Liberalism in Dialogue: Carl Schmitt's Critique and Masao Maruyama's Defense

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Abstract: Carl Schmitt criticized liberalism by asserting that it negates politics and leads to a crisis of parliamentary democracy. Through his theories on the concept of the political and sovereign decision-making, Schmitt provided a deep analysis of these issues. Masao Maruyama not only highly valued Schmitt's work but also theoretically borrowed from his ideas. However, Maruyama placed individual subjectivity at the core of his analysis, using Japan's traditional culture and unique historical and social context as his focus. In doing so, Masao Maruyama both supplemented and, in some aspects, refuted Schmitt's critique of liberalism. For Schmitt, the survival and integrity of the political entity are paramount, necessitating a clear distinction between friends and enemies. His critique of liberalism centers not only on its moral neutrality but also on its perceived incapacity to make sovereign decisions that guarantee the preservation of the political entity. In contrast, Maruyama contended that Japanese imperialism elevated the state as "the embodiment of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful," thereby positioning it as a value-laden entity, creating a metaphysical order seemingly justified by the imperative of national survival. Although this might initially appear to align with Schmitt's notion of the state's primacy, Maruyama ultimately critiques this belief as an ideological facade, which devolved into a mere instrument of totalitarian rule.

Keywords: Liberalism, Carl Schmitt, Masao Maruyama.

1. Introduction

Carl Schmitt is renowned for his profound critique of liberal parliamentary democracy. He introduced the theory of decisionism and articulated the concept of the political, famously stating that "the specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy."[1] Schmitt analyzed the contradiction between parliamentary systems and mass democracy, discussing the jurisprudential and political challenges inherent in parliamentary democracy. His ideas have had a far-reaching impact on political scholars worldwide, including one of post-war Japan's most influential political thinkers, Masao Maruyama. Maruyama himself acknowledged being drawn to Schmitt's works and lectures on Schmitt's theories during his university years.[2] Not only did Maruyama extensively study and highly praise Schmitt's works, but he also endorsed Schmitt's critique of liberal parliamentary system. The influence of Schmitt's ideas is evident in many of Maruyama's writings. In Maruyama's seminal work, *The Logic and Psychology of Ultra-Nationalism*, Schmitt's examination of the formation of modern European State,

characteristic of which lies in its neutrality, almost forms the foundation and starting point of Maruyama's argument.[3] Maruyama, drawing on Carl Schmitt's theories, explores the transformation in early modern European political thought from a logic rooted in natural order, which justified resistance to tyranny, to a logic of invention, where the monarch becomes the creator of normative order, mirroring the divine. This transition parallels shifts in Japanese political thought from the medieval period (近世, *kinsei*) to early modern times, where authority moved from a natural, inherent legitimacy to one constructed and imposed. Schmitt's idea that all the all the important modern state concepts are secularized theological concepts plays a key role in Maruyama's analysis.[4] However, Maruyama's attitude toward liberalism diverged significantly from Schmitt's. Schmitt is typically portrayed in the history of political thought as an "anti-liberal," while Maruyama, who had embraced a liberal political stance since his student days, remained committed to it and was sympathetic to left-wing ideologies.[2] This paper will introduce and examine the respective discourses of Carl Schmitt and Masao Maruyama on liberalism, analyzing how Maruyama, while theoretically recognizing and adopting Schmitt's critique, simultaneously maintained his commitment to liberalism.

2.   Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism

Schmitt's critique of liberalism is multifaceted, addressing both the philosophical foundations of liberal thought and its practical implications for political institutions. He argued that liberalism, by attempting to eliminate or depoliticize conflicts, fails to acknowledge the inescapable nature of the political, which is rooted in friend-enemy distinction. Furthermore, Schmitt contended that the contradiction between liberalism and the homogeneity demanded by democracy cannot be overcome, and the principle of discussion and openness in parliament, a key institution of liberalism, had been compromised by the rise of mass democracy and political parties. Once the political forces of various interests cannot reach a balance or compromise, parliamentary system will inevitably fall into crisis.[5]

According to Schmitt, liberalism evades the true nature of the political by oscillating between ethics and economics.[1] Based on a fundamentally optimistic view of human nature, liberalism reduces the political to either ethical issues or economic issues, where it is limited to critiquing state authoritarianism, restricting government power, and protecting individual rights.[1] In liberalism's depoliticization and pluralism discourse, independence of the political is undermined and the concept of enemy are eroded, leading to threats in the seriousness of human life and international relations. First, economics is placed in opposition to politics, perceived as essentially peaceful, and combined with freedom, technology, reason and parliamentarianism as the embodiment of progress, justice, and peace.[1] The political and the state no longer exist, leaving only politics-free weltanschauung, culture, civilization, economics, morality, law, art, or even meaningless entertainment (Unterhaltung) or play (Spiel).[1] Second, "war" becomes a "crime," and the "enemy" becomes a "criminal." The definitions of "war" and "peace" in international law lose their validity, causing "peace" to lose its meaning and leading to the prospect of perpetual war.[6]

2.1. Liberalism's Negation of Politics and Its Negative Consequences

Through his elaboration on the concept of the political (centered on the friend-enemy distinction) and sovereign decision-making, Schmitt critiques how liberalism negates politics while failing to eliminate it, thereby distorting and obscuring the true nature of the political.

The concept of the state is predicated on the concept of politics, which means that one cannot understand the latter by starting with the former.[1] Schmitt argues that the only distinction capable of defining "the political" and what it consists is the distinction between friend and enemy. This distinction represents the most intense form of association or dissociation and is independent of moral,

aesthetic or economic distinctions. A political enemy is not necessarily immoral, unattractive, or an economic rival.[1] The forces that unite or divide people may originate from religion, ethnicity, economics, etc., but once they escalate to the level of a friend-enemy distinction, these non-political conflicts become political. This transformation subjects purely religious, economic, or cultural motives to the irrational conditions and outcomes of the current political situation.[1] Moreover, the concepts of friend and enemy must be understood in their concrete and existential sense—it is the possibility of physical killing that lends these concepts their real meaning.[1] Acts of war and killing can only be justified in existential sense; that is, the elimination of another's life can only be justified when one's own way of life is threatened. These acts have no normative meaning.[1]

Schmitt's definition of sovereignty is closely tied to the distinction between friend and enemy, with the "state of exception" serving as the key to defining sovereignty.[7] "Sovereign is he who decides on the exception,"[7] and this decision fundamentally concerns who poses a threat to the political entity. The state, as the highest political entity, makes the decision about who is the enemy, prevents internal conflicts from escalating into extreme enmity, and externally demands that citizens be prepared to kill and die without hesitation, thus ensuring total peace within its borders, which is a prerequisite for the enforcement of legal norms.[1] There must be a normal situation for legal norm to be effective, and the sovereign is the one who decides whether this normal situation genuinely exists.[7] This decision is inextricably linked to the state of exception; determining whether an exceptional situation exists, where normal legal form cannot be maintained and extraordinary measures are required, is the defining feature of sovereignty. Schmitt thus reveals the relationship between decision and law: "every legal order is based on a decision, and also the concept of the legal order, which is applied as something self-evident, contains within it the contrast of the two distinct elements of the juristic-norm and decision. Like every other order, the legal order rests on a decision and not on a norm."[7] Law presupposes a political decision; the constitution cannot constrain the sovereign. Instead, the formation of legal norms and order is the product of the sovereign's political decision.

However, in a society primarily driven by economic concerns, as emphasized in liberalism, the primary focus is on economic prosperity and individual interests. The state cannot compel individuals to kill others or sacrifice themselves purely for economic reasons, rendering a liberal state incapable of meaningfully appealing to its citizens for self-defense.[1] Furthermore, liberalism's trust in individuals and distrust of all conceivable political forces and forms of state and government lead to an inability to make decisive decisions when necessary. Schmitt traces the foundations of state theory and political concepts to anthropological views on human nature, arguing that liberalism promotes the assumption of inherent human goodness, which leads to a radical rejection of the state and government. For liberals, the belief in the inherent goodness of human nature implies that the state and government should be subordinated to society and restricted due to their perceived untrustworthiness. The liberal insistence on individualism and private rights systematically evades and neglects the state and the political, sidesteps the challenges of political identity and survival, and limits the state's capacity for action.[1] By focusing on legal and economic resolutions to conflict, liberalism overlooks the existential nature of political struggle, thereby neglecting the friend-enemy distinction and undermining the essential need for decisive action during crises.

The negative impact of liberalism extends beyond these issues. By the 19th century, economics, trade, industry, technology, freedom, and rationalization were increasingly seen as allies against the political, violence, military power, and oppression. The former represented "le calcul civilisé" (civilized calculation), where goods of life are achieved through peaceful exchange, while the latter was seen as "l'impulsion sauvage" (the savage impulse), where goods are won through war and coercion.[1] Discussing the different receptions of the Monroe Doctrine raised respectively by Japan and the U.S., Schmitt notes that economic or financial superiority is interpreted as "peaceful" and

"natural," in contrast to military and political superiority. This interpretation is not only to wrest interpretive control of a policy (the Monroe Doctrine in this case) from political opponents, but also to use it as a moral weapon of just war.[8] Both are forms of expansion and control, but the liberal and pacifist vocabulary and the apparent separation of politics and economics conceal the presence of the political.[9]

Viewing war as a "crime" that must be abolished is also part of liberalism's broader tendency to neutralize and moralize or legalize political conflict. Liberalism defines political conflict from a moral standpoint, wherein war is not a political act or a combat between sovereign entities, but an immoral or criminal act; those who wage war are seen as criminals rather than justi hostes (legitimate enemies). This removes the possibility of recognizing the enemy as a rational actor with legitimate reasons for political combat.[6][10] The enemy in war is thus seen as an embodiment of evil that must be annihilated, making compromise or negotiation—akin to compromising with crime or immorality—almost impossible. As a result, war becomes endless. The incompetence of the League of Nations to mediate in the Manchurian Incident already demonstrated that emphasizing the "just cause" or "just war" to eliminate war led to a new and fundamentally pacifist vocabulary where "war is condemned but executions, sanctions, punitive expeditions, pacifications, protection of treaties, international police, and measures to assure peace remain."[1] Consequently, it is not the brutal and inhumane armed conflict that is eliminated, but the legal and nominal concept of "war," to the extent that even bombings and battles of various sizes could be considered "peace." In the end, no one understands what constitutes war or peace, and it is typically the victor who monopolizes the judgment of just war, reducing the vanquished to criminals.[6][9]

2.2. The Fallacy of Liberalism's Faith in Parliamentarism

Based on the importance of decision, enemy-friend distinction and maintenance of political entity mentioned above, Schmitt's criticism of liberalism from the perspective of parliamentarism can be unfolded.

First, the principles of discussion and openness, foundational to parliamentary democracy, have already been violated in practice. Parliament has increasingly become a venue for political parties to pursue their own interests and power, rather than a place where parties persuade each other through rational arguments. Contrary to the ideals of parliamentary democracy, politics has not become the domain of a select group of elites; rather, it has degenerated into transactions among a despised group of people.[5] In the endless debates and competition for interests within parliament, Dezisionismus(decisionism) is nowhere to be found.

Second, the crisis of liberalism, parliamentarism, and democracy indicates an insurmountable contradiction between the liberal advocacy of equality for all individuals as human beings and the substantive equality and homogeneity required by democracy. As Schmitt observes, "The belief in parliamentarism, in government by discussion, belongs to the intellectual world of liberalism. It does not belong to democracy."[5] Schmitt argues universal suffrage and voting rights are only meaningful within a homogeneous group; democracy, if necessary, will exclude or eliminate heterogeneity. For example, if the British Empire granted all its residents equal voting rights, the majority vote of the non-white population would overwhelm the white minority, leading to the collapse of the empire. Schmitt further contends that "An absolute human equality, then, would be an equality understood only in terms of itself and without risk; it would be an equality without the necessary correlate of inequality, and as a result conceptually and practically meaningless, an indifferent equality."[5] This liberal ideal makes it impossible to determine the boundaries of the group entitled to equal voting rights and to maintain the stability and limits of the community.

Third, liberalism and the parliamentary democracy based on it lack "legitimating power to itself."[5] The so-called "legitimacy" or "authority" in parliamentary legislative state are merely

expression of and derived from legality, denying any authority or governing power, whether providing its own foundation or claiming to be based on something higher.[5] As a result, "the lawmaker, and the legislative process under its guidance, is the final guardian of all law, ultimate guarantor of the existing order, conclusive source of all legality, and the last security and protection against injustice."[5] Politics is thus mistakenly believed to be a legal process that can create order and operate entirely "value-neutrally." The state's public servants are viewed as a technical apparatus, failing to cultivate political elites capable and willing to take political risks.[5] Moreover, this liberal reduction of politics to an apparently "value-neutral" technique leads to a more profound danger— the re-emergence of the "indirect" powers in the form of parties, unions, and social groups as forces of "society" which masquerade their actions as non-political, i.e., as religious, cultural, economic, or private matters, while still exploiting the benefits of state resources. In this way, they are able to battle Leviathan while simultaneously using the massive machine until it collapses.[11] However,

The wonderful armature of a modem state organization requires uniformity of will and uniformity of spirit When a variety of different spirits quarrel with one another and shake up the armature. the machine and its system of legality will soon break down. The institutions and concepts of liberalism, on which the positivist law state rested, became weapons and power positions in the hands of the most illiberal forces. In this fashion, party pluralism has perpetrated the destruction of the state by using methods inherent in the liberal law state. The leviathan, in the sense of a myth of the state as the "huge machine," collapsed when a distinction was drawn between the state and individual freedom. That happened when the organizations of individual freedom were used like knives by anti-individualistic forces to cut up the leviathan and divide his flesh among themselves. Thus did the mortal god die for the second lime.[11]

3.   Masao Maruyama's Defense of Liberalism

Masao Maruyama once selected and translated parts of Schmitt's work, *Staat, Bewegung, Volk: die Dreigliederung der politischen Einheit* (State, Movement, People: The Threefold Structure of Political Unity), for which he also wrote a preface. In the preface, Maruyama evaluated Schmitt, stating that perhaps no one has more profoundly revealed the impotence of liberal thinking than Schmitt, nor has any scholar exposed the true nature of parliamentary politics as sharply. Maruyama acknowledged Schmitt's theory as highly original and unparalleled in its critique of liberalism.[12] Despite this high assessment, Maruyama remained a staunch liberal. Although he did not write a direct rebuttal of Schmitt in defense of liberalism, his writings suggest several reasons for his appreciation and citation of Schmitt's views while firmly standing on the side of liberalism. First, Maruyama's theory consistently centers on how to establish internal subjectivity, aiming to protect individual dignity from being trampled by state violence. He argued that individuals must adhere to ideals that transcend history to resist environmental pressures; for him, "the ideals of freedom, peace, and justice" were almost a matter of faith. Second, within the context of traditional Japanese political thought, Maruyama furthered or implicitly refuted Schmitt's concept of "the political" and his critique of liberalism by exploring issues such as the separation of state and society, the substantial value basis of the state, the transition from modern to contemporary times, and the role of intermediary groups.

3.1.   The Establishment of "Internal Subjectivity" as the Central Theme

The concepts of "modernity" and "subjectivity," closely linked to liberalism, hold a crucial place in the theoretical framework of Masao Maruyama. His assessments of "modernity" (近代, *kindai*) evolved in response to the transformations he observed in Japanese society. Nevertheless, regardless of these shifts, the question of how to resist external pressures and establish internal subjectivity remains a constant concern in his thought. It is essential to recognize that Maruyama's notion of

"subjectivity" primarily refers to the spirit that combines individual independence with a sense of social solidarity, emphasizing a commitment to personal beliefs in the face of authority, responsibility, and ethical consciousness. This concept should not be conflated with the term "subjectivity" or the notion of the "subject" criticized by Michel Foucault. Maruyama likely viewed certain liberal principles as the foundation upon which one could uphold subjectivity. Schmitt, on the other hand, expressed dissatisfaction with liberals who, in the name of civilization, humanity, democracy, and freedom, mobilized immense spiritual and moral forces to denounce their enemies as criminals.[13] In international affairs, Schmitt argued that politicians employed liberal democracy and related concepts to legitimize a principle of universal intervention without spatial limits.[8] However, in Maruyama's view, the spiritual strength derived from values such as freedom and democracy serves as a source of resilience, enabling individuals to confront reality and challenge authority. Liberalism's tendency to trust and protect the individual over the state also aligns with Maruyama's understanding of "nationalism." He argued that for Japan to develop as a modern state, it was necessary to reform the national spirit, awakening the masses, who had passively obeyed political orders, to the realization that they are the constituents of the state and must take responsibility for its fate. For Maruyama, the premise and key to nationalism lie in the individual's ability to establish freedom, spontaneity, and autonomy, rather than in the state's imposition of authority.[14]

During his high school years, Masao Maruyama was initially showed little interest in the political activities popular among students. However, his arrest and detention by the police after attending a lecture by philosopher Nyozekan Hasegawa—a close family friend whom he deeply respected—marked a turning point. This incident, characterized by baseless physical abuse and prolonged surveillance, left a lasting impact on Maruyama. Equally significant were the 1933 speech by Otto Wels, a German Social Democratic Party member who opposed the transfer of legislative power to Chancellor Hitler, and a paper by legal philosopher Hans Kelsen, a victim of Nazi persecution, which discussed Plato's theory of justice. These events prompted Maruyama to reflect deeply: given the existence of a self prone to succumbing to power and overwhelmed by anxiety and fear, how can one cultivate a subjectivity that remains steadfast in the face of external suffering?[15] His reflections on resisting external pressures and establishing subjectivity, coupled with his analysis of Japan's insatiable demand for spiritual submission and the political and ideological roots of Japan's militaristic expansion, converged into a structural analysis of Japan's societal pathology. Maruyama attributed Japan's misguided path to the underdevelopment of "modernity" and the immaturity of its "modern state" construction, which led to the rise of "ultranationalism." He argued that the concept of a modern state—rooted in liberalism ("neutral state") and the protection of individual rights—was the foundation upon which opposition to Japanese ultranationalism and the myth of the Tennō System could be built.

Inspired by Schmitt, Maruyama argued that the greatest characteristic of the modern European state was its neutrality (*Ein neutraler Staat*), which delegated value judgments concerning truth and morality to other social groups or individual consciences, grounding state sovereignty on purely formal legal institutions unaffected by these value orientations. In contrast, the formation of a modern state in post-Meiji Restoration Japan was fundamentally different. Japanese governance was invariably portrayed as being grounded in an imposed set of values, almost as if these values and moral principles took on a tangible form. As the embodiment of ethics, the Japanese state served as the sole arbiter of value judgments, existing not merely as an abstract concept but as a substance or entity infused with a specific moral and ideological essences. Unlike the Hobbesian sovereign, who decides based on authority rather than truth, the Japanese sovereign was revered because he was seen as "the culmination of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful." As a result, the Japanese Empire itself was considered the epitome of these ideals, inherently incapable of evil. Consequently, any tyrannical or treacherous actions by the Japanese state could be justified on the assumption that they aligned

with "the culmination of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful." In this context, state sovereignty, being the ultimate source of both power and ethics, led to a situation where ethical evaluation was based not on the content of moral values but on the presence of power as its foundation.[3]

In domestic policy, the entire national order was structured like a hierarchical chain radiating from the Tennō, who was regarded as the absolute value entity. The legitimacy of rule was proportional to one's degree of proximity to the Tennō, which not only determined political status and power relationships but also served as the standard for ethical judgment.[3] Behavior was regulated less by a sense of legality and more by an awareness of one's position in relation to the Tennō.[3] Consequently, every individual or social group, from the highest to the lowest levels, was simultaneously restricted by their superiors while imposing restrictions on their subordinates, perpetuating a cycle of oppression and violence. Those in superior positions were seen as the embodiment of substantive value, making any criticism from subordinates easily perceived as rebellion or even ethically inappropriate.[16] As a result, no one enjoyed true freedom or a sense of subjectivity, and naturally, no one bore responsibility—everyone believed that they were merely following orders. Most Japanese officials who stood trial after World War II claimed that they had no choice but to comply with pre-established policies, justifying their actions by appealing to faits accomplis and bureaucratic regulations. However, responsibility could not be ascribed to the Tennō, who was positioned at the pinnacle of this hierarchy. Senior statesmen, fearful of political responsibility being attributed to the Tennō or themselves, crafted the image of the Tennō as a "constitutional monarch." Ultimately, no one took responsibility for the actions that led to and occured during the war, transforming the entire Japanese political system into what Maruyama termed an absurd "system of irresponsibility."[17][18]

In foreign policy, the "center-radiating" order of domestic politics was projected onto Japan's understanding of international relations. Relationships between nations were perceived as inherently unequal, leading to either the conquest and annexation of one state by another or vice versa. Consequently, a passive defensive mentality could quickly escalate into unrestrained expansionism.[19] The clear-eyed understanding of *raison d'État* held by 19th-century thinkers—who recognized the tension between universal ethical values and realpolitik—had almost entirely vanished by the 1930s and 1940s. Yukichi Fukuzawa, for instance, acknowledged that universal norms such as freedom, equality, and human rights were morally superior to realpolitik in international relations. However, he argued that pursuing realpolitik was necessary in a world where the strong prey on the weak, while cautioning against morally glorifying this necessity. Without this nuanced understanding, grandiose phrases like "proclaiming the Imperial Way," "granting Imperial grace to the peoples of East Asia," and "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere" intoxicated Japanese leaders. These rulers conflated realpolitik with the realization of moral ethics, using ethical language to justify their expansionist policies. As a result, what was presented as "moral ethics" further fueled foreign aggression and expansion. While the exercise of power and the pursuit of interests typically have boundaries, when framed as the realization of moral ethics, the sense of "boundaries" dissipates, since the application of "morality" is perceived as limitless.[14]

It can be observed that the emphasis on individual rights and the "value-neutral" nature of the state in liberal theory, which Schmitt criticized, were seen by Maruyama as a potential remedy for the "pathology" of Japanese society. In contrast, Schmitt's implicit suggestion that the political unity of the state might be founded on substantive values—representing an ideological principle and connecting governance with transcendence—reminded Maruyama of the system of irresponsibility and the myth of the Tennō System, which contributed to Japan's downfall. "Personal subjectivity" can be identified as a keyword that runs through Masao Maruyama's theoretical research. From his structural analysis of the patterns of thought in Japan's modernization process, his examination of the nature of the opposition between modern Japanese social sciences (linked to Western thought) and

Japanese literature (linked to tradition), to his consideration of how institutions, theories, and concepts lose their significance when regarded as "finished objects" disconnected from their creators, Maruyama consistently analyzed whether these elements hindered human subjectivity and had the potential to erase freedom and a sense of responsibility.[18][20] When citing Schmitt's discussion of decisionism, Maruyama did not emphasize state sovereignty but rather the spiritual diminishment and lack of accountability that arose from the absence of subjectivity among those in power. He viewed these as maladies stemming from the antithesis of liberalism[14]

3.2. Response to Carl Schmitt's Concept of "The Political"

In examining Masao Maruyama's analysis of traditional Japanese political thought in the context of Carl Schmitt's theories, it becomes evident that Maruyama, while not explicitly addressing Schmitt, effectively supplements and refutes him in several key respects.

First, regarding Schmitt's critique of liberalism, the following question might be posed: Are the dangers Schmitt describes truly inherent to liberalism, or are they specific to particular historical and social contexts? If the kind of autonomous individual that liberalism seeks to establish does not yet exist in a given society, can we truly speak of the dangers of liberalism? Second, concerning the concept of "the political," the power to decide on the enemy need not be solely in the hands of the sovereign state. Human actions can easily be transformed into sharp oppositions with "enemies," and in such volatile situations, the exercise of power to achieve a degree of unification within a certain scope is what constitutes politics. Regarding the relationship between human nature and politics, it is precisely because humans are capable of both good and evil that politics, as a technique, has a foundation for existence. Third, while depoliticization and neutralization might negate the political, excessive politicization can also lead to its negation. Particularly when the political sphere overrides all others, allowing the state to intrude into society without limits, personal interests can infiltrate and distort national interests. Fourth, if the state becomes a representative of some substantive value base in its pursuit of political unity, this could lead to a situation where state actions are always deemed correct, thereby propelling humanity into endless wars under the banner of values. The fourth point has been addressed in the previous section, and the following will elaborate on the first three points.

Considering the background of Maruyama's theoretical development and his manner of referencing Schmitt, it is clear that he implicitly challenges Schmitt's critique of liberalism by raising a crucial point: Japan did not experience the same historical progression from the Middle Ages to modernity as Europe did, nor did it possess the same social and cultural foundations. The Western theories introduced by Japanese intellectuals were understood through the lens of Japan's traditional culture, potentially leading to their "traditionalization."[20] Given this, is it possible or reasonable to criticize the drawbacks of liberalism in a society that lacks its foundational basis? Would the influence of liberalism and parliamentary systems necessarily be negative in Japan, or would this vary depending on social context? Maruyama's theoretical adversaries before and after World War II were primarily expansionists, Imperial nationalists/fascists, and proponents of "Overcoming Modernity," rather than the potential dangers of liberalism and parliamentary systems—despite his regard for Schmitt's critique of them. During Japan's expansion under the banner of Pan-Asianism and the "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," some scholars advocated for the "Overcoming Modernity" to justify Japan's expansion, portraying Imperial Japan and its wars in Asia as a protest against a Eurocentric world order. They argued that the concept of modernity, born from Europe's uniqueness, was promoted as a universal norm, granting Europe the right to exercise power over other regions. Thus the proponents of "Overcoming Modernity" claimed that this "modernity" had become a scourge in Asia. In contrast, Japan's unique culture, centered around the Tennō system, and its beautiful tradition, were seen as untainted and therefore a model for a new world order. In this way, Japan's expansion and war were reinterpreted as a process of transcending and overcoming the

principles of "modernity" rooted in European imperialism, and as a moral journey toward an independent Asia.[21][22] It was this "overcoming modernity" discourse that posed the most direct theoretical challenge to Maruyama. He countered it by arguing that European thought was introduced to Japan in a decontextualized and fragmented manner, leading to a "Japanization" of these ideas while traditional ways of thinking remained intact. Maruyama contended that Japan had not yet achieved true modernity; thus, the critiques of "liberalism" and "modernity" were premature.[18] To a certain extent, Maruyama sidesteps Schmitt's critique by arguing that liberalism has not yet fully manifested in Japan.

Moreover, by exploring the concept of "koso" (古層, archetypal modes of thought) in Japan, Maruyama's theory offers another perspective on how "the political" might be negated—the blurring of the public and private spheres and the politicization of various fields could also lundermine the political. Maruyama argues that Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism did not clearly distinguish between personal morality and politics, leading to a situation where politics could not be separated from the moral realm.[23] In Zhu Xi's theory, natural laws governing the universe and the order of human society were seen as continuous, with personal moral cultivation as the foundation for all social and political values. Consequently, politics and personal ethics were interwined, and the political could not be distinguished from private life or cosmic natural order.[4] The political was not treated as a relatively independent domain, nor was it seen as having its inherent rules and logic. Furthermore, as the ruler was seen as embodying "the culmination of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful," subjects were expected to align their private lives with loyalty to the ruler and the state. Private affairs and interests were not morally justified, leading individuals to link their own interests with those of the Tennō and the state to pursue private gain.[3] As the political sphere infiltrated citizens' private lives, it too became tainted by private interests. In contrast, Ogyū Sorai's view—that the "Dou" (道) in Confucianism is distinct from natural laws and was created as a system by ancient rulers or "sages"—acknowledged the independence of the political from personal morality and natural order. This is why Maruyama compared Sorai's ideas to those of Machiavelli.[14] Notably, Maruyama's analysis here draws from Schmitt's *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, but his emphasis is not on the definition of "sovereign" but rather on the existence of "the political" as an independent domain, thereby affirming the modern liberal notion of separating "state" from "civil society." In this context, "modern" implies the separation of the political society from the natural order, recognizing it as an artificial construct. If personal dignity does not precede the political order, individuals will struggle to escape the state's coercive mobilization and oppression. Therefore, while advocating for civil society as tsupreme is not entirely correct, and despite the limitations of modern political system, a moderate individualistic principle should be upheld, due process respected, and institutional limits on government power maintain.[15]

When discussing the development of international organizations and domestic political parties, Schmitt critically observes the question: *Quis iudicabit* (Who decides?). He argues that the rule of law, as enforced by international organizations and treaties, will eliminate all international disagreements through legal procedures, thereby allowing the powerful to control not only power and wealth but also legitimacy.[24] Schmitt insists that the power to designate and divide friends and enemies should remain the prerogative of sovereign states. In contrast, Maruyama contends that supranational organizations, domestic political parties, trade unions, churches, and other entities also exercise internal control through power and can create divisions between friends and enemies. In these organizations, human behavior can easily be transformed into opposition against perceived "enemies," and using power to achieve some level of unification in response to contemporary conflicts constitutes politics.[25] Maruyama also notes that under the influence of existing international institutions and social opinion, the question of "who ultimately holds power and who

decides the course of politics" becomes increasingly unclear. However, rather than denying the influence of international organizations or domestic interest groups, Maruyama believes that individuals must gain and maintain autonomy within the complex and intertwined relationships of friends and enemies that extend beyond national borders in a mass society.[26] This perspective perhaps led Maruyama to further solidify his belief in the values of liberalism:

As empirical reality, what we see before us is the entirety of the world; invoking an intangible authority beyond it—be it God, reason, or an "ideology"—will ultimately bind us to this intangible authority. Without it, we will eventually submit to a visible authority—whether it be political power, public opinion, or social judgment—and I firmly believe in this irrational faith.[27]

Faced with the overwhelming potential for power to trample on individual rights, concepts like freedom and individual rights, even if they may be seen as illusions, or as representing an extremely difficult path both theoretically and practically, remain humanity's ultimate recourse. Without relying on such transcendent ideals, individuals might find no source of strength to resist forces that seek to overwhelm them.

4. Conclusion

In summary, Carl Schmitt's critique of liberalism can be broadly categorized into two main points: liberalism's denial of the political and the crisis of parliamentary democracy. Schmitt explores these issues through his conceptualization of the political and the notion of decisionism. Maruyama not only highly regarded Schmitt's theories but also incorporated them into his own theoretical framework. However, Maruyama placed individual subjectivity at the core of his analysis and, by integrating Japan's traditional culture and unique historical and social context, both supplemented and partially refuted Schmitt's critique of liberalism.

For Schmitt, the survival and integrity of the political entity are paramount, necessitating a clear distinction between friends and enemies. This existential concern transcends individual moral judgments. Schmitt's critique of liberalism lies not only in its moral neutrality but also in its perceived inability to make decisions that ensure the survival of the political entity. The political, in Schmitt's view, involves a friend-enemy distinction that defines the community, making neutrality or purely procedural approaches insufficient. However, the focus of decision-making in this context is on survival rather than individual moral principles, resulting in a certain degree of value neutrality—a contradiction that Leo Strauss identified in Schmitt's thought. Maruyama, on the other hand, argued that Japanese imperialism elevated the state itself as "the culmination of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful," demanding complete devotion from its citizens both physically and spiritually. This ostensibly positioned the state as representing a substantial value ideology, establishing a metaphysical order justified by the "harsh international environment of the survival of the fittest" and the need to "protect Japan from Western imperial powers" (i.e., the survival of the political entuty). While this might appear to align with Schmitt's expectations, Maruyama ultimately views it as a false shared belief that devolved into a mere tool and symbol of totalitarian rule.

When discussing Schmitt's critique of liberalism, it is essential to mention the "dialogue" between Leo Strauss and Schmitt. Strauss, in his *Commentary on The Concept of the Political*, deepened the exploration of the relationship between politics and morality within Schmitt's theory. If Maruyama's engagement with and supplementation of Schmitt's ideas can also be considered a dialogue, then it can be said that Maruyama shifted the focus to another dimension—the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. The central issue is not the relationship between politics and morality but rather the tension between those who wield power and those who are subject to it.

Schmitt criticized liberalism for maintaining peace at all costs through "value neutrality", a strategy that involves compromising with various value ideals. When issues of justices or goodness are at stake, disagreements become inevitable. So to achieve consensus and peace, questions of justice

must be entirely abandoned in favor of focusing solely on means. This pursuit of neutrality ultimately devolves into a belief in technical solutions, wherein peace is sought at the expense of life's deeper meaning. Essentially, this approach replaces value critique with a nihilistic tolerance of all values. Schmitt rejected the ideal of pacifism and affirmed the political because he saw the threatened status of the political as a threat to the seriousness of human life. For Schmitt, affirming the political is ultimately an affirmation of the moral.[28] However, it is precisely here that Strauss observed Schmitt's inability to fully escape liberalism. Schmitt criticized liberalism for attempting to treat moral decisions or value judgments as private matters, thus hollowing out the moral values from the foundations of political governance. Yet, positivism or value neutrality is also the foundation of his "decisionism," as Schmitt is concerned only with the act of decision-making itself, not with the moral foundation of that decision. "Therefore the affirmation of the political as such is the affirmation of fighting as such, wholly irrespective of what is being fought for. In other words: he who affirms the political as such comports himself neutrally toward all groupings into friends and enemies."[28] That is to say, Schmitt, while criticizing liberalism for its neutral stance on values in the private realm—claiming that this amounts to abandoning the political decision between friend and foe and leading to a loss of seriousness—simultaneously maintained a form of neutrality in the political realm by dismissing moral judgment and remaining impartial to all "wills to decide." To extricate political decisions from moral judgment, Schmitt had to adopt the liberal, individualistic definition of morality, emphasizing the private nature of moral determination. In this way, Strauss pushed Schmitt's exploration of the relationship between morality and politics to a deeper level.

From this perspective, Maruyama's theory can be seen as engaging in a dialogue with Schmitt from a different angle, using Japan as an example. It can be said that Maruyama subtly raised objections to both Schmitt and Strauss. Strauss's response to Schmitt's critique of liberalism was that we must move beyond the liberal-individualist assumption that morality is a private affair in order to transcend liberalism. According to Strauss, political life should be guided by higher moral standards, not just the protection of individual rights; otherwise, politics devolves into a mere struggle for rights and interests, disconnected from any objective or absolute concept of the good. Maruyama's analysis of how Japanese rulers propagated the idea that the state itself represented "the culmination of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful," and the consequences thereof, introduces another dimension to the problem. The primary concern may not be whether morality can judge politics or whether morality is privately determined or should strive for a common understanding of the good. Instead, Maruyama suggests that in the complex entanglement of morality and politics in both theory and practice, the first priority should be to protect citizens from the encroachments of those in power.

Due to the lack of individual subjectivity, people in Japan quickly shifted allegiance to new authorities (for example, those who condemned Britain and America during the war quickly became proponents of liberalism after the war). As a result, even in places without proceduralism and value neutrality, individuals actually found themselves in a state of moral vacuum and moral nihilism, and the political was still negated. Moral rhetoric can be exploited by politicians, and thus morality can become an object of attack, deconstruction, and nihilism. However, exposing the hypocrisy behind "morality" should be aimed at overthrowing the oppression of power, not at severing the link between morality and political judgment. Moreover, Maruyama did not overlook the possibility that liberalism might lead to mediocrity or a loss of seriousness. Despite these challenges, he chose a difficult path: he never served any regime or political party but remained actively engaged in public lectures and writing, attempting to provoke thought among his readers and listeners. Perhaps it could be said that, like Socrates, he made it his mission to be a "gadfly."

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