

A few industrialists and landowners pleaded for aristocracy. Robert Owen and Lord Shaftesbury, for example, were both persons with the aristocratic idea endeavouring to create an aristocracy in the new economic conditions of expanding wealth. Their failure; due to no faults of their own, was accompanied by the rapid development of the labour union, itself an aristocratic fellowship for protecting its members, and an industrial counterpart of the earlier craft guild. In addition, the oppressed found their prophet, the counter-blast to Adam Smith and even more to his successors. Karl Marx led the revolt against the new Plutocracy.

On the outbreak of the European War the labour unions had come so near to the possession of a monopoly of the labour power that Plutocracy had to buy, that it seemed as if some new politico-economic form was imminent. In the demonstrations of power given by the railway, mines, and transport unions, all classes recognized both a menace and a possible aristocratically responsible partner in industry, either with the industrialists or with the State. That was—whether rightly or not need not be argued—hailed as the imminent triumph of democracy.

The War, however, and its aftermath, led to an entirely new state of affairs, and in addition, made evident defects in our economic system which only a few voices crying in the wilderness had so much as hinted at before. As long ago as Proudhon, indeed, before Napoleon, and later, Gesell, Kitson, and Fürsheim, had laid the blame for part, in some instances a large part, of the friction in the new machinery for producing wealth on the money and banking systems. During the European War the pre-existing money system was suspended, and replaced by one which at least made it possible to carry on war. It involved, however, the creation of enormous sums of debt, chiefly national and international. Power no longer resided with the organizers of industry, as in the nineteenth century, but with the Creditor of the State; for whom tremendous attempts were made in the years following the War to restore the pre-War financial system.

There need be no doubt that a still newer Plutocracy

has arisen in the form of the community's chief creditors, namely, the bankers. In the trade depression due to the cessation of the demand for goods for war without the creation of a corresponding demand for goods for peace, much of the industrial property of every developed nation has been mortgaged to the banking system with scarcely a hope of redemption.

As long as that condition of affairs continues, democracy can express only revolt. Whether it is the trade unions, the merchants of Lancashire, or the Chambers of Commerce who condemn the banks and demand a new system, their action is a democratic revolt against the concentration of privilege in a place which does not exercise corresponding responsibility.

It will be necessary to show the form which Political Government and the Economic and Financial Systems must take in the future. One thing can be affirmed at once. The enormous expansion, at an even greater rate than ever before, of the ability of industry to produce, makes definitely possible an entirely new system, which will give security and the opportunity of leisure to all.

In the States which have deliberately abolished democracy as no longer worth while or possible, no attempt is being made to distribute to all the fruits of the Age of Possible Abundance. It seems, instead, as if they are fixing the old money system on their realms, and sealing the existing balances of power held respectively by finance and industry. Nothing is more certain in this world than that the Corporate State, no matter what claims it makes to aristocratic nature, will, unless it is as aristocratic as the modern industrial system would enable it to be, provoke a democratic revolt, and new experiments.

On the contrary, in the State which realizes and distributes its total possible production for the maximum well-being of its people, it is likely that something called Economic Democracy, and ensuring for every citizen the privileges previously reserved for the aristocracy, namely, opportunity for self-realization and culture, will achieve the final form of the national society; democratic and aristocratic at one and the same time.

Othmar Spann, the Philosopher of Fascism

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THE essence of a social movement lies in its philosophy. And the key to a romantic philosophy is the personality of the philosopher. Hence the importance of Professor Othmar Spann, his life and works, for the student of Fascism.

Philosopher and Politician

A forerunner of social upheaval, a dreamer and philosopher, prophet and politician, such is the figure of Othmar Spann. His theses on the superiority of the mediæval State-structure over modern democracy were published as far back as 1910. Some twelve years later in Italy, and another twelve years later in Germany and in Austria, corporative forms of State were established. At least in Austria, the part played by Spann had been more than merely academic. His was the intellect behind the Heimwehr movement. The "Charter of Kornburg", in which it first declared for a Fascist programme, had been supplied to the Heimwehr leader, Dr. Steidle, by Professor Spann. (Incidentally, Dr.

Steidle made use of it to prevent Starhemberg from taking the lead at the time.) But Spann was just as ready to advise constitutional factors as revolutionary movements, if they were but prepared to work towards his ideal society. When, in 1929, the Austrian Federal Chancellor, Dr. Schober, tried to counter the Heimwehr drive by a Conservative reform of the constitution, Spann presented to him at once the draft of a document which he thought suitable. Yet the part he played as a teacher was infinitely more important than his rôle as an adviser of politicians. Amidst the heated turmoil of post-War revolutionary Vienna he delivered a series of university lectures on "The True Concept of the State", which not even the fiercest opponent of his political system can fail to recognize as prophetic.

Romantic Prophecy—Romantic Irony

Spann declared Liberalism and Socialism to be things of the past at a time when they seemed to many to be the unchallenged rulers of the present. And although

judged by almost any standard Marx was the far greater man, sociologist and thinker yet, in a paradoxical manner, Spann appeared, in the short run, as the more successful prophet. And yet Spann was very much more than Marx absorbed by the speculative vision of far-off times than by the interest in the immediate future. In spite of his dealing with Steidle and Schöber (and, as rumour has it, also with Hitler) there is in his published works on politics and State-craft hardly as much as a reference to the Italian and German Fascist revolution. Indeed, the only mention of the historical happenings, which were actually bearing out in some manner the substance of his philosophical system, we find in a footnote in the third edition of *The True Concept of the State* in which the author refers, rather diffidently, to the setting up of the Corporate State in Italy as an instance of tendencies running parallel to his reasoning. This mixture of tentative realism and utter unreality is characteristic of the man. Marx has given us nowhere a description of the institutions of Socialist society, yet he was untiring in pointing out the methods by which the downfall of Capitalism was to be brought about. Spann, on the contrary, filled volumes and volumes with the details of the structure and working of the Corporate Society, but there is hardly any mention of the means by which the change-over is to come. Ever since Plato, the vagrant philosopher offering drafts of the Perfect Constitution to the tyrants of the day impressed the world as an emphatically romantic figure. It is the irony of history that Spann himself has till now more or less disowned his offspring with vehemence, if not with bitterness. He disagrees with Mussolini's interpretation of the Corporative Idea as much as with Hitler's racial fanaticism. However much some may regard the counter-revolutions in Central and Southern Europe as a factual support of his reactionary ideologies, he himself is known to complain that history has not followed his precepts aught. Neither Hitler nor Mussolini, he suggests, have quite understood his system.

A slight touch of pedantry is often an ingredient of romantic irony.

Causation the Culprit

Othmar Spann's is, indeed, a romantic mind in the full sense of the term. Life ranks for him higher than thought, and thought higher than truth. No irrationalist has ever attempted to carry his attack against science more ruthlessly than he. The very idea of natural law and physical necessity seems to him not only false and mistaken, but evil. In his view, there is no such thing as causation. Ever since man conceived this idea, he has no longer understood the world, and, therefore, made a mess of it. For causationalism in science is the source of individualism in social life. This is axiomatic with Spann. And Individualism is the root of all our troubles. "Individualism leads to Liberalism; Liberalism leads to Capitalism; Capitalism leads to Marxism; Marxism leads to Bolshevism". At any price, therefore, Causationalism must go. If the price be that science and scientific thinking must be sacrificed, let them be sacrificed. Othmar Spann is not a mere political reactionary. Not a mere counter-revolutionary, asking for the re-establishment of pre-democratic rule. What he wants is the obliteration of five hundred years of creative effort in thought and experience. He calls for a Counter-Renaissance.

But how can the idea of rationality be eliminated from thinking? And how can the individual and his claims be made to disappear from the sphere of social existence? How, in a word, can thinking be made to

return upon itself, and the individual be enabled to shift his responsibility back on to the universe?

Totality the Master-key

Spann feels, rightly, that once he could get rid of the concept of Causation, the rest would follow almost by itself. For this, however, a new concept is needed, which would enable the philosopher to rearrange the picture of the world at liberty without any fear of the carping criticism of science; which would allow him to set up ideals without asking whether they were true or not; or, as philosophers would say, in the dry but expressive terms of their language: a concept, which would fuse *value* and *validity* into unity. Precisely such is the logical quality of Spann's philosophical master-key of *Totality*. Both in the realm of idea and of fact, Totality is the one and only source and reason of phenomena. Single things are but articulations of Totality. Events in time and space are but junctures in timeless and spaceless Totality. For Totality is prior to its parts. Whether plant or geometrical figure, whether Empire or syllogism, in the strained terms of Spann's philosophy its parts or members are but "joints" in the "articulated ordination" of the One Whole.

Clearly this takes us right outside the realm of Science, and right into the field of Metaphysics. As long as we deal with life and the organic sphere, we can expect the method to work all right, for Totality is obviously but another name for the Organism as a whole. But the absurdity of it all must become at once apparent when we pass on to Physics or Chemistry, the technical Sciences and their technological application, where causational categories cannot be ousted by any amount of speculative sophistry. This has nothing to do with the theory of Probability replacing Causationalism in some branches of Physics. For let there be no mistake what Causation stands for in Spann's terminology. Spann disallows the validity of any sort of rational cause for natural phenomena. Whether the cause be physical or psychological, whether it be an effective cause or merely a functional factor, whether it be an individual phenomenon or a statistical average, Spann denies in every case that the process can be regarded as anything but the fulfilment or realization of the Totality.

Metaphysics—with a Vengeance

It is true that a functional and corporative organization of Society is more adequate to its essential nature than the individualistic atomism of *laissez-faire* Capitalism. It is very true, also, that the normal and enduring structure of Society is always, in a manner, co-operative or corporate, not chaotic, competitive and centrifugal. But Spann's concept of Totality goes far beyond this reasonable and scientific definition of the organic character of Society. His romantic predilections turn him towards the Middle Ages. Spann is a declared enemy of equality. Or, as he rather humorously puts it, he decries the Equality of Unequals. Equality of Equals is the only definition of Equality compatible with Totality. Concerning the idea of Freedom the outcome of his method is even more startling. For Society as a Totality can conceive of Freedom only as the action of the individual according to the rules prescribed for his own good. Even Spann must utter a warning against too much of this sort of Freedom in Society. For, as he sardonically comments, it would mean regulating everybody about everything, and turning the fabric of Society into a maze of statutes, decrees, and by-laws. In the romantic conception of Society, Inequality becomes an Idol and the very term Freedom is made to jeer at itself.