism and Hitler, "did much to pave his road to power."⁷ Both within and outside the engineering profession, advocates of the conservative revolution were also important contributors to the reactionary modernist tradition. This is a cultural paradox, for common sense would suggest

⁵ Charles Maier, *Recasting Bourgeois Europe: Stabilization in France, Germany and Italy in the Decade After World War I* (Princeton, N.J., 1975), pp. 385–6; and David Abraham, *The Collapse of the Weimar Republic* (Princeton, N.J., 1981).

⁶ The Austrian poet Hugo von Hoffmannstahl was the first to use the term "conservative revolution" in his *Das Schrifttum als geistiger Raum der Nation* (Munich, 1927). He spoke of the many Germans who sought "not freedom but communal bonds." Cited in Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (New York, 1961), p. 27. Also see Hermann Rauschning, *The Conservative Revolution* (New York, 1941).

⁷ Craig, *Germany*, pp. 486–7. The literature on the conservative revolution is extensive. Also see Bracher, *The German Dictatorship*, pp. 142–43; Wolfgang Hock, *Deutscher Antikapitalismus* (Frankfurt, 1960); Heide Gerstenberger, *Der revolutionäre Konservatismus* (Berlin, 1969); Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton, N.J., 1957); Herman Lebovics, *Social Conservatism and the Middle Classes in Germany* (Princeton, N.J., 1969); Armin Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland, 1918–1932*, 2d ed. (Darmstadt, 1972); George Mosse, "The Corporate State and the Conservative Revolution," in his *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left and the Search for a "Third Force"* in *Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York, 1970), pp. 116–43; Karl Prumm, *Die Literature des soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre: 1918–1933*, 2 vols. (Kronberg, 1974); Otto-Ernst Schüddekopf, *Linke Leute von Rechts: National-bolschewismus in Deutschland: 1918–1933* (Frankfurt 1973); Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*, (Munich, 1968); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*; and Walter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy* (Princeton, N.J., 1973).

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that partisans of irrationalism and nihilism would detest modern technology as a manifestation of rationality and faith in historical progress. In this chapter, I will discuss the themes, personalities, social and generational bases, and distinctively German dimensions of Weimar's conservative revolution in order to throw this paradox into sharper focus.

The social basis of the conservative revolution was the middle class, broadly defined. The German *Mittelstand* encompassed small- and middle-sized farmers, artisans and shopkeepers, white-collar workers in big industry and civil service, and the professional middle class – lawyers, doctors, professors, higher civil servants, and engineers.⁸ These diverse groups were bound together by common reactions to the rapid development of industrial capitalism in Germany. Anxious and afraid of large capital, on the one hand, and the organized working class on the other, they viewed the nation as a redemptive unity.⁹ Right-wing nationalist spokesmen claimed that the nation-state alone was above narrow class interests. The German middle class turned enthusiastically to the promise of a “primacy of politics” above egoistic self-interest, one motivated by national “idealism” rather than liberal, Marxist, Jewish, French, or English “materialism,” or cosmopolitanism. Heirs to an illiberal tradition to begin with, those whose savings had been wiped out in the inflation of 1923 and who faced bankruptcy and unemployment in the depression, responded favorably to Hitler's promise to the “little man” that the years of “chaos” were coming to an end.¹⁰

The German *Mittelstand* was an intermediate class in a temporal as well as social sense, a feature Ernst Bloch has described as its *Ungleichzeitigkeit*, its mixture of modern, capitalist and industrial experience alongside traditional, precapitalist, and preindustrial life.¹¹ The *Mittelstand* lived in the cities and worked in modern industry, but the memories of small-town life and less rationalized forms of production were still vivid in the Germany of the 1920s. Bloch's analysis of German middle-class consciousness was unusual because it qualified an exclusive focus on the antimodernism of the middle classes and pointed attention to their selective embrace of modernity. But most important,

⁸ Arno Mayer, *Dynamics of Counterrevolution in Europe, 1870–1956* (New York, 1971), p. 66.

⁹ Lebovics, *Social Conservatism*, pp. 4–11. Also see Emil Lederer's classic account, *Die Privatangestellten in der modernen Wirtschaftsordnung* (Tübingen, 1912).

¹⁰ See Bracher, *Die Auflösung der Weimarer Republik*, pp. 152–3; Mayer, *Dynamics of Counterrevolution*; Lebovics, *Social Conservatism*.

¹¹ Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt, 1962), pp. 104–26.

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Bloch's analysis took issue with the rationalist bias of Marxist orthodoxy. He suggested that the appeal of nazism lay less in traditional antimodernism than in the promise of cultural and emotional redemption through embracing aspects of the modern world in accordance with German national traditions. Hence the spokesmen of the Right would have to be understood in a more differentiated way. They, not the liberals, Social Democrats, or Marxists, were the real revolutionaries. They were the ones who did not promise more of the same *Entseelung* (desouling) but a renewal of the soul in a modern setting.¹² Sociological juxtapositions of tradition and modernity or progress and reaction fail to capture the paradoxes of *Ungleichzeitigkeit*. It is in literature, in particular in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus*, that we find an adequate sociological description of the conservative revolution as an "old-new world of revolutionary reaction."

In addition to sharing membership in the German middle class, the conservative revolutionaries were generational cohorts. Although some contributors, such as Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) and Moeller van den Bruck (1876–1925), matured before the war, the conservative revolution as a social and cultural movement was a product of the lost war and its consequences.¹³ Karl Mannheim's claims relating shared generational experience to shared political outlooks are vividly confirmed by the conservative revolution. Mannheim focused on the late teens and early twenties in the formation of individual political consciousness. The leading figures of both the conservative revolution and of National Socialism were born between 1885 and 1895. Their formative years, in a Mannheimian sense, took place during the Great War.¹⁴ The war taught them a contempt for bourgeois society, accustomed them to violence, and gave them a sense of community for which they afterward yearned.¹⁵ Hannah Arendt once wrote of the

¹² Ibid. Joachim Fest also explains how "fascism served the craving of the period for a general upheaval more effectively than its antagonists," *Hiller*, p. 105. Also see Ernst Bloch, "Die Angst des Ingenieur," and "Technik und Geistererscheinungen," in *Verfremdungen I* (Frankfurt, 1962). Anson Rabinbach provides a useful introduction to Bloch's contribution in "Ernst Bloch's Heritage of Our Times and the Theory of Fascism," *New German Critique* 11 (1977), pp. 5–21.

¹³ Armin Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland* contains a great deal of biographical information on participants in the conservative revolution.

¹⁴ See Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland*. Also see Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in *Essays in The Sociology of Culture* (New York, 1952), pp. 276–332. Also see Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979). Wohl applies Mannheim's sociology of generations to right-wing intellectuals in post-World War I England, France, Germany, Spain, and Italy.

¹⁵ A good example was Alfred Bäumler's *Männerbund und Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1934). On Bäumler and National Socialism, see Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Band III, *Irrationalismus und Imperialismus* (Darmstadt, 1962), pp. 204–6.

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"lost treasure(s) of the revolutionary tradition" as fleeting moments of community and political discussion (the American committees of correspondence, the Russian and European post-World War I soviets and workers' councils, the Hungarian revolution of 1956 were some examples) when the abstract ideal of the good society assumed actual historical reality. The Right, no less than the Left, has had its lost treasures. In Weimar, the masculine community of the trenches, recreated in paramilitary groups such as the *Freikorps*, provided the reactionary tradition with its concrete utopia, vision of a good society, and lost treasure.¹⁶

As we noted earlier, the war was a turning point for romantic anticapitalism. It was after the war that the conservative revolutionaries associated irrationalism, protest against the Enlightenment, and a romantic cult of violence with a cult of technics. Particularly among the nontechnical intellectuals, the war stimulated the development of reactionary modernist ideas. Ernst Jünger expressed a widely held right-wing view when he connected technology with the wartime *Gemeinschaft* rather than the fragmented, postwar *Gesellschaft*. When the right-wing literati idealized the lost communities of the past, they looked back to the modern battlefield and the trenches, not the preindustrial landscape. The *Kriegserlebnis* (war experience) presented postwar reaction with a fully up-to-date masculine alternative to bourgeois society, one preferable to the effeminate and escapist fantasies of previous generations of less daring conservatives.

The conservative revolution took place in and around universities, political clubs, and little magazines. These institutions constituted its public sphere.¹⁷ In this atmosphere of right-wing sectarianism, the

¹⁶ Hannah Arendt, "The Revolutionary Tradition and Its Lost Treasure," in *On Revolution* (New York, 1965), pp. 217–85. On the political and ideological importance of World War I for National Socialism also see Timothy Mason, *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich: Arbeiterklasse und Volksgemeinschaft* (Opladen, 1978); and "Die Erbschaft der Novemberrevolution für den National Sozialismus," in *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich*, pp. 15–41; reprinted as "The Legacy of 1918 for National Socialism," in *German Democracy and the Triumph of Hitler*, ed. Anthony Nicholls and Erich Mathias (London, 1971).

¹⁷ On the concept of the public sphere, see Jürgen Habermas *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit* 3 (Neuwied, 1974). Habermas attributes a normative dimension to the public sphere: It stands for the liberal idea of public discussion of different viewpoints. Here I am using the term in a strictly descriptive sense to refer to a forum in which politics is discussed without all points of view necessarily being represented. Along these lines, West German critics have spoken of a "fascist" or "proletarian" public sphere, uses which are really contradictions in terms. See the Berlin journal of cultural politics, *Ästhetik und Kommunikation* 26 (1976) on "fascistische Öffentlichkeit"; Eberhard Knodler-Bunte, "Fascism as a Depoliticized Mass Movement," *New German Critique* 11 (Spring 1977), pp. 39–48.

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charisma of the *Kriegserlebnis* was sustained by an ongoing cultural-political opposition to the republic. From 1918 to 1933, the German Right comprised over 550 political clubs and 530 journals.¹⁸ Some lasted weeks or months; others, such as *Die Tat*, (The Deed), with a readership of 30,000 or *Die Standarte*, the journal of war veterans, with a circulation of 110,000, continued throughout the entire life of the republic.¹⁹ By the time books by Jünger or Spengler came to the attention of a broader reading public, they had been discussed and refined within this narrower but by no means small right-wing public sphere. It served as a linguistic and political incubator of ideology, offering authors financial support and sympathetic readers.

Some of the more important postwar right-wing journals were the following: *Das Gewissen* (The Conscience) was connected to the June Club, a meeting place for ex-soldiers, conservative literati (especially Moeller van den Bruck), and industrialists. It was published from 1919 to 1927 and had a circulation of 10,000 at its height. Its major themes were attacks on Weimar liberalism and appeals for renewed nationalist spirit and rearmament.²⁰ From 1929 to 1933, *Die Tat* was the most widely read journal on the right. Its central figures were Hans Zehrer and Ferdinand Fried, both of whom had been participants in the prewar youth movement. *Die Tat* advocated a middle-class anticapitalism directed against the "materialism" of both capital and organized labor and favored authoritarian state intervention that was supposed to free the state from the fetters of parliamentary delay.²¹

Die Standarte was the most influential of the journals espousing the views of the "front" generation. Other magazines included *Deutsches Volkstum* (German Qualities of the People), *Ja und Nein* (Yes and No), *Arminius: Kampfschrift für deutsche Nationalisten* (Arminius: Battle Writings for German Nationalists), *Die Kommenden* (The Coming), *Die Standarte: Beiträge zur geistigen Vertiefung des Frontgedankens* (The Standard: Contributions to the Spiritual Deepening of the Ideas of the Front) *Standarte: Wochenschrift des Neuen Nationalismus* (Standard: Weekly Journal of the New Nationalism), *Der Vormarsch* (The Advance), and *Widerstand: Zeitschrift für nationalrevolutionäre Politik* (Resistance: Mag-

¹⁸ Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution*, pp. 539–54.

¹⁹ Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, p. 33.

²⁰ Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton, N.J., 1957); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, pp. 279–93.

²¹ Kurt Sontheimer, "Der Tatkreis," and *Antidemokratisches Denken*. On the economic views of the group around *Die Tat*, see Hock, *Deutscher Antikapitalismus*.

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azine for National Revolutionary Politics).²² One of the ironies of Hitler's seizure of power was that this plethora of little journals and political clubs, which did so much to aid his coming to power, was abolished when the Nazis made good on their promise to establish totalitarian control over German politics.

Fritz Stern has described the conservative revolution as "an ideological attack on modernity, on the complex of ideas and institutions that characterize our liberal, secular and industrial civilization."²³ There is no doubt that the conservative revolutionaries were hostile to liberalism and Enlightenment rationality, but the totality of their views toward modern technology was more differentiated than those offered by the figures Stern examined – Lagarde, Langbehn, and van den Bruck. Common sense and the dichotomous nature of both Marxist and modernization theories imply that advocates of "thinking with the blood" would reject complex technologies. But such was not the case. To appreciate the paradoxical nature of reactionary modernism as a cultural system, it is important to review some of the traditions of the German Right that suggest a complete incompatibility with modern technology.

The conservative revolutionaries were heirs to European irrationalist traditions, traditions that took on a particularly intense coloration in Germany due to the politicization of *Legensphilosophie*, the philosophy of life. Weimar's right-wing intellectuals claimed to be in touch with "life" or "experience" and thereby to be endowed with a political position beyond any rational justification.²⁴ To conservative revolu-

²² See Karl Prumm, *Die Literatur des soldatischen Nationalismus der 20er Jahre: 1918–1933*, 2 vols. (Kronberg, 1974); and "Das Erbe der Front: Der antidemokratische Kriegsroman der Weimarer Republik und seine nationalsozialistische Fortsetzung," in *Die deutsche Literatur im Dritten Reich*, ed. Horst Denkler and Karl Prumm (Stuttgart, 1976), pp. 138–64. Prumm's work is important for analysis of the mixture of irrationalist and modernist currents in National Socialist ideology. For a complete bibliography of Ernst Jünger's journalism in the Weimar years, see Hans Peter des Coudres, *Bibliographie der Werke Ernst Jünger* (Stuttgart, 1970), pp. 50–6. Prumm offers the most extensive analysis of these writings in *Die Literatur*. Also see Gerhard Loose, *Ernst Jünger: Gestalt und Werk* (Frankfurt, 1957); and Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die konservative Anarchist: Politik und Zeitkritik Ernst Jüngers* (Freiburg, 1962).

²³ Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, p. 7.

²⁴ Georg Lukács stressed the importance of *Lebensphilosophie* in *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Band III, *Irrationalismus und Imperialismus*. This volume includes Lukács's often not very subtle analysis of the background to National Socialism in German philosophy – Nietzsche, Dilthey, Simmel, Spengler, Scheler, Heidegger, Jaspers, Klages, Jünger, Bäumler, Boehm, Krieck, and Rosenberg. Lukács did not distinguish between Nietzsche's works and the use made of those works by the Nazis, nor was he fair to critics of positivism – Simmel above all – when he accused them of contributing to the "irrationalist" climate that was conducive to nazism. Adorno viewed the work as evidence of "the destruction of Lukács' own reason" and a reflection of the cultural

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tionaries, no accusation was more damaging than to describe an idea or institution – positivism, liberalism, Marxism, science, parliament, reason – as *lebensfeindlich* (hostile to life). They, of course, viewed themselves as representatives of all that was vital, cosmic, elementary, passionate, willful, and organic, of the intuitive and living rather than of the rational and dead.²⁵

German romanticism's contribution to the conservative revolution was decisive. The right-wing intellectuals were political romantics insofar as they advocated what Max Weber called the ethic of ultimate ends rather than an ethic of responsibility. There was much in the German romantic tradition and its modern Nietzschean variants that denigrated the role of reason in politics and/or saw in politics above all opportunities for self-realization, authentic experience, or new identities, conceptions of politics that National Socialism also advocated.²⁶ The rebirth of the nation would also mean the renewal of personal identity. This existentialist stress on the self replaced more prosaic conceptions of politics as a balancing of means and ends with a thirst for action and engagement for their own sake. If nationalist politics would dissolve all personal problems into a great collective political transformation, then force and violence were certainly justified in bringing about national rebirth. Many of the conservative revolutionaries were contemptuous of Hitler and the Nazis, but they could not deny that their own romantic thirst for action and commitment for their own sake was also part of his appeal and his program. As Carl Schmitt put it at the time, "Everything romantic stands in the service of other, unromantic energies."²⁷ Consistent with their political irresponsibility and romanticism, the conservative revolu-

repression of the Stalin era. But Adorno himself agreed with Lukács that *Lebensphilosophie* was prominent in the right-wing assault on reason. See his *Jargon of Authenticity*, trans. Kurt Tarnowski and Frederic Will (Evanston, Ill., 1973). Although *Lebensphilosophie* was not an exclusively right-wing subjectivism, it was one of those German traditions that contained a fund of metaphors that entered into right-wing ideology. If Nietzsche, for example, was misinterpreted, the misinterpretation was remarkably consistent. On this see J. P. Stern, *Hitler: The Führer and the People* (Berkeley, 1975), pp. 43–77; and Ernst Nolte, *Three Faces of Fascism*, trans. Leila Vennewitz (New York, 1966), pp. 441–6. Jürgen Habermas warns against rejecting criticisms of positivism too quickly in his review of Fritz Ringer's *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, "Die deutschen Mandarine," in *Philosophisch-politische Profile* (Frankfurt, 1973), pp. 239–51; David Bathrick and Paul Breines in "Marx oder Nietzsche: Anmerkungen zur Krise des Marxismus," in *Karl Marx und Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. Reinhold Grimm and Jost Hermand (Königstein, 1978), pp. 119–35, discuss the left-wing Nietzschean critique of Marxist scientism.

²⁵ See Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 56–61, on "vulgar *Lebensphilosophie*."

²⁶ J. P. Stern, *Hitler*; and Adorno, *The Jargon of Authenticity*.

²⁷ Carl Schmitt, *Politische Romantik* (Munich, 1919), p. 162.

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tionaries did not bother to ask what the consequences of destroying Weimar's democracy would be.

Friedrich Georg Jünger (Ernst's brother) expressed a widespread conservative revolutionary view when he wrote in his *Der Aufmarsch des Nationalismus* (1926) that rationality was synonymous with weakness, decadence, and lack of communal feeling characteristic of those intellectuals who "betray the blood with the intellect." He favorably compared the "community of blood" (*Blutgemeinschaft*) to the "community of mind" (*Geistgemeinschaft*), adding that a "community of blood does not [need to] justify itself: it lives, it is there without the necessity of intellectual justification." The conservative revolutionaries identified Germany with the *Blutgemeinschaft* while relegating the people, ideas, and institutions they despised – England, France, democracy, parliament, Weimar, economic and political liberalism, Marxian socialism, and often enough the Jews – to the *Geistgemeinschaft*. In Jünger's representative view, the purpose of politics was to make possible the realization of the *Blutgemeinschaft* over the rationalized and soulless *Geistgemeinschaft*.²⁸

Jünger's juxtaposition of mind and blood presents an important paradoxical feature of the conservative revolution: This was a case study in the antiintellectualism of the intellectuals. They attacked abstraction and the intellect while celebrating intuition, the self, and immediacy. They would have rejected the label "intellectual," with its French, left-wing, cosmopolitan, and Jewish connotations. In Nazi parlance, the term was an expression of contempt and ridicule. If life or blood was the central force in politics, it was pointless to engage in critical analysis. Whereas ideology was necessary, intellectuals were not, because everyone had feelings and could thus be his own ideologist. The conservative revolutionaries wrote in a profoundly antiintellectual atmosphere of Junkers, generals, and the emerging Nazi party. Like fascist intellectuals elsewhere in Europe, their self-contempt was the other side of a fascination for violence, action – and technology.

Despite their hostile attitude toward intellectuals, the conservative revolutionaries were intellectuals. That is, they were viewed and they viewed themselves as a cultural elite with a special responsibility and ability to work with traditions, ideas, symbols, and meanings in an effort to make sense of their times. They used some traditions unchanged while altering others in a manner Raymond Williams has referred to as the "work of selective tradition" to underscore active

²⁸ Friedrich Georg Jünger, *Der Aufmarsch des Nationalismus*, p. 21, cited by Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, p. 56.

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reworking of received traditions and symbolism to deal with new and potentially unsettling situations and events.²⁹ We have already touched on some of the German traditions on which the conservative revolutionaries drew, namely, romanticism, *völkisch* ideology, the existentialist language of the self and authenticity, a widespread acceptance of social Darwinism, *Lebensphilosophie*, Wagnerian visions of apocalypse and transformation, Nietzsche's amoral celebration of aesthetics, and a general antipathy to Enlightenment thought and morality.³⁰ Although it is true that elements of all of these traditions could be found throughout Europe in the first third of the century, nowhere else did they constitute such an important part of national identity as in the *Kulturnation*.

The accomplishment of the reactionary modernists within the conservative revolution was to demonstrate that this national cultural protest could serve to celebrate, rather than denounce, mechanization of war and labor. For example, the Nietzschean Left – Martin Buber and Gustav Landauer, to name two – saw the idea of the will to power as a slogan of individual protest against mechanization and positivism; the Nietzschean Right did the opposite.³¹ The right-wing intellectuals touched base with the modernist avant-garde insofar as they also advocated an amoral aestheticism “beyond good and evil” that could juxtapose war and technics to civilian decadence.³² Ernst Jünger, for example, celebrated the will over “lifeless” rationality by pointing to its presence in a non- and antibourgeois “hardness” evident in the “battle” against nature waged with technological devices. Jünger, one of the most self-conscious of the reactionary modernists, wrote that Nietzsche had no room for the machine “in his Renaissance landscape. But he taught us that life is not only a struggle for daily existence but a struggle for higher and deeper goals. Our task is to apply this doctrine to the machine.”³³ The West German critic Karl-Heinz Boh-

²⁹ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York, 1977), pp. 122–3. Also see Edward Shils on the relationship between the traditions of the intellectual elites and modern politics in *The Intellectuals and the Powers, and Other Essays* (Chicago, 1972).

³⁰ See Fest, *Höller*, pp. 36–57; J. P. Stern, *Höller*, pp. 43–9. On Wagner, see Jacques Barzun, *Marx, Darwin, and Wagner* (New York, 1958), pp. 231–339.

³¹ Bathrick and Breines, “Marx oder Nietzsche.”

³² On this see Karl-Heinz Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens: Die Pessimistische Romantik und Ernst Jüngers Frühwerk* (Munich, 1978), esp. pp. 13–64, which includes his discussion of the separation between aesthetics and morality in the European avant-garde from 1890 to 1930; and Ansgar Hillach, “Die Ästhetisierung des politischen Lebens,” in *Walter Benjamin in Kontext*, ed. Walter Burkhardt (Frankfurt, 1978), pp. 127–67.

³³ Ernst Jünger, “Die Maschine,” *Standarte* 15 (1925), p. 2. Also cited by Loose, *Gestalt und Werk*, p. 364.

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rer, in a recent study of Ernst Jünger, has underscored the contributions of European theorists of decadence such as Wilde and Baudelaire in this effort. By elevating the idea of beauty over normative standards, linking this concept of beauty to an elitist notion of the will, and finally interpreting technology as the embodiment of will and beauty, Weimar's right-wing intellectuals contributed to an irrationalist and nihilist embrace of technology.³⁴

Spengler offered another variant of the selective use of the Nietzschean legacy. He focused on Nietzsche's attack on Christian "slave morality" to support a Social Darwinist defense of inequality. Spengler equated the good with power and the bad with powerlessness. Faced with what they described as bourgeois decadence, Spengler and his fellow conservative revolutionaries appealed for the revival of a masculine elite, a "beast of prey" (*Raubtier*) whose will had not yet been tamed by the feminizing impact of Christian and bourgeois morality.³⁵ The Weimar right-wing intellectuals presented war, militarism, and nationalism as the breeding ground for a new, postdecadent, anti-bourgeois man. Nietzsche had provided these thinkers with an anti-bourgeois language as well as the pathos of a heroic struggle against convention. They transformed his message of the late nineteenth century into an effective element of the politics of youth in Weimar.

Although reactionary modernism was a variant of German romanticism, it entailed subtle yet important shifts in the meanings attributed to romantic words and symbols. For example, when Carl Schmitt and Ernst Jünger referred to romanticism, they referred to the idea of will and decision, rather than to antiindustrial imagery. Both Schmitt and Jünger were critics of what they saw as romanticism's passive and effeminate aspects. They argued that political romanticism was the product of the war, rather than of pastoral poetry.³⁶ Although the reactionary modernists used terms such as *Gemeinschaft* or *Innerlichkeit*, they redefined these legacies of romanticism in ways that elude the dichotomies of tradition *or* modernity, and progress *or* reaction.

But the paradox of rejecting reason and embracing technology did not elude all social and cultural observers. One of the first to understand that the German feeling for nature was making its peace with the industrialized landscape was Walter Benjamin. Given the impor-

³⁴ Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens*.

³⁵ Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes*, Band II (Munich, 1923; reprint, 1972), p. 981. Spengler presented the idea of man as a *Raubtier* or beast of prey in *Der Mensch und die Technik* (Munich, 1931; reprint, 1971), pp. 10–17.

³⁶ See Schmitt, *Politische Romantik*. Jünger's critique is found throughout *Der Arbeiter* (Hamburg, 1932; reprint, Stuttgart, 1962).

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tance that sociological investigation has attached to the process of the rationalization of society (indeed, sociology as a discipline began as reflection on this process in Europe), Benjamin's fragmentary but suggestive comments on the aestheticization of political life and technology among Weimar's right-wing intellectuals deserve attention from sociologists reflecting on the nature of modernity.³⁷

Benjamin's views on fascist aesthetics first appeared in his 1930 review of Ernst Jünger's essay collection in praise of the front experience (*Fronterlebnis*) entitled *Krieg und Krieger* (War and the Warrior).³⁸ Right-wing intellectuals, Benjamin wrote, were drawn to fascism partly because they hoped it would lead to a resolution of a cultural crisis in bourgeois society. Fascism in Europe and National Socialism in Germany promised creativity, beauty, aesthetic form, and the spiritual unity of the nation in place of materialism, positivism, and formless, soulless, and chaotic liberalism. The soul would be able to express itself in the political imagery and symbolism of the nation rather than in divisive social classes and compromising parliaments.³⁹ Benjamin argued that this program of aesthetic rejuvenation and "overcoming" cultural decadence served the more mundane interests of German militarism and imperialism.

Benjamin's essays on technology and the Right were attempts to dissolve reification, that is, the perception that technology possessed, in Georg Lukács's terms, "a phantom objectivity," an automony so strictly rational and all-embracing as to conceal every trace of its fundamental nature: the relation between people.⁴⁰ Lukács's theory of reification as developed in *History and Class Consciousness* was a cornerstone of Benjamin's ideas on the aesthetics of technology in the

³⁷ In *The Nationalization of the Masses* (New York, 1970), George Mosse writes: "Against the problem of industrialization, German nationalism defined itself as truly creative; the artistic became political" (p. 4). Also see Mosse's essay, "Fascism and the Intellectuals," in *The Nature of Fascism*, ed. S. J. Woolf (New York, 1969), pp. 205–25. "The shift from 'aesthetic politics' to the national state as the repository of aesthetic rejuvenation distinguished the fascist intellectuals from antifascist intellectuals whose world view, in other respects, was closer to such fascist idealism" (p. 208).

³⁸ Walter Benjamin, "Theorien de deutschen Faschismus," in *Walter Benjamin: Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 3 (Frankfurt, 1977), pp. 238–50.

³⁹ Ernst Robert Curtius made this point in *Maurice Barres und die geistigen Grundlagen des französischen Nationalismus* (Bonn, 1921): "Barres's world of the soul conceals an inner logic evident in the fact that his political will is dominated by the same law that rules his relationship to art." In both, Barres wanted to express his soul and will.

⁴⁰ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass., 1971), p. 83. On the concept of reification in the Frankfurt school, see Russell Jacoby, "Towards a Critique of Automatic Marxism: The Politics of Philosophy from Lukács to the Frankfurt School," *Telos* 10 (Winter, 1971), pp. 119–46; and his *The Dialectics of Defeat* (New York, 1982).

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German Right. The reactionary modernists we will be examining saw in the machine various categories taken from aesthetics and philosophy, but none taken from society or social relations. Benjamin, like Lukács, rejected the attempts of Soviet Marxists, such as Bukharin, to separate technology from social relations and view it as an autonomous force.⁴¹ But like all of Benjamin's work, his insights are situated between an unrepentant Marxist orthodoxy and his own, less systematic but more perceptive, interpretations. At times, his work echoes standard Marxist, Leninist, and Luxemburgian arguments. At other times, he seemed to accept the idea that technology did indeed possess its own dynamic, spilling over the bounds of civilian production and pushing forward in the service of the search for markets and imperialist war.⁴²

Benjamin's special contribution lay in his understanding that for Germany's right-wing intellectuals, the "liberation" of technology from Weimar's social and political restrictions was synonymous with recovery of the German soul. Whatever this program may have meant for German industry, for the right-wing intellectuals it meant resolution of a cultural crisis. The idea that economic advance could overcome a cultural crisis was new, at least for Germany's nontechnical intellectuals. It seemed to Benjamin that the less important the individual on the industrialized battlefield became, the more the right-wing enthusiasts of technology stressed his presence. Benjamin thought Jünger and his colleagues turned war into a cultic object, an eternal power that transforms the soul, and that in so doing they were engaging in "nothing other than an uninhibited translation of the principles of art for art's sake to war itself."⁴³ In the language of battle, the Right abandoned its enmity to technology. At times, Benjamin wrote of fascism in general and compared the Germans to the French and Italians. But he also noticed that Weimar's right wing saw World War I as the culmination of German idealism. This was the meaning of

⁴¹ Georg Lukács, "N(ikoloi) Bukharin: Historical Materialism," in *Georg Lukács: Political Writings, 1919–1929* (London, 1972), pp. 134–42.

⁴² See Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Illuminations* (New York, 1968), p. 244, for Benjamin's analysis along these lines. In "Theorien des deutschen Faschismus," Benjamin spoke of imperialistic war as a "slave revolt of technology" against the discrepancy between the means of production and their "inadequate realization in the process of production." Ansgar Hillach in "Die Äthetisierung des politischen Lebens" draws out these aspects of Benjamin's work.

⁴³ Benjamin, "Theories of German Fascism," *New German Critique* 17 (Spring 1979), p. 125.

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the praise for submission as “heroic surrender” and the stoic bearing present in their postwar writings.

Benjamin referred to “a new theory of war” in the postwar Right whose real purpose was a compensatory one, that is, to transform the actual humiliating defeat in the war into a victory of form and beauty. The beautiful form of the soldier emerging purged and intact from the hell of the trenches turned mass destruction into a redemptive experience. War is the crucible from which a new collective subject of history develops. To make war the subject of aesthetic considerations obscured the political and social interests and purposes that had brought the war about. At times, Benjamin’s analysis sounded like so many other general indictments of European fascism, but the specifically German dimension was never completely lost, as the following passage indicates. Here he insists that Jünger’s descriptions of the landscape of the battlefield were a perversion, not the logical culmination of German romanticism and idealism:

With as much bitterness as possible, it must be said that the German feeling of nature has had an undreamt-of upsurge in the face of this “landscape of total mobilization” Technology wanted to recreate German Idealism’s heroic features with ribbons of fire and approach trenches. *It went astray*. For what it took to be the heroic features were those of Hippocrates, the features of death To elevate war into a metaphysical abstraction as the new nationalism does, is nothing other than an effort to use technology to solve the mystery of nature as German Idealism understood it in a mystical way instead of illuminating and using nature’s secrets via the rational organization of society In the parallelogram of forces formed by nature and the nation, war is the diagonal [emphasis added].⁴⁴

The idea of a dialectic of progress, of advances in society taking place through repression of individuals, has been a central theme in modern social theory evident in Hegel, Marx, Durkheim, Weber, and Freud. Benjamin’s particular contribution to theoretical reflection on the dialectic of progress is to have understood that cultural and political revolt against the rationalization of society in Germany took the form of a cult of technics rather than backward-looking pastoralism. After World War II, Max Horkheimer developed this idea in his analysis of National Socialism as a “revolt of nature.” Horkheimer claimed that nazism combined strict organization and bureaucratic rationalization with cultural revolt. In “modern fascism,” he wrote, “rationality now exploits nature by incorporating into its own system the rebellious potentialities of nature.”⁴⁵ It was Benjamin’s analysis of

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 127.

⁴⁵ Max Horkheimer, *The Eclipse of Reason*, p. 127.

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the right-wing ideological reflection on World War I that first indicated that Germany's rebellion against the Enlightenment would incorporate technical advance. This insight, rather than Benjamin's own literary speculations on the relation between technology and society (which tended to attribute to technology the same phantom objectivity that Lukacs criticized in Bukharin's Marxism), was Benjamin's major contribution. Put in other terms, Benjamin understood that technical and industrial modernization did not necessarily imply modernization in a broader political, social, and cultural sense.

Benjamin was also one of the first to note that certain concepts of beauty were connected to *Lebensphilosophie*. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," he wrote that "fascism sees its salvation in giving [the] masses not their rights but instead a chance to express themselves."⁴⁶ Five years earlier, in his essay on Jünger, he had observed that the right-wing intellectuals had transferred the idea of expression from the language of *Lebensphilosophie* to the interpretation of historical events. For Weimar's right-wing nationalists, the violence of the battlefields, the efficiency and power of tanks and ships, and the explosions of grenades were the external expression of inner impulses toward "life." Rather than offer political, economic, or social analyses of events, they could be explained away as being merely the expression of some deep, mysterious, eternal, and irresistible force, some *Ding an sich* immune to rational description. If this were the case, the distinction between history and nature would also be blurred, as it became in Jünger's description of the war as a "storm of steel."

In disputes that originated in the conflicts of the 1960s, a number of critics of the Frankfurt school have argued that the origins of the critical theorists' views on technology lay in the anticivilizational mood of the Weimar right-wing intellectuals. In my view, this analysis is mistaken. Far from indicating a convergence with the views of technology on the German Right, Benjamin's essays were efforts to pierce what Marcuse later called the "technological veil," that is, the idea that technology is an autonomous entity that obeys "imperatives" unrelated to social relations.⁴⁷ Grounded in Lukács's theory of reification, Benjamin's insights pointed to some of Marcuse's and Horkheimer's subsequent discussion of technological rationality. His ideas developed from his criticisms of the postwar cult of technology on the Right. The evidence does not support the claim that his interpretation con-

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art . . .," p. 243.

⁴⁷ Herbert Marcuse, *One Dimensional Man* (Boston, 1964), p. 32.

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verged with the conservative revolution. As I suggested in the previous chapter, the problem with Benjamin's and Horkheimer's analyses was rather that when they were insightful it was for the wrong reasons. Too often they presented the particularities of modern German history as characteristics of modern society in general. Keeping this in mind allows us to save their valuable insights without accepting their generalizations about the state of the modern world. We will now return to the conservative revolution to delineate its major themes and underscore its distinctively German nature.

The combination of received tradition and active refashioning of these traditions produced an ideology that was distinctively German, notwithstanding some commonalities with fascist ideology as it developed elsewhere in Europe. The following were its common themes.

First, the conservative revolutionaries were nationalists who believed that the virtues of the German *Volk* were superior to the destructive influences of Western capitalism and liberalism on the one hand, and Marxist socialism on the other. This gave their writings an overwhelmingly antimodernist thrust. They defended *völkisch Kultur* against cosmopolitan *Zivilisation*. The former was rooted in the people. The latter was soulless, external, artificial. Modernism was difficult to define, but its tangible symbols of *Entseelung* were everywhere. Berlin was a loveless metropolis of left-wing intellectuals, pornography, and mass consumption. Jewish speculators were creating giant corporate bureaucracies and displacing small businesses and German craftsmen and engineers.

The core juxtaposition of their nationalism was that of *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. On one side stood the *Volk* as a community of blood, race, and cultural tradition. On the other side was the menace of *Amerikanismus*, liberalism, commerce, materialism, parliament and political parties, and the Weimar Republic. Nationalism served as a secular religion that promised an alternative to a world suffering from an excess of capitalist and communist rationalization. German nationalists elevated Germany's geographical position between East and West into a cultural-political identity as well. The *Kulturnation* would escape the dilemmas of an increasingly soulless modernity.⁴⁸

Second, the prominent advocates of the new nationalism after the war – Spengler, Moeller van den Bruck, Schmitt, and Ernst and Friedrich Jünger – did not place anti-Semitism at the center of their *Weltanschauung*. Rather, they believed that German superiority lay in historical traditions and ideas rather than in biology. But anti-Semi-

⁴⁸ Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, p. 244–78.

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tism was not absent from the conservative revolution. Some believed that the process of cultural decay and moral disintegration in Weimar was by no means accidental; it was a part of a concerted and planned conspiracy by world Jewry to undermine everything that was healthy in Germany so that the country could never again recover and rise to greatness. Although the Nazis' rhetoric about the "world enemy" found few converts among them, they often associated the Jews with the spirit of commercial abstraction, which they attacked as incompatible with a united nation. As Ernst Jünger put it, the ideal of form and beauty inherent in the *Volk* excluded the Jewish *Gestalt* from Germany as clearly as oil was distinct from water.⁴⁹

Third, they were advocates of *Gemeinschaft* as something inherently good and unified in contrast to a divided and fragmented *Gesellschaft*. Further, the idea of *Gemeinschaft*, and later that of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, had pronounced authoritarian implications. It both proclaimed the existence of social harmony without addressing actual social conflicts and established a moral and ethical basis for individual sacrifice and surrender to existing political powers. Hence the conservative revolutionary notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft* was an attack on both the liberal idea of individual rights and socialist assertions that class divisions and inequalities stood in the path of genuine community.⁵⁰

Fourth, the conservative revolution called for a "primacy of politics," that is, a reassertion of an expansion in foreign policy and repression against the trade unions at home. National idealism was to triumph over the selfish interests of the unions and the materialist philosophy of the left-wing parties. Hans Freyer's "revolution from the Right" combined anticapitalist and nationalist themes. Where the far Left sought to end the domination of the economy over social life through communist revolution, those of the far Right pursued a similar goal through the expansion of the state over society. The primacy of politics blurred the distinction between war and politics, and placed cultural protest in the service of a technologically advanced and powerful

⁴⁹ Ernst Jünger, "Nationalismus und Nationalismus," *Die Kommenden* 4 (1929), pp. 481–2. On anti-Semitism and German nationalism, see George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology* (New York, 1964).

⁵⁰ Sonthheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, pp. 250–1. On the incorporation of the idea of *Gemeinschaft* into the rationalization measures undertaken by the Nazi regime, see Mason, "Zur Entstehung des Gesetzes zur Ordnung der nationalen Arbeit," in *Industrielles System und politische Entwicklung in der Weimarer Republik*, ed. Mommsen, Petzina, and Weisbrod (Düsseldorf, 1974).

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state.⁵¹ The explicit implications of the primacy of politics in the conservative revolution were totalitarian. From now on there were to be no limits to ideological politics. The utilitarian and humanistic considerations of nineteenth-century liberalism were to be abandoned in order to establish a state of constant dynamism and movement.⁵²

Finally, the conservative revolution articulated the idea of a German or national socialism. The idea of a national socialism was ingenious. It reformulated a potentially threatening idea, socialism, to suit indigenous German traditions. Moeller van den Bruck, the single most important figure of the conservative revolution, wrote in his most significant work, *Das Dritte Reich*, that German socialism began where Marxism ended, and that “the task of German socialism in the context of the cultural history of humanity was to dissolve all traces of liberalism [remaining in the idea of socialism].” He also contrasted the “young peoples” of the “East” – Germany and Russia – with those of the capitalist and materialist “West.”⁵³ Some figures in the conservative revolution, such as the “national Bolsheviks” around Ernst Niekisch, interpreted van den Bruck’s alliance of the “young peoples” as a call for a German-Russian alliance rooted in a shared antiliberalism and resentment of the Western democracies.⁵⁴ But Spengler (and later Heidegger) expressed a more common view, namely, that Germany as the nation “in the middle” ought to pursue a “third way” between the capitalist West and communist East. Socialism, Spengler argued, must be made compatible with the antiliberal, authoritarian traditions of German nationalism.⁵⁵

The idea of national socialism was all the more powerful for the generation that lived through the war because it was an idea that many believed had been realized in the trenches. The West German political scientist, Kurt Sontheimer, has pointed out that National

⁵¹ George Mosse, “Fascism and the Intellectuals” and *Masses and Man: Nationalist and Fascist Perceptions of Reality* (New York, 1980), develops the idea of fascism as a cultural revolutionary movement that appealed to intellectuals seeking spiritual values in a materialistic, bourgeois age.

⁵² See Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (Cleveland, 1958).

⁵³ Moeller van den Bruck, *Das Dritte Reich* (Berlin, 1923), p. 68. Also see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, pp. 310–20 for a discussion of this work. Van den Bruck’s comments on the young people were in *Das Recht der jungen Völker* (Munich, 1919).

⁵⁴ See Schüddekopf, *Linke Leute von Rechts: National-bolschewismus in Deutschland* (Frankfurt, 1973); and John Norr, “German Social Theory and the Hidden Face of Technology,” *European Journal of Sociology* XV (1974), pp. 312–36, for comments on Niekisch’s friendship with Jünger.

⁵⁵ Oswald Spengler, *Preussentum und Sozialismus* (Munich, 1920).

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Socialism united the two most powerful ideological impulses of the epoch and “anticipated the synthesis the age had yet to complete.” The socialist parties were not nationalist, and the bourgeois parties were not socialist. “Here, however, appeared to be a party [the Nazis] that represented both things at the same time, the party of the German future.”⁵⁶ To a political generation that believed that national socialism had been realized, however briefly, in the very recent past, the Nazis presented themselves as the party of the German future. They promised to make the national unity of August 1914 a permanent condition.⁵⁷ The war experience of the recent, not the distant, past had become the concrete utopia of the Right, a lost treasure that this reactionary tradition was intent on recapturing.

Not all of the conservative revolutionaries were reactionary modernists. Considerable antagonism to technology persisted in the Weimar Right. For example, Moeller van den Bruck did not exempt technology from his general indictment of Enlightenment rationality. His “third reich” beyond capitalist and communist materialism was to provide the answers to questions such as “what to do with our masses . . . and how to save human nature from the machine.”⁵⁸ Spengler’s *The Decline of the West* had an ambiguous impact. It is a major document of reactionary modernism and also contains enough references to the “devilish” nature of the machine or the “enslavement of man by his creation” to please the antitechnological mood.⁵⁹ Spengler was sufficiently worried that his book might encourage the revolt of youth against technology that he wrote *Man and Technics* to establish his protechnological credentials. Many of the cultural politicians of the engineering profession repeatedly criticized him for fostering hostility, even if unintentionally, to technical advance.⁶⁰

There was no ambiguity whatsoever in the antitechnological views

⁵⁶ Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*, p. 278.

⁵⁷ Here is how Robert Ley, director of the German Labor Front in the Third Reich, described the significance of World War I: “The German revolution began in the August days of 1914 . . . The people were reunited in the trenches in the East and West. The grenades and mines did not ask whether one was high- or low-born, if one was rich or poor, or what religion or social group one belonged to. Rather this was a great, powerful example of the meaning and spirit of community.” *Durchbruch der sozialen Ehre* (Munich, 1935), cited in Timothy Mason, *Sozialpolitik im Dritten Reich*, p. 26.

⁵⁸ Moeller van den Bruck, *Das Recht der Jungen Volker*, p. 115.

⁵⁹ Spengler is still viewed by some as an antitechnological critic. See Gerd Hortleder, *Das Gesellschaftsbild des Ingenieurs: Zum politischen Verhalten der Technischen Intelligenz in Deutschland* (Frankfurt, 1970), p. 86.

⁶⁰ Carl Weihe, the editor of *Technik und Kultur*, a journal for graduates of the technical universities, repeatedly criticized Spengler’s views on technology. See chap. 7.

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of adherents of the conservative revolution such as the philosopher Ludwig Klages, the poet Paul Ernst, and the journalist Ernst Niekisch. Klages's three-volume work, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (The Mind as the Antagonist of the Soul), published from 1929 to 1931, was the most elaborate attack on scientific and technological rationality to emerge from the conservative revolution.⁶¹ Its main theme was this: Human history consists in the growing domination of *Geist* (mind) over soul, of consciousness over dream and fantasy, of concepts and logic over imagery and myth. This all-powerful, disenchanting *Geist* characterizes Christianity, Marxism, liberalism, and modern science and technology. In Klages's view, the abstractions of science and technology are really new myths that seek to foster the illusion that they are synonymous with natural phenomena themselves. He wrote that "the machine . . . can destroy life but never create it," and he believed that conceptual grasp of the physical universe led to a "death of reality."⁶² This juxtaposition of abstraction, rationality, technics, and death with immediacy, intuition, feelings, nature, and life has the kind of consistency one would expect from an irrationalist position. In his *Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus* (The Collapse of German Idealism), Paul Ernst presented a comparable consistency. Criticizing the impact of the division of labor on individuals, he wrote, "Whoever uses machines, receives a machine heart."⁶³

Though they were in a minority, there were right-wing intellectuals who had survived the war and now hated technology. Ernst Niekisch, for example, wrote the following in an essay entitled "Menschenfresser Technik" (Man-eating Technology):

Technology is the rape of nature. It brushes nature aside. It amounts to cunningly tricking nature out of the free disposal of one piece of land after another. When technology triumphs, nature is violated and desolated. Technology murders life by striking down, step by step, the limits established by nature. It devours men and all that is human. It is heated with bodies. Blood is its cooling lubricant. Consequently, war in this technological era is a murderous slaughter . . . The antilife [*lebensfeindlich*], demonic quality of technology manifests itself most horribly in modern war. In war, technology's productive capacity is so up-do-date that on the hour it is able to annihilate everything organic, whatever it may be – suddenly, totally and precisely.⁶⁴

⁶¹ Ludwig Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele* (reprint, Bonn, 1969). On Klages's contributions to the conservative revolution, see Hillach, "Ästhetisierung des politischen Lebens"; Horkheimer, "Zum Rationalismusstreit"; and Lukács, *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, Band III, pp. 195–9.

⁶² Klages, *Der Geist als Widersacher der Seele*, p. 695.

⁶³ Paul Ernst, *Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus* (Munich, 1918), p. 451.

⁶⁴ Ernst Niekisch, "Menschenfresser Technik," *Widerstand* 6 (1931), p. 110. Cited by Karl Prumm, *Die Literatur des soldatischen Nationalismus*, Band 1, p. 376.

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Like the ideas of van den Bruck, Klages, and Ernst, Niekisch's thinking possesses the virtue of internal consistency: If technology "murders life," then the defense of life calls for opposition to technology. In this view, technology belongs in the realm of *Zivilisation* rather than *Kultur*. Despite its logical coherence, however, such a cultural system was hardly suited for German nationalism in an age of technological warfare. The accomplishment of the reactionary modernists within the conservative revolution was to have made a virtue out of the necessity of embracing technics by shifting technology out of the sphere of *Zivilisation* and into that of *Kultur*. By so doing, they could embrace technology without adopting a rationalist world view in politics and culture. The resulting cult of technics went far beyond pragmatic resignation to a necessary evil. It possessed the same emotional fervor present in the antitechnological mood that spread across the Weimar political spectrum.

Among Weimar's cultural currents, reactionary modernism was unique in combining irrationalism with enthusiasm for technology. Expressionists generally attacked technology and bourgeois philistinism from the left. Dramatists such as Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser saw technology as a source of dehumanization. Although they also called for cultural as well as political revolution, the synthesis of unreason and modern technology was beyond them. A non- or less industrialized Germany would have suited them.⁶⁵

The architects, artists, designers, and engineers in the Bauhaus tried to demonstrate that Enlightenment reason was indeed fully compatible with a fruitful interaction of art and technology. Walter Gropius, the leading spirit of the Bauhaus, saw no conflict between cosmopolitanism, social democratic values, and reason, on the one hand, and beauty on the other. Given a sufficient measure of reason and passion, Gropius saw no reason why technology should pose a threat to mankind. The Bauhaus embraced technology as part of modernity in a broader sense.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ Helmut Lethens, *Neue Sachlichkeit: Studien zur Literatur des Weissen Sozialismus* (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 64. This book contains much useful material on the German response to Americanism and technology. Lethens's thesis is that *Neue Sachlichkeit* was the dominant current of Weimar culture and that this fetishization of industrial rationalization culminated in nazism. Drawing on the Frankfurt theorists, he stresses the continuity of a technocratic liberalism and fascism. But his own evidence suggests that the Nazis' primacy of politics was hardly so exclusively technocratic. Lethens's book suffers from a common trait of West German Marxist analyses of "fascism": It subsumes German traditions under the more general (and less painful?) rubric of capitalism.

⁶⁶ Gay, *Weimar Culture*, pp. 98–101.

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Other forms of accepting technology in Weimar lacked the Bauhaus's sense of proportion. *Neue Sachlichkeit* or the New Objectivity signaled a more sober, disillusioned, resigned, and cynical mood in literature and reportage during the stabilization phase of the Republic. Writers on the Left, such as Erich Kastner and Alexander Doblin, distanced themselves from expressionist hostility to technology.⁶⁷ It was also in this period that technocratic visions found support among liberals eager to use technological advances to increase productivity and attenuate social conflicts. As Charles Maier has pointed out, the German response to Fordism bore similarities to strategies of bourgeois defense in France and Italy.⁶⁸ Indeed, in Germany, Henry Ford was not only the apostle of assembly-line techniques and scientific management but also of what Gottfried Feder called "creative" or productive capital as opposed to Jewish finance.

Those unhappy with productivist visions of the future could hardly look to the Communist Party for an alternative view. The German Communist Party exuded Leninist enthusiasm for capitalist technology. "Forward through the trusts and beyond to socialism" was the view of one leading theorist, who also went so far as to call Henry Ford a revolutionary "no less revolutionary than capitalism itself."⁶⁹ The Communists and Social Democrats distanced themselves from the antiindustrialism of the cultural radicals in favor of Marx's teleology of the progressive unfolding of the productive forces that would eliminate feudal residues, enlarge the proletariat, and lead to socialism or communism. Some suggested that the left-wing parties had succumbed to capitalist ideology. Bela Belasz denounced *Neue Sachlichkeit* as the "*Lebensgefühl* (life feeling) of trust capital, . . . the aesthetics of the assembly line," whereas Ernst Bloch called it "the doctor at capitalism's deathbed" whose "hatred of utopia" (*Utopiefeindschaft*) served the rehabilitation of capital after the postwar years of revolution and counterrevolution. Bloch argued that German Marxism was so committed to capitalist development that it left the field of cultural revolution and appeals to myth and emotion to the Right.⁷⁰ For example, although the left-wing cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer described the American chorus line as a welcome sign of the disen-

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 120–2; Craig, *Germany*, pp. 484–5.

⁶⁸ Charles S. Maier, "Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Productivity in the 1920s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 5 (1970), pp. 27–51.

⁶⁹ Jakob Walcher, *Ford oder Marx*, p. 51, cited in Lethens, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, p. 82.

⁷⁰ Bela Belasz, "Sachlichkeit und Sozialismus," in *Die Weltbühne* 14 (1928), p. 917, cited in Lethens, *Neue Sachlichkeit*, p. 32.

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chantment of society that could only help to dissolve German *völkisch* mysticism, the right-wing intellectuals from *Die Tat* were disgusted and horrified by it. In their view, *Amerikanismus* – mass production and consumption, Taylorism, rationalization of industry – was a plague threatening the German soul. Those conservatives such as the industrial psychologist Fritz Giese, who praised the chorus line as the disciplining of previously wild and chaotic instincts, were in a minority.⁷¹ *Die Tat's* synthesis of nationalism, anti-Americanism, and middle-class anticapitalist rhetoric was a more widespread cultural complex.

In short, with the exception of the reactionary modernists, those who rejected the Enlightenment and its legacy rejected technology, whereas those who defended the Enlightenment accepted the need for technical development. In the following chapters I will discuss in greater detail the contributions of the following five thinkers: Hans Freyer, Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Werner Sombart, and Oswald Spengler. I will also discuss Martin Heidegger's works on technology, which share in some but by no means all of the reconciliations of technics and unreason favored by these other authors.

Ernst Jünger (b. 1895) was the most important and prolific contributor to reactionary modernism in the conservative revolution. A much-decorated soldier, during the Weimar years Jünger produced about ten books and over a hundred essays on war, death, heroism, nationalism, sacrifice, and technology. Among these were two commercial successes, *In Stahlgewittern* (The Storm of Steel, 1920) and *Der Arbeiter* (The Worker, 1932).⁷² The titles of two works he published between these, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (The Battle as an Inner Experience, 1922) and *Feuer und Blut* (Fire and Blood, 1925), suggest the vitalist fascination for war and technics that makes him so im-

⁷¹ See Fritz Giese, *Girlikultur: Vergleiche zwischen amerikanische und europäischen Rhythmus und Lebensgefühl* (Munich, 1925).

⁷² Ernst Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* (Berlin, 1920; reprint, Stuttgart, 1960); and *Der Arbeiter* (Hamburg, 1932; reprint, Stuttgart, 1960). The two West German studies that discuss Jünger's modernism are Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens*, and Prumm, *Die Literatur des soldatischen Nationalismus*. Other useful secondary works on Jünger are Klaus-Frieder Bastian, *Das Politische bei Ernst Jünger: Nonkonformismus und Kompromiss der Innerlichkeit* (Freiburg, 1962); Christian Graf von Krockow, *Die Entscheidung: Eine Untersuchung über Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger* (Stuttgart, 1958); Gerhard Loose, *Ernst Jünger: Gestalt und Werk*; Hans-Peter Schwarz, *Die konservative Anarchist*; J. P. Stern, *Ernst Jünger: A Writer of Our Time* (Cambridge, 1953); and Struve, *Elites Against Democracy*. *In Stahlgewittern* was one of the most popular books of its time; *Der Arbeiter* was a best seller in 1932. See *Elites Against Democracy*, p. 377, on Jünger's literary success.

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portant for this study. He published his political essays in *Arminius*, *Die Standarte*, and *Vormarsch*. Although he never joined the Nazi party and retreated from politics after 1933, his work before then helped create a climate favorable to National Socialism.⁷³

Like Jünger, Oswald Spengler (1880–1936) was rooted in right-wing political clubs and journals, not the university. Although usually thought of as Weimar's leading advocate of cultural pessimism, Spengler shared in the reactionary modernist synthesis. Whereas some observers, at the time and since, have interpreted *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The Decline of the West, 1918–1922) and *Der Mensch und die Technik* (Man and Technics, 1931) as antitechnological tracts, I will discuss them as documents that associated technology with beauty, will, and productivity, thereby placing it in the realm of German *Kultur* rather than Western *Zivilisation*.⁷⁴

There are many who consider Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) the most important German philosopher of the twentieth century, whereas others think he did almost irreparable damage to the German language in the service of philosophical obscurantism. In either case his was a major voice raised against the dangers of technology. Less well known is his friendship with Ernst Jünger and the similarities between their views on technology.⁷⁵ I will consider Heidegger's essays on technology and politics taken from the 1930s. Although his enthusiasm for technical advance did not match that of the other members of the conservative revolution under consideration, neither was he an ardent Luddite. His hope that Germany would be the country to achieve a fusion of technology and soul places his work at this time firmly within the reactionary modernist current of German nationalism. Heidegger made a tenuous peace with both nazism and tech-

⁷³ Ernst Jünger, *Der Kampf als inneres Erlebnis* (Berlin, 1922); and *Feuer und Blut* (Magdeburg, 1926; reprint, Stuttgart, 1960). On the parallels between Jünger's view of technology and Hitler's vision of totalitarian movement, see Wolfgang Sauer, *Die Nationalsozialistische Machtergreifung: Die Mobilmachung der Gewalt* (Frankfurt, 1974), pp. 165–74. Sauer focuses on Jünger's desire to "set aside the barrier between war and revolution and to fuse both into a single all-encompassing process of embattled dynamism." On Jünger's relationship to nazism, see Prumm, *Die Literatur*, Band 2, pp. 385–400.

⁷⁴ On Spengler's role in the conservative revolution see Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism*; Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution*; and Struve, *Elites Against Democracy*. For a view of Spengler as an antagonist of technology, see Hortleder, *Das Gesellschaftsbild des Ingenieurs*.

⁷⁵ On the similarities in Jünger's and Heidegger's views, see Norr, "German Social Theory and the Hidden Face of Technology."

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nology, whatever his postwar retrospectives on technological dehumanization may have been.⁷⁶

Hans Freyer (1887–1969) exerted a powerful influence on German sociology and philosophy from the 1920s through the 1960s. His most important popular contribution to the conservative revolution was *Revolution von Rechts* (Revolution from the Right, 1931), in which he praised the virtues of the *Volk* and attacked industrial society. However, in this work, in several philosophical essays of this period, and in his *Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft* (Sociology as a Science of Reality, 1931), a continuous theme in Freyer's work was the reification, its separation from social relationships, not the rejection, of technology.⁷⁷

Carl Schmitt (b. 1888) was the most widely read and respected political scientist of his day, a position due to his literary talent and to his praise of power and conflict as values in themselves. In 1932, as Germany moved into the protracted constitutional crisis that resulted in Hitler's accession, Schmitt argued in his book-length essay, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (The Concept of the Political), that the actual situation creates its own legality, that emergencies obviate normative law, and that he is sovereign who makes the decision regulating the emergency situation. In the spring of 1933, he joined the Nazi party in the belief that Hitler and National Socialism were the realization of this theory of decisionism, according to which political action was a value in itself regardless of the normative justifications attached to it.⁷⁸ His contributions to reactionary modernism may be found in two

⁷⁶ Ibid. Also see Winifred Franzen, *Von der Existenzialontologie zur Seinsgeschichte: Eine Untersuchung über die Entwicklung der Philosophie Martin Heideggers* (Meisenheim am Glan, 1975); and George Steiner, *Martin Heidegger* (London, 1978).

⁷⁷ Hans Freyer, *Revolution von Rechts* (Jena, 1931); and "Zur Philosophie der Technik," *Blätter für deutsche Philosophie* 3 (1927–8), pp. 192–201. On Freyer in the conservative revolution see René König, "Zur Soziologie der Zwanziger Jahre," in *Die Zeit ohne Eigenschaften: Eine Bilanz der Zwanziger Jahre*, ed. L. Rheinisch (Stuttgart, 1961), pp. 82–118; and George Mosse, "The Corporate State and the Conservative Revolution." On Freyer's contributions to Weimar sociology, see Herbert Marcuse, "Zur Auseinandersetzung mit Hans Freyers Soziologie als Wirklichkeitswissenschaft," in *Herbert Marcuse: Schriften I*, (Frankfurt, 1978) pp. 488–508. On Freyer's importance for discussions of technology in postwar West Germany, see Otto Ulrich, *Technik und Herrschaft* (Frankfurt, 1977).

⁷⁸ On Schmitt and National Socialism, see Joseph Bendersky, "The Expendable Kronjurist: Carl Schmitt and National Socialism, 1933–1936," *Journal of Contemporary History* 14 (1979), pp. 309–28; Neumann, *Behemoth*; and Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken*. On Schmitt's political theory, see Christian Graf von Krockow, *Die Entscheidung: Eine Untersuchung über Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Martin Heidegger, Herbert Marcuse, "The Struggle Against Liberalism in the Totalitarian View of the State,"* in *Negations*, trans. Jeremy Shapiro (Boston, 1968), pp. 3–42; Franz Neumann, "The Change in

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works: *Der Begriff des Politischen* (The Concept of the Political, 1932), and *Politische Romantik* (Political Romanticism, 1919).⁷⁹ A student of Max Weber, Schmitt believed that the authoritarian state, when combined with advanced technology could restore political dynamism in a bureaucratized society. Along with Ernst Jünger, he argued that political romanticism demanded a break from what he viewed as the passivity and escapism of nineteenth-century German romanticism.⁸⁰

Werner Sombart (1865–1941) was the most important representative of German sociology to influence the conservative revolution as well as the reactionary modernist tradition. Along with Max Weber, he edited one of the major journals of German social science, *Die Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik*.⁸¹ During the Weimar years he extended his influence into the conservative revolution through popularization of his scholarly work in *Die Tat*.⁸² Although Sombart was an enthusiastic supporter of the German war effort (see his *Händler und Helden*, Traders and Heroes, 1915), World War I was not the formative influence on his thinking. His main contribution to reactionary modernism preceded the war. *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (The Jews and Economic Life, 1911) was an interpretation of the origins of capitalism in Europe that translated social-historical categories into religious and psychological archetypes.⁸³ Sombart identified the Jews with market rationality and commercial greed and the Germans with productive labor and technology. The result was to shift cultural protest against capitalism and the market away from antitechnological resentments and onto liberalism, Marxism, and the Jews. His *Deutscher Sozialismus* (German Socialism, 1934) was an explosive mixture of sympathy for National Socialism, enthusiasm for

the Function of Natural Law," pp. 22–68, and "Notes on the Theory of Dictatorship," pp. 233–56, in *The Democratic and Authoritarian State* (New York, 1966).

⁷⁹ Carl Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Munich, 1932); *Politische Romantik* (Munich-Leipzig, 1919). See also Schmitt's *Der Hüter der Verfassung* (Tübingen, 1931); and *Die Geistesgeschichtliche Lage des heutigen Parlamentarismus*, 2d ed. (Munich-Leipzig, 1926); *Die Diktatur* (Munich, 1921); *Politische Theologie* (Munich, 1922).

⁸⁰ See Schmitt's *Politische Romantik*.

⁸¹ On Sombart's importance for the Weimar Right, see Lebovics, *Social Conservatism*, pp. 49–78.

⁸² Ferdinand Fried, an editor of *Die Tat*, was the most active popularizer of Sombart's ideas. See his *Das Ende des Kapitalismus* (Jena, 1931); Hock, *Deutscher Antikapitalismus*; and Klaus Fritzsche, *Politische Romantik und Gegenrevolution. Fluchtwege in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft: Das Beispiel des "Tat"-Kreises* (Frankfurt, 1976). On Sombart's influence in German social science, see Arthur Mitzman, *Sociology and Estrangement* (New York, 1973), pp. 135–264.

⁸³ Werner Sombart, *Die Juden und das Wirtschaftsleben* (Leipzig, 1911).

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“German technology,” and disgust with the supposedly bygone liberal-materialist-Jewish era.⁸⁴

In this chapter, I have situated the conservative revolution in Weimar’s social, cultural, and political climate to underscore the paradox of the embrace of technology by nontechnical intellectuals who were the inheritors of irrationalist and romantic traditions. Like their contemporaries in the political Center and Left, the reactionary modernists were romantic anticapitalists in juxtaposing *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*. Unlike these other critics of positivism, however, the political romantics of the Right separated the idea of *Kultur* from the humanistic dimensions of the, albeit comparatively weak, German Enlightenment. Instead they equated *Kultur* with suprahistorical first principles – life, blood, race, struggle, will, sacrifice – which required no rational justification. The reactionary modernists were no less hostile to reason than their comrades who detested the machine as a threat to the German soul. Their accomplishment was to articulate a set of cultural symbols for the nontechnical intellectuals in which technology became an expression of that soul, and thus of German *Kultur*. It is no wonder that their reconciliation of technics and unreason strikes us as paradoxical. For if they broke with the hostility to technology that had characterized aspects of German nationalism for a century, they continued its century-old revolt against Enlightenment rationality. Here lay the great appeal of this illiberal and selective view of German modernization.

Two final issues deserve comment: the relation of the reactionary modernists to Hitler and to the irrationalist enthusiasm for technology among fascist intellectuals in Italy, France, and England. Because they either never joined the Nazi party (Jünger, Freyer, Sombart, Spengler) or joined for only a short time (Heidegger, Schmitt), some interpreters have stressed the gap between their views and those of National Socialism. But the commonalities outweighed the differences. Whether they liked it or not, Hitler tried to carry out the cultural revolution they sought. It may seem odd to describe Hitler as a cultural revolutionary but both his roots and his intentions point in this direction. He shared with the reactionary modernists an ideology of the will drawn from Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, a view of politics as an aesthetic accomplishment, a Social Darwinist view of politics as struggle, irrationalism, and anti-Semitism, and a sense that Germany was

⁸⁴ Werner Sombart, *Deutscher Sozialismus* (Berlin, 1934). On Sombart and National Socialism, see Werner Krause, *Werner Sombarts Weg vom Kathedersozialismus zum Faschismus* (East Berlin, 1962).

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sinking into a state of hopeless degeneration. The promise of Hitler's totalitarian politics was to reverse this process by attacking the main source of the disease, the Jews. His genius lay partly in convincing his followers that he was going to carry out a cultural revolution and break the drive toward the disenchantment of the world brought about by liberalism and Marxism without pulling Germany back into preindustrial impotence. Like the reactionary modernists, he was contemptuous of *völkisch* pastoralism, advocating instead what Goebbels called "steellike romanticism." But unlike them, Hitler was an actor committed to pursuing the implications of ideas to their logical or illogical conclusions – war and mass murder. Against Hitler, the advocates of the *Blutgemeinschaft* were without alternative ideals. Though not a prolific writer on the subject, Hitler was the most important practitioner of the reactionary modernist tradition, the one who built the highways and then started the war that was to unify technology and the German soul.⁸⁵

Finally, what distinguished the German reconciliations of technics and unreason from those common among fascist intellectuals in post-war Europe? In Italy, France, and England, the avant-garde associated technology with a new antibourgeois vitalism, masculine violence and eros, and the will to power; a new aesthetics, and creativity rather than commercial parasitism; and a full life lived to the emotional limit that contrasted with bourgeois decadence and boredom. Marinetti and the futurists in Italy, Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound in England, Sorel, Drieu la Rochelle, and Maurras in France were all drawn to right-wing politics partly out of their views on technology.

To be sure, there were similarities between the modernist vanguard in Germany, especially Jünger, and right-wing modernism in Europe generally.⁸⁶ Some observers have interpreted these parallels as lending support to Adorno and Horkheimer's thesis of the dialectic of enlightenment according to which enlightenment rationality contains within itself a return to myth regardless of national histories and traditions. In my view, however, the urge to compare has obscured German uniqueness. Nowhere else in Europe did technological mod-

⁸⁵ This view of Hitler draws on Bracher, "The Role of Hitler"; Fest, *Hitler*; Jäckel, *Hitler's World View: A Blueprint for Power*, trans. H. Arnold (Middletown, Conn., 1972); Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology*; and J. P. Stern, *Hitler*.

⁸⁶ On the parallels between Jünger and the avant-garde generally see Bohrer, *Die Ästhetik des Schreckens*, pp. 13–159. Also see Miriam Hansen, *Ezra Pounds frühe Poetik und Kulturkritik zwischen Aufklärung und Avantgarde* (Stuttgart, 1979); and Frederic Jameson, *Fables of Aggression*, Wyndham Lewis: *The Fascist as Modernist* (Berkeley, 1979); Helmut Kreuzer, *Die Boheme: Analyse und Dokumentation der intellektuellen Subkultur vom 19. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Stuttgart, 1971).

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ernity and romantic protest clash with such force as in Germany. Nowhere else had industrialization developed so quickly in the absence of a successful bourgeois revolution. And nowhere else was protest against the Enlightenment a constitutive element in the formation of national identity as it had been in Germany from the early nineteenth century up through Weimar. Although Italian, French, and British intellectuals presented similar themes, none of these societies witnessed anything comparable to the *Streit um die Technik* that filled the political clubs of the literati and the lecture halls of the technical universities in Weimar. Nor did they produce a cultural tradition spanning three-quarters of a century.

The reason for the depth and pervasiveness of the reactionary modernist tradition in Germany had less to do with capitalism or modernity in general than with the form they took in Germany. The conservative revolution must be understood in light of the German problem in general, that is, the weakness of democracy and the liberal principle in a society that became highly industrialized very quickly. Neither anti-Western resentments nor technological proficiency were monopolies of the Germans. But nowhere else did the two coexist in such thorough forms. This is why reactionary modernism became part of German nationalism while elsewhere in Europe it remained one of the fads and fashions of the avant-garde. It was the weakness of the Enlightenment in Germany, not its strength, that encouraged the confusions concerning technology I have called reactionary modernism. And it was also Germany's unique (at that time) path to modernity that made possible the ultimate political impact of reactionary modernist ideology. Having presented the background, it is now time to turn to the evidence, beginning with an ambivalent but central figure of the reactionary modernist tradition, Oswald Spengler.