

Radical Conservatism and the liberal Question.

Morphology and radicalization of conservative ideology in Germany from Vormärz to the Weimar Republic

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Summary

The aim of the thesis is to reconstruct the radicalization of conservative thought in Germany in the 19th and early 20th centuries in a historical-systematic manner and to outline the (ideological) concept of radical conservatism. To this end, following the morphological approach of ideology research, conservatism is first described as a complex ideology characterized by a radical potential that directly refers to the structural dependence on (anti-liberal) enemy images. In a critical examination of the state of conservatism research, a (heuristic) conception of conservative core concepts and structural characteristics is developed, the specific form and (historical) transformation of which is then examined in the further course of the work.

The historical reconstruction of German conservatism begins with Prussian old conservatism, whose political-theological paradigm (of the Christian state) increasingly loses its plausibility in the context of the process of secularization of political thought. Taking the two conservative thinkers Hermann Wagener and Paul de Lagarde as examples, it is shown how, in the face of its ideological crisis of identity, old conservative thinking is increasingly replaced by a militant version of an intransigent conservatism; the *social question* (Wagener) and the *national question* (Lagarde) are accordingly increasingly linked with anti-liberal and anti-Semitic enemy images and the task of conservatism is now to overcome liberal supremacy. In the context of the Weimar Republic, these radicalization phenomena intensified and a genuinely radical conservative movement emerged for the first time; the conservative self-image of these so-called young conservatives distinguished itself in (dependant) opposition to both the older (reactionary) conservatism and the supposedly hegemonic liberalism and was characterized by intransigent and voluntaristic concepts of conservatism. This radical conservatism is also characterized by a decidedly metapolitical agenda, as shown by the example of the controversies over the concepts of politics and the people.

The radicalization of German conservatism can thus be systematically understood as a direct consequence of the secularization of conservative (religious) thought and accordingly points to the corresponding theoretical challenges for moderate (liberal-)conservative thought, which must be constantly aware of the radical potential of conservative ideology.