THE PROBLEM OF "STAATSRÄSON" IN
GERMAN DRAMA, WITH SPECIAL
REFERENCE TO KLEIST

by

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CHAPTER I

The theme of
"Staatsrâson" in German drama
before the time of Kleist.
The word "Staatsraison" is not an easy word to translate into English. We may speak about "reasons of state", but never of a policy of "reasons of state". We speak about "raison d'état", which is itself a translation into French of the Italian "ragione di stato". The word "Machiavellism" is sometimes used. It is an awkward word but one which is substantially appropriate. For the idea of "Staatsraison" originates in Machiavelli's "Principe".

The "Principe" is not a systematic book but a single theme runs through it. We are to understand that the ruler's task is to protect his people. To do this he must succeed in doing two things. He must maintain his power against those who seek to overthrow him in his own country. He must defend his country against other rulers who, he must assume, are continually prepared to take advantage of his weakness. He will succeed in his two-fold task provided he is not too scrupulous or too soft-hearted. For the laws which govern men's behaviour in their private life - the laws of the State or the "laws" of God - ought not to be allowed to prevent the ruler from accomplishing his task effectively. If he makes it a rule in all circumstances to do nothing but good he is bound to go under. His first duty is not towards his conscience - to appease which is to be selfish - but towards the state. To maintain the state he need never take account of scruples or humane feelings. Indeed, Machiavelli taunts with "squeamishness" the wicked ruler who could not be wholly wicked. Such a man, if it is conscience that restrains him, confines his attention to the immediate effects of evil methods. Posterity judges these things better. If a ruler is dishonest or cruel for the public good, in practice posterity forgives him and approves of what he does. It understands, as he must also, that he could not choose but to do as other
rulers do. The rulers of the world are only human and human nature is always and everywhere aggressive and acquisitive. The wise ruler, therefore, does not wait to break a treaty until he thinks that the other signatories to it intend to do so too. He assumes that, human nature being what it is, they are bound to do so sooner or later. He cannot afford the luxury of a clear conscience when clear consciences are not the first consideration of his neighbours.

The political condition of the world as Machiavelli knew it was one either of war or of impending war. The ruler therefore must anticipate attack. His wars must be preventive wars - evils to prevent worse evils. In a similar way he must consolidate his power among his own subjects. To do this, which is his duty, he cannot always afford to be humane. In the course of a preventive war he may have conquered for himself a new province. He may then find, like Philip II of Macedon before him, that he cannot govern properly while the despoiled ruler and his family survive. It is true that, while exterminating these, he may be thinking of himself only. But his own interest and the interest of his people largely coincide. Thus, in the eighth chapter of the "Principe", even the cruel Agathocles is praised for his "virtù" and his "grandezza dell'animo". Cesar Borgia, who committed so many acts of cruelty to satisfy his lust, is set before us as a model. Machiavelli cannot blame him. "Perché lui avendo l'animo grande e la sua intenzione alta, non si poteva governare altrimenti ..."(1) For, having great spirit and vast designs, he could not have governed otherwise.

So long as he does not neglect his people, the ruler should do what is morally right. More important than this, he should appear to do so. The ideal Prince should practice virtue only in so far as it affects his
reputation and therefore his political success.

In his admiration for Republican Rome and for the well-ordered states of Southern Germany, Machiavelli contradicts his view of human nature and shows that elsewhere a more humane régime is possible than that which circumstances enforced in Italy. In the "Discorsi" (Book I, Chapter IV) he writes that in Germany strong traces of ancient goodness and manly virtue ("virtù") still remain. When the councils or the magistrates of these countries raise a tax on each man's property, the people, having first taken an oath that they will pay their respective proportions, throw their money into a chest provided for the purpose. The tax-collectors, says Machiavelli, never count this money but rely instead on the people's virtue and regard for religion.

In the twelfth chapter of the "Principe" he envies the fortune of the German towns. Well fortified as they are by ditches, walls and cannon, they are easily defended. The inhabitants enjoy much liberty. Their liberty does not endanger their own civil peace. Their liberty and safety alike rest securely on their civic virtues, and their well-defended towns protect these virtues from the unhealthy influence of the Italians, the Spaniards and the French.

As he shows in the "Discorsi", Machiavelli was a republican at heart. A republic, such as that of Rome, could satisfy the people's just demands. But republics could only survive where civic virtues flourished, and civic virtues could only flourish when the state was strong. Republican government was something which the strong state could afford to enjoy. But the strong state itself could only be created in the first place not by republicans but rather by a strong ruler. The strong ruler would wage both defensive and preventive war against his country's enemies. When the country's wars had
long been foreign wars, and none domestic, a republic could safely emerge.

Machiavelli's doctrine is best understood if we regard it as a "war-time" view of statesmanship. In time of war we require of one another a certain relaxation of moral principles which in peace-time we should not admit. A deliberately planned war is a policy of "Staatsrason" of the most distressing kind, and yet, as we all know, it is all too easy for a people to tolerate such a policy when its victims are not themselves or persons whom they know and love, but the distant, unknown subjects of a foreign power. In Machiavelli's Italy the difference between war and peace was ill-defined. War was more or less continual. Italy had fallen an easy prey to the French in 1494 and had since become a field of battle, disputed not only by the French but by the Spaniards and the Germans. In these circumstances it is not difficult to understand the origin and success of Machiavelli's "Principe".

It was not until similar conditions prevailed in Germany a full century later that the idea of "Staatsrason" found any favour among German political philosophers. At this time political philosophers in Europe as a whole generally emphasised the necessity for absolute and strong rule. Thinkers as different from one another in other respects as Descartes, Bacon, Pascal, Spinoza and Hobbes agreed that the great good of social life was order. The plea of the political philosophers for order as the supreme good of social life supplemented Christian teaching. "There is no power but of God," says St. Paul "and the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation."(2) St. Augustine agrees. It is advantageous for us all when good men rule. But what does it matter under what government a mortal man lives out his brief span? Evil rulers can do the good man no
harm. This was the Christian point of view, which Catholics inherited and Lutherans upheld more strongly. Whether Lutheran or Catholic, the German Bürger recognised and accepted his place in the order of society. He took no part in the higher political administration. He demanded none. Diplomacy and statecraft were accomplishments to which he had never been apprenticed and of which he did not consider himself a qualified judge. As a Lutheran at least he understood that the only right of the Christian was to suffer and to die. The ruler's power had been ordained by God, the law of the State was in that sense God's law, the ruler represented God and the subject must obey him. Not only the tyrant would be judged in after life but the serf also who transgressed the ordinance of God when he disobeyed his master.

The problem of "Staatsrätion" is one which Luther himself appears to have understood, for he often draws attention to the moral difficulty in which the pious ruler may find himself.

Wer da wil ein fromer Regent sein, dem wird so viel Unlust, Sorg und Fahr unter Augen stossen, das er lieber dafür möchte Steine tragen oder ein Bauman sein. ... Bistu ein Regent, ein Hausvater, so mustu viel tun, das den Untertanen, deinen eigen Kindern nicht gefällt, und unter deim eigen unterthanen Gesinde wirstu finden, wilche dir alles, was du Gutes thuest, Übel auslegen ... (3)

The Peasants' Revolt impressed on Luther the moral difficulty of the ruler's situation and the need to make allowances for ruthless methods of forestalling or combating sedition. At the same time he believed that the duty of the subject to obey God implied a duty to obey the ruling power which God had instituted. What the State willed God willed. He could therefore obey the State's commands without fear of embarrassing his conscience. Thus far
Luther himself may be said to have prepared men to acquiesce in the doctrine and policy of "Staatsräson".

He cannot, however, be said to have directly encouraged it. Directly at least political events were more important in this respect than religious teaching was. The prolonged havoc of the Thirty Years' War enhanced the position of the strong ruler whose authority no one dared to question. As Meinecke says, "Der Ständestaat und mit ihm die Idee eines alten guten unantastbaren Rechtes, enthalten in Landesgewohnheiten und Landesgesetzen, hatte Bankrott gemacht ..., weil er den Staat wahrlos gelassen hatte."(4)

The need which was felt for an organized and concentrated state power meant that much regional autonomy would have to be surrendered. In so far as it was not surrendered willingly, the ruler would be justified in asserting his authority by force. There was thus a natural connection between the decline in regional autonomy and the practice of "Staatsräson". "Um ... den Widerstand der Stände und der alten Rechte ... niedersukämpfen, konnte der Machtwille der Fürsten nun aber eben die neue Rechtsidee der Staatsträson, der salus publica zu Hilfe rufen und sich dadurch innerlich rechtfertigen und adeln."(5)

The political testament of the Great Elector reveals how tirelessly his political officials resisted provincial rights and privileges. Political philosophers tended to approve of this. In 1651 Heinrich Voss of Regensburg dedicated his Helmstedt thesis, "Ratio status", to the Great Elector.

But these ideas addressed a wider audience than their immediate beneficiaries, the rulers. Peace was universally desired. The absolute power of the monarch seemed capable of maintaining peace, and the practices of "Staatsräson", it was claimed, would secure the power of the monarch. In the first decade of the seventeenth century German political philosophy was stimulated by an Italian literature of "Staatsräson" which Botero and Amirato
had established as disciples of Machiavelli. Clapmarius, Besold, Forstner and Efferen all dealt with the subject at about this time, and from 1630 onwards, when the works of Reinking, Böcler, Conring and Chemnits were published, interest rapidly increased. In 1667 Gottfried of Jena's twenty-four "Fragmenta de ratione status àui desiderata" aroused keen interest, and such were the lessons of the civil war that they were well received. By the end of the Thirty Years' War, the political philosophy of Machiavelli had become topical, and if, by about 1750, considerably less was heard of it, this was partly because the subject was by then exhausted and because, too, it had been overshadowed by the new ideas of the Enlightenment.

A number of writers, meanwhile, appear to have regarded Machiavelli's doctrine more as a concession to the time in which he lived than as a guiding principle. However reasonable it might seem in war-time, when men wished for peace above all else, they could only see in "Staatsräsöon" a sad necessity at best, and they accepted it in such a qualified way that in their written work they virtually contradict themselves. Thus Clapmarius believes that the ruler sometimes acts rightly when he sets himself against the law. Deception is indispensable to sound statecraft. There is such a thing as a "ius dominationis", raising the ruler above the "ius commune seu ordinarium" and leaving him free to serve the public interest, rather than indulge his own moral comfort. But Clapmarius also believes that the ruler's moral privilege is definitely limited by conscience and religion. A similar uncertainty appears in the work of Kessler, who believes that God approves of "Staatsräsöon" but that those who practise it must not violate the law of God as revealed in holy scripture. In a similar way, in his "Paedia politices" of 1622, Schoppe makes it clear that the methods which he writes about are simply those which a
tyrant must adopt in order to strengthen his position. The state which he describes is not the ideal but the actual state. And Conring, who republished Schoppe’s pamphlet and annotated Machiavelli’s "Principe", is equally ambiguous. He admits that, if the end is good, the ruler may sometimes be compelled to act in bad faith. But at the same time, quoting from the Bible, he attempts to show that it is possible to govern properly without resorting to crime.

Thus, apologetically almost, the attempt was made to reconcile the idea of "Staatsrüson" with law, morality and religion. Or to put it in another way, the German political philosophers at this time so qualified their acceptance of Machiavelli’s doctrine as almost to reject it.

What they do, however, unequivocally emphasise is the overriding need for civil peace and for strong rulers to maintain it. Pufendorf, Thomasius and Wolff, who between them dominate German political philosophy from the mid-seventeenth until the mid-eighteenth century, continue to stress this need.

It is also stressed in the plays of Gryphius. Gryphius, who grew up amid the horror of the Thirty Years’ War, upholds the authority of the monarch. He acknowledges as a Protestant the divine right of kings to govern. In "Carolus Stuardus" (1649) they are "gotts-gesalbten", "Europens götter". The King himself believes that he is answerable, as King, to God alone, "der prinzen setzt und richtet". But divine right as Gryphius understands it does not include the privilege of acting on the principle of "Staatsrüson". The ruler who is pained to find, or who must satisfy himself, that he can only serve the state by acting dishonestly or inhumanely had yet to appear in German drama. After "Leo Armenius" (1646) the heroes of all Gryphius's tragedies are martyrs. In "Großmütiger Rechtsgelernter" (1659)
the Emperor has murdered his brother. Papinius the jurist refuses to defend him. He will die rather than betray his principles and for this reason he must even witness the murder of his son. The evils of war make the dramatist aware of the necessity for political power. The religious theme of martyrdom focusses his mind on the abuse of power. He exalts those who defy the ruler when the ruler asks them to transgress God's laws. The king himself, who makes the laws which bind his subjects, need not obey the laws which he has made. "Ein fürsst ist von dem recht und allen banden frey." But he is subject, as much as anybody else, to the law of God. "Ihn bindt der gōtter furicht. Diß band geht nicht entzwei."(8)

In the 17th century, German political philosophers did not wholeheartedly accept Machiavelli's doctrine. Despite war and their desire for civil peace, they were reluctant to uphold a separate morality for princes. As time went on and circumstances changed, the image of the ruler as a strong man, deceitful and insensitive, appealed to them still less. In time of war despots could not afford to antagonize their subjects unnecessarily. The common danger tended to emphasise the ruler's and the people's common interest. In years of comparative tranquillity the ruler's privileges were more obvious than his duties were. His duties themselves appeared to be less urgent. Sympathy for the ruler necessarily diminished and the more the exercise of privilege degenerated into tyranny the more we should expect to see the monarch as a target for literary criticism.

It has sometimes been said, however, that political elements are not conspicuous in 18th century German literature. In his "Leasing-Legende: zur Geschichte und Kritik des preußischen Despotismus und der klassischen Literatur" (1919), F. Mehring takes great pains to make this point. Despotic
rule had long instilled into the German mind the habit of unquestioning obedience. Hence, he says, their lack of interest in politics. In this respect Gottsched is typical of many. He flees from Königsberg to avoid conscription. He translates from Bayle. He enjoys the social and political satire of Voltaire. But of the 4,700 letters which he left behind, hardly any have anything to say concerning politics, and servility of the most obsequious kind appears to be considered natural. In his "Moralischen Vorlesungen" of 1770, Gellert, too, says Mehring, makes no mention of the state whatever. The sharpest critics of despotic rule were surprisingly traditional in their attitude towards political institutions. Moser can see nothing wrong with serfdom nor Moser with divine right.

In "Deutsche Vergangenheit und deutscher Staat" (1935), Paul Kluckhohn concludes as Mehring does that German literature at this time indicates what little interest the ordinary German took in the affairs of state. "So war ihm der Staat im Grunde nichts mehr als ein notwendiges Übel, ..." Throughout the 18th century, he says, there is revealed a tendency to look away from politics, to contrast politics with culture and to distinguish carefully between the government or the state on the one hand and society or the nation on the other. It is this distinction which Wilhelm von Humboldt makes in his "Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grenzen der Wirksamkeit des Staates zu bestimmen" (1791-1792).

Die Staatsverfassung und der Nationalverein sollten, wie eng sie auch ineinander verwebt sein mögen, nie mit einander verwechselt werden. Wenn die Staatsverfassung den Bürgern, sei's durch Übermacht und Gewalt oder Gewohnheit und Gesetz, ein bestimmtes Verhältnis anweist, so gibt es außerdem noch ein anderes, freiwillig von ihnen gewähltes, unendlich mannigfaltiges und oft wechselndes. Und dies letztere, das freie Wirken der Nation untereinander, ist es eigentlich, welches alle Güter bewahrt, deren Sehnsucht die Menschen in eine Gesellschaft führt.
In his prose draft of the uncompleted poem, "Deutsche Größe" (1801), Schiller draws a similar contrast between "deutsches Reich" and "deutsche Nation".

Deutsches Reich und deutsche Nation sind zweierlei Dinge. Die Majestät des Deutschen ruhte nie auf dem Haupte seiner Fürsten. Abgesondert von dem Politischen hat der Deutsche sich einen eigenen Wert gegründet, und wenn auch das Imperium unterginge, so bliebe die deutsche Würde unangefochten. (13)

The greatness of Germany is moral. It resides in the culture and character of the nation. It does not depend on its political destiny.

The Romantic and other writers were more or less compelled to interest themselves in politics by the events of 1789, and still more when Napoleon conquered the German States and interfered with the ancient established order of society, its customs and its laws. And yet it was still possible to feel, as Friedrich Schlegel did, that there was little room in politics for the finer sentiments and aims of man. "Nicht in die politische Welt verschleudere du Glauben und Liebe, aber in der göttlichen Welt der Wissenschaft und der Kunst opfre dein Innerstes in den heiligen Feuerstrom ewiger Bildung." (14)

But the tendency for German writers to turn their backs on political matters was less pronounced in the second half of the 18th century than in the first. The influence of French political theorists, notably Montesquieu, gradually made itself felt and at the same time despots tended on the whole to be less despotic. As R. Flenley says in his "Modern German History" (1953), the worst days of princely rule were over; even Schiller's Duke of Württemberg underwent a "conversion of sorts". (15) In certain of the smaller states - Baden, Saxony, Weimar and Anhalt-Dessau - the benevolent despotism of Frederick the Great in particular, and humanitarian ideas generally, inspired
the rulers to institute reforms of many kinds, affecting industry and trade, law, education, poor relief and medicine. By thus mending their ways and conforming more closely to the spirit of the age, the German princes presumably emboldened some critics - they appear to have done so - and disarmed others.

Of these last, some no doubt felt drawn to the ideas of those who trusted in enlightened despots - in a "revolution from above". The ideas advanced by this school originated with the physiocratic movement in France and were first introduced into German administrative theory by Christian Wolff. They were based on the principle of the "rights of man". But these rights were hardly political. They referred rather to man's social and economic welfare. To promote man's welfare the state must widen its activities. For in social life what one man does will almost certainly affect the interests of his neighbour. If the state regulates our lives it can prevent us from interfering with one another and, in the long run, it will spare us much unhappiness. Generally speaking man has not yet come of age and must be made to do what the state thinks good for him. Not only should the ruler provide his subjects with the necessities of life where they cannot provide them for themselves: he must control his country's economic life, establishing industries where they are needed and fixing both wages and prices; he must watch over public morals, building churches, appointing state musicians and poets, establishing academies to systematize knowledge useful to the state and subjecting publications to a strict censorship.

In his "Versuch eines vollständigen Systems der Staatslehre" (1784), Lamprecht, unwittingly lampooning Wolff's ideas, prescribes a quasi-military system under which all towns are to be of equal size and all roads and streets to meet at right angles. The colouring of Easter eggs will be forbidden and
mothers will be compelled by law to breast-feed their babies. He prefaces his work with the following quotation from Cicero: "Communum et felicitas populi prima omnium legum." (16) The ruler's task is to make the citizen behave better, to protect him - not only from others but also from his own weakness - and to help him to become more healthy, wise and prosperous.

Absurd though Lamprecht's ideas may seem to us, they were matched by current practices. The German prince, encouraged to see himself as the patriarchal guardian of his people's interests, often considered it his duty to teach his subjects how to order their domestic lives. The edicts which were issued in Brunswick, regulating dress for servant-girls, and in Posen, forbidding the burghers' wives to wear their hair down their backs, or to wear capes, were not untypical of benevolent German despotism in the 18th century. (17)

Initially, perhaps, the administrative theorists encouraged the ruler to interfere paternally in the private lives of his people. But as time went on, it would presumably be more correct to say, they did not so much encourage as reflect this. We cannot be sure; we cannot easily compare influences which complement each other. The influence of political ideas on the ruler depended on the ruler's susceptibility to influence. How susceptible he was must often have depended, at least in part, on his religion. The belief that his monarchical power was a sacred trust - a belief which Luther had revived and which the Catholics already accepted - predisposed him to assume the moral responsibilities of a "Landesvater".

If the function of the ruler as the father of his people encouraged German writers to show more interest in politics, however, this was partly because they were suspicious of it. The picture of the "Landesvater" was more appropriate to tiny principalities than it was to the bigger state in which
officialdom inevitably stood between the ruler and his subjects. It was more appropriate, as Möser was aware, to the early German tribes or to the Middle Ages. "Priester und Könige", in the mediaeval patriarchy as Möser describes it, "in ihren Häusern und Hofmarken ... richteten über das Leben ihrer Familie und Knechte, ohne einander Rechenschaft zu geben. Jeder Hof war gleichsam ein unabhängiger Staat, der sich von seinen Nachbaren mit Krieg oder Frieden schied." But the impact of authority could hardly be felt. The "Landesvater" did not feel that he must teach his people how to live their private lives:

Jeder Hausvater handhabte seinen eignen Hausfrieden; und wie sie sich mehrerer Sicherheit halber enger verbanden, war diese Befugnis nicht aufgehoben. Keine Obrigkeit, und vielleicht nicht einmal eine gemeinsame Gottheit erstreckte sich in eines Mannes Wehre. Das gemeine Recht kam, wie billig, dem Hausrechte nur zu Hülfe. (18)

According to Möser the old German feudal order had offered great benefits. It had allowed the citizen the utmost tolerable freedom. The individual had stood on his own feet and, relying on his own strength and skill, he had asked nothing of the state but its protection.

The ruler in the large state, who hardly knew his subjects, but who "knew" what was good for them, better than they did themselves, filled some writers with misgiving. In their view the zealous ruler had the makings of a tyrant. It was one thing to be protected. To be taken by the hand and led, as if they were his children, was another. For however much the kings of Prussia had achieved by setting up what we should now call social services, they had themselves shown how almost indistinguishable such zeal could be from a new form of despotism - a despotism all the more insidious for appearing to be altruistic or enlightened.
Misgivings such as these appear to have motivated Schiller when writing his "Gesetzgebung des Lykurgus und Solon" (1790). In the city state of Sparta the state, he says, took everything upon itself that was likely to affect the morals of its citizens.

Das Vaterland war das erste Schauspiel, das sich dem spartanischen Knaben zeigte, wenn er zum Denken erwachte. Er erwachte in Schoß des Staats; alles, was um ihn lag, war Nation, Staat und Vaterland. Es war der erste Eindruck in seinem Gehirne, und sein ganzes Leben war eine ewige Erneuerung dieses Eindrucks.


We may admire Sparta as a work of art, says Schiller, in which the means were perfectly adapted to the end. But the end was the state and the means were human beings. However much we may admire the Spartan system in some ways, it would be a sad day for us all if the countries of the world were to adopt it.

Der Staat selbst ist niemals Zweck, er ist nur wichtig als eine Bedingung, unter welcher der Zweck der Menschheit erfüllt werden kann, und dieser Zweck der Menschheit ist kein anderer, als Ausbildung aller Kräfte des Menschen ... Hindert eine Staatsverfassung, daß alle Kräfte, die im Menschen liegen, sich entwickeln; hindert sie die Fortschreitung des Geistes, so ist sie verwerflich und schädlich, sie mag übrigens noch so durchdacht und in ihrer Art noch so vollkommen sein.
However much he might admire those aesthetically, who could sacrifice their dearest, when the state willed that they should do so, Schiller did not feel that patriotism need discourage the more restricted loyalties that bind us to the family. Obedience to the State could go too far.


In his "Ideen zu einem Versuch, die Grenzen des Staates zu bestimmen" (1792), Wilhelm von Humboldt relates the ideas in Schiller's essay to his own time. On his title page he quotes the words of Mirabeau, who warns the people to resist "la fureur de gouverner, la plus funeste maladie des gouvernements modernes." He attacks the passion for issuing edicts which affected the kings of Prussia. Internally the power of the state should be as weak as possible, no stronger than it needs to be to resist aggressors and maintain the civil peace. The hand of the state is a dead hand. Man has made the state. The state does not make man nor any part of him.

Needless to say, there are certain responsibilities which the state must assume for the well-being of the citizen. It must protect his life and property. But from this point on let it leave him to his own devices.

"Das Prinzip, daß die Regierung für das Glück und das Wohl, das physische und moralische, der Nation sorgen muß", is, according to Humboldt, "gerade der ärgerste und drückendste Despotismus." (20) The state should prevent us
from doing evil. But it cannot force us into doing good without at the same time depriving what we do of its moral value. We can only develop and satisfy ourselves as moral beings by acting responsibly on our own initiative. By all means let the state encourage good works and remove what obstacles it can to make these possible. Let it hold the bad men down and let it keep the peace with other nations. For the rest let it allow each one of us to think for himself, to fend for himself and his family and to find his own happiness in his own way.

But the main reason why German writers in the late 18th century concerned themselves with politics was not that certain of the German princes treated their subjects too parentally. It was rather that all too many German despots were still sufficiently despotic to arouse their indignation. In the second half of the 18th century unenlightened despots continued to rule, side by side with the enlightened. In their own states they could hardly be criticised. However, freedom to criticise was much more possible when criticism was directed against a state other than the writer's own. As Fichte says in "Die Reden an die deutsche Nation", of the period in question,

Eine Wahrheit, die an einem Orte nicht laut werden dürfte, dürfte es an einem anderen, an welchem vielleicht im Gegenteil diejenigen verboten waren, die dort erlaubt wurden; und so fand denn, bei manchen Einseitigkeiten und Engherzigkeiten der besonderen Staaten, dennoch in Deutschland, dieses als ein Ganzes genommen, die höchste Freiheit der Erforschung und der Mitteilung statt, die jemals ein Volk besessen; ...(21)

In "Der Herr und der Diener" (1759), Karl Friedrich Moser, to whom Goethe records his debt in "Dichtung und Wahrheit", preaches against the evils of autocracy, though not against autocracy as such. Gellert, whatever he may leave unsaid about the state, at least condemned injustice and aggression.
Klopstock, praising Joseph II of Austria and Frederick V of Denmark, implied how much he disapproved of the methods of Frederick the Great. The hero of Gottsched's play, "Der sterbende Cato", defeated at Utica, takes his life rather than lose his freedom under Caesar. It seems likely that when Cato feels "vor aller Tyrannei den größten Abscheu"(22), he speaks for Gottsched.

The poets of the "Hainbund" reflected their distaste for German despotism when they praised the English for their love of liberty. Though Lessing admired Frederick the Great's good qualities he did not overlook his faults and he lamented the loss of liberties which the Germans had once enjoyed. In his novel "Der goldene Spiegel" (1772), describing the reforms of an enlightened ruler, Wieland clearly addresses the less enlightened rulers of the German states. Herder, who revised his judgement of Frederick the Great when Frederick's correspondence was posthumously published, did not hesitate to criticise his methods when Frederick was still alive.

Other more purely political writers focussed attention on specific political abuses and corruption. As a Hanoverian, Schlözer did not find fault - publicly at least - with his sovereign in the Electorate or beyond the seas. But he attacked Joseph II for the harsh treatment meted out to the religious minorities in Bohemia. He condemned the second partition treaty between Russia and Prussia. He attacked serfdom and the privileges enjoyed by the nobility. He did not, however, attack the nobility as an institution. He stood for a monarchy like that preferred by Montesquieu, in which, as in England, the advantages of monarchy, aristocracy and democracy were combined. The people's voice should be heard, but within the framework of the existing estates. An enlightened, reforming monarch would have satisfied his demands; he did not challenge the ruler's sovereignty.
In Hanover again, connected as it was with England, Leisewitz wrote his dramatic scene, "Der Besuch um Mitternacht" (first published in 1838), in which the ghost of Arminius appears and warns the tyrant that despotism can only serve to intensify men's yearning to be free and must eventually lead to revolution.

To say that in the 18th century the German intellectuals did not generally interest themselves in politics but devoted themselves instead to art, literature and philosophy is largely true. But at the same time it is misleading. To ascribe their apparent lack of political interest to docile habits, which the rulers instilled and which the Church encouraged, is similarly inadequate. Behind their apparent unconcern there was much contempt for tyranny. Humane as these men were, tyranny as practised by certain of the Dukes of Württemberg could hardly have escaped their notice or failed to arouse their feelings. The increasing use which the Princes made of their privilege of "Kabinettsjustiz" was especially resented. By exercising this power, Karl Eugen had imprisoned Schubart and the publicist J.J. Moser, each of them without any form of trial. If as Flenley says(23) there was little desire or freedom to discuss political problems and issues, we may at least suppose that there was less freedom than desire. The censorship was strict. In his book "Der polizeiwidrige Goethe" (1852), H.H. Houben shows in detail how vigilant the censors were in the majority of German states in Goethe's time. They objected to Goethe's "Götz von Berlichingen". The word "Freiheit" became a rallying cry for all men of liberal opinion since the American War of Independence in 1775 and a play which had so much to say of freedom alarmed them.

But however alert the censors may have been in the theatre, it was
there that the best opportunity of exposing despotism presented itself. As Schiller says in his essay of 1784, "Die Schaubühne als eine moralische Anstalt betrachtet", drama naturally lends itself to an indirect and therefore prudent form of criticism. The rulers of the world should be especially grateful to the stage. It is there alone that they can hear the truth about themselves. Already, he claims, humanity and tolerance have begun to prevail at the courts of princes and in courts of law. We may ascribe to the theatre a large share of the credit which is due for this improvement.

The theatre, says Schiller, can criticise the fool with impunity. He can hear himself rebuked without blushing. He can be grateful. It would not, however, have been wise of Schiller, or of anybody else in Schiller's time, to presume too much upon the gratitude of tyrants. The dramatist might pillory the tyrant, but above all he had to be discreet. Lessing, in "Emilia Galotti" (1772), indicts tyranny, but no one tyrant in particular, and not so much the tyrant himself as those who do the tyrant's bidding. His Prince, it is true, behaves despicably. He confirms a sentence of death as if a man's life meant nothing. "Recht gern. - Nur hier! geschwind ... ich bin eilig."(24) He pities no one other than himself, whom he pities much. He is a weak character. Marinelli provides him with a constant refuge but eventually serves him as a scapegoat. There are limits beyond which he is not prepared to go as a despotic ruler; it is not, however, scruple that restrains him, it is lack of nerve. "Topp! auch ich erschrecke vor einem kleinen Verbrechen nicht. Nur, guter Freund, muß es ein kleines, stilles Verbrechen, ein kleines heilsames Verbrechen sein."(25) Whatever kind of criminal we may consider him to be, he is not the sublime criminal whom Schiller could admire. No spurious glamour can attach itself to Lessing's Prince. He discredits despotism absolutely.
But the Prince of Guastalla is not a German prince. We shall return to this point presently. Moreover, as Bruford suggests, it is even possible to see him not so much as the villain of the piece but as the victim of his situation. "By temperament he is no tyrant, but an amiable and cultivated young man, yet such is the corrupting influence of absolute power that, surrounded as he is by toadies, he is bound to misuse it in the end ..."(26)

The dramatist might wish to attack despotism. This he could safely do. But he could not usually attack specific German despots. Caution was required. There were various ways open to him of exercising caution. He could do as Lessing did, and attack the despot as a foreigner. More prudently, he could attack not the ruling prince but those who represented him and served him badly. In dramas critical of princely rule, the prince himself often appears as a benevolent background figure, who finally intervenes to correct the injustices committed by his ministers. Such a play is Brandes's "Der Landesvater", which presents us with a picture of a small German state entrusted by its King to a corrupt deputy. In this way Brandes brings to light the abuses of despotic rule. But the King himself is a humane figure who must show his servants what it means to govern justly.

In "Kabale und Liebe" (1784) Schiller paints a much more frightful picture of the seamy side of life at Court. The Duke himself does not appear. Our attention is focussed instead on the President of the Court and on his secretary, Wurm. Details suggest what was probable in any case, that Schiller has in mind the Court of Karl Eugen of Württemberg. But his attack on the worst instances of tyranny - the selling of German citizens in the American War of Independence - is aimed at other states. Stecher, in his note on the "siebentausend Landeskinder"(27) referred to by the Chamberlain
in Act II, scene ii, points out that of the 29,000 Germans sent against their will as soldiers to England, most were citizens of Hesse-Cassel and the rest from Anhalt-Zerbst, Brunswick, Hanau and Waldeck. Schiller, though not lacking in courage, ran little risk when he attacked the rulers of these states. He felt as many did, at all levels of society. According to Henriette Herz (28) the traffic in German men was widely denounced outside the borders of the states that were involved, and even by the young nobility. Therefore Schiller could afford to be outspoken. He could write about despotism as he felt about it. Given the "freedom", he was not lacking in "desire". The Chamberlain's description of the actual event may be over-coloured but at least it indicates what Schiller felt about contemporary despots:

Die Herrlichkeit hättest ihr doch nicht versäumen sollen, wie uns die gellenden Trommeln verkündigten, es ist Zeit, und heulende Waisen dort einen lebendigen Vater verfolgten, und hier eine wütende Mutter lief, ihr saugendes Kind an Bajonett zu spießen, und wie man Bräutigam und Braut mit Säbelhieben auseinander riß, ... (29)

Goethe, when he criticises despots, is more restrained than other German dramatists in his own time. But this does not mean that they disturbed him less. In a letter to Langer, Goethe as a young man writes scornfully about the empty outward show with which the rulers of the world surround themselves.

The power which they exercise is absolute, their subjects being powerless to defend themselves against it:

Wie sehr verleugnen wir unser ganzes Herz vor dem drapdornen Kleide Majestät, das jedem gradgewachsenen Menschen besser stehen würde als einem buckligen König. Und doch, wenn wir gerührt sind, ist unser Stolz unwirksam, das wissen unsere Fürsten ... und machen mit uns was sie wollen. (30)
Whatever Goethe may have felt towards the princes as men, the mere trappings of authority did not impress him. We can hardly agree with those writers who suggest that, even in his younger days, Goethe was biased in favour of authority and more inclined to see the outward splendour of monarchical power than to note the evils which it covered. Gooch, in the chapter "Goethe's Political Background" in "Studies in German History" (1948) and Krennbauer, in "Goethe und der Staat" (1949), both leave us with the impression that Goethe did not share the anti-monarchical sentiments which were current in his earlier years. Gooch, writing of his attitude to the Holy Roman Empire, says that "Goethe ... saw rather the glamour than the hollowness of a picturesque survival."(31) He refers, among other spectacles, to the Imperial Coronation at Frankfort in 1765. But turning to the description of this event in "Dichtung und Wahrheit", we find that, although stirred by what he saw on this occasion, Goethe was aware,

dass hier mehrere Gewalten einander gegenüber standen, die sich das Gleichgewicht hielten, und nur insofern einig waren, als sie den neuen Regenten noch mehr als den alten zu beschränken gedachten; dass jedermann sich nur insofern seines Einflusses freute, als er seine Privilegien zu erhalten und zu erweitern und seine Unabhängigkeit mehr zu sichern hoffte. (32)

It is clear that, however much he might respond emotionally to a spectacle such as this, he did not allow his feelings to obscure his judgement.

As a mature dramatist, Goethe reveals his sympathy both for those who mean to govern well and for those who are oppressed by those who govern badly. In his early work he reveals much sympathy for the latter. In Act IV of "Götz von Berlichingen" Weislingen tells of a conversation with the Emperor.

"Wir redeten vom Wohl des Staats. O! sagt' er! Hätt' ich von jeher Räte
In the words of the Emperor, Goethe addresses those who might reply as Adelheid had done on that occasion: "Er verliert den Geist eines Regenten."(34)

In his minor political plays Goethe assigns to the ruling prince or his equivalent a rôle similar to that which is assigned to him in Brandes's "Der Landesvater". The Emperor in "Götz von Berlichingen" (1771) has established a supreme court of justice to redress wrong and to maintain the civil peace. If his benevolent intentions come to nothing, it is not so much his own fault as that of the delegated power of the justiciary. In "Clavigo" (1774), Beaumarchais assures us that the King is great and good but isolated from his people by the Court. "... überall gibt's treffliche Menschen unter den Mächtigen und Großen, und das Ohr der Majestät ist selten taub; nur ist unsere Stimme meist zu schwach, bis dahinauf zu reichen."(35)

The evil of authority arises where real power falls into the hands of the King's officers. Carlos, proposing to have the guiltless nuisance Beaumarchais shipped off to India as a convict, acts on his own initiative.

It is as if Goethe mistrusted most the officials who stand between the ruler and his subjects. Perhaps he would agree with Frederick the Great, who in his "Considérations sur l'état présent du corps politique de l'Europe" (1737-1738) submits, as the main cause of the excesses of power politics, the delegation of affairs to ministers. More probably, however, the rôle usually allotted to the ruler by Goethe and other dramatists was a necessary precaution taken to appease the Censorship. Prudence required that the ruler should be pushed into the background, and emerge, if at all, preferably as a patriarchal figure, a model of what rulers ought to be.
This was prudent. At the same time it fitted in with the theory of the tragedy of common life, as introduced into Germany by Lessing.

Lessing agrees with Aristotle that the fear which the tragic hero arouses, the fear that his fate might well have been our own, can only be aroused if the hero as a moral being fundamentally resembles us. But he extends the necessary moral likeness of the hero to ourselves to include his social status. The names of heroes and princes can at most impress us by their majesty and pomp. We do not pity men like these as princes or as heroes. We pity them as men or not at all. The state, with which we identify their names, is too abstract to arouse our pity.  

At the same time Lessing, like Aristotle, rejects the villain as a tragic hero. Since we cannot see ourselves in his shoes, we cannot feel that his fate might befall us also. Since he cannot suffer more than he deserves, we can hardly pity him.

Apparently it did not occur to Lessing that the ruler might act unscrupulously, not for his own sake but for the sake of his country. But this was not surprising. In the 18th century despotic practices in many States - Cassel, Mecklenburg, Hesse-Darmstadt, Bavaria, Württemberg, Zweibrücken, Ansbach-Baireuth, Saxony - impressed on German dramatists not so much the ruler's moral difficulty as the troubles of his subjects. If the despot ever thought of doing so, he could not always plead the higher interest of the state in order to justify the injuries which he inflicted. The rulers of the "Principe", the dramatist might think, were academically interesting. But when in real life did rulers practise evil conscientiously?

According to his "Geschichte meiner Zeit", which did not appear until 1788, Frederick the Great did. In his "Anti-Machiavell", written in 1739,
when he was not yet King, he refutes Machiavelli's doctrine. In the later-written work, he accepts it. When the Fatherland is threatened, scruples must be set aside and dishonourable means resorted to. He says this, however, only after much heart-searching and even then regretfully.


Als Grundgesetz der Regierung des kleinsten wie des größten Staates kann man den Drang zur Vergrößerung betrachten. Diese Leidenschaft ist bei jeder weltlichen Macht ebenso tief eingewurzelt wie beim Vatikan der Gedanke der Weltherrschaft.

Die Fürsten zügeln ihre Leidenschaften nicht eher, als bis sie ihre Kräfte erschöpft sehen: das sind die feststehenden Gesetze der europäischen Politik, denen jeder Staatsmann sich beugen muß. (37)

What Frederick here designates as the fixed laws of European politics is the predictable behaviour of other rulers. Their selfishness, their mistrust and fear, perpetuate themselves. These are the "laws" as they actually prevail. What they ought to be instead does not immediately concern him as a statesman. He must live by the "laws" of common practice.

Machiavelli was right. An unselfish ruler surrounded by ambitious powers cannot defend his country or himself. But Frederick concedes this reluctantly. Machiavelli's principles are less appropriate to home affairs than they are to foreign policy. Deceit, he says, cannot be justified when the strong practise it against the weak or when the Prince uses it against
The King's posthumously published correspondence caused Herder to see him in a new light, as a man forced into making war in spite of his humanity. But Frederick's plea for understanding, appearing late, can hardly have done much to alter the impression which he made on German writers in his own life-time. In his later years his rule became more and more arbitrary. He interfered in trials, sometimes even punishing the judges whose verdicts had displeased him. He dismissed capable officers and civil servants. The heavy duties which he imposed on coffee and tobacco, enforced by French officials, were widely resented. He inspired fear but was no longer popular. As the sensitive and well-meaning King that emerges from his writings, Frederick the Great was well aware how delicate his moral situation was. But his actions spoke louder than his words. In his state as in most other German states despotism remained the rule. The dramatist therefore naturally tended to focus the attention of his audience on the abuse of power. The abuse of power, combined with dramatic theory, tended to relegate the ruler to a position of subordinate importance in German drama. It also tended, still more strongly, to eliminate from the dramatis personae the good ruler who must suffer morally from decisions which circumstances have forced upon him.

The ruler as a man forced against his nature into evil methods almost appears in J.A. Törring's "Agnes Bernauerin" (first performed in 1780). In this play Duke Ernst finds himself confronted by a problem which Hebbel's play on the same subject has made more familiar. In Törring's treatment of it Agnes is destroyed because subordinate officials exceed their orders. By doing so they relieve the Duke of his problem. But the problem is one which
Törring understands and which his Duke finds painful. As in Hebbel's "Agnes Bernauer" the marriage of the low-born Agnes to Albrecht the heir apparent seems likely to precipitate a civil war. The Duke is well aware of this and its unpleasant implication. "Vielleicht auch ist sie unschuldig, verführt, verblendet! Aber Ehre und Vaterland fordern ein Opfer; besser sie als Tausende!"(39) If she will not freely renounce Albrecht, he will not, however, give orders secretly to murder her. First she will be brought to trial. "Vicedom, Ihr und der Rat sprechen dann gesetzmäßig über sie."(40) When the court has made its verdict known, it will be his task either to confirm, or modify or annul the sentence which they recommend to him.

It is not the Duke but the "Vicedom" who puts the case for murder. He thinks of Agnes as Schiller's Elizabeth does of Maria Stuart. While Agnes lives, the problem that she raises will remain unsolved, for the least prospect of the girl's release will divide the country into two opposing camps. Half measures, taken out of pity, will do more harm than good. "Sterben, oder bürgerlicher Krieg! eine Welt muß zwischen die zwei gesetzt werden, oder es ist nichts gethan."(41)

By having Agnes murdered he relieves the Duke of the need to take a decision which must either dissatisfy or pain him. We may perhaps feel that in this way the dramatist avoids the problem which he sets himself. Clearly he can see that the choice which the ruler has to make is not necessarily a simple one, between benevolence and tyranny. Sometimes the ruler has to choose between conflicting rights. It is a weakness of the play, however, that Törring's Duke should uphold, equally, the rights of Agnes on the one hand and Bavaria on the other and yet not need to choose between them. At the same time, though he will punish the murderers of Agnes, he welcomes what
has happened as a stroke of fate. "... ich hatte das Urteil gehört; hätt' es gemildert; - zu spät! Es war ihr Schicksal! ... Rache soll folgen dem Manne, der durch entheiligte Gesetze sie mordete." (42) He equates justice with revenge but only to admonish Albrecht when he also speaks about revenge a few lines later.

Ernst: Vergebung ist deiner würdig, mein Sohn, laß Gott die Rache!
Albrecht: Was wäre dann mein Trost?
Ernst: Bayern! (43)

But although confused, the Duke Ernst of Töring's "Agnes Bernauerin" at least enables us to see that occasions may arise when the ruler must make concessions to the national or public interest, either at the cost of moral principles or, which is not necessarily the same thing, at the cost of moral feelings.

Goethe was clearly aware of this. In "Clavigo" (1774) Don Carlos refers explicitly to the problem of "Staatsräson":

Möge deine Seele sich erweitern, und die Gewißheit des großen Gefühls über dich kommen, daß außerordentliche Menschen eben auch darin außerordentliche Menschen sind, weil ihre Pflichten von den Pflichten des gemeinen Menschen abgehen; daß der, dessen Werk es ist, ein großes Ganzes zu überschauen, zu regieren, zu erhalten, sich keinen Vorwurf zu machen braucht, geringe Verhältnisse vernachlässigt, Kleinigkeiten dem Wohl des Ganzens aufgeopfert zu haben. (44)

There is something similar to this in "Iphigenie" (1779/1786), where Pylades pleads the excuse of necessity to justify his scheme for tricking Thoas. But however much we disapprove of the influence of Don Carlos and Pylades on their respective friends, they are neither of them rogues, and even if they were, it would not follow that Goethe indicates his own opinion by causing them to speak for "Staatsräson", or in the case of Pylades, for
something that essentially resembles it. Even the young Goethe does not
indict the tyrant as unambiguously as Lessing, Brandes or Schiller do. His
strictures are comparatively restrained.

Restraint of this kind presumably enabled Goethe to succeed, as he
succeeds in "Egmont" (completed in 1787), in dealing with the problem of
power from the two opposing points of view of those who wield it and of those
who must endure it. When Egmont condemns despotism, he could hardly do so
more persuasively: " ... diese unbeschränkten Eingriiffe der Gewalt, sind sie
nicht Vorboten, daß einer tun will, was Tausende nicht sollen? Er will sich
allein frei machen ..."(45) But when Orange warns him that Alba's purge
might begin at the top, and that Egmont and he might be summarily liquidated,
his will not believe the King to be capable of acting so unjustly. He
exonerates the King; he trusts him. He only fears that Philip's heir may
prove to be unmerciful, or else, we particularly note, that his servant may
not interpret him correctly in a land powerless to mutter in the King's ear
and with whose rights he has not been made familiar. It is one of Rousseau's
objections to monarchy, it is also that of Schiller's Philip, that while the
virtuous shun the courts of kings, having no eye to their advantage, the
interest of rascals and intrigurers vigorously asserts itself there. "Wie
seltene kommt ein König zu Verstand."(46) Indeed. But whose fault is this?
As Egmont says: the people trust more in one another than in the group which
immediately surrounds and humours the King: "dass an den Blicken seines Herrn
altert"(47), believing that it is the King's duty not only to keep order and
to uphold the faith but to dispossess the people of their property and the
Dutch princes of their rights. From his earlier comments on the warning
letter from his uncle at the Spanish court, we understand that his own behaviour
is the object of report and already suspect.

The judiciary, the delegated instrument of the King's will, is denounced by Vansen, a malcontent but a credible one. "Der Schelm sitzt überall im Vorteil ... Ich habe so ein Protokoll abschreiben gehabt, wo der Kommissarius schwer Lob und Geld vom Hofe erhielt, weil er einen ehrlichen Teufel, an den man wollte, zum Schelmen verhört hatte." Where power must first be sought, it is worst exercised. But where power is the birthright of an individual, and does not have to be secured by intrigue and ingratiating, he who wields it sins less than he is sinned against. It is true that, unlike Margaret of Parma, the King himself enjoins severity. But in this he is the victim of that advice of which Alba's gory and exaggerated picture of the rising constitutes a persuasive part.

A person who is morally sensitive may well wish to avoid politics, especially in troubled times. But if politics are thrust upon him, his feelings for others may continually hold him back. The more understanding, the more capable he is of looking at a problem from the point of view of other people, the less capable he will be of taking a decision and acting single-mindedly. Margaret of Parma is a case in point. She is neither with the King, nor against him, neither with nor against the people. She is divided in herself and under pressure from outside. "0 was sind wir Großen auf der Woge der Menschheit? Wir glauben, sie zu beherrschen, und sie treibt uns auf und nieder, hin und her ..." But we know that she could alter much, if she were less humane.

Egmont also is humane. But his position is completely different. He is a Dutch patriot. His country is occupied by a foreign power and the
people are oppressed. His position simplifies his attitude to the problem which the ruling power must solve. When Alba asks him how the country should be tranquillised, he prescribes a general pardon. Loyalty must spring from the affection of the people for their King. He belittles the sacrilege and the sabotage as the work of drunkards. There is no occasion for alarm. Pardon will be more effective than harsh measures intended to intimidate the people. "Und ist ein Verbrechen des Unsinns, der Trunkenheit, nicht eher zu entschuldigen, als grausam zu bestrafen?" (51) It is the plea, essentially, of Kleist's Natalie for the Prince of Homburg. There is no need, what is more, for his Majesty to feel insulted, for the dignity of princes, like the dignity of God, should be felt to be beyond the reach of insult. Let tyranny, he says, beware: the industrious, the rich, will flee oppression to the benefit of foreign countries.

On the ground of eloquence alone, we may suppose that Egmont speaks for Goethe. Alba, it is clear, is guided by his envy. Egmont knows this. "Nicht das Wohl des Staates, nicht die Würde des Königs, nicht die Ruhe der Provinzen haben ihn hierher gebracht. Um sein selbst willen hat er den Krieg geraten ... und ich falle, ein Opfer seines niedrigen Hasses, seines kleinlichen Neides." (52) Alba lays a trap for Egmont and fills out the time with arguments. These arguments are disingenuous. Disingenuous though they are, however, they are persuasive, and arguments similar to these appealed to Goethe in his later life.

In Alba's view it is natural that the King should wish to govern by his own lights: "durch sich" (53). His aim is to preserve peace.

Der König hat nach tiefer Überlegung gesehen, was dem Volke frommt; ... Des Königs Absicht ist, sie selbst zu ihrem Besten einzuschränken, ihr eigenes Heil, wenn's sein muß, ihnen aufzudrängen, die schädlichen
The people's favor is a doubtful guarantee of loyalty and peace. "Ihr
guter Wille ist alles Pfand, das wir haben." (55)

This is the crux of the matter. Whereas Alba mistrusts the people—they are chiefly governed by their greed and fear—Egmont believes that the people can be trusted and that power rests more securely on their good will than on coercion:

Und ist der guter Wille eines Volks nicht das sicherste, das
edelste Pfand? Bei Gott! Wann darf sich ein König sicherer halten,
as wenn sie alle für einen, einer für alle stehn? Sicherer gegen
innre und äußere Feinde? (56)

Alba trusts in terror. Shall insult and desecration go unpunished?
"Zum bereiten Beispiel, daß ungeheure Verbrechen straflos sind?" (57) Freedom
itself is only relatively good:

Ein schönes Wort, wer's recht verstände. Was wollen sie für Freiheit?
Was ist des Freiesten Freiheit? — Recht zu tun! — Und daran wird der
König sie nicht hindern. Nein! Nein! sie glauben sich nicht frei,
wenn sie sich selbst und andern nicht schaden können ... Weit besser
ist's, sie einzuengen, daß man sie wie Kinder halten, wie Kinder zu
ihrem Besten leiten kann. Glaube nur, ein Volk wird nicht alt, nicht
klug; ein Volk bleibt kindisch. (58)

In Alba's opinion, the masses are their own worst enemy. The Venetian
Epigrams (1790) suggest that Goethe would agree:

Nie gelingt es der Menge, für sich zu wollen, wir wissen's.
Doch wer versteht, für uns alle zu wollen, er zeig's.

Frankreichs traurig Geschick, die Großen mögens bedenken;
Aber bedenken fürwahr sollen es Kleine noch mehr.
Große gingen zu Grunde, doch wer beschützte die Menge
Gegen die Menge? Da war Menge der Menge Tyrann. (59)
After 1789 Goethe's point of view approaches more and more closely to that of Alba. The French Revolution appears to have profoundly affected his political beliefs. As it was he had not personally suffered under tyranny as Schiller had. The benevolent autocracy of Weimar made possible what projects he believed to be worth while. As we have seen, he was not blind to the excesses of princely rule in other German states. But however corrupt and irresponsible a government might be, revolution seemed to him to be incomparably worse.

That is the cautionary message of several of his minor plays. "Der Großeophta" (1785), which shows by its presentation of a corrupt society how ripe France was for revolution, warns the ruling classes. "Der Bürgergeneral" on the other hand warns those who were affected by the French ideas. As in Rousseau's "Contrat Social", the underlying assumption appears to be that of the small state, only not so much the City State of Athens or Geneva as the benevolent despotism of Weimar. This, indeed, forms the context, socially, of Goethe's point of view as the wise nobleman expresses it:

Unzeitige Gebote, unzeitige Strafen bringen erst das Übel hervor. In einem Land, wo der Fürst sich vor niemand verschließt, wo alle Stände billig gegeneinander denken, wo niemand gehindert ist, in seiner Art tätig zu sein, wo nützliche Einsichten und Kenntnisse allgemein verbreitet sind: da werden keine Parteien entstehen. Was in der Welt geschieht, wird Aufmerksamkeit erregen, aber aufklärerische Gesinnungen ganzer Nationen werden keinen Einfluß haben. Wir werden in der Stille dankbar sein, daß wir einen heiteren Himmel über uns sehen, indes unglückliche Gewitter unermessliche Fluren verhageln. (60)

He addresses those who must obey. The Countess of "Die Aufgeregtten" (1793) appeals to those who govern: "... ich würde großmütig sein, wie es dem gar wohl ansteht, der Macht hat." (61) As Goethe says to Eckermann (62)
with the words which he had put into her mouth he had indicated how the nobility should think. She had convinced herself that the people might be ruled but not trodden underfoot, and that the revolutionary outbreaks of the lower orders resulted from the injustices inflicted on them by the higher orders.

In "Die natürliche Tochter" (1798/1803), the last of those of Goethe's plays which deal with the French Revolution, the intended picture of oppressed citizens is altogether wanting. The King himself is a minor figure. His world, stable and serene, and his kindly wisdom, point back to Duke Alfons in "Tasso". He is a good man, privileged to rule in moral comfort.

Like Hobbes and Locke in this country, what Egmont understands by "freedom" is immunity, or "freedom from ..." For Alba, it is "freedom to ...", the freedom, not to do what we should like to do, but to realise our better selves, or to acknowledge freely our responsibilities. In later life, Goethe's idea of freedom approaches that of Alba.

Nicht das macht frei, daß wir nichts über uns anerkennen wollen, sondern eben, das wir etwas verehren, das über uns ist. Denn in dem wir es verehren, heben wir uns zu ihm hinauf und legen durch unsere Anerkennung an den Tag, daß wir selber das Höhere in uns tragen und wert sind, seinesgleichen zu sein. (63)

As defined elsewhere, freedom means to Goethe what it means to Kant and Schiller: the free jurisdiction of "Vernunft", unprejudiced by "Neigung", "denn Freiheit ist nichts als die Möglichkeit, unter allen Bedingungen das Vernünftige zu tun." (64) The masses are by no means guided by "Vernunft".

In the French or in any other revolution,

Losgebunden erscheint, sobald die Schranken hinweg sind,
Alles Böse, das tief das Gesetz in die Winkel zurücktrieb. (65)
Order is the great good. We should regard justice not so much as an end in itself, but rather as a means serving to preserve order. At the same time, "eine große Revolution ist nie Schuld des Volkes, sondern der Regierung. Revolutionen sind ganz unmöglich, sobald die Regierungen fortwährend gerecht und wach sind, so daß sie ihnen durch zeitgemäße Verbesserungen entgegenkommen und sich nicht so lange sträuben, bis das Notwendige von unten her erzwungen wird." (66)

In the real world as Goethe saw it the ruler must perform less enviable tasks, not only meeting force with force but incapacitating those who might attack him. Under pressure of their situation, political and geographical, the German princes had established a tradition of moral latitude with regard to the interest of the State. In Goethe's view this was justified. We should not condemn the Prussian King for seizing Polish territory. The Poles were certain to be conquered - if not from one side, from another. Was Prussia to stand and watch and come away with empty hands while Austria and Russia helped themselves? "Ich stelle mich höher als die gewöhnlichen platten moralischen Politiker: ich spreche es geradezu aus, kein König hält Wort, kann es nicht halten, muß stets den gebieterischen Umständen nachgeben." (67)

Rousseau's enquiry into the legitimacy of sovereign power has nothing to do with what Goethe comes to see as its fundamental purpose. Let the Church rule or the State: "wenn nur Ordnung gehalten wird, so ist es ganz einerlei, durch welche Mittel." (68) If the ruler has to choose between justice and order, let him choose order. "Es ist besser, es geschehe dir Unrecht, als die Welt sei ohne Gesetz. Deshalb füge sich jeder dem Gesetze." "Es ist besser, daß Ungerechtigkeiten geschehn, als daß sie auf eine ungerechte Weise gehoben werden." (69)
On the one hand Goethe looks to justice as to that rock on which the edifice of the state will rest secure. This is the point on which Plato lays much stress in the "Republic". Thrasymachus has claimed that injustice is a sign of strength. The "law of nature" as the Sophists understood it has prevailed and rightly so. But, as Socrates objects, the work of injustice is enmity. It causes men to hate each other, to quarrel and to be quite incapable of joint enterprise, whether as free men or as slaves. *(70)*

On the other hand Goethe also believes that if, in normal circumstances, justice is itself a means, tending to maintain the civil peace, there are times, too, when it is anything but that, and when a course must be followed which deprives the individual of his customary due in order that the nation may defend itself. The state must do some evil or else it will neglect much good. In time of war we commit all manner of injustice, injustice not only to the soldiers on the other side but also to our fellow-citizens, whose lives we risk and whose property we requisition.

Under pressure of his patriotic feeling a writer may condone, with regard to a ruler's foreign policy, a brutality which, in home affairs, he would think unjustified. Goethe, who mistrusted patriotic feeling, did not distinguish in this way between those who threatened national security and those who threatened civil peace. He opposed the penalty of death in Weimar. He could not approve of the pardon which Austria had granted to the Milanese conspirators or of that which was granted by the King of Prussia to the students who had disobeyed their military orders. The mature Goethe took the side of Metternich. Obedience had to be compelled, and to pardon the offender necessarily diminished the deterrent force of punishment.

In the 18th century, when the dramatist was apt to overlook the moral
problem of the ruler, he could at least help to call the problem back to mind by pointing out, as Goethe does, that however intolerable despotism was, revolution could be still more intolerable. Schiller too performs this service. On the one hand, he knew what despotism meant, and exposes it in his first four plays. In "Die Räuber" (1781), Kominsky of the robbers must surrender to the ruling Prince either his life or his betrothed. We are persuaded, largely by report, that the Prince is a tyrant. As Bruford reminds us, the vile Franz is himself "a free Imperial Count". The motto on the title-page - "In tyrannis" - sufficiently reveals the author's purpose. But Schiller aims not only at exposing tyranny for what it is, and all too plainly was, for him and for the citizens of Württemberg, but also at exposing that which purports to destroy it: an idealistic, self-deceiving "Großmannssucht", or tyranny in embryo. The despot's world is one which, to improve it, Karl Moor would himself bestride. "Das Gesetz hat noch keinen großen Mann gebildet; aber die Freiheit brütet Kolosse und Extremitäten aus ... Stelle mich vor ein Heer Kerls wie ich, und aus Deutschland soll eine Republik werden, gegen die Rom und Sparta Nonnenklöster sein sollen." He proposes to reallocate by violence the ill-gotten wealth of the few to the distressed many. But his followers frustrate his purpose. With the free hand which he has given them, they behave outrageously. The world of the established despot compares happily with his, and beneath what has loosely been described as Schiller's revolutionary fervour, the Lutheran injunction, "Verehret die Obrigkeit!" is upheld, one might almost say, faute de mieux. The robbers, pitting their misguided strength against insuperable odds, reveal a comradeship and valour more morally substantial than the preface might suggest. But we have Schiller's word that he would only warn us of the
leopard and, so that we may know him, he acquaints us with the splendour of the leopard-skin.

A missionary self-delusion, similar to that of Karl, provides the theme of "Die Verschörung des Fiesco zu Genua" (1783). The old Andreas Doria will be succeeded as Doge of Genoa by his villainous nephew Gianettino, whose present record of bloodshed and rape threatens to establish a boundless despotism. We gather from Fiesco's parable of animal life that the despot must at all costs be overthrown. But democracy, as he understands it, means government diluted. It is indecisive. It cannot secure the state against the enemy. The truth is that Fiesco really distinguishes between is government by himself, whom he admires and trusts, and government by anybody else, or others, whom he does not admire or trust. The despot is a man who governs for his own material advantage. Fiesco on the other hand believes that he will rule Genoa like the lion in his parable, as a strong, disinterested monarch. In his dictatorship lies the key to Genoa's salvation. He resists for a moment his ambition to rule and he disclaims it. But the first, creditable outcome of the struggle is reversed off-stage. His wife is killed and he is grieved. But he now believes that providence has given him a sign. It has tested and prepared him for the stern task of ruling over Genoa:

... die Vorsehung, versteh' ich ihren Wink, schlug mir diese Wunde nur, mein Herz für die nahe Größe zu prüfen. - Es war die gewagteste Probe - jetzt fürcht' ich weder Qual noch Entzücken mehr ... ich will Genua einen Fürsten schenken, wie ihm noch kein Europäer sah ... (73)

Fiesco appears to us to be a born tyrant. Leonore, his wife, believes that tyrants are not so much born as made. The autocrat is bound to be a tyrant; he is more corrupted than corruptible:
Das Herz eines Menschen, und wär auch Fiesco selbst der Mensch, ist zu eng für zwei allmächtige Götter - Götter, die sich so gram sind. Selten stiegen Engel auf den Thron, selten herunter. Wer keinen Menschen zu fürchten braucht, wird er sich eines Menschen erbarmen? Wer an jeden Wunsch einen Donnerkeil heften kann, wird er für nöthig finden, ihm ein sanftes Wörtchen zum Geleite zu geben? ... Fürsten, Fiesco! diese mißrathenen Projecte der wollenden und nicht kännenden Natur - sitzen so gern zwischen Menschheit und Gottheit nieder; - heillose Geschöpfe! Schlechtere Schöpfer! (74)

In "Kabale und Liebe" (1784), Schiller indicts despotic practices more directly than he does in his first two plays. Yet Ferdinand, who inveighs against the established order, behaves more despicably than Karl does. He acclaims as many "rights" as happen to be his. He is too ungenerous to discard the unlikiest of incriminating letters. He will raise money on his father's credit in order to elope. His attitude towards Luise is that of an abusive prig. He bullies her. He appoints himself her judge and executioner, by divine commission, for her own deserts and for the good, also, of her father. He then believes that he can suitably indemnify her father with a cash payment.

It is Ferdinand, nevertheless, who criticises despotic rule:

Neid, Furcht, Verwünschung sind die traurigen Spiegel, worin sich die Hoheit eines Herrschers belächelt - Tränen, Flüche, Verzweiflung die entsetzliche Mahlzeit, woran diese gepriesenen Glücklichen schweben, von der sie betrunken aufstehen und so in die Ewigkeit vor den Thron Gottes taumeln. (75)

Ferdinand appears to speak for Schiller. If we ask, "Why he?" we may think that Schiller is being prudent rather than careless, being mindful of the Censorship. However, it may well be that he is again casting doubt on the motives of those who seek to undermine authority.

In his next play, "Don Carlos" (1787), no such doubt arises. It is true
that there is much that we admire about the Marquis Posa. In a world that rewards flatterers, he dares to be honest. He lays down his life, and for a while his reputation, for a cause which he does not hope to see accomplished in his own time. He has a stronger claim to sympathy than Karl, Fiesco or Ferdinand. And yet he does not scruple to enlist a son against his father for a cause which he considers good. The political objective matters more to him than do the ties of blood in others. He regards the love of Carlos for the Queen only as a means by which he may revive in him his old missionary zeal. It is to satisfy his pride, Elizabeth believes, and not only to advance his cause, that he manipulates the love of Carlos and herself for one another. As one who, as Schiller says, "hüllt sich in die Größe seiner Tat, um keine Reue darüber zu empfinden" (76), he can plot against the King in moral comfort. He can even argue that although, outwardly, he plots against him, he really intends to serve him.

Königin. Was ich höchstens
Sie zeihen könnt, Marquis - was von Ihnen
Mich fast befremden könnt, wäre - wäre -


Königin. Unredlichkeit
Am wenigsten. Der König wollte mir
Wahrscheinlich nicht durch sie entbieten lassen,
Was sie mir sagen werden.

Marquis. Nein.

Königin. Und kann
Die gute Sache schlimme Mittel adeln?
Kann sich - verzeihen Sie mir diesen Zweifel -
Ihr edler Stolz zu diesem Amte borgen?
Kaum glaub' ich es.
It is true that, if he can, he is prepared to act straightforwardly.

He urges on the King a new policy of religious tolerance. But the attempt fails and we are made to see that in the short run at least he will either succeed by treachery or not at all.

A sympathetic treatment of the idea of "Staatsräson", in an author who had suffered under despotism as Schiller had, and who saw history as he did, may surprise us. But despite his view of politics in general, in which brutality served no end other than the greed of rulers, in "Don Carlos" he acquaints us with a monarch who, as Bruford says, acts harshly from a sense of what is right and must suffer when he does so. "It is his personal tragedy that though he can never quite suppress his human feelings, his office calls for inhumanity." (78) He believes it is his duty to uphold the Catholic religion and maintain the civil peace in Flanders. His duty to religion and the state are one. As King of Spain he believes that he must answer for the State to God:

Mich ruft mein königliches Amt. Die Pest
Der Ketzerrei steckt meine Völker an,
Der Aufruhr wächst in meinen Niederlanden. (79)

The remedy which he prescribes for heresy and lawlessness is terror:

(1) Ein schauerndes

Exempel soll die Irrenden bekehren.
Den großen Eid, den alle König
Der Christenheit geloben, lös ich morgen.
Dies Blutgericht soll ohne Beispiel sein. (80)
(ii) Und Schrecken bändigt die Empörung nur, Erbarmung hieße Wahnsinn. (61)

His generosity towards Medina Sidonia, the defeated admiral, however, suggests that his severity is free from malice. He admits, and the stage directions strongly indicate, that he is not insensitive to Posa's appeal for religious tolerance and clemency in Flanders. It is true that, when he finds that Posa has deceived him, he declares that he will vent his outraged feelings on those whom Posa tried to serve.

Die Welt
Ist noch auf einen Abend mein. Ich will
Ihm nützen, diesen Abend, daß nach mir
Kein Pflanzer mehr in zehn Menschenaltern
Auf dieser Brandstättenernnten soll. Er brachte
Der Menschheit, seinem Götzen, mich zum Opfer;
Die Menschheit büße mir für ihn! Und jetzt
Mit seiner Puppe fang ich an. (82)

But the hatred that he feels is like the one side of a single coin, the other side of which is his affection:

Ich hab ihn lieb gehabt, sehr lieb. Er war
Mir teuer wie ein Sohn. (83)

In this way, Schiller wins our sympathy for a man whom other dramatists would probably have preferred to pillory, or present, not as he actually seemed to be to them, but as he ought to be, correcting the abuses of his ministers. At the same time he cautions those who would reform the world by violence. At best they simply fail. At worst they not only fail but leave behind them a world more wretched than it was before they interfered with it. As he says in the first few pages of the "Briefe Über die Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen" (1793-1794), there can be no immediate, political
solution to the problems of a troubled world. In his own time, the author sees men rise, claim and grasp what they believe to be their birthright. The edifice of the "natural" monarchical state is tottering. Men say that law shall be enthroned, that man shall be respected as an end and no longer be regarded as a means to one. But is this possible, he asks, in an age in which tyranny and revolt give rise to one another in a vicious circle? The "freed" community, far from hastening ahead into a new, organic life, morally disintegrates. The law of reason will never reign supreme in our affairs until we are able to rely on the natural rectitude of our fellow men.

Political freedom has to be deserved. If we do not deserve it, it is worse than useless. An aesthetic education, to condition us for that which we are seeking to enjoy, our freedom, offers hope in the long term. But not until we have established in ourselves the moral law of reason will politics be other than what politics have always been, a blind, chaotic struggle for supremacy.

We are to understand that it is not enough that kings should be philosophers. In an unchanged world, philosophers must sometimes act as brutally as tyrants do. But being philosophers, confident of knowing where their duty lies, they will not feel moral pain when they perform it. The sacrifice of human life, we read, in Schiller's essay, "Über den Grund des Vergnügens an tragischen Gegenständen", may sometimes be justified. For life in itself is not important. It is important as a means through which the moral law is realised. The idea that a father should sacrifice his son or a son sacrifice his father, for society or the state, is one which may immediately offend us but which we may yet accept when we consider it objectively.
Aber es gibt Fälle, wo das moralische Vergnügen nur durch einen moralischen Schmerz erkauf wird, und dies geschieht, wenn eine moralische Pflicht übertreten werden muß, um einer höheren und allgemeinern desto gemäß zu handeln. Wäre Coriolan, anstatt seine eigene Vaterstadt zu belagern, vor Antium oder Corioli mit einem römischen Heere gestanden, wäre seine Mutter eine Volsckerin gewesen, und ihre Bitten hätten die nämliche Wirkung auf ihn gehabt, so würde dieser Sieg der Kindespflicht den entgegengesetzten Eindruck auf uns machen. Der Ehrerbietung gegen die Mutter stände dann die weit höhere bürgerliche Verbindlichkeit entgegen, welche im Kollisionsfall vor jener den Vorrang verdient. Jener Kommandant, dem die Wahl gelassen wird, entweder die Stadt zu übergeben oder seinen gefangenen Sohn vor seinen Augen durchbohrt zu sehen, wählt ohne Bedenken das letztere, weil die Pflicht gegen sein Kind der Pflicht gegen sein Vaterland billig untergeordnet ist. Es empört zwar im ersten Augenblick unser Herz, daß ein Vater dem Naturtriebe und der Vaterpflicht so widersprechend handelt, aber es reißt uns bald zu einer süßen Bewunderung hin, daß sogar ein moralischer Antrieb, und wenn er sich selbst der Neigung gattet, die Vernunft in ihrer Gesetzgebung nicht irre machen kann. (84)

We are aware that, when Timoleon of Corinth puts to death his ambitious brother, whom he loves, he does not act malevolently. He does what he sincerely believes to be his duty to his country. At first we may feel that he behaves outrageously,

aber unser Abscheu löst sich bald in die höchste Achtung der heroischen Tugend auf, die ihre Anspriuche gegen jeden fremden Einfluß der Neigung behauptet und im stürmischen Widerstreit der Gefühle ebenso frei und ebenso richtig als im Zustand der höchsten Ruhe entscheidet. Wir können über republikanische Pflicht mit Timoleon ganz verschieden denken; das ändern an unserm Wohlgefallen nichts. Vielmehr sind es gerade solche Fälle, wo unser Verstand nicht auf der Seite der handelnden Person ist, aus welchen man erkennt, wie sehr wir Pflichtmäßigkeit über Zweckmäßigkeit, Einstimmung mit der Vernunft über die Einstimmung mit dem Verstand erheben. (85)
In his essay, "Über die tragische Kunst", Schiller returns to this idea. The pity which we feel for the tragic hero is most pure when the hero deliberately accomplishes his duty at the cost of inclination. In this way Schiller adapts the Kantian idea of the categorical imperative of duty to his theory of drama. If we in turn accept Schiller’s theory of drama and apply to Kleist’s last play the terms that Schiller uses, we shall applaud the Elector when he first confirms the penalty of death; we shall dismiss Natalie’s "liebliche Gefühle" as "Natur", "Neigung", "Stofftrieb", the antithesis of "Vernunft". Probably, however, we shall not accept Schiller’s theory. It appears that Schiller himself would think it most unlikely that many of us would. In his "Grund des Vergnügens" he already agrees that to admire Timoleon when he puts Timophanes to death requires


einen hellen Verstand und eine von jeder Naturkraft, also auch von moralischen Trieben (insofern sie instinktartig wirken) unabhängige Vernunft. Daher wird die nämliche Handlung, in welcher einige wenige die höchste Zweckmäßigheit erkennen, dem großen Haufen als ein empörender Widerspruch erscheinen, obgleich beide ein moralisches Urteil fällen; daher ruht es, daß die Rührung an solchen Handlungen nicht in der Allgemeinheit mitgeteilt werden kann, wie die Einheit der menschlichen Natur und die Notwendigkeit des moralischen Gesetzes erwarten läßt. Aber auch das wahrste und höchste Erhabene ist, wie man weiß, vielen Überspannung und Un Sinn, weil das Maß der Vernunft, die das Erhabene erkennt, nicht in allen dasselbe ist. Eine kleine Seele sinkt unter der Last so großer Vorstellungen dahin oder fühlt sich peinlich über ihren moralischen Durchmesser auseinander gespannt. Sieht nicht oft genug der gemeine Haufe da die häßliche Verwirrung, wo der denkende Geist gerade die höchste Ordnung bewundert? (86)

In the essay, "Über die tragische Kunst", however, Schiller agrees that something more than an unprejudiced and penetrating mind is wanted if the audience of his own day is to admire the Corinthian or Roman hero.
To admire Timoleon the spectator would need to have been born and brought up as a Corinthian himself. It is not surprising, therefore, that Schiller does not always apply in his own drama what he prescribes in his aesthetic essays. In "Wilhelm Tell" he abandons the "Roman" point of view and vindicates instead the ordinary man of common sense. The hero of the play feels that his duties are primarily those of a father and a husband. He knows as well as anyone that the Austrians under Geßler oppress his fellow-Swiss but he will not perform his duty as a patriot till the insurrection is irrevocably launched. If he joins in sooner than he meant to do, it is only because his hand is forced and he must save his family.

Octavio in "Wallenstein" comes nearer to the type of tragic figure with which we are concerned and with which the author also is concerned as a dramatic theorist. Octavio is a man who is governed by a sense of duty. His duty happens to be a morally distasteful one. As physician to the body politic, he applies the principle of "like cures like". His son Max puts his trust in Wallenstein. His trust fails. It does not bring out the best in Wallenstein and it does not save the state from Wallenstein's treachery. Octavio, however, deceives Wallenstein and wins his soldiers back into the service of the Emperor.

Events justify what Octavio does. His son's blind faith in Wallenstein
forces him to justify himself. But his arguments are not strictly speaking those of Machiavelli. The evil methods prescribed by Machiavelli are intended to prevent what could prove to be worse evil, which might or might not arise and which, indeed, they might themselves provoke. Octavio does not say that the ruler must assume that his neighbours will attack him or his generals betray him when they feel that they are strong enough. He will correct evil and forestall worse. But evil must first declare itself.

By pleading obedience to orders Octavio relieves his conscience. His efforts to satisfy his son, however, show how much he is aware of the predicament in which the ruler finds himself:

Mein bester Sohn! Es ist nicht immer möglich,
Im Leben sich so kinderrein zu halten,
Wie's uns die Stimme lehrt im Innersten.
In steter Notwehr gegen arge List
Bleibt auch das redliche Gemüt nicht wahr -
Das eben ist der Fluch der bösen Tat,
Daß sie, fortzeugend, immer Böses muß gebären.
Ich klügle nicht, ich thue meine Pflicht;
Der Kaiser schreibt mir mein Betragen vor.
Wohl wär' es besser, überall dem Herzen
Zu folgen, doch darüber würde man
Sich manchen guten Zweck versagen müssen.
Hier gilt's, mein Sohn, dem Kaiser wohl zu dienen,
Das Herz mag dazu sagen, was es will." (88)

By discrediting those who cry out "Liberty!", Schiller reminds us that the ruler has his problem too. In "Wallenstein" he states that problem clearly, but without conceding much to Machiavelli. The assumptions, however, underlying Machiavelli's doctrine appear, from what Schiller says, to be well-justified. For the world of politics resembles an arena. Incorrigible men dispute it. The sovereign, as a rule, finds himself
continually threatened from without, and in the struggle for his life, or his position, he does not feel morally divided. In "Maria Stuart" (1800) the discordant voices of humanity and "Staatsrason" do not speak in the one person of the Queen but in the counsel of the Earl of Shrewsbury, on the one hand, and of Lord Burleigh on the other. It is true that, for as long as Mary Stuart lives, her claim to sovereignty will continue to give rise to unrest among the Catholics who support her and the Protestants who oppose the Catholics. But the Queen fears more for herself than she does for the civil peace. She is governed, not by scruple or kindness, but by the fickle approbation of the mob. She would like the prisoner to be put to death, if possible in secret, without trial and without publicity. To save her reputation, a blameless secretary must be locked away. Her "benevolence" conceals her malice. What Mary says is true. Her parliament serves her as a willing slave. It passes the laws which she asks it to pass and, no less readily, it annuls them. It will ratify a marriage and will then dissolve it. It will disinherit the royal daughters of the realm as bastards and tomorrow it will have them crowned. It will abjure its faith four times under four monarchs. We are told of Mary's antecedent guilt and of the brutal circumstances in which she incurred it. We learn how Mary was convicted of complicity in Babington's plot by false evidence. Catholic fanatics, backed by the French ambassador, attempt to assassinate the Queen. Thus at every turn "Maria Stuart" illustrates what Schiller says in the opening paragraphs of his essay "Über das Erhabene" (1802). The world as a historic object is nothing but the strife of natural forces with each other and with human liberty. It registers more actions which are attributable to nature than to free will. In a Cato or a Phocion reason makes its power felt.
But they are exceptional. It is not in history, where reason lies buried in caprice, but only in certain individuals that the moral law may be seen to triumph, and only then as an idea.

The truth of this was impressed on Schiller as a historian, above all no doubt by his study of the Thirty Years' War. The havoc which the war had wrought in the first half of the seventeenth century affected German political thought for some time after. The lesson which Schiller and other writers drew from it was reinforced by the French Revolution of 1789. The events of 1789-1815 mark a turning-point in German political thinking. In the next chapter we shall study their importance with reference to the work of Kleist.
CHAPTER II

The influence of patriotic feeling and political reform in the plays of Kleist and on Kleist's treatment of the theme of "Staatsräson".
The writings of those who inspired the French Revolution did not suggest that the social and political reforms which they envisaged could only be achieved by violence. In the Age of Reason, side by side with a contempt for tyranny, mistrust for violence was still widespread. Even Rousseau, despite his hatred of the "ancien régime", warns against the "coup d'État", whatever it is that may inspire it. The usurper will contrive to bring about, or will select, the troubled hour, when, under cover of national alarm, he will pass destructive laws which, in more sober mind, the people would reject. (1)

The French Revolution itself did not begin with civil strife. Though disturbances arose when provincial citizens refused to pay their taxes, and when hungry men heard rumours of a "pacte de famine", it was the noble members of the "parlements" who were chiefly responsible for provoking them, not the middle-class or Third Estate which set up the Constituent Assembly. The storming of the Bastille was a mere incident, and not one which the Assembly had encouraged. Though the Third Estate showed firmness it did not use force. It was to yield to force within its own ranks. But it did not use force in order to transform the position of the King into that of a Constitutional monarch.

It is not surprising therefore that in Germany not only the radicals but moderates as well were encouraged and inspired by the events of 1789. Kant applauded what appeared to him to spell the end of arbitrary power and Fichte the victories of the Jacobins. When the French armies appeared on the Rhine, the German intellectuals as a whole welcomed them. Forster was prepared to let the French take Mainz and Görres the entire left bank. Such was the measure of their sympathies.

Romantic writers, such as Schelling, Wackenroder and Tieck, were delighted
to see the "ancien régime" collapse. Friedrich Schlegel spoke more cautiously than the others did of the events that were taking place, but he too was converted to the French ideas. The true republic, he maintained, in a world of true republics, was certain to achieve eternal peace. Herder, who had greatly influenced the Romantics, agreed. The harshness of political behaviour, he believed, could be attributed to a corrupt ruling class governing for its own ends. The self-governing society would abolish war. "Kabinette mögen sich betrügen; politische Maschinen mögen gegeneinander gerückt werden, bis eine die andere zersprengt. Nicht so rücken Vaterländen gegeneinander; sie liegen ruhig nebeneinander und stehen sich als Familien bei."(2)

When the Romantics saw what the French Revolution really meant, however, they reacted against it violently. The idea of "liberty" was now discredited. In practice it had degenerated into anarchy. This in its turn had given way to tyranny and tyranny had maintained itself by foreign conquest. When autocracy had been replaced by a constitutional monarchy more or less on the English pattern they rejoiced. But they had never contemplated the violent abolition of monarchy altogether in order to remedy its defects.

There were some writers - Gleim, Jacobi, the Niebuhrs, Justus Höser - who had mistrusted the Revolution right from the beginning. They, who mistrusted it, and those whom it had disappointed were inevitably drawn to the political philosophy of Edmund Burke.

In his "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (1790) Burke prophesies the course which the Revolution was to take. But he attacks, not simply violent methods of reform, but any sudden, radical and arbitrary change in the order of society. In his view sound institutions develop slowly and
organically, not convulsively. Their sturdy resistance to decay shows that they enjoy God's blessing. To bring about a sudden and violent change in the social order is to question the wisdom of Providence itself. In any case, what could be the wisdom of a single man, or group of men, compared with the accumulated wisdom of countless men over many centuries? Napoleon, by reducing the number and increasing the size of the small German states, and bringing in the "Code Napoléon", led many Germans to believe that Burke's warning had been amply justified. The new order was unnatural and ungodly.

The writings of Burke, introduced into Germany by way of the Electorate of Hanover, especially appealed to the pious men and women whom the French anti-clericals had offended. The apostles of "reason" had misled their disciples. By launching their attack upon the Church, they had undermined the rock on which the state was built. The human race was naturally inclined towards religion. Destroy its Christian faith and a degrading superstition would replace it. The result then would be disastrous. For the Christian Church filled the minds of those who governed with a high and worthy notion of their task and made them more aware that ultimately they must answer for their deeds to God.

As a result of the French Revolution the Romantics placed their trust more firmly than before in the established order. They found in Burke what they were anxious to believe. What they seem to overlook, however, is that Burke does not oppose change as such but only the methods which the French adopted to achieve it. Again, though he clearly encourages the Romantic idea of the king as a patriarchal figure, the monarchic system which he praises is that which had developed in his own country: a system, that is
to say, in which monarchic, aristocratic and popular elements were combined. The Romantics - in particular Novalis - criticised the manner in which Frederick the Great governed but not the system under which he did so.

Napoleon, as a product of the Revolution, served to reinforce the conservative ideas of the German Romantics. At the same time his invasion of the German states made many Germans feel more aware of being German. In time of war love of country easily degenerates into chauvinism and enables most men to accept, unthinkingly perhaps, but none the less wholeheartedly, the principle of "Staatsraison". As Herder points out, Machiavelli wrote his "Principe" when Italy was constantly being overrun by foreign soldiers. Machiavelli was "ein redlicher Mann ... ein warmer Freund seines Vaterlandes." His work was simply a product of his time: "ein rein politisches Meisterwerk für italienische Fürsten damaliger Zeit, in ihrem Geschmack, nach ihren Grundsätzen, zu dem Zwecke geschrieben, ... Italien von den Barbaren ... zu befreien." (3)

The making of allowances of this kind, for the actions of the ruler, would surprise us less in the Napoleonic era than immediately before it. Yet the theme of "Staatsraison" cannot be said to be a prominent one in German writing at this time. The German patriots appear to have been more concerned with ideas of social and political reform.

The natural connection which Herder notes in Machiavelli, between the subject of "Staatsraison" and patriotic feeling, is revealed in the political writing of Fichte. It is not consistently upheld there, it is not conspicuous. Patriotic feeling does not cause Fichte consciously to abandon his liberal-republican beliefs. But it does appear to cause him to approach and finally accept Machiavelli's main idea. In the "Grundsüge des
gegenwärtigen Zeitalters" (1806) he subordinates the interest of the individual to the interest of the species as represented by the state. In the early stages of social history the individual instinctively accepts the restraints imposed upon him by the laws and customs of society. In a middle stage he reflects upon these laws and customs restraining him, rebels against them and asserts as an individual what he believes to be his rights. In the third stage the state as an educative force leads him back to the point at which he recognises that the life, desires and achievements of the state are immeasurably more important than his own are.

The "Reden an die deutsche Nation" (1808) form a sequel to the "Grundsprüche". They reveal how tenaciously Fichte resists the demands which undermine his cosmopolitan ideals:

patriotism made on his cosmopolitan ideal:

So wird denn jeglicher Kosmopolit ganz notwendig vermittels seiner Beschränkung durch die Nation Patriot, und jeder, der in seiner Nation der kräftigste und regsamste Patriot wäre, ist eben darum der regsamste Weltbürger, indem der letzte Zweck aller nationalen Bildung doch immer der ist, daß die Bildung sich verbreitet in dem Menschengeschlecht." (4)

We may feel that at this point Fichte is attempting to convince himself. At another point, at which his patriotism wrings concessions from his liberal beliefs, he appears to be convinced already, when he asks,

Welcher Geist nun ist es, der ein unzweifeltes Recht habe, jedem, den es treffen mag, ob er nun selbst es wolle oder nicht, gebietend anzumuten, und den Widerstrebenden zu zwingen, daß er alles, bis auf sein Leben, in Gefahr setze? Nicht der Geist der ruhigen bürgerlichen Liebe zu der Verfassung und den Gesetzen, sondern die verzehrende Flamme der höheren Vaterlandsliebe ... für welche der Edle mit Freuden sich opfert, und der Unedle ... sich eben opfern soll. (5)

By saying in effect that the nation's interest is sometimes more important
than questions of legality, Fichte comes very near to accepting the principle of "Staatsråson". In an article written in 1807, "Über Machiavelli als Schriftsteller und Stellen aus seinen Schriften", he does so more explicitly.

In the "Rechtslehre" of 1812, Fichte returns to his earlier idea of a "Völkerbund", a federation of world states. In the "Reich der Vernunft", which will be realised somewhere in the distant future, the conflicts which now divide these states will disappear. The need to forsake diplomacy and resort instead to armed force will no longer arise. But in the meantime the countries of the world must vigorously and separately pursue their own interests.

Although not always classed as a Romantic, Fichte influenced the political thought of Novalis, the Schlegel brothers, Schleiermacher and Tieck. Novalis like Fichte emphasises the indebtedness of the individual to the State.

The ideas of Novalis affected in their turn the work of Adam Müller.
According to Müller, freedom rightly understood meant obedience to God. God, says Müller, created the State. So, to obey God at all times, we must at all times obey the State.

But this is not to say that the political ideas of the German Romantics now became less humane or wholly illiberal. Their political ideas often conflict with one another. They are far from being consistently authoritarian. For the present let us simply say that anyone who wanted to believe that a civilised way of life chiefly depended on national security, which depended in its turn on strong leadership, could find the support which he was looking for in the political ideas of the German Romantics.

The Romantics emphasised the need to make the State strong. They did not go further and subscribe to Machiavellism. On the other hand they did not stand in the way of it. They did not emphasise the people's rights but rather their responsibilities. The only rights which the people could legitimately claim were those which had long been established. The Romantics would not hear of any theory of contract. Respecting as they did the natural growth of things, and believing that violent and sudden change was not natural, they were anxious to preserve diversity of rank and privilege. They did not sympathise with the spirit of criticism which the French Revolution had fostered and spread. They preferred the discipline imposed by the mediaeval guild to the influence of self-made men. Thus they encouraged an already German tendency to accept without question whatever policy the ruler might decide to follow.

At the same time the Romantic love of what is great, miraculous or spectacular produced the cult of the great man. It was not a new cult. In the words of H.S. Reiss,
The German literary movement of the "Sturm und Drang" had worshipped at the shrine of genius, but only with the German Romantic did it assume political significance. For they transferred this cult of genius from the sphere of art to that of politics. In art it is legitimate to pay heed to genius, for in its realm genius rules, but in politics it is different. The German Romantics ignored this difference, ... Aesthetic criteria (the Romantics believe) have to be applied to politics. The artistic genius ... has developed his individuality more fully than others. The same is true of the great political leader, and he has a right to fashion society according to his arbitrary will. He is able to mould it into a great work of art, since his activity resembles artistic creation. (8)

This idea, the idea of "Sonderrecht", was open to abuse. It made way for the pernicious doctrine of "Staatsrassen". The Romantics did not themselves embrace this doctrine. But they did make it easier for other writers to accept it.

Of these others it is possible that Kleist was one. But if he was, his first completed play in which the problem of political morality arises both magnifies and distorts the political influence. As an affirmation of "Staatsrassen", "Die Hermannschlacht" (1808) goes far beyond anything that Frederick the Great or Fichte are likely to have had in mind when they allowed its claims upon the ruler. Fichte, like Kleist, was decisively influenced by his patriotic feelings when Prussia was occupied by the French and humiliated. But what Fichte is prepared to concede as a philosopher is harmless by comparison with what Kleist's Hermann is prepared to do to liberate his country from Roman rule. To incriminate the enemy, and rouse the people to take up arms and drive him out, his men disguise themselves as Romans and plunder their own kind. When they discover the body of a dead
girl, Hermann represents her as the victim of assault by Roman soldiers and orders his men to distribute her dismembered body to the tribes in order to incite them to revenge. He deplores the generosity and courage publicly displayed by a Roman officer towards the Germans, for such virtue can only serve to undermine the fighting spirit of the people. Let no Cheruscan imitate the conduct of the Roman. A generous Cheruscan makes a bad soldier.

Ich will die höhnische Dämonenbrut nicht lieben!
Solang' sie in Germanien trotzt,
Ist Haß mein Amt und meine Tugend Rache. (9)

The words put into the mouth of Hermann, and intended to rouse the Germans into driving out Napoleon, may be contrasted with the humane patriotic sentiments recurrently expressed in Schiller's "Wilhelm Tell" (10) or with the words of Goethe: "Überhaupt ist es mit dem Nationalhaß ein eigenes Ding. Auf den untersten Stufen der Kultur werden Sie ihn immer am stärksten und heftigsten finden." (11) But whereas Goethe and Schiller condemn national hatred, Kleist appears to mean what Hermann says. In his poem "Germania an ihre Kinder" (1809), calling on the Germans to damn the Rhine with the bodies of the fallen enemy and whiten the fields with their bones, he sets himself the task of arousing in his fellow countrymen a hatred for the French as bestial as the hatred for the Romans which Hermann seeks to arouse among the German tribes. The lines

Schlagt ihn tot! das Weltgericht
Frage euch nach dem Gründen nicht! (12)

can hardly be said to raise the problem which concerns us here - rather they dismiss it. In the "Katechismus der Deutschen" (1809) the question is asked, whether hating your enemy and acting on your hatred of him is compatible with the duty of a Christian to love his neighbour. The answer, that he who loves
will go to heaven, that he who hates will go to hell, and that he who
neither loves nor hates will go into the lowest hell of all, again evades
the problem, almost flippantly. (13)

Deluded by patriotic fervour, Kleist accepts what he had once rejected -
the terror of war and hatred for the enemy. Accepting this he could hardly
disagree with Machiavelli that, in order to maintain the state, the ruler is
frequently obliged to take no account of any moral scruples or humane
feelings. When Hermann puts humanity aside in the interest of the tribal
state, no doubt arises in his mind, no crisis in his heart. The only
conflict which develops in the play is the purely physical one between the
German tribes under Hermann and the Roman army under Varus. In "Prinz
Friedrich von Homburg", the interest of the individual clashes with the
interest of the State. The humane feelings of those who have the individual's
interest at heart conflict with what the ruler believes to be his duty. The
author of "Die Hermannschlacht" apparently assumes that this particular moral
problem cannot be regarded as a problem by the leader of a subject people
fighting to be free.

The problem of "Staatsrüßen" confronting the Elector in "Prinz Friedrich
von Homburg" is the problem of securing obedience to military orders - an
internal problem directly, but one which bears in an important way on the
relations of the ruler with other states. To secure such obedience, the
ruler of a country that was fighting to survive might feel himself obliged
to punish disobedience severely. If Kleist himself appreciated this it was
presumably because he was a patriot, impatient to liberate his country from
Napoleon. It appears that he approached the patriotic genre - "dieses, ein
wenig dürres, aber eben deshalb mächt' ich sagen, reizendes Feld" (14) - with
mixed feelings. But we cannot doubt that among other motives the patriotic motive influenced him. In his letters he twice describes his play as "vaterländisch"(15). Like the Romans of "Die Hermannschlacht" the Swedes of "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" stand for the army of Napoleon. The Prince, calling on his countrymen to resist the enemy, addresses the sentiments of those, like Kleist, who ardently desired to drive the French from German soil:

Es erliege
Der Fremdling, der uns unterjochen will,
Und frei, auf mütterlichem Grund, behauphtes
Der Brandenburger sich; denn sein ist er,
Und seiner Fluren Pracht nur ihm erbaut! (16)

The sympathy of Kleist himself with what the military law demanded was an acquired sympathy. The occupation of his country by the French had aroused his patriotism. But patriotism was ineffectual without armed force. Armed force might not prevail without good discipline. And good discipline could only be maintained if bad discipline were severely punished. The Elector in Kleist's last play appears to act on this assumption. What Kleist thought himself we do not know, but political events which coincided with the writing of his play may enable us to guess. In particular he must have known how, in the battle of Saalfeld, Prince Louis Ferdinand, the idol and main hope of the Prussian patriots, had disobeyed the order that had been given to him. The order was that he should under no circumstances engage the enemy. His adjutants urged him to comply with it. He did not do so. He launched his attack and it resulted in catastrophe. It is known that he had once already been rebuked for ignoring his instructions. On this occasion Prince Hohenlohe urged him in vain not to jeopardise success by yielding to his vanity.
Intensely patriotic as Kleist now was, he is likely to have marked the lesson that was taught on the battlefield of Saalfeld. The hero of his play is both vain and headstrong. An essay which Kleist wrote in 1809, "Was gilt es in diesem Kriege", suggests that he intended to reflect in him the character of Louis Ferdinand. The hopes and fears of the single combatant, we read, centred on his own showing in the battle, are as nothing when set against the interest of the whole community. "Gilt es", he asks, "den Ruhm eines jungen und unternehmenden Fürsten, der, in dem Duft einer lieblichen Sommernacht, von Lorbeern geträumt hat?" A war, he might have said, is not a tournament.

If the French were to be driven out of Germany, the military virtues of the Germans must flourish. Of these virtues, courage in itself was not enough. The Prince shows courage - at least he does in battle. He does not, however, show unquestioning obedience. It is because he does not that the defeat which he inflicts on the Swedes proves indecisive.

On the eve of battle, walking in his sleep, the Prince becomes the victim of a jest. In the course of this jest, the Elector takes away the laurel wreath which the Prince is weaving, winds his chain about it and gives it to Natalie, his ward and niece. Natalie, the Elector and his wife withdraw. The Prince reaches out for the laurel wreath but seizes hold instead of Natalie's glove.

He awakens. The events leading to the seizure of the glove appear to him now to have been the subject of his dream, and the dream itself seems not so much a dream as a vision. In this vision, as he now remembers it, he can recognise the Elector and the Electress. The third figure was a lady. It was she who took the laurel wreath and chain from the Elector's hands and
was about to crown him with it. But there, suddenly, the dream ended. He
cannot yet say who this other person was.

The officers are briefed for the impending battle. The Prince is
absent-minded. He discovers to whom the glove belongs. He is "verwirrt"(18).
He may hear but he does not listen to the Field Marshal's carefully worded
orders concerning him:

Des Prinzen Durchlaucht wird -
Nach unsers Herrn ausdrücklichem Befehl -
Wie immer auch die Schlacht sich wenden mag,
Vom Platz nicht, der ihm angewiesen weichen. (19)

He fails to take in fully the orders which the Field Marshal gives to him.
He merely echoes the one part of his instructions the stirring character of
which appeals to him:

Dann wird er die Fanfare blasen lassen! (20)

In his own mind he is elsewhere. The discovery that the glove belongs to
Natalie, whom he hopes to marry, confirms for him the message which he reads
into his "vision". In the stage directions, "Homburg steht einen Augenblick,
wie von Blitz getroffen, da; dann wendet er sich mit triumphierenden
Schritten wieder in den Kreis der Offiziere zurück."(21)

His dream reveals that he is vain. It reflects the image of himself in
his conscious mind as a man destined to be great. He interprets the dream
as only a vain man would. If he were less vain he would be less confused
when he discovers whom the lost glove belongs to. When the glove appears,
he regards it as a providential sign. But he can only regard it as a sign
for as long as he is predisposed to think it one. From his point of view
instructions are superfluous. He has already read into his dream the part
which he must play in the impending battle. What the Field Marshall says
only impresses itself upon him in so far as it fits in with a preconceived idea.

The Field Marshal, noticing that the Prince is not attending to his words, decides to make doubly sure that he complies with the Elector's orders:

\[
\text{Doch wird des Fürsten Durchlaucht ihm, damit,}
\text{Durch Mißverstand, der Schlag zu früh nicht falle,}
\text{Ihm einen Offizier aus seiner Suite, senden,}
\text{Der den Befehl, das merkt, ausdrücklich noch}
\text{Zum Angriff auf den Feind ihm überbringe. (22)}
\]

The entire cavalry has been placed under the command of the Prince,

\[
\text{Dem Obrist Kottwitz gleichwohl unbeschadet,}
\text{Der ihm mit seinen Rat zur Hand wird gehen. (23)}
\]

The Field Marshal is far from confident, however, that the Prince can be entrusted with his task. As a final precaution, he asks Golz to inform Kottwitz that he would like to speak to him, if possible, before the battle begins. He leaves the Prince with this warning:

\[
\text{Herr Prinz von Homburg, dir empfehl' ich Ruhe!}
\text{Du hast am Ufer, weißt du, mir des Rheins}
\text{Zwei Siege jüngst verscherzt; regier' dich wohl,}
\text{Und laß mich heut den dritten nicht entbehren,}
\text{Der Mindres nicht, als Thron und Reich, mir gilt! (24)}
\]

Before the battle the Prince admits to Hohenzollern that he had not taken in the order which the Field Marshal had given to him. He is again told what the order was:

\[
\text{Und dir ist aufgegeben, hier zu halten}
\text{Im Tal, schlagfertig mit der Reuterei,}
\text{Bis man zum Angriff den Befehl dir schickt. (25)}
\]

The battle begins. Hennings's encircling movement runs into the
Swedish cannon-fire. Truchß advances down the middle. The Swedish left moves over to reinforce the other wing. The cavalry goes with it to protect its flank. All this takes time.

The Prince meanwhile waits patiently until he hears the distant shout of success. The shout is taken up by those who stand and wait with him:

Triumph! Triumph! Triumph! Der Sieg ist unser! (26)

Only now does the Prince give the order to advance, when a victory seems to have been scored, or at least to be in sight, in which he will have played no part.

Kottwitz restrains him. He reminds him of the orders that were given to him:

Des Herrn Durchlaucht bei der Parole gestern,
Befahl, daß wir auf Orde warten sollen.
Golz, lies dem Herren die Parole vor. (27)

Without waiting for Golz, however, he tells the Prince what he is charged to do. Other officers tell him why he is charged to do it.

Hohenzollern refers to Hennings's pincer movement. A subordinate points out that Hennings has not yet reached the river Rhyn. But nothing seems to penetrate the Prince's mind which does not fit in with that which he conceitedly counts upon.

The Prince has orders to withhold the cavalry until he has received the signal to advance. He does not know about Hennings's outflanking movement. It is on this movement, cutting off the Swedes' retreat, that the final victory depends. He does not realise that the success of Truchß's frontal engagement of the Swedes is intentionally limited. He therefore gives the order to advance. He does so impulsively. The rôle of idle witness does
not appeal to him. He would rather intervene decisively. He eagerly desires to serve his country but not so much for his country's sake as only to exalt himself. The scene which closes with the Prince's cry,

O Cäsar Divus!

Die Leiter setz ich an, an deinen Stern! (28)
tells how Froben, the Elector's groom, laid down his life to save his master. The Prince's vanity contrasts with the groom's self-sacrifice. He betrays that "Eigendünklen", as distinct from "vernünftige Selbstliebe", which Kant especially condemns. (29)

Ignorant of the Swedes' defensive system, he carries out his attack. His initial sally is repulsed and heavy casualties result. The Elector appears to fall in battle. In his grief and anger the Prince retaliates. From his own point of view he succeeds completely. But his victory is premature. It is not the final victory which the Elector has planned.

When the Prince recovers from the shock of his arrest, later, he agrees with Hohensoltern that he is not likely to be put to death:

Sind denn die Märkischen geschlagen worden? (30)
Has the battle not been won? His arrest was a mere gesture. He will be pardoned and released. He was at fault, he knows. But all that really matters is the outcome of the battle.

The Elector's attitude to the articles of war, he continues, is unnatural. It is not so much a German as a Roman one. It cannot last. He has responded to his own peculiar idea of duty. Not only will he now relent, he will acknowledge too the debt which he owes him for defeating Wrangel and behave towards him as a father would:

Der Kurfürst hat getan, was Pflicht erheischte,
Und nun wird er dem Herzen auch gehorchen. (31)
He does not consider his offence to be at all serious:

War's dann ein todeswürdiges Verbrechen,
Zwei Augenblicke früher, als beföhlen,
Die schwä'sche Macht in Staub gelegt zu haben? (32)

On what, Hohenzollern asks, does he base his confidence? He replies,

Auf mein Gefühl von ihm! (33)

His action, he inconsistently admits in passing, was a capital offence:

Das Kriegsrecht mußte auf den Tod erkennen;
So lautet das Gesetz, nach dem es richtet. (34)

The Elector, however, would sooner go before the firing squad himself than have the sentence carried out. At heart he must be well pleased that the Swedes have been defeated. It would be petty and ungrateful of him not to overlook the irregularity which he, the Prince, committed, and which brought this victory about:

Um eines Fehls, der Brille kaum bemerkbar,
In dem Demanten, den er jüngst empfing,
In Staub den Geber treten? (35)

Although he may sometimes doubt, as Samuel suggests, "with something like despair"(36), he trusts in the Elector on the whole. In so far as he does not delude himself, his trust rests on his belief that to impose so harsh a sentence for so trivial an offence would be unthinkable. Who in his right mind can doubt that the Elector's duty is to pardon him?

But the news that the Elector has now sent for the death warrant, and intends to sign it, destroys his confidence. "O Himmel! Meine Hoffnung!"(37)

He hears of the offer of marriage from the Swedish King. He hears also how the Elector took the news - the rumour, Hohenzollern says - that Natalie already hopes to marry someone else:
Ein Wort, das die Kurfürstin Tante sprach,
Hat aufs empfindlichste den Herrn getroffen;
Man sagt, das Fräulein habe schon gewählt. (38)

He believes with Hohensollern that the penalty will now stand for reasons of state. He trusts, he says, in the Elector. But the moment that Hohensollern imputes to the Elector an unworthy and unlikely motive, his trust in the Elector vanishes.

His attitude up till now has been wholly self-regarding. It is self-regarding to such a point that he cannot see in himself the fault which he sees in another. When in Act II, Scene iii, a subordinate officer challenges his right to disobey military orders, he immediately orders the officer's arrest. As Kant says, wrong cannot succeed if all men practise it. We must therefore observe the maxims which we wish to see respected as the universal law. But Homburg is so self-centred that he cannot see that, by ordering the officer's arrest, he contradicts himself.

His attitude recalls Kleist's own, some ten years before the play was written. "Ein eigener Zweck steht mir vor Augen, nach ihm würde ich handeln müssen und, wenn der Staat es anders will, dem Staate nicht gehorchen dürfen." (39)

The Kleist who worked subversively to liberate his country from the French, appears to have altered his attitude towards the State. There is in the Prince much of his own old self which by this time presumably dissatisfied him.

In Act V, Scene ii, Hohensollern maintains that the Elector himself is partly to blame for the disobedience of the Prince. If he had not played his jest on the sleep-walking Prince, the Prince would have been more attentive when the plan of battle was read out. The Prince disobeyed because he was absent-minded. He was absent-minded as a result of the Elector's
prank.

We have already said that if the Prince had been more mindful of the destiny of Brandenburg than he was of his own reputation, the Elector's prank would have disturbed him less. The real happenings that accompanied his dream entered into the dream. He cannot now distinguish between what was real and what was unreal. It is possible, on the one hand, that the Elector does not appreciate how his jest affected him. He can no doubt judge the Prince's character but not how dream and jest combine as if calculated to delude him.

On the other hand, what he could say, if he wanted to defend himself, he does not say. He could say that he had given the Prince fair warning to control himself - "regier' dich wohl!"(40) - that two victories had been lost - "verscherst"(41) - through his fault and that "Thron und Reich"(42) would depend on the outcome of the battle on the next day. He could defend himself still better if he knew how flagrantly the Prince ignores this warning. It is followed, immediately, by the monologue which the Prince addresses to Fortuna:

Du hast mir, Glück, die Locken schon gestreift:
Ein Pfand schon warfst du, im Vorüberschweben,
Aus deinem Füllhorn lächelnd mir herab. (43)

The token ("Pfand") which he refers to is the glove. It appears to him to be a pledge of fame. It is his vanity, more than any Kleistian "Verwirrung der Gefühle", which possesses him. Without this, all that would remain of the excuse which Hohenzollern makes on his behalf would be that he had not enjoyed a good night's rest.

The glove incident does little more than confirm the Prince's vain intention to achieve glory for himself in battle. The Elector, who appears
not to be aware of this, cannot disprove effectively what Hohenzollern says. We, who are better placed to judge, are less impressed by Hohenzollern's case than Hohenzollern is himself:

Es ist genug, mein Kurfürst! Ich bin sicher,
Mein Wort fiel, ein Gewicht, in deine Brust! (44)

Is Hohenzollern right? The Elector knows about the Prince's disobedience. He has been told that the Prince was inattentive when he received his orders for the battle. He may not know that these orders were again impressed upon the Prince when he had quite recovered from his bewildered state of mind of the night before. He had certainly not heard the Prince's vain soliloquy at the end of Act II, Scene viii. But he had seen the Prince as he wound his laurel wreath, walking in his sleep in the castle garden at Fehrbellin. On that occasion he had asked Hohenzollern what the wreath might signify.

Hohenzollern there replies:

O - was! Die Schlacht von morgen, mein Gebieter!
Sterngucker sieht er, wett' ich, schon im Geist,
Aus Sonnen einen Siegeskrantz ihm winden.

Schade, ewig schade,
Daß hier kein Spiegel in der Nähe ist!
Er würd' ihm eitel, wie ein Mädchen, nahn,
Und sich den Kranz bald so, und wieder so,
Wie eine florene Haube aufprobieren. (45)

The Elector seems to agree. When he withdraws, he rebukes the Prince impatiently:

Ins Nichts mit dir zurück, Herr Prinz von Homburg,
Ins Nichts, ins Nichts! In dem Gefild der Schlacht
Sehn wir, wenn's dir gefällig ist, uns wieder!
In Traum erringt man solche Dinge nicht! (46)
Hohenzollern himself, as a close friend of the Prince, can probably guess the motive which inspired his premature attack. So perhaps can the Elector. It may well be that, if Hohenzollern fails to shift upon the Elector himself the blame for what the Prince has done, he does not fail because he ruffles the Elector's pride but because the Elector knows that the Prince who disobeyed was not confused, or ill-informed, but a vain young man who needed to be taught a lesson.

If we think how unashamedly intent Kleist was himself on achieving literary fame, we cannot be quite sure that we are meant to disapprove of the Prince's vanity. The Prince asks the Elector to forgive him for serving him "mit Übereiltem Eifer". Ambition - "Ehrgeiz" - may not necessarily reflect a man's vain impulse but simply his desire to enjoy the pleasures of pursuit which the modern world denies him or to feel that he is doing something purposive. What we can, however, say is that if Kleist would not condemn the Prince's feelings as such, he would condemn him - as the Prince finally condems himself - for not restraining them. Through not restraining them he frustrates the Elector's well-laid plans aiming at conclusive victory.

In Act V, Scene v, Kottwitz declares that he no longer believes, as he did at the time, that the Prince did wrong in ordering the cavalry to advance. The Swedes had not reacted as they had been expected to. The description of the battle in Act II, Scene ii, bears out what Kottwitz says. The Swedish move from right to left is unforeseen. Possibly if Hennings is intercepted quickly, by strong enemy forces, he may fail to reach the Rhyn in time to destroy the bridges there. For Homburg to attack now might be tactically sound. The Elector cannot know for certain whether Hennings would have reached the Rhyn if Homburg had stayed where he was. It is possible that to this extent Kottwitz is right.
But even if Kottwitz is right, his argument does not materially affect the Elector's case against the Prince. The argument that the enemy was put to rout, that this was victory enough, that lessons have now been learnt, and that all will come to him who waits, are beside the point. What hope is there of victory in the future, the Elector replies, if it is once established that an officer may quash his orders by exercising tactical discretion?

Mit welchem Recht, du Tor, erhoffst du das,
Wenn auf dem Schlachtenwagen, eigenmächtig,
Mir in die Zügel jeder greifen darf? (48)

It is design, rather than chance, that wins victories in war and, unless orders are obeyed, design will not win victories.

In due course the court-martial sentences the Prince to death according to a written law. As the Prince says,

Das Kriegerecht mußte auf den Tod erkennen;
So lautet das Gesetz, nach dem es richtet. (49)

The Elector is still free to exercise his right of pardon. But instead he orders that the death warrant shall be brought for him to sign. He orders arrangements to be made to have the Prince executed on the following day and for his grave to be prepared.

To Natalie he justifies what he has done as a political necessity:

Dich aber frag' ich selbst: darf ich den Spruch,
Den das Gericht gefällt, wohl unterdrücken?
Was würde wohl davon die Folge sein?
Für wen? Natalie asks. Für dich?

The Elector replies,
It is true that the Prince has put the Swedes to rout. But because his victory was not the final victory which the Elector's plan of battle had intended, the future of Brandenburg is still in doubt. For Brandenburg is a small state, continually threatened by invasion. Its future will still remain in doubt when the last battle has been fought and won. Victory in battle will continue to depend on good generalship. The generalship will depend on good discipline.

But how is discipline to be maintained? The Elector seems to think, or to act on the assumption, that allowing disobedience to go unpunished may set a precedent so dangerous that, rather than sacrifice Brandenburg for the Prince, he must sacrifice the Prince for Brandenburg. In this way the idea will be fixed in the minds of those who serve him that to disobey him is a serious offence for which the fitting penalty is death. If it is well supported by deterrent laws, discipline will prevail. But these laws must be seen to be applied, no matter who has broken them. The law should not only be severe, it should also be inflexible.

It is possible to argue that the Elector's motives are more ambiguous than we infer. At one point we may suspect that, had he known from the beginning who the officer was who had disobeyed him, he would not have had the Prince court-martialed. When he hears that the cavalry has attacked before the signal to advance was given, his words to the assembled officers are stern and unequivocal:
Wer immer auch die Reuterei geführt,
Am Tag der Schlacht, und eh' der Obrist Hemmings
Des Feindes Brücken hat zerstören können,
Damit ist aufgebrochen, eigenmächtig,
Zur Flucht, bevor ich Ordre gab, ihn zwingend,
Der ist des Todes schuldig, das erklä're ich,
Und vor ein Kriegsgericht bestell' ich ihn.
- Der Prinz von Homburg hat sie nicht geführt? (51)

The question is important. The Elector knows beyond a doubt that the Prince had been entrusted with the cavalry. As the Field Marshal says, the plan of battle is the Elector's own. (52) It is the Elector again who assigns the cavalry to the Prince. (53) His question, therefore, can only mean that he has already heard that the Prince had not been in charge of the cavalry when the order to advance was prematurely given. He is now told why. The Prince had fallen with his horse before the battle and had been badly hurt. When the Prince appears, bearing three Swedish banners in his hand, he is taken aback: "stutst" ... "betroffen" (54). But whether, if the Elector had known that the Prince had indeed led the cavalry into battle, he would still have used the words "des Todes schuldig" (55) and have court-martialled him, we can only guess.

The Elector defends his decision. The Prince must die in the interest of the Fatherland. What he means by this he does not say. But he does not speak of what the Prince deserves. The punishment is not retributive. What he appears to say is that he means to make quite certain that his officers obey him in the future:

Meint er, dem Vaterlande gelt' es gleich,
Ob Willkür drin, ob drin die Satzung herrsche? (56)

Assuming this to be his purpose, he does not achieve it. Discipline,
far from being strengthened, goes from bad to worse. His niece Natalie, colonel-in-chief of a regiment, intrigues against him, summons Kottwitz and his men to Fehrbellin and falsely claims that she was given his authority for doing so. By implicating him in the act of disobedience which the Prince commits, Hohenzollern weakens his authority. Kottwitz goes much further. If the Elector has the Prince executed, he, Kottwitz, will always follow where success beckons him, whatever orders he receives and even if he knows that the penalty for doing so is death. It is thus made clear that the sentence passed upon the Prince has already failed to achieve the only useful purpose which it could achieve with regard to the army as a whole.

But what of its effect on the character of the Prince? When the Prince sees the pit dug ready to receive him, he knows that the Elector is in earnest. He is terrified:

Seit ich mein Grab sah, will ich nichts, als leben,
Und frage nichts mehr, ob es rühmlich sei! (57)

He visits the Electress on parole. On bended knee he implores her to intercede for him. In battle he has risked his life for glory many times. But now, rather than surrender his life for nothing, he even promises to renounce Natalie. As Natalie herself admits, he is

Verstört und schüchtern, heimlich, ganz unwürdig,
Ein unerfreulich, jammernswür'd'ger Anblick. (58)

If the individual only matters in so far as he is useful to the state, the life of the Prince is unimportant and his abject condition is still less important. But we cannot believe that Kleist thought this. A policy of "Staatsräson" - war itself - directed against a foreign people, is more easily accepted than an act, in principle the same, sacrificing the life of a fellow-countryman. It is not altogether strange, therefore, that the
The author of "Die Hermannschlacht" should also write "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg". It is still less strange when we take into account political ideas in Kleist's time which, if heeded, must have tended to restrict the claims which the State might make upon the individual.

In the last decade of the 18th century Humboldt and Schiller had written of the State, in particular the big State, as something regimental and prohibitive and inclined to take too much upon itself. In the smaller political society of old, said Humboldt, the functions of the State had been limited and man more self-reliant. The German valued what the big State was coming to deny him. "In Deutschland", he says, "vergilt man gerne die Masse um bei einigen Individuen stehen zu bleiben."(59) The Prussian King had broken with tradition and betrayed his people's heritage.

Novalis, for reasons much the same, condemned Frederick the Great's Prussia as a machine-state.

Kein Staat ist mehr als Fabrik verwaltet worden als Preußen seit Friedrich Wilhelm des Ersten Tode. So nötig vielleicht eine solche maschinistische Administration zur physischen Gesundheit, Stärkung und Gewandtheit des Staates sein mag, so geht auch der Staat, wenn er bloß auf diese Art behandelt wird, im wesentlichen darüber zugrunde. (60)

The men who served it were driven to their tasks like slaves and they could only act as their King saw fit. Novalis follows Burke. In the ideal polity the subject is encouraged and inspired by a royal family. We obey those whom we admire and love. We obey our King because we love him as a father-figure. If we obey the law it is not because we love the statute-book. The state must be visibly embodied in the person of the Monarch:

Ein wahrhaftes Königspaar ist für den ganzen Menschen, was eine Konstitution für den bloßen Verstand ist. Man kann sich für eine
Konstitution nur wie für einen Buchstaben interessieren ... Was ist ein Gesetz, wenn es nicht Ausdruck des Willens einer geliebten, achtungswerten Person ist? Bedarf der mystische Souverän nicht, wie jede Idee, eines Symbols, und welches Symbol ist würdiger und passender als ein liebenswürdiger trefflicher Mensch? (61)

Religion, says Burke, binds the citizens together and fixes the ruler's mind on sound moral principles. It may be that this was an unduly optimistic claim to make. But compared with the picture which Novalis paints of an age gone by, when secular power was wielded by the helmsmen ("Steuerleute") of the mediaeval Church, it is a modest claim. The ecclesiastic power, Novalis says, had met violence with gentleness. It had succeeded by the power of love in taming the unruly men:


But what has now become of this ideal relationship?

Wo ist jener alte, liebe, alleinselig machende Glaube an die Regierung Gottes auf Erden, wo ist jenes himmlische Zutrauen der Menschen zueinander, jene süße Andacht bei den Ergiebungen eines gottbegeisterten Gemüts, jener allesumarmende Geist der Christenheit?

It is gone. But we - Christendom - may yet recover it,

... das alte Füllhorn des Segens wieder über die Völker ausgießen. Aus dem heiligen Schoße eines ehrwürdigen europäischen Konziliums wird die Christenheit aufstehn ... Keiner wird dann mehr protestieren gegen christlichen und weltlichen Zwang, denn das Wesen der Kirche wird echte Freiheit sein, und alle nötigen Reformen werden unter der Leitung derselben als friedliche und förmliche Staatsprozesse betrieben werden. (62)

What Novalis wanted to achieve was an authority similar in scope to the old "concordantia catholica", in which the squalid interest of men within the state, and of states continually at war with one another, would disappear.
He believed that it had once prevailed. Why therefore should it not prevail again?

But to renew men’s hopes as Novalis did in a supra-national authority like that once exercised from Rome was to overlook the whole history of ultramontane conflict. His view of the past is a distant, enchanted one. As Reiss says, this was not unusual among the German political Romantics, who "tended to stray into fantasy. At times they did not even accept the social order which existed before 1789, but yearned for a completely utopian society and left the firm shores of what was actually possible. They created a dream-world ..."(63) They see the state as Natalie looks on Brandenburg in Kleist’s "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg", "mit Zinnen, Üppig, feenhaft, zur Wonne der Freunde."(64)

The Romantics exalt the state. But in doing this they do not feel that they take away the dignity of the individual. "Aus jedem Staatsbürger", says Novalis, "leuchtet der Genius des Staates hervor ..." The individual is a microcosm of the state, "... so wie in einer religiösen Gesellschaft ein persönlicher Gott gleichsam in tausend Gestalten sich offenbart. Der Staat und Gott sowie jedes geistige Wesen erscheint nicht einzeln, sondern in tausend mannigfaltigen Gestalten."(65) Just as the idea of God does not lessen the importance of man, who is made in the image of God, but on the contrary increases it, so too in Romantic political philosophy the idea of the state as God’s creation upholds the dignity of the individual. With this in mind we shall not misunderstand Novalis when he says, "Jeder Staatsbürger ist Staatsbeamter."(66) However insidious the Romantic idea of the great leader was, who, like an artist, would be privileged to mould society
according to his arbitrary will, the Romantics did not consciously set out to tie the subject down but to free him. "Je geistvoller und lebendiger die Glieder sind – desto lebendiger, persönlicher ist der Staat." (67)

Adam Müller agrees with Novalis: under Frederick II the Prussian state resembled a machine, in which to serve the state meant only to obey the monarch and do nothing on one's own initiative. The ideal state, says Müller,

ist nicht bloß ein Spielwerk oder Instrument in der Hand einer Person, eines Friedrichs, sondern er ist eine Person selbst, ein freies in sich durch unendliche Wechselwirkung streitender und sich versöhnender Ideen bestehendes wachsendes Ganze, nicht ein von außen durch einseitige Wirkung, nach kalten despotischen Begriffen zusammengefügtes, geklebtes, geknetetes Werkzeug. (68)

Like Novalis he compares the ideal state to a parent, whose chief concern is the upbringing of its children. Children may disagree and, like a parent, the state must seek to reconcile their conflicting interests. The parental function of the state, however, should not mean parental interference. "Der Staat verstätte dem Menschen das zu sein und ohne Ende immer mehr zu werden, was er seiner eigentümlichen Natur und seinem individuellen Wachstum sein kann." (69) Furthermore, monarchical as distinct from autocratic rule, being more direct, helps the written laws to function more humanely. "Das Gesetz wird nicht bloß mechanisch ausgelegt, sondern wirklich repräsentiert durch eine Person ..." (70) The ideal and at the same time practicable state is not a penal institution like that of Frederick the Great – on the contrary. "Auch von der Staatsweisheit und von den künstlichen Buchstaben der Gesetzegebung gilt es, daß, wenn sie der Liebe entbehren, sie nichts als tönendes Erz und klingende Schelle sind." (71)

It is probable, if not certain, that Kleist's play was written in the
period in which he was estranged from Adam Müller and before he co-operated with him in publishing "Die Berliner Abendblätter" (1810). "Die Berliner Abendblätter" failed after Müller had incurred the Government's displeasure and a rigid censorship had been imposed upon it. Müller had attacked Hardenberg's financial reform under which the nobility would cease to be exempt from paying taxes. He spoke for those who were against reform and who still clung to the privileges which the Junker class enjoyed. That Kleist on the other hand sympathised with the reformers rather than with the nobility may be gathered from several of his short stories, published or republished at about this time, including "Michael Kohlhaas", "Das Erdbeben in Chili", "Die Verlobung in St. Domingo" and "Das Bettelweib von Locarno".

Nevertheless, only three weeks after Müller and he abandoned the "Berliner Abendblätter", Kleist could still write admiringly of Müller's "book". Which book he does not say. He had once possessed a copy which - "unseeliger Weise" - a friend had borrowed from him and had not yet given back to him. "Inzwischen habe ich schon Anstalten gemacht, es wieder zu erhalten ... Erinnern Sie das Volk daran, daß es da ist; das Buch ist eins von denen, welche die Störrigkeit der Zeit, die sie einengt, nur langsam wie eine Wurzel den Felsen sprengen können; nicht par explosion."(72)

If the letter does not refer to Müller's "Lehre vom Gegensatze" of 1804, it can only refer to his better known "Die Elemente der Staatskunst", the published form of a series of lectures, for which the earlier book provides the basic principles. Müller delivered these lectures in Dresden in the winter of 1808-1809, before Prince Bernhard of Saxe-Weimar and an assembly of statesmen and diplomats. It was in Dresden at about this time that Kleist and he jointly edited the journal "Phöbus".
A man susceptible to political Romantic influence, who believed that the state was a kind of family, where the influence of a benign monarch might coax out the best in men, as force could not, that he himself was just as important in the King's eyes as man was in the eyes of God, and that such thinking was traditionally German, would probably react as the Prince does in Kleist's play when the Elector orders his arrest:

Mein Vetter Friedrich will den Brutus spielen,
Und sieht, mit Kreid' auf Leinwand verzeichnet,
Sich schon auf dem curul'schen Stuhle sitzen:
Die schwed'schen Fahnen in dem Vordergrund,
Und auf dem Tisch die märk'schen Kriegsartikel.
Bei Gott, in mir nicht findet er den Sohn,
Der, untern Beil des Henkers, ihn bewundre.
Ein deutsches Herz, von altem Schrot und Korn,
Bin ich gewohnt an Edelmut und Liebe;
Und wenn er mir, in diesem Augenblick,
Wie die Antike starr entgegenkommmt,
Tut er mir leid, und ich muß ihm bedauern! (73)

The case for "Edelmut und Liebe" is first argued by Natalie. Unlike Hohenzollern, she does not seek to alter the picture of events in the Elector's mind. She addresses his feelings. She tells him that she does not plead for the Prince for her own sake:

Ich will ihm nicht für mich erhalten wissen -
Mein Herz begehrt sein und gesteht es dir;
Ich will ihm nicht für mich erhalten wissen -
Mag er sich welchem Weib' er will vermählen;
Ich will nur, daß er da sei, lieber Onkel,
Für sich, selbständig, frei un unabhangig,
Wie eine Blume, die mir wohlgefällt:
Dies fleh' ich dich, mein höchster Herr und Freund,
Und weiß, solch Flehen wirst du mir erhören. (74)
At first Natalie’s appeal differs greatly from that which Kottwitz and Hohenzollern make in Act V. Pity, she appears to think, argues for itself. She backs up her appeal with reasons too but the force of these is to move rather than convince him. The Prince committed no great crime:

O dieser Fehltritt, blond mit blauen Augen,
Den, eh' er noch gestammelt hat: ich bitte!
Verzeihung schon vom Boden haben sollte:
Den wirst du nicht mit Füßen von dir weisen!
Den drückst du um die Mutter schon ans Herz,
Die ihn gebar, und rufst: "komm, weine nicht;
Du bist so wert mir, wie die Treue selbst!" (75)

Natalie here reminds us, as the Prince reminds the Electress in Act III, of the promise which she, the Electress, made to his dying mother:

Dir Übergab zu Homburg, als sie starb,
Die Hedwig mich, und sprach, die Jugendfreundin:
"Sei ihm die Mutter, wenn ich nicht mehr bin."
Du beugtest tiefgerührt, am Bette kniend,
Auf ihre Hand dich und erwidertest:
"Er soll mir sein, als hätt' ich ihn erzeugt." (76)

The Elector may feel that Natalie suggests that he should administer the law in a biassed way: equality before the law should not rule out privileges inspired by sentiment. When she says that the Prince is young, zealous rather than disobedient, that he only intended to enhance the Elector’s own prestige, he may feel that the motives of the Prince were more self-centred. He may bear in mind, what she appears to overlook, that the victory which the Prince has scored was not, as he had planned, conclusive. Her picture of the state may seem to him an ideal, fictitious one, naively reconciling the harsh responsibilities of government in war-time with the promptings of
the heart. Feeling demands clemency and feeling ought not to be denied.

Das Kriegsgesetz, das weiß ich wohl, soll herrschen,
Jedoch die lieblichen Gefühle auch. (77)

The state of Brandenburg, she claims, stands on a rock. Its future is bright,

Mit Zinnen, üppig, feenhaft, zur Wonne
Der Freunde, und zum Schrecken aller Feinde. (78)

Her optimism is perhaps unrealistic. Perhaps the state of Brandenburg is less secure than she imagines. At the same time, however, her plea for clemency is combined with an important element of common-sense lacking in the argument advanced by the Elector. The Elector exaggerates the dependence of the State on discipline. The State is vulnerable in many ways. But as Natalie says, can one unauthorised victory, can one act of clemency, endanger it?

O Herr! Was sorgst du doch? Dies Vaterland!
Das wird, um dieser Regung deiner Gnade,
Nicht gleich, zerschellt in Trümmern, untergehn.

Das braucht nicht dieser Bindung, kalt und öd',
Aus eines Freundes Blut, um Onkels Herbst,
Den friedlich prächtigen zu überleben. (79)

It may appear that the Elector is not yet the benign Romantic "father-figure" that Natalie wishes him to be. But Natalie feels that the Elector's present attitude is out of keeping with his true character. A man as humane as he is can hardly allow the sentence of death on the Prince to be carried out:

Das wäre so erhaben, lieber Onkel,
Das man es fast unmenschlich nennen könnte:
Und Gott schuf noch nichts Milderes, als dich. (80)
Burke and the Romantics after him revered hereditary princes. The loyalty which a good prince inspired appeared to them to be the natural and main source of political obedience. We see from his regard for Queen Luise that Kleist could feel as they did. She inspired him as a patriot - "sie ist es, die das, was noch nicht zusammengestürzt ist, hält."(81) It was she who granted Kleist the modest pension on which he depended for his livelihood. "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg" is dedicated to her and perhaps the most delightful of Kleist's poems is the one that celebrates her birthday.

If we disregard the Elector's attitude to the Prince, we can see that Kleist exalts the Elector in a way that is in keeping with his feelings for the Queen. In contrast to the Prince the Elector does not seek to exalt himself. He is unassuming. He does not by his manner demand that other men should revere him. But they naturally do revere him. Hafner, in his analysis of the play, draws our attention to the awe which the Elector inspires in the young Prince - "der Kurfürst, mit der Stirn des Zeus". (82) The Elector and his wife appear before the dreaming Prince in majesty:

\begin{quote}
Mir war, als ob von Gold und Silber strahlend,
Ein Königsschloß sich plötzlich öffnete,
Und, hoch von seiner Marmorrampe herab,
Der ganzen Reigen zu mir niederstiege,
Der Menschen, die mein Busen liebt,
Der Kurfürst und die Fürstin, ...
\end{quote}

In real life, surrounded by his standard-bearers, he rides in an aura of royal state:

\begin{quote}
Auf einem Schimmel herrlich saß er da,
Im Sonnenstrahl, die Bahn des Siegs erleuchtend. \(84\)
\end{quote}

His men serve him with extreme devotion. When they think that he has fallen, they redouble their attack with such ferocity that the Swedes are
put to rout:

Der Graben wird, der Erdwall, der sie deckt,
Im Anlauf überflogen, die Besatzung
Geworfen, auf das Feld zerstreut, vernichtet,
Kanonen, Fahnen, Pauken und Standarten,
Der Schweden ganzes Kriegsgepäck erbeutet. (85)

Their victory is indecisive, but spectacular in a way which suggests great love for him, and not merely a submissive respect for his authority. As Hafner says, "Sein scheinbarer Tod bewirkt den Sieg. Man kann geradezu sagen: der eigentliche Sieger ist der tote Kurfürst." (86)

At the time of his arrest the Prince distinguishes between the Roman conception of the law and the Germanic. The Roman conception is of something inflexible and automatic - "starr". (87) Rousseau, dealing with the problem of pardon in his theory of the social contract, bears him out. "In the days of the Roman Republic", he says, "neither the Senate nor the Consuls ever attempted to pardon the guilty. Even the people did not do so." (88) But in the German states, the Prince believes, the law was applied more humanely.

Hebbel agrees with this. To be truly German, he says, the play must end in clemency - a surprising statement (1850) from the author of "Agnes Bernauer" (1852). But Hebbel is no longer speaking for himself but for his fellow-countrymen. "Oder wie sollte der Handel anders entschieden werden, als auf die bekannte Catonische Weise? Der kategorische Imperativ, den die alten Römer sich zuweilen gefallen ließen, ist bei den Deutschen aber schrecklich unbeliebt." (89)

We have already seen that the picture of the German state as it had once been, humanely governed by an understanding monarch and his Queen,
characterised the political beliefs of the Romantics.

The Prince criticises the Elector's attitude as Roman. He is arguably right. The Elector's use of the word "Heiligtum" is significant. The Romans like the Greeks regarded the state and its laws as they regarded their religion. For a long time the laws could only be administered by the priests. "Pontificem bonum neminem esse nisi qui ius civile cognosset." (90) The Romans believed that their laws had been given to them by the gods. Their laws were divine. They were therefore immutable. No one ever abrogated them, for although new laws were made from time to time, the old laws were still held to be applicable, however contradictory the new laws and the old might seem to be. (91) In this sense and in the sense, too, that pardon was unusual, the laws of Rome could be described as "starr".

But what of their place in German law? How German was the German law at the time when Kleist was writing?

The written German law was Roman. The learned judges who had replaced the mediaeval lay judges had been educated, most of them, in Padua and Bologna. They naturally regarded Germany as being part of the Roman Empire. A consistent system of law such as that which they desired to introduce into their own country had already been devised for them by the Italian "doctores" on the basis of Justinian's "Corpus Juris". The Roman law consequently became the German law.

There were those who had regretted this. Conring (1606-1681) wished the lost German elements of law to be restored. The representatives of natural law, notably Pufendorf (1632-1694) and Thomasius (1655-1728), had thought the old, superseded laws, which were rooted in the German past, more reasonable. The historical school of law, which replaced the school of
natural law, intensified the attack on Roman law which the other school had made. It vindicated, as Sir Ernest Barker says (92), the "national" or German elements of the law as it stood and it resented as alien the Roman elements which had largely taken their place. It believed that political and legal institutions must grow spontaneously from the natural feelings and accumulated wisdom of the people. In his pamphlet "Vom Beruf unsrer Zeit für Gesetzgebung und Rechtswissenschaft" (1814), Savigny opposes Thibaud's demand that German law should be codified. He fears that this will mean a rationalist form of legislation. All good law, he says, originates in custom. It is steeped in the native spirit of the people. Usage and popular belief ("Sitte und Volksglaube") create it and not the arbitrary will of any legislator (93). Through his marriage with Kunigunde von Brentano, a sister of Brentano the Romantic poet, Savigny met many of the leading figures of the Romantic movement. The historical school itself, d'Entreves points out, "was an aspect as well as a result of the great tide of Romanticism which, foreshadowed in the eighteenth century, swept Europe as a counterblow to the French Revolution." (94) It was not until 1810 that Kleist met Savigny, but these things were in the air at about this time and Kleist's work suggests that they affected him.

In what way do they appear to be reflected in the functions exercised by Kleist's Elector?

We may feel that the sentence of death imposed on the Prince is too severe, which is to say unjust. But is it possible to argue this? In so far as it is just that the law which applies to one man should apply to another— all things being equal— we perhaps can. The cavalry, we remember, is entrusted to the Prince,

Dem Obrist Kottwitz gleichwohl unbeschadet,
Der ihm mit seinem Rat zur Hand wird gehn. (95)
Kottwitz is an older man. We might expect him to restrain the younger man's impetuosity. But taunted by the Prince for holding back, he is immediately indignant and he urges on the cavalry to follow him:

Oho! Kommst du mir so, mein junger Herr? -
Den Gaul, den du daher sprengst, schlepp' ich noch
Im Notfall an dem Schwanz des meinen fort! (96)

It is he who orders the signal for attack to be given:

Marsch, Marsch, ihr Herrn! Trompeter, die Fanfare!
Zum Kampf! Zum Kampf! Der Kottwitz ist dabei! (97)

It is indeed strange that an officer of Kottwitz's age and rank, who has been ordered to advise the Prince, should so lightly divest himself of this responsibility:

Auf deine Kappe nimm's. Ich folge dir. (98)

No one in the play suggests, but we can see for ourselves, that if the Prince does wrong, so too does Kottwitz. But whereas Kottwitz goes unreprimanded, the military court condemns the Prince to death and the Elector confirms the sentence passed upon him.

We may question the justice of the penalty on other grounds. For whoever the Prince's judges are, they cannot have looked, as we have, into the Prince's state of mind when he launches the attack and on the eve of the battle. Their verdict must be somewhat automatic. They will consult the law, whether the written law or the law of precedent and custom. They will apply it to the bare knowledge that Homburg disobeyed a certain order. They will thus resemble the Elector when he learns that the cavalry has attacked before the order to advance was given. An order has been disobeyed - someone is "des Todes schuldig" (99). No doubt they will enquire into the circumstances in which the Prince acted as he did. But the picture which they have of these
can only be fragmentary. They cannot look into the Prince's mind. Nor can the Elector. But at least he is accessible to those who can. He listens to Natalie. What he now hears leads him to acquit the Prince, at first without condition and then on one condition which, in the event, the Prince need not fulfil if he does not wish to.

The Prince thus enjoys advantages which, as we have seen, the Romantic political philosophers believed could usually be enjoyed where rule was personal and direct. The idea, as they repeatedly acknowledge, had first been developed by Edmund Burke. For Burke believed that the chief merit of the vanishing feudal system was to unite subordination to the law with subordination to a person. The law stood but the ruler could mitigate its harshness. Also he could introduce into public life the virtues and affections which unite the family. He could inspire obedience rather than compel it.

Müller, with whose views Kleist was almost certainly familiar, accepts Burke's view of the function of the monarch and develops it in a way which, if it did not actually inspire Kleist's own solution, is at least similar.

Das Gesetz, he says, wie es da im Buchstaben ausgedrückt ist, kann wegen seiner Starrheit und Leblosigkeit nicht regieren; deshalb ist ein lebendiger Ausüber des Gesetzes, ein wirklicher, persönlicher Suverän, nöthig. Dieser nun soll, wegen seiner menschlichen Gebrechlichkeit, nicht anders regieren, als mit beständiger Rücksicht auf das Gesetz. Also weder der Suverän soll, noch kann das Gesetz allein regieren; demnach regiert wirklich ein Drittes, Höheres, welches aus dem Conflit des Gesetzes mit dem Suverän, in jedem Augenblick hervor-geht, und von dem Suverän das Leben, von dem Gesetz aber die Eigenschaft der Dauer erhält, und dieses ist die Idee des Rechtes. (100)

The distinction between "Gesetz" and "Idee des Rechtes" is an old one. We find it in Justinian. The law of nature, Justinian says, "ius naturale"
which is always good and equitable, "bonum et aequum", is not, nor could it possibly become, the law of the state - "ius civile". Perfect justice is complicated. It cannot be codified since no two cases are ever quite alike. "Ius quia instum" is not "ius quia iussum". The positive or statute law can never be the same as the natural or moral law, however hard the jurists may strive to bring them into line with one another. (101)

The Electress, we have said, pleads with the Elector to extend mercy to the Prince. Her attempt fails. Natalie repeats the attempt. At first she also fails. But the moment that she reveals to the Elector that the Prince, whose "feeling" (for justice) he respects, does not himself believe that the penalty is just, the Elector's function changes. He ceases to be just a rubber-stamp in the process of the law. He assumes, now, the function which the Romantics after Burke would have allotted to him. He is no longer there merely to uphold the law as if that, like the state itself, were a "Heiligtum", necessarily and always right. The law may sometimes fail to achieve its purpose. It is his function to correct it when it does.

In the first place, the Prince is subject to military orders. Military orders do not themselves constitute the law or any part of it. But the law, we understand, says that military orders must be obeyed and that disobedience is punishable by death. The Elector's will finds itself expressed in military orders. But military orders are not the law and the law is not the will of the Elector. The Elector's words, "des Todes schuldig" (102), merely suggest the prescribed or customary penalty. He makes it clear that the law is not his will when he orders the as yet unknown culprit to be tried by court-martial, and again later when he refuses to act against the findings of the court by pardoning the Prince.
The usual or prescribed penalty as imposed upon the Prince does not seem just to those who know him well: the Electress, Hohenzollern, Kottwitz and Natalie. But the Elector does not primarily aim at treating the Prince justly, however much he may wish to do so. The question which he asks Natalie is not whether she does not agree that an officer who acted as the Prince did deserves to die. What, he wants to know, will happen if he fails to impress upon the army as a whole how serious a thing it is to disobey? If the Elector is now prepared to put the question of justice first, it can only be that he has come to think or feel as Natalie does - influenced perhaps by her - that he exaggerates the potential danger to the state which pardon would create.

From whichever point of view we look at it, the Elector's first decision appears to be unfortunate. The Prince must suffer and die, but his death will do the state no good. It may be said, however, with regard only to the Prince, that if clemency now succeeds, where severity has failed in every way, this is because the ordeal which the Prince has suffered has already brought him to his senses. If we think this, we shall readily accept the theory that the Elector deliberately teaches the Prince to recognise his duty, and this theory in its turn will govern our analysis of Kleist's attitude to "Staatsrasson".

In his preface to the first edition Tieck says that the Prince freely and unselfishly acknowledges the claims which authority has made upon him. With this we shall agree. But when Tieck goes on to say that the Elector deliberately educates the Prince to the point at which he understands his duty, we may differ. It may be as Brahm has said, "Begnadigung ist der verschwiegene Wunsch des Herrschers." (103) It may be his wish. But is it his intention to pardon him, and if so, from what point on? Hebbel believes that the
Elector gives orders to the Prince which are calculated to curb his zeal and to improve his discipline: " ... es ist kein Zufall, wenn der Kurfürst ihm einen Posten anwies, der ihm mit seinen Leidenschaften und den Forderungen seines Blutes in Widerspruch bringen muß, er soll beide eben bekämpfen lernen."(104) Is this likely? It would not take us very far, even if it were. But the Elector himself does not say that he has this in mind. He would be foolish if he did. His supreme task is to win the battle of Fehrbellin. His opponent is redoubtable. The whole future of Brandenburg lies in the balance. Is this a time to nurse the Prince's military virtues? Twice already the Prince has "let the side down" - "zwei Siege jüngst verscherzt".(105) Can the Elector possibly afford to regard a battle which, for Brandenburg, means life or death, as an opportunity to test the Prince's discipline, or train him? Is he likely to allow his own position as a reigning monarch, let alone the future of the state, to depend on the impetuosity of the Prince, "mit seinen Leidenschaften und den Forderungen seines Blutes"? He could hardly deliberately begin the education of the Prince at a worse chosen opportunity.

Samuel suggests that, far from gently guiding the Prince from start to finish to recognise his duty, the Elector is impetuous himself, and decides things rashly. "He proclaims a sentence of death without conducting an investigation, and only as an afterthought does he call for a court-martial, whose judgement he anticipates ..."(106)

Wer's immer war, der sie zur Schlacht geführt,
Ich widerhol's, hat seinen Kopf verwirk't,
Und vor ein Kriegsrecht hiermit lad' ich ihm. (107)

The Elector commits himself. His afterthought - "Der Prinz von Homburg hat sie nicht geführt?"(108) - does not necessarily indicate that he sees in
a flash a possible consequence of his rashness. But it does mean that he cannot yet have hatched a plan to educate the Prince. When the Prince appears, laden with the trophies of war, he is taken aback - "stutzt" (109). From now on, as a man of normal feeling, he may well waver, secretly, between his Prussian idea of the ruler's duty to the State and his affection for the Prince, whose late mother entrusted him to the special care of the Electress (110). It is possible that in this dilemma he will attempt to compromise, threatening the Prince with death before he pardons him. But if, in this sense, he now intends to educate him, how does he propose to do so? He can administer a sharp deterrent shock, as a master might inflict pain on a domestic animal, making no attempt to induce him to reflect and recognize his duty. Or else he can subject him to a regenerative spell of fear in which to think and eventually admit that he did wrong in disregarding the orders which were given to him.

In the first case he has succeeded and has good reason to be satisfied. In the second case it may disappoint him to be told that, although the Prince fears death, he is not, as Natalie tacitly admits, contrite. In neither case has he any cause to be astonished. But he is astonished, as the stage directions indicate: "betroffen", "im äußersten Erstaunen", "verwirrt" (111). He is incredulous:

Unmöglich, in der Tat?! - Er fleht um Gnade? (112)

But was the Elector already seeking to reform the Prince? It is only now that he discovers that the Prince's attitude requires correction. If the purpose of his strategem is to imbue him with a right attitude to military orders, it may seem strange at first that the wrong attitude, the feeling that the verdict was unjust, should now become the sole condition on
which he will exercise his right of pardon. If the words "die höchste Achtung ... für sein Gefühl"(113) mean that he believes that the Prince will now accept the penalty, there is nothing strange about it. If he believes this, however, what need has he to educate him?

The Elector has a kindly manner. He speaks fondly to his wife, "mein teur' Elisa"(114), and to Natalie, "mein süßes Mädchen"(115), "mein Töchterchen"(116), "mein süßes Kind"(117), "meine teuerste Natalie"(118). We may find it difficult to reconcile his cheerful and paternal manner with his apparent callousness towards the Prince. He has the Prince arrested without ado and turns away from him, it almost seems, demonstratively unconcerned:

Kottwitz! Sei gegrüßt mir! (119)

His interest - perhaps assumed - is in the Swedish banners. He cuts Kottwitz short. He ignores his questions of dismay. His demeanour corresponds to Natalie's description of it later:

... so erhaben,

Daß man es fast unmenschlich nennen könnte. (120)

It can hardly be a pleasant task for a humane person to confirm the penalty of death on a man of Hamburg's youth and character. A firing-squad must be drawn up. A grave must be prepared for him. These duties are distasteful. Yet nothing suggests that they in any way involve the Elector's feelings.

The Elector, who otherwise appears to be humane, or at least "human", would no doubt prefer to act mercifully. It does not follow that he intends to do what he would like to do. He is not unfeeling: let us say that he controls his feelings. He holds his feelings back in the interest of the state. This being so he will certainly appeal to Schiller's man of an
unprejudiced and penetrating mind. But he will hardly satisfy the Romantic political philosopher. Tieck, as a Romantic, finds no fault with him. The Elector's cheerful and paternal manner predisposes him perhaps to think that his actions are humane rather than what Schiller means by morally sublime. The Elector intends, right from the beginning, to pardon the Prince eventually. Assuming this, Tieck naturally sees him as an educator. What else could cause him to delay his pardon? The lesson which he teaches, culminating in a jest, with the Prince being led before the firing-squad, seems unnecessarily cruel. The proponents of the "educator" theory, however, do not raise this objection, nor do they dispose of it. They therefore still feel able to resolve the apparent contradiction in the Elector's character.

Abandoning for a while the Romantic assumption of a model Elector we may look at the Elector more critically. We appreciate that he must deal with a Prince who has frustrated his plans three times and who still does not appear to understand the importance of obeying orders:

Ja, urteilt selbst, ihr Herrn! Der Prinz von Homburg
Hat im verflossnen Jahr, durch Trotz und Leichtsinn,
Um zwei der schönsten Siege mich gebracht;
Den dritten auch hat er mir schwer gekränkt.
Die Schule dieser Tage durchgegangen,
Wollt ihr's zum vierten Male mit ihm wagen? (121)

The Prince must suffer correction of some sort. But the punishment of death hardly fits the "crime" of which he is guilty. As Natalie says, the Elector exaggerates the consequences which his action may entail. We may object also, in so far as we consider that the sentence passed upon him is unduly harsh, that the Prince is being sacrificed for Brandenburg. As Kant would say, he is being treated, not as a person but rather as a thing; not
as an end in himself but rather as a means to one:

Die Wesen, deren Dasein zwar nicht auf unserm Willen, sondern der Natur beruht, haben dennoch, wenn sie vernunftlose Wesen sind, nur einen relativem Wert als Mittel und heißen daher Sachen, dagegen vernünftige Wesen Personen genannt werden, weil ihre Natur sie schon als Zwecke an sich selbst, das ist als etwas, das nicht bloß als Mittel gebraucht werden darf, auszeichnet.

Der kategorische Imperativ wird also folgender sein: Handle so, daß du die Menschheit sowohl in deiner Person als in der Person eines jeden andern jederzeit zugleich als Zweck, niemals bloß als Mittel brauchst. (122)

Those who insist that the Elector educates the Prince may logically add that he upholds Kant's precept. But most critics now maintain that he does not deliberately educate the Prince. One of them, Schultze-Jahde, goes so far as to agree with Hohenzollern. "Das Spiel, das im Garten von Fehrbellin gespielt wird, streift hart an die Grenze despotischer Frivolität."(123)

When he anticipates the penalty of death, the Elector speaks in haste. This is why, when the Prince appears in the pleasure garden, bringing with him the trophies of victory, he is speechless - "stutst". He is "betroffen".(124)

Ruthless, foolish and precipitate, he now finds himself involved in difficulties from which he is hard put to it to extricate himself.

We may not wish to go as far as this. But if we cannot agree that the Elector deliberately subjects the Prince to an ordeal, to bring him to his senses, we must certainly ask ourselves whether or not the Elector is at fault and must be taught a lesson or learn one for himself.

Ideas current in the time of Kleist may help us to decide this. Our enquiry into the Romantic idea of monarchy has focussed our attention on the reaction in the German states against the principles which the leaders of the Revolution in France had originally been inspired by. But these principles
were far from being universally abandoned by German writers. What was true of the Romantics was much less true of others. In particular it was anything but true of the more active German patriots. Fichte, who acclaimed the Revolution, did not cease to uphold the republican ideal or to oppose privileges based on the hereditary principle. The best state was founded, he believed, not on power, obedience and regulation, but as far as possible on custom and voluntary partnership. Extreme though his ideal was, there was still something of Romanticism in it. In the "Zurückforderung der Denkfreiheit" (1793) he rebels against the restrictions placed on freedom to criticize in the absolutist state. The refusal to grant such freedom could only lead to violent revolution. In the "Beiträge zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution" (1795), he maintains that where no written contract is agreed upon the state owes nothing to the individual and the individual owes nothing to the state. Provided that he waived his claim to be protected by the state he could even secede from it and, what is more, having seceded from it, could continue to live within its territory. It is true that Fichte modified the extreme individualism which appears in his earliest political writing. As early as 1794, in the "Vorlesungen über die Bestimmung des Gelehrten", he agrees that the state necessarily develops out of man's social nature. We cannot regard ourselves as being separable from it. He did not radically alter his position, however, till the French occupation forced him into doing so. Even then he did not support the war of liberation without misgiving as to whether it was really a national or only a dynastic war. The monarchic-aristocratic system in Prussia, he believed, was a slave system, under which one class was exploited and oppressed by another.
So far as we can tell, Kleist did not know Fichte personally. But he did know Gentz. Gentz, whose translation of Burke’s "Reflections" appeared in 1794, acclaimed the Revolution when it first broke out. Its consequences disappointed him; he adopted more conservative ideas. But he still upheld the British Constitution as a model. Though repudiating his earlier, anti-monarchic point of view, he did not yet look back despairingly to enlightened despotism.

In the time of the War of Liberation many Germans looked upon the war not only as a war against Napoleon but also as a war for unity and reform. The cause which they adhered to did not embrace the Romantic idea of the monarch as the wise father of the people. In their view the people—people like themselves—should be allowed to play a more constructive part in the government of the country. They complained that Frederick the Great had concentrated power in his own hands, seeking no advice from anyone and stifling any independent thought and action on the part of his subordinates whether military or civilian. His successor, Frederick William II, did little to alter the administration or encourage hope in those who were anxious to reform it. The system remained; its officials only tended to be more corrupt and less efficient. Under Frederick William III government fell more into the hands of a court camerilla. In itself this could not satisfy the reformers. The king refused to carry out the reforms which Stein urged upon him, before Jena, and Stein himself was dismissed from office.

The most ardent of those who were working for reform appear to have been the most ardent of the patriots. As such they were dissatisfied by the King’s refusal to participate in the coalition wars against Napoleon.
The swift collapse of Prussia at Jena in 1806 and the humiliating peace of Tilsit in 1807 did not endear them to the monarchy. Their aim was to change the character of the monarchy altogether. When Stein returned to office he abolished the royal cabinet and replaced it by five separate ministries. He hoped to turn the Prussian state from a Junker state into a state in which the people as a whole could feel that they were represented. Like Scharnhorst, Gneisenau and Arndt, he understood that one important reason for the success of the French revolutionary soldiers was their feeling that France belonged to them. The war which they had waged had been one from which they themselves would gain or lose, and not one in which rival dynasties were fighting as if people and their homeland were only important as objects of dispute.

The Reformers' point of view is eloquently put by Gneisenau:

Die Revolution hat alle Kräfte geweckt und jeder Kraft einen ihr angemessenen Wirkungskreis gegeben. Dadurch kamen an die Spitzen der Armeen Helden, an die ersten Stellen der Verwaltung Staatsmänner, und endlich an die Spitze eines großen Volkes der größte Mensch aus seiner Mitte.

The mercenary soldier does not care what cause he serves,

aber der Bürger im Staate, der sein Vaterland kennt und das Glück einer gerechten Regierung unter milden Gesetzen und dem Fortschritt zum Besseren in jedem Zweige des inneren Lebens und die Hoffnungen der Zukunft zu schätzen weiß, bringt mit Freuden seine Opfer dar, um diese höchsten aller Güter wo nicht sich, doch denen zu sichern, denen nach ihm der vaterländische Boden grünt. (126)

It was nonsense to ask men to sacrifice their lives to resist a foreign despot only to find that they were still the subjects of a despot in their own country:

Es ist billig und staatsklug zugleich, daß man den Völkern ein Vaterland gebe, wenn sie ein Vaterland kräftig verteidigen sollen. (127)
Kleist knew Gneisenau and describes him as
ein herrlicher Mann ... ich bin gewiß, daß wenn er den Platz fände, für den er sich geschaffen fühlt, ich irgendwo in seiner Umgebung den meinigen gefunden haben würde ... Es ist eine Lust, bei einem tüchtigen Manne zu sein; Kräfte, die in der Welt nirgends mehr an Orte sind, wachsen, in solcher Nähe und unter solchem Schutze, wieder zu einem freudigen Leben auf. (128)

Compared with the Romantics the Reformers laid more stress on the Fatherland and less on the monarch as the father of his people. They saw themselves not so much as subjects of the King but rather as men fitted to participate more actively and more responsibly in the government of their country.

The words of Kottwitz in Kleist's play appear to combine a Romantic feeling of allegiance to the Monarch with a Reformer's desire to serve him as a free man, and not merely as a puppet:

not as a mere puppet, but rather as a free man:

Herr, das Gesetz, das höchste, oberste,
Das wirken soll in deiner Feldherrn Brust,
Das ist der Buchstabe deines Willens nicht;
Das ist das Vaterland, das ist die Krone,
Das bist du selber, dessen Haupt sie trägt.

Schütt ich mein Blut dir, an dem Tag der Schlacht,
Für Sold, sei's Geld, sei's Ehre in den Staub?
Befüße Gott, dazu ist es zu gut!
Was! meine Lust hab, meine Freude ich,
Frei und für mich, im Stillen, unabhängig,
An deiner Trefflichkeit und Herrlichkeit,
Am Ruhm und Wachstum deines großen Namens! (129)

The influence of the "patriot-reformers" as distinct from that of the Romantic political philosophers appears to underlie the final solution to the problem of the play. It will be seen that the assumptions on which the
solution rests are completely different from those on which Machiavelli based his "Principe". It is these assumptions which concern us most, for the important lesson of the play, politically, is not that clemency prevails but the circumstances in which it can prevail.

We have pointed out that to begin with Natalie's plea for clemency succeeds no more than does that of the Electress. If it succeeds in the end, it does so in special circumstances. What are they?

Natalie has addressed the Elector's feelings and perhaps too his common-sense. But he has not yielded. He asks her whether the Prince thinks as she does. She replies,

Ach, lieber Onkel!
Hierauf sur Antwort hab' ich nichts, als Tränen. (130)

At this point he is "betroffen". He is taken aback. He is not "gerührt", he is not touched by her tears. On the contrary he is visibly amazed by what she has revealed to him.

Natalie continues. All that the Prince desires is to be allowed to live:

Der könnte, unter Blitz und Donnerschlag,
Das ganze Reich der Mark versinken sehn,
Daß er nicht fragen würde: was geschieht?
- Ach, welch ein Heldenherz hast du geknickt! (131)

It is here that Natalie breaks into tears. "Sie wendet sich und weint." (132) The Elector, who has indicated several times that he feels towards her as a father, does not soften at the sight of her distress and comfort her, for he is too astonished:

Kurfürst (im äußersten Erstaunen).

Nein, meine teuerste Natalie,
Unmöglich, in der Tat?! - Er fleht um Gnade?
Natalie. Ach, hätt' st du nimmer ihn verdammt!

Kurfürst. Nein, sag': er fleht um Gnade? - Gott im Himmel,
Was ist geschehn, mein liebes Kind? Was weinst du?
Du sprachst ihn? Tu mir alles kund! Du sprachst ihn?

Perhaps these words reveal his sympathy. But his chief feelings are those of curiosity and surprise.

Natalie now describes the Prince's state of mind in detail. The Elector listens to her amazed. The stage directions describe him as "verwirrt". In his confusion, he speaks nine lines, interrupted by only three separate lines from Natalie. In his first four, containing five exclamation marks, he says four times, in effect, that he will pardon the Prince.

The word "verwirrt" is important. We may feel that the Elector who coldly obeys reason "disappears", in the same way that Kleist's Penthesilea, dedicated to the state and expected to renounce the normal love of a woman for a man, falls in love with Achilles and "disappears" as Queen. Nature as it were reclaims her and she finds herself released from the unnatural, trained feelings of the Amazon. In a similar way Natalie catches the Elector off his guard. He has no time to reflect. He is bewildered. He cannot think, he can only act impulsively. His political or military mind is taken unawares and what Rousseau held to be the unsophisticated man of feeling, concealed by the acquired habits of social life, emerges. As a natural man, as distinct from social man, he liberates his underlying feelings, his innate pity and his uncorrupted moral sense.

Whatever may be said against this view, it at least suggests a reason why Natalie's appeal to the Elector's feelings should succeed where that of the Electress has already failed:
Mein teurer Sohn! Es ist bereits geschehn!
Doch alles, was ich flehte, war umsonst! (135)

So far as we can see, no argument prevails on the Elector. He is astonished and confused by what Natalie says. In this state of mind, either he suddenly relents or he suddenly reveals that he has secretly relented. We cannot say which and, like Natalie, we cannot say why:

Was deine Huld, o Herr, so rasch erwreckt,
Ich weiß es nicht und untersuch' es nicht. (136)

When the Elector commits himself to pardoning the Prince, he at first does so unconditionally. Let us pause here and ask ourselves how an unconditional acquittal might affect the Prince. He will probably react in one of two ways. He may feel that the Elector has at last come to his senses and accorded what was due to him – his pardon. Alternatively he may feel that his offence was serious, that he deserved to die and that the pardon granted to him is not an act of justice but one of grace. If he does this he will best serve the interest of Brandenburg. He will vindicate the Elector’s judgement and in doing so he will strengthen the Elector’s authority. At the same time, if he does not maintain that clemency is his by right, other men will understand that to punish disobedience by death is to impose a just penalty and that, being just, it is one to be expected should they ever disobey as he did. The effectiveness of the law – military orders – will depend on the certainty in men’s minds that, if they disobey it, punishment will inexorably follow.

With this preference in mind, that the Prince himself should accept the justice of the penalty, how can the Elector best encourage him to do so? He can say to the Prince, “If you undertake to declare publicly that you regard what you have done as a serious breach of military discipline, the
fitting penalty for which is death, I will take into account your gallantry and let you off with a caution." Instead he does the opposite. Why is this? From all that we can see and hear, he hardly allows himself the time to think about it. In his first moments of confusion he assures Natalie that the Prince is free:

Nun denn, beim Gott des Himmels und der Erde,
So fasse Mut, mein Kind; so ist er frei! (137)

But now, in answer to her question, he qualifies his promise. He respects the moral feeling of the Prince, he says, and will appoint him judge in his own case:

Die höchste Achtung, wie dir wohl bekannt,
Trag' ich im Innersten für sein Gefühl:
Wenn er den Spruch für ungerecht kann halten,
Kassier' ich die Artikel: er ist frei! (138)

Natalie tells him that the Prince will save himself at any price. He is already so afraid as to have lost his self-respect. Surely therefore, to save his life, he will gladly and publicly confess his guilt? But confused though he is - or because he is confused, and does not consult his reason - the Elector disregards the evidence and trusts in the Prince not to save his life by exonerating himself but to condemn himself even though he should lose his life by doing so.

Natalie takes the letter to the Prince, who reads the letter as follows:

Mein Prinz von Homburg, als ich Euch gefangen setzte,
Um Eures Angriff, allzufrüh vollbracht,
Da glaubt' ich nichts, als meine Pflicht zu tun;
Auf Euren eignen Beifall rechnet' ich.
Meint Ihr, ein Unrecht sei Euch widerfahren,
So bitt' ich, sagt's mir mit zwei Worten -
Und gleich den Degen schick' ich Euch zurück. (139)
Natalie, guessing that the letter will appeal to the finer qualities of the Prince and lead him to accept the penalty, urges him to write the necessary words that will enable the Elector to release him. But the Prince refuses to be hurried. He reads the letter carefully, acknowledges his guilt and accepts the penalty as just:

_Er handle, wie er darf;_  
_Mir ziem't's hier zu verfahren, wie ich soll!_  

_Ich will ihm, der so würdig vor mir steht,_  
_Nicht, ein Unwürd'ger, gegenüber stehen!_  
_Schuld ruht, bedeutende, mir auf der Brust,_  
_Wie ich es wohl erkenne; kann er mir_  
_Vergeben nur, wenn ich mit ihm drum streite,_  
_So mag ich nichts von seiner Gnade wissen._ (140)

Natalie's reminder that his grave is ready to receive him, its jaws open wide, does not impress him. His jocular reply suggests that he has conquered his fear completely:

_Wahrhaftig, tut Ihr doch, als würde sie_  
_Mir, wie ein Panther, übern Nacken kommen._ (141)

The Prince insists that the law must stand. Apparently he puts himself back in the situation in which the court and the Elector placed him. He will die. But the manner of his death will be more satisfying morally. As St. Paul says, "If ye are led of the spirit, ye are not under the law."(142) Aquinas agrees. Coercion destroys the moral quality of action. "In this sense", he writes, "virtuous and just men are not subject to the law, but only the wicked. For whatever pertains to constraint and violence is against the will. But the will of the good is at one with the law, whereas in the bad the will is opposed to the law. So, in this sense, the good are not under
the law, but only the bad."(143)

Kant, like Paul and Aquinas, tells us that the good man is a free man, and the perfectly good man perfectly free.

Ein vollkommen guter Wille würde also ebensowohl unter objektiven Gesetzen (des Guten) stehen, aber nicht dadurch als zu gesetzmässigen Handlungen genötigt vorgestellt werden können, weil er von selbst nach seiner subjektiven Beschaffenheit nur durch die Vorstellung des Guten bestimmt werden kann. Daher gelten für den göttlichen und überhaupt für einen heiligen Willen keine Imperative; das Sollen ist hier an unrechten Orte, weil das Wollen schon von selbst mit dem Gesetz notwendig einstimmig ist. (144)

We have already seen that Schiller and Humboldt both maintained that to deprive the citizen of his free choice was to weaken his character. It is commonly agreed that there is little virtue in doing good when we are driven to it. As J.D. Mabbot says,

Where there is no opportunity for vice, there is no merit in virtue ... Law is not merely negative, removing opportunities for virtue; it is often positively evil, substituting a bad motive for a good one, and since the moral value of an action lies entirely in the motive, the theory of Rousseau that, through law, the State "sides with" my moral self is everywhere and entirely false. Every law marks the death of so much moral value. The State may make me abstain from some actions and do others, but between an act done from fear of prison and "the same act" done from the right motive there is the whole difference between cowardice and courage, self-interest and self-sacrifice. The act is "the same act" only in the sense that I "go through the motions" as before. (145)

It is for reasons such as these that T.H. Green concludes that the State's activities must be minimal. Since all law is demoralising, let the State compel "only those actions which are better done from a bad motive than not at all."(146)
Rousseau comes near to saying this in the "Contrat Social". "The most important law of all is not to be found graven on pillars of marble or plates of bronze but in the hearts of the citizens. It is the true foundation on which the state is built." (147) As a source of good citizenship voluntary discipline is much to be preferred. But, as we have said before, he also believes that men must be compelled to be free, compelled, that is to say, to do what they would surely recognise as right, and wish to do, if they could only free themselves from the prejudice which selfishness involves.

Kleist, we know, thought highly of Rousseau. Three letters which he wrote to Wilhelmine von Zenge make this plain. (148) But however much he admired Rousseau, he did not do so uncritically. When Rousseau condemns man's unfortunate curiosity, in the "Discours sur les sciences et les arts" (1750), his restless seeking after knowledge, which creates more needs than it can satisfy, he cannot agree with him. (149) The letters in which he refers to him admiringly begin and end in the year 1801, eight years before his last play was written. Besides, there was much in Rousseau's political philosophy which Kleist could not accept. In the ideal order which Rousseau describes in the "Contrat Social", the "free" man will be free only in the sense that the community will force him to agree to that which he would readily approve of, if only his selfishness did not mislead him. For man is naturally good and will respond to those whose wisdom and virtue he respects. Like a good parent the state will guide his steps. Its censorship will govern his opinions. It will prescribe for him the articles of civil faith. If he should publicly acknowledge these, and then behave as if he had not done so, he shall be put to death. He has committed the gravest crime: he has deceived the law. (150) His life is in any case no more than "something which he holds, on terms, from the State". (151) If he is shown to be an
enemy of the State - Rousseau does not define one at this point - for this also he must die. Rousseau as he appears from the "Discours sur l'inegalité parmi les hommes" differs greatly from Rousseau as the author of the "Contrat Social". What Kleist knew of him as such he does not tell us. But the message of his play largely denies Rousseau's more systematic political philosophy, as Burke does too and the Romantics after him.

The Rousseau whose influence if any reflects itself in Kleist's work, was more probably the author of the "Discours sur l'inegalité parmi les hommes", "la Nouvelle Héloïse", "Emile" and the "Confessions". He believed that man found God and could follow him not so much by consulting his reason as by doing what his feelings prompted him to do. He believed that the voice of pity spoke in all men. They could hear that voice if only they did not refuse to listen to it. He believed that man was born good. He would remain good if self-interest did not corrupt his reason as a guide or if reason in its then imperfect state were not allowed to silence his natural and sound feelings. Kottwitz appears to be echoing Rousseau in his words to the Elector:

Die schlechte,
Kurzsicht'ge Staatskunst, die, um eines Falles,
Da die Empfindung sich verderblich zeigt,
Zehn andere vergisst im Lauf der Dinge,
Da die Empfindung einzig retten kann! (152)

It may be that Rousseau's confidence in unsophisticated human nature accounts for his confidence in his own political theories. He believed in a primary democracy. He could have hardly have done so were it not that he believed in the good sense of men generally. They needed guides. But at least they could be guided. By retaining his belief in man born good, and remaining good at bottom, Rousseau does something to correct the
disquietening aspects of his work. "No man", he says, "should be put to death, even to serve as an example, unless his continued existence is a source of danger." (153) For no one is so bad that he cannot be made good for something. Original virtue survives in all men.

The Romantics opposed Rousseau's idea of the social contract. But clearly they would not reject the premise on which his theory was based. Their own confidence depended on it. The solution in Kleist's play similarly appears to rest on the assumption, which does not always appear to underlie Kleist's work, that in our dealings with civilised people we can often elicit good qualities simply by trusting in them. If, however, we assume the worst, or believe that not just lawless men need to be intimidated, but a whole people, we shall produce men of whom it could be truly said that they cannot be trusted. The idea that the ruler must be brutal over small things lest worse befall rests on the false premise that men generally will abuse kindness and tolerance. The threat of execution destroys the dignity and moral self-respect of the Prince. It almost brings about an officers' revolt. But as soon as the Elector acts upon his confidence in the noble character of the Prince, as soon as he assumes the best in him, he finds it. In this way, his trust and his mistrust both tend not so much to be confirmed as to confirm themselves.

The solution which Kleist contrives - which the Elector seems to stumble into - not only satisfies the interest of the Prince but also that of the Elector himself. Not only does the Elector pardon the Prince and soften the rigours of the law as most of us would wish. By enabling the Prince to acknowledge the law and freely accept the penalty of death, he does not suggest that he and the military court must admit that they misjudged him. He does not now seem to say that to disregard an order is not, after all, a
serious offence or that soldiers who do not obey need fear no punishment. He does not yield - more important, he does not appear to yield - to pressure from the officers. He remains the undisputed master of the state. He does not appear to be pardoning the Prince simply because he is the Prince. It shall not be said that there is one law for the ordinary man and another law for the Elector's prospective nephew-in-law. By refusing to annul the penalty at once the Elector gives time to those who might otherwise suspect that there is one law for princes and another law for them to petition him for mercy. They can no longer disapprove of that which they have now had time to recommend themselves and which, if rumour is correct, they are even ready to achieve by force.

The Prince justifies the Elector's action as no one else could, upholding the penalty of death not as its pitiable victim but rather in a spirit of martyrdom. He confirms the Elector's authority and exalts that for which he is prepared to die:

Ich will das heilige Gesetz des Kriegs,
Das ich verletzt' im Angesicht des Heers,
Durch einen freien Tod verherrlichen! (154)

The solution to the problem of the play appears to be wholly satisfying. By what process of thought or feeling the Prince comes to be acquitted has given rise to much controversy. The pardon itself, however, satisfies almost all critics of the play that the play ends happily. Hebbel only criticises the manner in which it does so. On the whole the play is sound, but he complains about the garden scenes - the first and the last: "... die Wucherpflanzen haben sich", at these two points, "als überflüssige Arabesken herumgeschlungen." (155) Tieck, however, stresses the importance of precisely these two scenes. The disobedience of the Prince, the verdict
pronounced by the court martial, the sentence which it imposes, and which
the Elector anticipates, confirms and finally annuls, bounded as these are
by the unusual events which take place in the castle garden, stand for an
ideal which the real world is unlikely to see fulfilled. The events which
fall between them, from the time when the Prince disobeys the order which was
given to him, till the Elector virtually annuls the sentence, are limited by
improbable, dream-like events which are intended to suggest that the solution
is ideal and unattainable.

A French critic, Schlagdenhauffen\(^{(156)}\), has revived Tieck's interpretation
and elaborated it. He believes that Kleist's last play was not inspired by
patriotism. Neither does it reconcile the conflicting rights of the State
and the individual. The Prince reflects the character of Kleist himself in
a world, as it appears to him, "fait d'éléments discordants, un monde
incohérent et absurde, sur lequel glisse, en de rares instants, le halo
bienfaisant et trompeur de l'illusion et du rêve."\(^{(157)}\) The author belittles
the gravity of the Prince's disobedience, emphasising the "Scherz-Schuld"
relationship and reading so much into Hohenzollern's case against the Elector
as to take the Elector's words, "Mein junger Prinz, Euch ruf' ich mir zu
Hülfe!"\(^{(158)}\), as a cry of distress.

He also emphasises the last point which Kottwitz makes. If the Elector
were to find himself in grave peril, should he, Kottwitz, leave his sword
unsheathed and say that he had not had orders to advance and rescue him?
Schlagdenhauffen agrees with Kottwitz. The demands which the State has made
on the Prince are absurd. Therefore, he says, the Prince resigns himself to
death much as Kleist's Penthesilea wills herself to die, or as Kleist himself
committed suicide. The Prince, like Kleist\(^{(159)}\), approaches death
jubilantly:
Nun, o Unsterblichkeit, bist du ganz mein!
Du strahlst mir, durch die Binde meiner Augen,
Mit Glanz der tausendfachen Sonne zu!
Es wachsen Flügel mir an beiden Schultern,
Durch stille Ätherräume schwingt mein Geist;
Und wie ein Schiff, vom Hauch des Winds entführt,
Die muntre Hafenstadt versinken sieht,
So geht mir dämmernd alles Leben unter:
Ach, wie die Nachtviole lieblich duftet! (160)

In the resemblance of the last scene to the first scene of the play, there is more, Schlagdenhauffen believes, than the aesthetic unity that Schmidt sees in it (161). The reconciliation is no more than a dream. The Prince asks,

Nein, sagt! Ist es ein Traum?

Kottwitz replies,

Ein Traum, was sonst? (162)

For the Prince the love and glory for which he has yearned in earthly life have become valueless. He has conquered his fear, he has chosen death and will not willingly re-accommodate himself to this world. He neither looks at nor speaks to Natalie or the Elector. He does not join in the vivat,

In Staub mit allen Feinden Brandenburgs! (163)

His world, Schlagdenhauffen insists, and the world of patriotic feeling remain separate, and the Elector’s pardon only serves to prolong his torment.

The interpretation is original but only special pleading can sustain it. Above all it ignores Kleist’s love of country and his hatred of Napoleon. It ignores the author of "Die Hermannsschlacht" and the fierce patriotic zeal of his poem "Germania an ihre Kinder" (1808). At the time when Kleist was writing his play - between January, 1809 and March, 1810 - he witnessed
Napoleon's first defeat at Aspern. Political writing - appeals to German patriotism - occupied much of his time. The defeat of the Archduke Charles at Wagram disappointed him but his patriotic spirit and his will to live were not altogether spent. "Noch niemals bin ich so erschüttert gewesen ...

Nicht sowohl über die Zeit - denn das, was eingetreten ist, ließ sich ... vorhersehen; als darüber, daß ich bestimmt war, es zu überleben ... Aber Hoffnung muß bei den Lebenden sein." (164)

To see in the Prince only his author and to see in his author only a psychopath weary of life is surely to misunderstand them both. But it may be that Schlagdenhauffen's interpretation has an element of truth in it.

As something of a rebel and a nonconformist, who in turn resigned his commission in the Prussian army and his apprenticeship for the Prussian Civil Service, Kleist could presumably sympathise with a Prince who acted on his own initiative and disregarded orders. It might not be right but he could understand it. The spectacle of military discipline had filled him with contempt and the maintaining of it with moral anguish:

entstehen, einen Stand zu verlassen, in welchem ich von zwei durchaus entgegengesetzten Principien unaufhörlich gemartert wurde, immer zweifelhaft war, ob ich als Mensch oder als Offizier handeln müßte; denn die Pflichten beider zu vereinen, halte ich bei dem jetzigen Zustande der Armeen für unmöglich. (165)

The world that Kleist knew as a Prussian officer was very different from the world as it appears to the Prince, "gewöhnt an Edelmut und Liebe" (166). The assumptions underlying Kleist's solution are more appropriate to the world as he wished it to be than to the world in which he actually lived. They are not the assumptions which underlie Machiavelli's theory of "Staatsräson". The theory of "Staatsräson" on the one hand chiefly rests on a mistrust for human nature, which, in Machiavelli's view, is almost everywhere aggressive and acquisitive. The belief that most men are ready to compete with one another for wealth, power and pleasure, and that only fear of death restrains them, also inspires the "strong state" philosophy of Hobbes's "Leviathan". On the other hand the plea for liberty and humanity must go together with confidence in human nature. In Locke's view being trusted by others tends to help us to deserve being trusted. The Elector bears this out by trusting in the Prince and eliciting his best qualities. But he does not succeed by trust alone. He also succeeds because the Prince admires and emulates him:

Ich will ihm, der so würdig vor mir steht,
Nicht, ein Unwürd'ger, gegenüber stehn! (167)

There can be little doubt that Kleist intended to portray an Elector who in his view could be regarded as a model. To do this was not easy. It is likely that Kleist is much less interested in the Elector than he is in the Prince. If this is so the Elector's behaviour is determined by what Kleist wants to make of the Prince and by the situation in which the Prince has to
appear. Until Act IV, Scene iv, the Elector’s function in the play is that of a Junius Brutus or Timoleon, morally sublime in Schiller’s sense. The Prince - Timophanes as it were - must fall before the firing-squad. After Act IV, Scene iv, the Elector’s apparent change of heart enables the Prince to be a Regulus. The character of the Prince cannot develop as it does if the Elector appears throughout the play as a humane ruler.

Accounts of the part played by the real Prince Frederick of Homburg in the battle of Fehrbellin left Kleist more free to depict the Elector as he wished. Prince Frederick, in his own account, says nothing of a conflict between the Elector and himself. Frederick the Great does; the Prince, he says, was sternly reprimanded. Krause, whose account is the only one which Kleist is definitely known to have consulted, says that before embracing the Prince the Elector paternally admonished him.

Within the limits which the character and behaviour of the Prince appear to have imposed upon him, Kleist presents the Elector as Krause does. The Elector’s idea of duty cannot be helped. But in his private life the Elector is revealed as Natalie describes him:

Und Gott schuf noch nichts Milderes, als dich. (171)

When he writes his letter to the Prince and gives it to Natalie, he speaks to her consolingly:

Fürwahr, mein Töchterchen, mein Michtchen, weinte!
Und ich, dem ihre Freude anvertraut,
Muß' ihrer holden Augen Himmel trüben!
(Er legt den Arm um ihren Leib) (172)

The whole play abounds with indications such as these that the Elector is fundamentally humane. His refusal to pardon the Prince immediately may puzzle us. The "education theory" is clearly defective. It appears that the Elector must contradict his character in order to reveal the unfortunate
result of applying the remedy of "Staatsräsön" - a remedy inspired by fear and which consists in instilling fear in others. The remedy does not work.

The opposite remedy does. To show that it does, the Elector must relent. We are well prepared for his doing so. We are so well prepared that we may think that the Elector's humanity does not depend on the exigencies of the plot alone. It may also reflect the desire, which Kleist felt, to create a monarch who not only allowed the Prince the opportunity of standing forth as a model patriot and soldier but who also satisfied his own longing for a more humane spirit than that which had animated the Kings of Prussia and still prevailed in the Prussian army.

Humane rulers appear in several of the plays of Goethe. The ordinary people of Goethe's plays are not incorrigibly evil - far from it. But on the whole his good people tend not to be attracted into politics. In the politics of Goethe's drama we often find that the good intentions of the monarch are frustrated by his servants. If Schiller's Leonore speaks for Schiller, Schiller would presumably go further and would say that when good people are attracted into politics, politics corrupts them. The difference between Kleist and those who treated problems comparable to his lies less in their solutions than in the premises on which these solutions rest. The characters of Kleist's play endear themselves to the audience. They are far removed from the intriguers who frustrate the intentions of the King in Goethe's "Egmont" and still further from the life at court under Schiller's Queen Elisabeth. In the real world as Schiller sees it, as a poet and historian, evil perpetuates itself continually. The ruler governs over men in order to indulge his own self-interest and to have his way in all things.

In the German states of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this could not always be said of the ruling prince. It was far from true of the
Great Elector. If he did act against morality, it was to serve Brandenburg rather than himself. According to Marriott and Robertson,

... facts as he interpreted them enforced the conclusion that in a world demoralized by a devastating war success would come to the man who took that world as he found it, met force with force, guile with guile. Brandenburg had been ruined because its rulers had forgotten that foes were pitiless and friends selfish. The sum of statecraft lay in doing to others what they would do to you, in attaining the means to do it and to prevent them from doing it ... to mask ones feelings ... accept an ally for what he was worth and to bow, unconvincing, to the inevitable. (173)

We see little even of this in the Elector as portrayed by Kleist. It is true that the reference to the proposed marriage of Natalie to the Swedish King suggests it:

Erkauf’, o Herr, mit deiner Nichte Hand
Von Gustav Karl den Frieden nicht! Hinweg
Mit diesem Unterhändler aus dem Lager,
Der solchen Antrag ehrlos dir gemacht:
Mit Kettenkugeln schreib’ die Antwort ihm! (174)

It appears from what the Prince says that the Elector had been forced to think of marrying Natalie to the Swedish King so that, putting an end to the war, he might save his country from a powerful aggressor. He more or less admits this:

Was auch bedarf es dieses Opfers noch,
Vom Misglück nur des Kriegs mir abgerungen;
Blüht doch aus jedem Wort, das du gesprochen,
Jetzt mir ein Sieg auf, der zu Staub ihm malmt! (175)

These words do not necessarily confirm Hohenzollern’s suspicion, which the Prince shared, that the proposal of marriage from the Swedish King lay behind the Elector’s refusal to quash the penalty. But they do serve to
emphasise the difficulty of the Elector's position. They suggest that defeat in battle would have forced him into setting aside Natalie's feelings.

The Elector, as a man forced into using evil methods by the evil policies of other states or by unruly subjects, does not appear in Kleist's play. He is a good and kindly person who allows or is persuaded to allow kind feelings to mitigate the harshness of the law. In the earlier plays of Goethe a man such as this might find that his kind purposes are nullified, sometimes by his executive officers and sometimes by the unruly mob. But in Kleist's Brandenburg ordinary men - Froben and the soldiers in general - serve the Elector not because they fear him or desire his favour but because they love him. In Kleist's play, as opposed to Kleist's own world, there is no villain. His characters betray few failings. The Electress and Natalie are kind and understanding, as we see in the first scene of the play in which the Prince appears, walking in his sleep:

_Kurfürstin._ Der junge Mann ist krank, so wahr ich lebe.

_Natalie._ Er braucht des Arstes - !

_Kurfürstin._ Man sollt' ihm helfen, dünkt mich,

_Nicht den Moment verbringen, sein zu spotten!_ (176)

The officers are chiefly represented by Hohenzollern and Kottwitz, the teasing humour of the one and the zest of the other, with his aches and pains (177), adding to the atmosphere of cheerfulness. Did Prussian officers as Kleist remembered them ever speak and feel as Kottwitz does?

_Ein schöner Tag, so wahr ich Leben atme!_ 
_Ein Tag, von Gott, dem hohen Herrn der Welt,_ 
_Gemacht zu süßem Ding', als sich zu schlagen!_ 
_Die Sonne schimmert rüthlich durch die Wolken,_ 
_Und die Gefühle flattern, mit der Lerche,_ 
_Zum heitern Duft des Himmels jubelnd auf!_ (178)
The solution to the problem of the play depends almost entirely on the Elector's underlying humanity. It remains, however, for the Prince either to war this solution by claiming pardon as his right - implying that the Elector and the court-martial took too serious a view of his offence - or else to perfect it, by declaring that the penalty is just, vindicating the Elector and the court-martial, emphasising the gravity of his offence and leaving the Elector free to pardon him as an act of grace.

We can pay no higher tribute to the Prince than by applying to him the following words of Kant: "Die völlige Angemessenheit des Willens aber zum moralischen Gesetz ist Heiligkeit." It is impossible for the will to conform completely with the moral law - that would be "eine Vollkommenheit, deren kein vernünftiges Wesen der Sinnenwelt in keinem Zeitpunkt seines Daseins fähig ist."(179) But the Prince appears to achieve what Kant believes impossible. His will to uphold the moral law triumphs over his fear of death, he accepts death and he refuses life apparently without effort and finally without regret.

In a world composed of men like these the problem of "Staatsräson" need not arise. The Elector appears to understand the need for acting as he does; he must. But no one else can. It is clear to us that the problem of maintaining discipline, in this play, calls for no remedy of "Staatsräson". The remedy of "Staatsräson", imprudently applied, itself gives rise to the problem of maintaining discipline. An imperfect world forces the Elector into waging war with Sweden in defence of Brandenburg. But in what we see of Brandenburg itself, of an ideal society within it, the problem of "Staatsräson" arises almost accidentally. Pardon, it appears, is not the evil which it might have been - the greater or the lesser. For not only does humanity triumph, but discipline itself is exalted.
CHAPTER III

The theme of "Staatsraison" in German drama since the time of Kleist.
A study of political thought in Germany from 1815 until the time of Bismarck shows a growing tendency among German liberals to seek to achieve their purposes not by antagonising but by influencing those who already wielded power and were unlikely to relinquish it. The tendency to do so characterises their work from the beginning. As L. Krieger has shown, the word "Rechtsstaat" as used by writers such as Müller, Welcker and Mohl, "did not signify a new state but a new way of looking at the old state". The ruler was morally bound to respect the liberty and rights of the subject, but no other institution of the state should be empowered to hold him to his duty. The liberals as a whole accepted monarchic power as it then was. It had altered little, the years of revolution and reform had done little to change the position of the German ruler. In 1815 a number of constitutions were promulgated, notably in Baden, Württemberg and Bavaria. These modified absolutism in some ways but executive power remained vested in the monarch, who enjoyed also the right to initiate or veto legislation and to dissolve parliament. Similar, timely but modest concessions were made in 1830 in the states of Brunswick, Hanover, Saxony and Hesse-Kassel, while in Baden the liberals were further appeased by reforms long overdue. The readiness of the liberals to accept the system as it was and make the best of it constantly appears. The title of Dahlmann's main work, "Die Politik, auf den Grund und das Maß der gegebenen Zustände zurückgeführt" (1835) in itself indicates his preference for a hereditary rather than elective monarchy, a peerage rather than a senate and a lower house that would represent a restricted, property-owning section of the people. Apart, however, from what men like Dahlmann preferred, in practice they could not hope to achieve their purposes by radical means. The middle-class, which would benefit most from liberal policies and institutions, was not numerically strong enough until
late in the nineteenth century to effect a revolution for itself as the French had done in 1789. In the first half of the century the broad pattern of German economic life changed little. Agriculture still predominated over industry. The industrial society that was likely to disturb the existing political system had not yet arisen. Political liberalism before 1848 was a predominantly intellectual movement more concerned with principles than with ways of putting them into practice. This is not to say that radical as distinct from moderate liberalism was unknown. Liberalism of a radical kind was particularly strong in the "Burschenschaften". The repressive measures of 1819-1826 only served to accentuate its radical character. At the same time, however, the members of the "Burschenschaften" were far from being politically united. Some of them were hoping for a revolution, such as that in Spain, or Italy, or Greece. Others, however, simply desired to see a spiritual regeneration of the German people, nothing more. The "Burschenschaften" stood as much for "faith" as for "unity" and "freedom", and the Christian aspect of the movement was inclined to make them more conservative or conciliatory than they might have been otherwise. The failures of 1848 and 1849 converted some despairing liberals to radicalism - Gervinus was one. But a more impressive list could be drawn up of those who adopted conservative ideas and who even found their way, many of them, into the Austrian or Prussian civil service. In Prussia especially the easing of the censorship in 1840, the convocation of a committee representing the Prussian Diets, and the projected Prussian Union of 1849-1850, encouraged liberals to think that, if only they were patient, their hopes would be fulfilled.

In the mid-forties a series of riots beginning with the rising of the
Silesian weavers in 1844, and culminating in bloodshed in Leipzig and Berlin in 1847, had aroused much sympathy for the workers. But it also served to deepen the misgivings which many Germans felt concerning radical methods of reform. For whatever sympathy the educated German might feel for the working classes, he could not be said to represent them. Revolution from above was more likely to strike him as the only wise alternative to violence. The leaders of industry in Rhenish Prussia stood to lose much from the disruption brought about by revolution from below and to gain much from the good will of the authorities. They were supported by the work and writing of liberals such as Mevissen, Camphausen and Hansemann.

In the 1860's the issues of the army bill and the budget rights of the elected representatives ranged the liberals against the Prussian government. The articles of Lasker attacked the Prussian police state and the continual interference of the bureaucracy in matters which did not properly concern them. Waldeck and Jacoby in Prussia and F.T. Fischer in Württemberg condemned Bismarck's triumph over Denmark and Austria. Good might come of it - German unity - but not even that could be held to justify the use of violent and dishonest methods.

In the time of Bismarck, however, the liberals as a whole came more and more to think that liberal measures were more important than liberal ideas and that liberal ideas were best implemented by a strong leader. A strong leader could do what wrangling states or wrangling representatives were unlikely to achieve. The success of the Italian struggle for unity against Austria in 1859 encouraged German nationalism. By the time that Bismarck had defeated Austria in 1866 the liberals appear to have become more "national" than "liberal". They indemnified Bismarck for raising taxes without the Landtag's consent and from 1866 to 1918 no further progress was made towards
fully responsible parliamentary government. The members of the Reichstag itself were popularly elected and enjoyed wide powers of legislation and budget control. These concessions in the Empire as a whole enlisted the support of the Southern liberals as Bismarck had intended. Until 1878, when Bismarck abandoned his policy of free trade, the liberals appear to have believed that the more the government depended on them the more liberal it would become.

The pronounced and increasing tendency for the German liberals to support the monarchy, encouraging it to institute reforms, rather than attacking it to no avail, is paralleled in the German drama. The dramatists who could not condone a policy of "Staatsraison" tend not so much to attack those who practise it as to set before the public a model of something more humane.

In Fouqué's "Waldemar der Pilger" (1811) the Margrave of Brandenburg - Waldemar himself - appears as the benign ruler on whom as an idea political Romanticism centred. Kleist, when drawing the character of the Elector, seems to have someone similar in mind but is handicapped by the need to place the hero of his play in a given situation. Fouqué is less restricted. It is true that, like the Elector, Waldemar is engaged in war and that war does not encourage humane feelings. But the war which he is fighting is a war against his fellow-Germans. Waldemar (1303-1309) is as conscious of himself as being German as Fouqué was in 1811. Such a war can therefore only be regarded as "ein bittres Muß" (2).

Repeatedly throughout the play the Margrave describes himself in one way or another as the father of his people. His people are his children:

Wenn über Kinder so der Vater weint,
Wie ich heut über Euch, so bringt es Sagen
Auf Erden, und im Himmel Seligkeit!

(2)"ein bittres Muß" - a phrase that refers to the tragic necessity of war.
Ihr lieben, treuen Kinder ... 

... ...

Innigkeit, Vertrau'n,
Das sind die Gaben, die ein Vater heischt.
Auch Tränen sind, auch Klagen, süßes Labsaal,
Wenn recht ihr Weg von Herz in Herzen geht. (3)

In "Waldemar der Pilger" Fouqué deprecates the inhumanity of war and he distinguishes, as Kleist does not, between the ruler who decides to wage it and the people who must simply do as he does.

Gere von Byern
Die Böhmen hat das Kriegsvolk nicht verschont;
Kein Bitten half; sie liegen all' zerfleischt.

Waldemar
Was soll das? Solch Gemetzel ist ein Gräu'l mir.

Gere von Byern
Dieweil sie Euch abtrünnig worden sind!

Waldemar
Das tat ihr Herr, nicht sie. Das arme Volk!
Führt die Gefang'nen fort, pflegt ihr wohl. (4)

The hero of Uhland's "Ludwig der Bayer" (1818) conducts his relations with other powers in a spirit similar to that in which Waldemar behaves towards his own people. He is chosen to be King by the princes of Bavaria. The princes believe that he is qualified to govern because, like the philosopher-kings of Plato's "Republic", he does not desire to do so. Of all the princes it is he who is the least ambitious:

Um meines Volkes Liebe laßt mich werben!
Die Königskrone gönn' ich andern gern. (5)
He is a King who loves his enemy and will treat with him in good faith. When Leopold lays waste Bavaria, the threat from Ludwig's officers that Leopold's captive brother Friedrich shall suffer, if Leopold himself does not surrender, achieves nothing. For Ludwig's clemency is too well known:

Es hat nicht not;
Der König Ludwig kann das Blut nicht sehn.

A soldier comments,

Kann er doch das Blut
Der Bayer seh'n, das täglich für ihn fließt!
Warum nicht Friedrichs? (6)

But Ludwig will not treat Friedrich as a hostage. He summons him from prison. He says,

Man riet mir, Euch zu töten, es ist wahr,
Und wahr ist's, dieser endlos blut'ge Streit
Verhärmt auch des mildern Mannes Sinn;
Doch so ist noch der meine nicht verwildert,
Daß dieses schöne Haupt mir dürfte fallen,
Dies edle Haupt, der höchsten Krone wert. (7)

Kindness has failed. The word which he gave him as a friend has been mistaken for hypocrisy. However, he does not despair. Failure does not drive him into harshness. He releases Friedrich and he trusts him to persuade Leopold his brother to negotiate for peace.

Unterpfland
Begeh' ich keines, Eure Treue bürgt.
Nur Euer Wort verlang' ich, daß, wenn Ihr
Nicht die Bedingungen erfüllen könnt,
Ihr Euch bis auf die nächste Sonnenwende
Unfehlbar in die Fängnis wieder stellt. (8)

Friedrich gives him his word and keeps it, despite the casuistry and
brutal threats of Leopold and the papal threat also of being excommunicated. He resists the entreaties of his wife, who is now with child and feels in need of him. He returns. Ludwig acclaims his moral victory and, meeting the good in him half way, appoints him Regent for the time that he must go to war with Brandenburg.

Und doch so nahe lag die Lösung; nicht
Im Schwertkampf, nicht in List noch Zauberei,
Sie liegt uns einzig in der Kraft des Herzens.
Das Herz nur kann uns retten, das uns stets,
Wenn wir zum Kampfe schritten, Warnung gab. (9)

This is a palatable remedy for corruption in the body politic. It works. But its effect when Ludwig is away and Friedrich must oppose Leopold, we can only guess.

Wenn Leopold herangezogen kommt,
Mein Bayern zu verwüsten, tritt ihm än
Entgegen in der Königswürde Schmuck!
Und lächeln wird sein finstres Angesicht. (10)

Friedrich agrees with Ludwig. He will not ask whether it is possible, in a world unalterably hostile, for the state to maintain itself by gentleness alone. If he can demonstrate the moral law and exalt it, that will suffice:

Ich frage nicht mehr, ob es möglich ist,
Ob in feindsel'gen Treiben dieser Erde
So herrlicher Entschluß bestehen kann,
Genug, es ist in dieser großen Stunde,
Es lebt in diesem hehren Augenblick,
Ich fühl's und werfe mich an deine Brust. (11)

A ruler who passively resists his enemy as Ludwig does is lucky to remain in power. If he is not deposed, or does not die the martyr's death which in Lessing's view does not suit tragic heroes, his fortune will appear
incredible.

The Regent in Immermann's "Andreas Hofer" (1826) shoulders the burden which Uhland's Ludwig spares himself. He feels about his duty to punish men much as Kleist felt as a Prussian officer. Only his duty is more distasteful. From time to time he must append his signature to the penalty of death. He always thinks the penalty deserved or he would not confirm it. But a man's feelings do not necessarily correspond to his opinions. He may seek to justify himself. But if, like the Regent, he has seen his father hanged, he cannot take refuge from his feelings in abstract ideas of right and wrong or of political necessity:

Der Graf, mein Vater,
Ging auch einst zum Gerüst. Ich taucht' ein Tuch
Ins Blut, das durch die Bohlen tröpfelte.
Und dieser Anblick kommt mir stets vor's Auge,
Wenn mir ein Todesurteil wird gebracht,
Ich schaudre dann und meine Feder stockt. (12)

He ponders the question whether harsh deterrent measures are a worse evil than the evils which they are intended to prevent. He finds that to attempt to answer this is to involve himself in an endless labyrinth of futile speculation. But the question still haunts him:

Und doch ruft das Gewissen Tag und Nacht:
O daß es anders wär'! In solchem Streit,
Was rettet uns? Ein holdes Maß im Busen.
Durch Strudel fahren wir, wo des Verstandes
Compaß den Weg nicht zeigt! Kann unsern Hort,
Den düstern, reichen, schwerunheimlichen,
Zum frommen Eigenthume was verwandeln,
So ist es Ehr' und Treue, Mild' und Unschuld. (13)

Grillparzer, if we may judge from "König Ottokar" (1823), believes that
in affairs of state, as in private life, the moral problem for the ruler is
difficult but not complicated. If the ruler can control himself, he will
control others. This is the advice which Bancbanus gives to the child Bela
in "Ein treuer Diener seines Herrn" (1828):

Sei mild, du Fürstenkind, und sei gerecht!
Auf dem Gerechten ruht des Herren Segen.
Bezähm dich selbst, nur wer sich selbst bezähmt,
Mag des Gesetzes scharfe Zügel lenken. (14)

The moral difficulties of the ruler do not appear to differ from those
of the subject. In these two plays Grillparzer does not broach the problem
of "Staatsrätson". It is true that in "König Ottokar" the King feels driven
to admit that no good can ever come of evil methods:

Denn du allein kannst heilen, großer Gott,
Und hab ich auch das Schlimme nicht gewollt,
Wer war ich, Wurm? daß ich mich unterwand,
Den Herrn der Welten frevelnd nachzuspielen,
Durchs Böse suchend einen Weg zum Guten! (15)

His admission of guilt strikingly resembles that of Schiller's Karl(16).
Unlike Karl (if Karl can be believed), however, Ottokar has not sought to put
the world to rights but to possess it. As a tyrant he is overthrown. But
Grillparzer does not suggest that legitimacy is not enough or that the subject
only owes obedience to monarchs who deserve to be obeyed. For why must
Ottokar be overthrown? Who is it who resists him? He is heir to Bohemia
and Moravia. He succeeds rightfully to Austria, Styria and Carinthia. He
is not punished as a usurper. He is punished by a model Emperor for abusing
the power to which he was entitled. But only the Emperor may punish him.
If the right to govern does not imply the right to govern brutally, neither
does the abuse of power imply anybody's freedom to resist it. Again and
again the characters in Grillparzer's plays instil this lesson:

Daß einer herrsche ist des Himmels Ruf,
Weil zum Gehorchen er die Menschen schuf. (17)

The idea of the loyal servant of the State has been discredited. At Nuremberg the plea of obedience to orders did not save those who had committed "crimes against humanity". As the servant of his King, Bancbanus commits no evil. But his attitude to the State may disquieten us who have seen what unquestioning obedience can lead to. He commits no evil but neglects much good. He puts his duty to the State first and his duty as a husband after it. He accepts without murmur the Regent's word that his wife has been put to death for some good reason - he does not know what and does not inquire. In the interest of public order he suppresses those who try to avenge his wife's death. By his own lights this is putting first things first. But to perform in this way what he thinks to be his duty, without any moral difficulty whatever, seems unnatural.

The excessive loyalty to the state shown by Bancbanus is paralleled in the "Bruderzwist" (ca. 1810). Prokop, when he runs to the defence of Prague, realises that his daughter Lucretia is exposed to danger. He puts the city first:

Der ist kein Bürger, der die eigne Sorge
Vergißt nicht in der Not des Allgemeinen. (18)

Lucretia is killed and Prokop is horrified. But for all that we can hear, he does not go back on his opinion that civic duties are more important than his duty to the family. He does not think or feel in this respect as Schiller's Wilhelm Tell does.

The question, whether the state is entitled to subordinate to itself not merely our natural protective instinct for those who are most dear to us,
but justice and humanity as well, finds an answer in "Die Judin von Toledo" (1824/1836). The Queen and the King's ministers decide that if the King is to be freed from his passion for the Jewess, Rahel, and recalled to his responsibilities, Rahel must be put to death. The interest of the State as such is pleaded most strongly by the Queen. Her motive, however, is impure. The King has outraged her feelings. She acts from revenge. But the Queen is not alone. The King's counsel think as she does. There is some reason why they should. The enemy is at hand. The whole future of the state hangs in the balance. Isaak, Rahel's father, is appointed by the King as his chief Minister and abuses his position for his own profit. The King no longer commands respect. The affairs of state are conducted "als wäre herrenlos das Königreich" (19).

When the King's ministers decided to act, and Rahel is killed, Alfons condones her murder almost at once as a political necessity. Only one voice protests. It is that of the bereaved sister, who curses those who now clasp hands in reconciliation. But Isaak, her father, too intent on his money to mourn the loss of Rahel, diverts her bitter feelings from those who rule and centres them instead upon himself:

*Dann nehm' ich rück den Fluch, den ich gesprochen,
Dann seid ihr schuldig auch, und ich - und sie.
Wir stehn gleich jenen in der Sünder Reihe;
Verzeihn wir denn, damit uns Gott verzeihe.* (20)

"Staatsräson", we are to understand, is inevitable. It is the lesser of a choice of two evils. The other evil is to neglect the security of the land and those who live there. But although inevitable, it is still evil, whatever Machiavelli might think or Hegel. The interesting point which Grillparzer makes is that the evil of "Staatsräson" is not so much the evil which the ruler commits, for whatever purpose, as the evil which other men
equally imperfect force upon him. It is necessary. It is regrettable. Men inflict upon the ruler what the ruler must inflict on others.

We may feel about Rahel as we do about Agnes Bernauer. Something has to be done. But is murder the only possible solution? Perhaps it is not. But if we care to look upon the fate of Rahel as a symbolic fate, knowing as we do that the state actually does sacrifice the lives of men, innocent and guilty, soldiers and murderers, lest worse befall, we may then agree that what Grillparzer has to say about the problem is instructive. In effect he says what Schiller says. Evil begets evil. But Grillparzer takes us a stage further with the modern idea that all society must hold itself responsible for the crimes which are committed by the individual - in this case by the ruler.

His play "Libussa" (completed in 1848) expounds the problem in general terms. He sees it from two opposing points of view. The wisdom of Primislaus, on the one hand, applies to a society of men as the author knew them. Above all they must be governed firmly. To say this would appear to mean that some men must be restrained from doing as they wish to do. But it is not only the criminals whom the sovereign's will or the rule of law restrains from doing as they wish to do. If doing as we wish is to be free, no man who was wholly good could be completely free, even in a world in which all men were wholly good. But freedom has been variously defined. For Primislaus a man is free in an entirely different sense. He is a party to the social contract. The social contract is not for him a mere hypothesis. Prague is on the point of being founded. The social contract is therefore a real contract, which is freely accepted by the citizens. Each citizen surrenders his own right to punish those who wrong him. It is because each one, without exception, surrenders his own natural right of
punishment that no one man can tyrannise over another. The citizen is quite free, he can no longer be punished or oppressed by one man arbitrarily. As Rousseau says, "Whoso gives himself to all gives himself to none." (21) Since all men surrender their separate, arbitrary right of punishment, all men stand before the law as equals. This being so it is in no one's interest that the laws which they enact should be oppressive.  

In the sense that justice is done without favour, this might be true. It still remains to be said that justice cannot always be done to two things or to two people at the same time. But Primislaus believes that, given the social contract, the citizen will no more be deprived of his rights than will two persons who contract a marriage:  

Was jeder abgibt, geben auch die andern,  
Und so empfängt der eine tausendfach.  
Es ist der Staat die Ehe zwischen Bürgern,  
Der Gatte opfert gern den eignen Willen.  
Was ihn beschränkt, ist ja ein zweites Selbst. (22)  

Libussa's ideal state is a benevolent matriarchy, which for Primislaus is anachronistic and impracticable. Libussa has hitherto led a cloistered life and has only recently come into contact with the world. Primislaus does not look back as she does on a golden past or forward to a melancholy future. He knows as Rousseau does that, if ever it existed, the golden age of man is over. We can no longer live our lives separately. Communities have been established. We depend on one another. We get in one another's way. There is no alternative to the rule of law - Prague as a state - but chaos. Forgetting now the idea of the social contract, he believes that a strong ruler is required to hold the bad men down, for their own good and for the good of all.
But the modern state presents other difficulties. Not only does liberty diminish. As the state develops, it tends to treat the citizen as if he were a mere unit in a big machine. It is no one's fault but the result of circumstance. As Schiller foresees in his "Ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen" of 1795, in the modern state the gulf between the ruler and the subject will continually widen. For knowledge is expanding fast. The sciences will divide. There will be more differences in rank and occupation, so that more and more we shall each of us be turned into a specialist. Our view of life will be narrower. The machinery of the state will become more complicated. Law, which hardly enlists our affection as it is, will become increasingly prohibitive. In the big state authority will be too remote to see the subject as a real person and the subject will regard the state as being quite impersonal. (23)

Libussa agrees in terms which call to mind one of Burke's main points in the "Reflections":

Die Liebe liebt den nahen Gegenstand,
Und alle lieben ist nicht mehr Gefühl,
Was du Empfindung wahnst, ist nur Gedanke! (24)

The state which the inhabitants of Prague are about to establish, Libussa believes, will only be transitional. It will lead on to something better. "Der Mensch ist gut ..." (25) He has it in him to improve eventually. But the transition from an old and stable order to a new one will be painful. The words "liberty" and "equality" each stand for something valuable. But men will bandy them about as slogans, as a cover for their mean ambitions:

Und Freiheit wird sich nennen die Gemeinheit,
Als Gleichheit brüsten sich der dunkle Neid! (26)

Primislaus claims to see men for what they really are, quarrelsome and
avaricious. They need to be firmly controlled. Libussa, on the other hand, envisages the State as the Romantics did. She looks back to a time of concord when the need to keep the peace by threats and punishment did not arise. Man, she assumes, is good at heart, and so she will address his better nature. She is clement:

Ich bin ein Weib, und ob ich es vermöchte,
So widert mir die starre Härte doch. (27)

She intends to govern men with kindness and believes that they will trust and follow her. But her kindness is ineffectual and must give way to the rule of Primislaus, who intends - and prizes most - not kindness but order. She anticipates a time - perhaps Grillparzer's own - when the citizen will think less and less about his responsibilities and continually more about his claims on other people:

Dann schließen sich des Himmels goldene Pforten,
Begleisterung und Glauben und Vertraun,
Und was herab träuft von den sel'gen Göttern,
Nimmt nicht den Weg mehr zu der flachen Welt. (28)

As used by the disputants the word "Recht" sounds strange to one whose right to love her neighbour and to help those who are in need is the only right that she considers:

Das ist dein Recht, vielmehr ist deine Pflicht,
Und Recht ist nur der ausgeschmückte Name
Für alles Unrecht, das die Erde hegt. (29)

Libussa's "man", like Rousseau's of the "Discours sur l'inégalité parmi les hommes", is born good. He will reclaim his matriarchal paradise; the state, as Marx was to predict, shall wither and fall away:

Dann kommt die Zeit, die jetzt vorübergeht,
Die Zeit der Seher wieder und Begabten.
Das Wissen und der Nutzen scheiden sich
In the meantime, however, she looks upon the state as the institution which man's foolishness necessitates.

We read in Grillparzer's essay "Fürst Metternich" (1839) that if we speak of a divine right we contradict ourselves. The idea of rights does not follow from the moral law of God.

In the character of Prinislau, Grillparzer seems to recognise that Metternich is right. In the character of Libussa, he appears to say that he regrets that Metternich is right. He does not say that the State should be regarded as an end, he says that the State must be strong, and sometimes, to be strong, it must also act unpleasantly. We may not like this, but it is our fault. Thus Grillparzer explains his problem, but like Schiller, he does not hope to see it satisfactorily solved, so long as men behave as they always have, seeking only to promote their selfish interest.

To the ruler's problem, whether or not he should punish or relent, or do evil to prevent worse evil, a best possible solution will usually suggest itself. But the best possible solution is not likely to be perfect. If Libussa is Grillparzer's "still small voice", we may take it that, as he sees it, the best possible solution is a second best which still leaves much to be
desired. How good a second best it is depends on his confidence - or lack of confidence - in human nature. In the "Bruderzwist" there is a soldier's squabble. A voice cries out,

Ich war's der ihren Bräutigam erschlug,
Drum ist sie mein und das von Rechtes wegen. (32)

It is people like him who justify the State's existence. The State protects us from our worst enemy, ourselves. As St. Augustine says, it originates in sin.

The sinfulness of man continually raises for the ruler the problem of discipline and punishment. The problem, however, is one of which the ruler himself may not feel painfully aware. Alfonso the King, in "Die Jüdin von Toledo", enquires whether anyone was ever just who was never harsh. The question does not trouble him. For some it is enough to say that the means justifies the end. This is where their difficulties stop. But others feel that, whether or not evil can be justified, it remains evil. Octavio in Schiller's "Wallenstein" believes that he performs his duty. But he does not say that performing his duty means that he commits no evil. He believes that the state must combat evil with evil methods of its own.

A man who is morally sensitive does not readily adopt these methods and will not wield power if he can help it. The Emperor Rudolph in Brillparzer's "Bruderzwist" is such a man. He has come to see that he who scruples hesitates, and that he who does not hesitate, but acts, does so, as a rule, heartlessly:

Denn was Entschlossenheit den Männern heißt des Staats
Ist meisten Falls Gewissenlosigkeit,
Hochmut und Leichtsinn, der allein nur sich
Und nicht das Schicksal hat im Aug der Andern;
Indes der gute Mann auf hoher Stelle
Erzittert vor den Folgen seiner Tat,
Die, als die Wirkung eines Federstrichs,
Glück oder Unglück forterbt späten Enkeln. (33)

Both by action and neglect he illustrates his point. He might, had he
attended to his correspondence, have forestalled Ferdinand's suppression of
the Protestants in Styria and spared the population there much misery. On
the other hand he allows Leopold's attempt to unseat Matthias. He does so
reluctantly, it is true, and he at once hastens to withdraw what he has said.
But he is too late. Having once made this brief concession to his pride,
for the first time in the political events covered by the play he commits
himself to action. The attempt fails and brings great misery to Bohemia.
The intention - more Leopold's than Rudolph's own - is good, but it results
in disaster.

There are moments, Rudolph believes, when the ruler either has to choose
between two evils or refrain from action altogether:

Zudem gibt's Lagen, wo ein Schritt voraus
Und einer rückwärts gleicherweis verderblich.
Da hält man sich denn ruhig und erwartet,
Bis frei der Weg, den Gott dem Rechten ebnet. (34)

But sometimes, when confronted by the choice between two evils, he
chooses what he thinks to be the lesser. Thus, though he abhors bloodshed,
he believes that the only way to keep the Empire free from civil strife is to
resist the Turks in Hungary:

Den Krieg, ich hoss' ihn als der Menschheit Brandmal,
Und einen Tropfen meines Blutes gab ich
Für jede Träne, die sein Schwert erpreßt;
Allein der Krieg in Ungarn, der ist gut.
Er hält zurück die streitenden Parteien,
Die sich zerfleischen in der Meinung schon.
Die Türkentracht bezähmt den Lutheraner, 
Der Aufruhr sinnt in Taten wie im Wort, 
Sie schreckt den Eiferer meines eignen Glaubens, 
Der seinen Haß andichtet seinem Gott. 
Fluch jedem Krieg! Doch besser mit den Türken 
Als Bürgerkrieg, als Glaubens-, Meinungsschlachten. (35)

He comes to see that this safeguard is inadequate. It has taken him a long time. He has persistently refused to listen to those who tried to warn him. In his own words he is "ein schwacher, unbegabter Mann." (36) He is interested in astrology, in painting and in literature more than in affairs of state. He believes that he can best serve the country as a figurehead:

Ich bin das Band, das diese Garbe hält, 
Unfruchtbar selbst, doch nötig, weil es bindet. (37)

Matthias, his brother, usurps his power. But Rudolph is slow to believe that he is doing so. His brother, he thinks, is foolish but means no harm. If it is true that the Turks have offered him the crown, they cannot offer him the Empire; there is no need to be alarmed. If the Protestants have offered him support, in return for religious liberty, as a loyal Catholic he will disappoint them. If there are foreign soldiers in Moravia, they can only be Tilly's, whom he ordered there himself. The Bohemians are too loyal to betray him. In the end he is disabused. But by then he has neglected his authority for so long that it has virtually lapsed. He cannot retrieve it.

Appealing to his brother Max and Ferdinand his nephew to acknowledge the authority of his brother Matthias, he does not think that Matthias's title to it, either morally or legally, is worth considering:
Allein bedenkt: der auf dem Throne sitzt,  
Er ist die Fahne doch des Regiments,  
Zerrissen oder ganz, verdient die Ehrfurcht. (38)

He believes in order for its own sake. What he dreads most is anarchy.

It is the will of God that order should be maintained:

Gott aber hat die Ordnung eingesetzt,
Von da an ward es Licht, das Tier ward Mensch. (39)

God's pattern reveals itself in all creation. Mankind has unfortunately
chosen to destroy it:

Drum ist in Sternen Wahrheit, im Gestein,
Im Pflanze, Tier und Baum, im Menschen nicht. (40)

For it seems to Grillparzer, as it does to Schiller, that history reveals
that man is his own worst enemy. The people acclaim Matthias. But
Matthias himself is stricken with remorse and filled with grave misgiving.
His nephew Ferdinand has already begun to undermine his power. Disaster
threatens. "Der Krieg ist gut, und währt er dreißig Jahr"(41), says
Wallenstein, and with Wallenstein's words of relish the clouds of war begin
to gather.

In his "Studien zur Kulturgeschichte, Geschichte und Politik" (1845),
Grillparzer repudiates the idea that man is born good. There never was a
noble savage. The gods of old were violent. Primitive man had created
them in his own image. If, therefore, his Gods were violent, primitive man
was too.

Morally man had not altered much. As Schiller had already said,
political history was almost all of it the history of selfishness. It is
true that Rudolph triumphs over Ottokar (1825), his goodness prevailing over
brutal arrogance. His namesake in the "Bruderzwist" (published in 1872)
intends no harm. But it is not so much by these that history is made as by
the vainglorious Matthias, the insensate Don Cesar, Ferdinand the religious fanatic and the scheming Bishop Klesel.

In "Dantons Tod" (published in 1835) Büchner warns against another and perhaps more dangerous kind of mischief-maker, who insulates himself against reproach rather as Machiavelli does. Compared with Robespierre the Dantons of the world act slowly. Their kindness and integrity inhibit them. They do not divide their fellow-men into two neat halves, those with and those against them, the good men and the bad. The truth about other people as they see it is complicated. They do not attempt to simplify it by thinking of their fellow-men only as groups that represent certain ideas or policies.

As a man of action Robespierre in "Dantons Tod" does not handicap himself in the way in which Danton does.

Die Waffe der Republik ist der Schrecken, die Kraft der Republik ist die Tugend - die Tugend, weil ohne sie der Schrecken verderblich, der Schrecken, weil ohne ihn die Tugend ohnmächtig ist. Der Schrecken ist ein Ausfluss der Tugend, er ist nichts anders, als die schnelle, strenge und unbeugsame Gerechtigkeit. (42)

His self-esteem and little understanding complement each other and strengthen his purpose in a way in which they never would in a man who is as honest with himself as Danton. He believes that he cannot err. He is on God's side. Hence his confidence. If he is ruthless, it is not, he believes, for the mere sake of being ruthless but to rid God's world of the imperfect men and women who disfigure it.

The radical Büchner thus warns us, rather as Schiller does, that a zealous ruler, pleading "necessity", "Staatsraison" or "the law of God", may exercise a tyranny far worse than what a tyrant may inflict who is simply out to satisfy his appetite for pleasure.
In Germany at about this time such dangers were beginning to be
overlooked and policies of "Staatsräson" accepted. Patriotic feeling
appears to have played an important part in bringing this about.

It is true that patriotism is not chauvinism. Herder's patriotic
pride in the German language and the German past is not inconsistent with
the more cosmopolitan outlook of Goethe, Schiller and Kant. Herder knew as
well as they that no country could afford to shut itself away from the
civilising influence of its neighbours. We have seen, however, that in
the time of the War of Liberation - as in any time of war in any country -
principles were waived which would not normally have been questioned or
surrendered. The efforts of writers such as Novalis, Schlegel and Fichte
to reconcile cosmopolitan and patriotic feeling indicate their predicament.

Before 1815 the patriotic feeling which the War of Liberation engendered
encouraged the Germans to accept a policy of "Staatsräson" as applied to
foreign powers. In the years that followed, until 1870, the desire for
German unity encouraged such a policy when applied to a state that seemed
likely to oppose unity and prevent it if it could. A state such as this
might be one which was already felt to be more German than foreign. As
applied to a neighbouring, fellow-German state, the problem of "Staatsräson"
might therefore be regarded as being almost a domestic one.

The demand for unity commanded the support of most German writers in
1815. The irreconcilable interests of Austria and Prussia frustrated it.
So too did the particularism of the smaller states. Nationalism, which
particularism was opposed to, was naturally associated with liberal ideas.
A liberal state, in which the people's voice could make itself heard, was
more likely to achieve the unity which most educated Germans were demanding.
But the failure of the liberals in 1848 led many Germans to believe that unity was not to be achieved by persuasion alone. Some of them at least had never imagined that it was. As long ago as 1813 Fichte had urged Frederick William III to become the "Zwingherr zur Deutschheit". In so far as his "Zwingherr" was intended to achieve not only liberty but unity as well, Fichte anticipated Bismarck. Bismarck, who declared that the great questions of the day would be solved, not by speeches but by blood and iron, was to justify his prophesy by defying the Prussian Diet and provoking war with Austria and France. Like Machiavelli he believed that, if a strong state was to arise in the midst of discord, questions of legality must be disregarded.

What Bismarck did had long been encouraged by German political philosophers. Hegel, who on the eve of the battle of Jena had looked forward with pleasure to the overthrow of military and bureaucratic Prussia, came to be revered as a spokesman for German nationalism and the absolute state. The laws to which the leader of the state was subject, he believed, were not those that we should wish to govern ordinary men and women in their private life. Ranke, whilst agreeing that Machiavellism is popularly felt to be synonymous with evil, nevertheless believed that the poison which Machiavelli prescribed was appropriate to the Italy in which he lived. He did not go quite as far as Hegel did and maintain that Machiavelli's methods were compatible with the will of God. But he did agree that good might come of evil and that good purposes could sometimes only be fulfilled by evil methods. In the twenties and the thirties influential writers - Niebuhr, Haller, Stahl, Wilhelm and Leopold Gerlach and List - smoothed the way for policies of "Staatsrüson" by continuing to glorify the State. In 1858 Bollmann wrote his "Verteidigung des Machiavellismus" with its motto "Das Vaterland über
alles“, in which we read what the failures of 1848 lead us to expect: that Germany could only be united, not by any principle, idea or contract, but by any single state that was strong enough to swallow up the others. Ideas such as these were sufficiently infectious to contaminate the thought of German liberals. Treitschke, better known in this country for his worship of the State than for his liberal ideas, wholeheartedly approved of the annexation of Schleswig-Holstein and Alsace-Lorraine. Bismarck succeeded and aggressors who succeed are more easily accepted in their own country than tyrants are.

The problem of "Staatsrüson" is one which the philosopher may all too easily consider in its broad abstract terms and not as one which may afflict man's conscience or grieve him. There is this danger in philosophy. The dramatist, however, may be forced - may force himself - to see and bear in mind what may escape the philosopher's attention. The theory of "Staatsrüson" is less disconcerting as a rule than are plays intended to uphold that theory by showing it translated into practice.

In German drama the problem of "Staatsrüson" is associated first and foremost with the work of Hebbel. Hebbel's attitude to the problem is revealed in his first play, "Judith" (1839). Judith herself is not politically responsible but her problem is one with which men of state are faced, in innumerable forms, and Hebbel's own comments on it are illuminating.

The inhabitants of the besieged city of Bethulia wish only to survive, with or without honour. They are not numerically strong. Their morale is low. Either they will starve or the city will be taken, and then they will be massacred. The only way in which the city might be saved is by unclean methods. Assassinating Holofernes, the Babylonian General, Judith believes, might demoralise the enemy. Her suitor, Ephraim, is not, at this time,
prepared to murder him. If Judith herself does not do so, no one else will. Her task seems plain to her. She believes that God has called her to it and, believing this, she is able to relieve her conscience.

Her attitude resembles Hebbel's own. "Meine ganze Tragödie," he writes, "ist darauf basiert, dass in außerordentlichen Weltlagen die Gottheit unmittelbar in den Gang der Ereignisse eingreift und ungeheure Taten durch Menschen, die sie aus eigenem Antrieb nicht ausführen würden, vollbringen lässt ..." (44)

Her will to carry out the task to which God has called her contends with her admiration for the manly virtues of Holofernes. In any case, the mere thought of bloodshed repels her. At the first opportunity of killing him, her nerve fails. Having forfeited her honour, all that she has so far done is amuse him. "Dieser ruhige Schlaf nach einer solchen Stunde, ist er nicht der Ärgste Frevel? Bin ich denn ein Wurm, dass man mich zertreten und, als ob nichts geschehen wäre, ruhig einschlafen darf?" (45) She now accomplishes her task of murder. "Jetzt führt sie die Tat aus auf Gottes Geheiß, ..." But her motives, when she does so, are not entirely pure. "... sie ist sich in dem ungeheuren Moment, der ihr ganzes Ich verwirrt, nur ihrer persönlichen Gründe bewusst." (46) It does not at first disturb her conscience to think that she will sacrifice her honour in order to kill Holofernes and save her people. The end is good. The knowledge that the end is good, and her belief that God has bidden her to achieve it by sinful means, allows her to approach her task not merely with an easy mind but joyously. In the end, however, it distresses her to think that her real motive for murdering Holofernes is to satisfy her wounded feelings: "... nichts trieb mich, als der Gedanke an mich selbst." (47) For just as it is all too possible to speak of war or capital punishment (rather than of "hanging"), without imagining the
spectacle itself, so Judith fails to realise what it will really mean to prostitute herself before Holofernes. The words that she uses serve only to conceal the true nature of the ordeal which lies in store for her: "das höchste Opfer", "Sünde", "das Unreine", "meine Ehre". She can speak of his embrace but she cannot effectively imagine it.

In a similar way Hebbel himself can write in abstract terms about human beings in general in a way which would probably sound more callous, to himself and us, if he wrote instead about people whom he knew personally. "Die Versöhnung im Tragischen geschieht im Interesse der Gesamtheit, nicht im Interesse des Einzelnen, des Helden." The state is all and the individual citizen is of relatively small account. "Es gibt nur eine Notwendigkeit, die, daß die Welt besteht. Wie es aber den Individuen darin ergeht, ist gleichgültig ... Der Baum hat der Blätter im Überfluß und die Welt der Menschen." (48)

Opinions such as these might predispose a person to accept the principle of "Staatsräson" all too readily. In each of his dramas of state, however, Hebbel is careful to persuade us that there is no alternative to the evil of "Staatsräson" in question but worse evil. "Herodes und Mariamne" (1847) chiefly concerns the misunderstandings that arise between Herod and his wife. But in their first dialogue Herod must defend the murder of Mariamne's brother, Aristobolus, as something which is politically justified. As Mariamne anticipates, he does this skilfully:

Wenn solch ein Bruder selbst auf's Töten sinnt
Und man nur dadurch, daß man ihm begegnet,
Ja, ihm zuwirkt, sich erhalten kann!
Wir sprechen hier vom Möglichen. Und weiter!
Wenn er, an sich zwar arglos, sich zur Waffe
In Feindeshänden machen läßt, zur Waffe,
Die tödlich treffen muß, wenn man sie nicht
Zerbricht, bevor sie noch geschwungen wird.
Wir sprechen hier von Möglichen! Und endlich!
Wenn diese Waffe nicht ein Einzelhaupt,
Nein, wenn sie eines Volkes Haupt bedroht!
Und eins, das diesem Volk so nötig ist,
Wie irgendeinem Rumpf das seinige.
Wir sprechen hier von Möglichen, so denk ich,
In allen diesen Fällen wird die Schwester,
Als Weib aus schuldiger Liebe zum Gemahl,
Als Tochter ihres Volks aus heilger Pflicht,
Als Königin aus beiden sagen müssen:
Es ist geschehn, was ich nicht schelten darf! (49)

In "Herodes und Mariamne" the politically necessary murder of Aristobolus
imposes an initial strain on the happy relationship of Herod and his wife.
It is in this relationship that we are chiefly interested. In Hebbel's
next play, "Agnes Bernauer" (1852), the marriage of a royal heir threatens
to divide a country. Here it is the political interest which predominates,
rather than the domestic one.

In some ways the character of Duke Ernst corresponds to the character
of Kleist's Elector. The interest which he shows in his son's boyish
pranks may be compared with the Elector's frivolous behaviour in the first
and the last scene of Kleist's "Prinz Friedrich von Homburg". He is "human".
But like Kleist's Elector he also speaks for the higher interest of the
State in conflict with the individual. The alternatives which confront them
are fundamentally similar. If not the choice which the Duke ultimately
makes, the manner of his making it resembles the Elector's attitude when he
orders the Prince to be arrested. He feels no qualms. He believes that,
by reason of her humble birth, Agnes Bernauer will not be generally acceptable
as the wife of a reigning Duke of Bavaria. Ingolstadt and Landshut, the
rival claimants to power, will be encouraged to claim the country and will plunge it into civil war. His son, Albrecht, must therefore renounce her. But Albrecht refuses to do so. The Duke holds his hand, hoping that Albrecht will tire of Agnes. Meanwhile he disinherits Albrecht in favour of the boy Adolf. But Adolf dies. Albrecht remains as his only acceptable successor. Neither he nor Agnes will agree to be divorced. Therefore, the Duke believes, Agnes must die, leaving Albrecht free to take a bride whom all men will accept without any risk of bloodshed. His Chancellor suggests that there is no need for Agnes to be murdered. "Laß sie entführen und dann verschwinden! ... Man breitet aus, daß sie gestorben ist ... kann Euch der Priester fehlen, der einen Totenschein ausstellt?"(50) But if Albrecht took another wife whilst Agnes lived, he would violate the holy sacrament. That Agnes should be put to death appears to the Duke to be the lesser evil. Although we may not agree that he has only these alternatives to choose from, or that, given these alternatives, the evil which he chooses to commit is the lesser, we cannot think that, in choosing as he does, he is dishonest with himself. But we may still regret that, so far as we can see, he is completely undistressed by a decision which, even if necessary, would be felt to be distasteful by any man of ordinary feeling. "Es ist ein Unglück für sie und kein Glück für mich, aber im Namen der Witwen und Waisen, die der Krieg machen würde, im Namen der Städte, die er in Asche legte, der Dörfer, die er zerstörte: Agnes Bernauer, fahr' hin!"(51) His words "kein Glück für mich" do not suggest compassion in their context, for his whole attitude denies it. His son will understand that he has done his duty. He talks about the end which he intended. But the means which he employs do not, so far as we can see, torment him. He admires Agnes but does not pity her. "Deine Gemahlin konnte ich nicht anerkennen, deine Witwe will ich selbst bestatten und für
ewige Zeiten an ihrem Grabe einen feierlichen Totendienst stiften, damit das reinste Opfer, das der Notwendigkeit im Laufe aller Jahrhunderte gefallen ist, nie in Andenken der Menschen erlösche!" (52) When his son Albrecht draws his sword against him, he offers him the "Herzogsstab". In this way, he abdicates in favour of his son and legitimises his son's intention. "Der macht dich zum Richter deines Vaters! Warum willst du sein Mörder werden?" (53) It is not feelings that he has for the moral law, it is only opinions. He may doubt in these - until, as he believes, God makes plain his purpose - but he does not, even for an instant, soften and relent. He decides on murder as a means with a degree of moral comfort which is frightening.

The Duke abdicates. By so doing he appoints Albrecht his son as judge of what he, his father, has done. The position in which Albrecht now finds himself thus resembles that of the Prince in Kleist's play. If the Prince persists in thinking only of himself, he will regard the death sentence as unjust. It will be quashed and he will live.

If Albrecht only sees his own interest, he may condemn his father and may punish him. Both Albrecht and the Prince are allowed to decide freely whether or not the action which the state has taken or will take is justified. The murder of Agnes Bernauer is unjust and brutal. The sentence of death passed on the Prince, which the Prince himself eventually accepts, is one which we today would find inhuman. Each act is endorsed by the person or by one of the persons against whom it is directed. Albrecht as his father's judge, like Homburg as his own, is forced to weigh impartially what his feelings would summarily condemn, much as at first the Prince finds fault with his Elector. But whereas we are inclined to feel that the Prince is a perfectly independent judge, we seem to hear Hebbel prompting Albrecht.
This, perhaps, chiefly comes of knowing more of Hebbel's purpose than we know of Kleist's. For Hebbel tells us what his purpose is. It is to demonstrate

dass das Individuum, wie herrlich und gross, wie edel und schön es immer sei, sich der Gesellschaft unter allen Umständen beugen muß, weil in dieser und ihrem notwendigen formalen Ausdruck, dem Staat, die ganze Menschheit lebt, in jenem aber nur eine einzelne Seite derselben zur Entfaltung kommt. Das ist eine ernste, bittere Lehre, für die ich von dem hohen Democratismus unserer Zeit keinen Dank erwarte; sie geht aber durch die ganze Geschichte hindurch ...” (54)

The only distinction which Hebbel observes here is between that which is, and that which is not, politically justified. That another person might agree with him in siding with Duke Ernst and yet feel differently about it, and that such differences of feeling are important, is a question into which he does not go. It is left to Nietzsche to uphold consciously the moral unconcern with which both Kleist's Elector and Hebbel's Ernst perform their unpleasant tasks. A bad conscience, Nietzsche says, is conscience itself in its corrupted state. Mercy characterises the Christian. It serves only to reveal his moral weakness. For Rousseau - and for Schopenhauer after him - a man's conscience is innate. So is his pity. But for Nietzsche these qualities are the unfortunate product of Christian teaching. "Die Heraufkunft des christlichen Gottes als des Maximal-Gottes ... hat ... das Maximum des Schuldgefühls auf Erden zur Erscheinung gebracht.”(55) The idea which we find in Goethe's "Iphigenie auf Tauris", that to use a discreditable means to a good end will not eliminate a sense of guilt in persons of the highest moral quality, he thus rejects.

Other writers, and other dramatists, in Hebbel's time and later, continue
to portray the monarch as a model of what a ruler ought to be. Associated with this tradition there is a natural tendency to idealise the rulers of the German states in history. It appears in Gutzkow’s “Zopf und Schwert” (1843). Since this play has nothing to do with Frederick William I’s cruel treatment of his son and his son’s friend Katte, for desertion, we can only believe in the King’s character for as long as we regard it as a pure fiction. For although Gutzkow does not conceal the King’s faults, his self-will, his meanness, his contempt for culture and his low-brow tastes(56), he clearly wishes us to understand that a heart of gold lies hidden underneath his rude exterior. The King respects honesty. He will not stand for any sort of humbug. He will see fair play. He loves his wife and his children as a "Landesvater" should. He is sincerely religious. He devotes himself unstintingly to his main task of promoting the welfare of his subjects.

The Emperor in Prutz’s "Moritz von Sachsen" (1847) is a similarly venerable figure, the servant of God and of his people, devoting his life to the task of preserving peace among the German states:

Den Thron der Welt! Gott hat ihn mir beschrieben:
Die Welt für mich! Dann die Welt für den Frieden! (57)

He regards his imperial office as a decorative burden. He is glad to be relieved of it. But the Princes under him will wage war among themselves, he believes, where once the Empire was united by their love and trust for him.

A less Romantic, more critical approach to the question of the monarchy appears in Laube’s "Prinz Friedrich" (1854). The King aims at maintaining a "geordnete und gottesfürchtige Staatsgesellschaft". (58) But not only must we doubt whether executing Katte will help him to achieve this. We suspect his motives. He ventes on his son’s friend the shame that his son has brought
It is better, he argues, that Katte should die than that justice should perish from the earth. But when Katte begs for mercy he shows how incapable he is of administering justice impartially. "Ich habe ihn nie leiden mögen, Katte, ich halte Ihm für ein verdorbenes Subject." (60)

Laube turns our attention away from the figure of the King as a benign father of his people to the King as an inhuman bully, from whom "Staatsräson" demands no sacrifice of which he is himself aware. His Frederick William I has no warm feelings to suppress. In "Der Fechter von Ravenna" (1854) Halm appears to ridicule the ruler who claims to be unmerciful from better motives by attributing the anguish that he claims to feel to the mad Caligula:

... das Gewicht
Der Herrschaft liegt zu schwer auf meiner Seele!
Die Pflicht zu strafen reibt mein zart Gewissen,
Der Drang zu nützen meine Kräfte auf! (61)

The German dramatists who greatly desired to see the German states made one, and who looked to history for their subjects, were naturally attracted to the figure of the Holy Roman Emperor, uniting that which the Princes in the separate states desired to keep divided. In their work it might not be enough that the Emperor should act humanely. The picture of a humane Emperor anxious to conciliate the Princes might suggest that, like the Romantics, they accepted Germany's disunity. A stern Emperor like the Emperor in Bauernfeld's "Der Landfrieden" (1869), keeping the unruly Princes in order would better reflect their hope,
Ein Reich zu schaffen wie kein zweites,
Ein Friedensreich, kein Reich des Streites. (62)

The sort of princes who opposed this aim were less likely to be shown
as being influenced by "Edelmüt und Liebe" as the main source of their
political obedience:

Nur Strenge mag dem Landfried' nützen,
Dem Schwert verfall ein jeder, der ihn bricht. (63)

But Bauernfeld clearly rejects the exaggerated idea of duty shown, in
history, by Frederick William I and, in drama, it appears, by Kleist's
Elector. The Emperor maintains that the young Robert, accused of
"Friedensbruch und Dirnenraub", must die. He cannot pardon him:

Ich darf's nicht!
Ich gab mein Wort, die Freveltat zu strafen -
Und wär's mein eigen Blut.

Von der Rosen enquires,

Brutus, Gevatter? (64)

His question calls to mind the words of Kleist's young Prince,

Mein Vetter Friedrich will den Brutus spielen, ... (65)

The idea that the Emperor may not mitigate the harshness of the law is
alien, it seems to be implied, to German feeling.

The humane ruler whom Natalie sees in the Elector is contrasted in
Wildenbruch's "Der neue Herr" (1889) with the kind of despot whom Laube sees
in Frederick William I. At the outset of the play, when the Elector succeeds
to his father's title, the real power in the land has already been usurped
by the generals, led by Rochow. Rochow fights for no cause other than his
own. The common people, he says, are as flies that bother him. He will
not wage war "schmutziger Bürger Siebenschachen zu behüten" (66) but only for
the pleasure which he finds in fighting, or as many German generals have
said(67), to extend diplomacy by other means:

Wenn der Diplomat keinen Rat mehr weiß,
Dann kommen die Soldaten. (68)

He attempts, without authority, to renew the war against the Swedes by provoking them into attacking him. He defies the orders of his "new lord" and, as a military precaution, gives orders to destroy those parts of the town which lie outside the ramparts. The Elector hears about this plan before he knows who hatched it. Like his counterpart in Kleist's play he at once commits himself. No matter who the guilty one may be, he shall be punished:

Wer an besagten Häusern
Nur einen Stein anrührt,
Wer die Bewohner tribuliert,
Abbruch an ihrer Habe schafft,
Den nehme ich in Verhaft
Als einen Räuber und Mordbrenner. (69)

In the sixth "Vorgang" of the seven, when the plan to pull the houses down has been exposed as Rochow's, the Elector repeats his warning and again says what action he intends taking:

Darauf hätt' ich den Tod gesetzt! (70)

He confronts Rochow and attempts to persuade him to turn back from the course which he has followed and freely submit himself to the law. He fails. But Rochow, when he draws his sword against him, finds that a mysterious power robs him of the strength to wield it:

Meine Hände - gehorchen mir nicht -
Die eigenen Glieder
Versagen mir die Pflicht -
(Er fällt auf einen Stuhl am Tische.)
Ihr habt mich um meine Mannheit gebracht! (71)
This scene stands out. It is the least convincing scene in the play but at the same time it is the most important. The young Elector triumphs over a man who is a born leader, beside whom his superiors and equals speak and move as if they were subordinates. Wildenbruch would make us believe that the good ruler trusts in his subjects, instead of assuming from the start that they cannot be trusted. Such a man commands the best men's loyalties and so secures the state from danger. There is no need for him to base his power on force and fear. Let the ruler give a lead, as someone whom the people can respect, and his subjects will generally follow it. The Elector makes it clear that this is how he means to govern. In his dealings with most men he succeeds. But with Rochow his trust fails, and it is only an act of God that saves him.

We cannot doubt that Wildenbruch portrays a ruler whom he wants to be admired. The Elector is a God-fearing monarch who is deeply conscious that, not so much the "State", as the happiness and welfare of countless separately important men and women, depend on him:

Tausend Häupter und tausend Herzen,
Ihrer jegliches eine Welt
Von Harren, von Hoffen, von Schmerzen -
Und auf mich, und auf mich
Richten all die Gedanken sich;
Diese ganze Unendlichkeit
Von Menschenglück und von Menschenleid
Auf meine Schultern gestellt -
Zu dem ungeheuren Werke,
Gott du im Himmel, gib mir Stärke! (72)

First by stealth and then by force, Rochow seeks to usurp the Elector's power. He is guilty of treason. The Elector, however, does not propose to punish him but only to reclaim his loyalty:
Dich liebt nur einer noch auf der Welt,
Ein Freund, ein letzter - ich. (73)

Like Kleist's Elector and the wayward Prince, the two men are shortly to become related to each other - in this case by the marriage of the Elector to Rochow's sister. But this is not the reason why Wildenbruch's Elector forbears to punish Rochow. He believes in the sanctity of human life. Provided that Rochow is prepared to swallow his pride and yield to his Electoral authority, he will pardon him:

Unrecht hast du an mir getan - 
Beuge dich -
(Er streckt die Hand aus.)
Gib dich in meine Hand.

Rochow. Mich - ergeben?

Friedrich Wilhelm.

Glaub' mir, es ist noch dieselbe,
Die sich zu Rhena in deine fand;
Sie wird dich wahren vor Strafe und Schand',
Aber ergib dich mir. (74)

He is Rochow's friend and it is only as his friend that he addresses him. As he sees it, this is not to neglect his duty out of sentiment but to perform his greater duty as a fellow-man and to make his more distasteful duty as a prince unnecessary. He does not mean by "Pflicht" what Hebbel means. Hebbel speaks of men's lives as leaves on the tree of State. What can it matter if a leaf is plucked? The metaphor misleads Hebbel, but it would not mislead Wildenbruch's Elector. Hebbel surrounds the idea of "Pflicht" with an aura of courage and self-denial. Judith risks her life and sacrifices her honour for the city. Duke Ernst does what he believes he must, abdicates and calls on his embittered son to judge and, if he so
decides, to punish him. It cannot be thought that in Hebbel the word "Pflicht" is just a moral cover for the ruler, concerned only to maintain himself in power. In a similar way Wildenbruch makes sure that we do not look on his Elector as a man who neglects his duty in order to enjoy his sentiments. Rochow is desperate. He will stop at nothing. By confronting him alone the Elector puts himself in danger. The people wait outside for him. In their midst he is the Elector. In the meantime he is Rochow’s friend, and if Rochow will only humble his pride and obey him, he will act as he prefers, humanely. If not he must revert to his unenviable role of the state’s chief magistrat:

Der Kurfürst steht draußen in ihrer Mitte;  
Daß er die Schwelle überschreite,  
Rochow, erwarte es nicht!  
Denn es kommt in seinem Geiste  
Jene, die Freund und Feind nicht kennt,  
Die blinde, die taube Pflicht!  
Daß ich dich vor dem Kurfürst rette,  
Neh’ es mir möglich, sprich -  
Rochow - ich bitte dich. (75)

Rochow ignores the Elector’s warning, he resists arrest and he is shot. But he is not killed on the orders of his sovereign. The Elector mourns his death in words that almost exonerate him:

Einst mir so nah - nun so weit -  
Moritz Augustus -  
Brausender Strom der männlichkeit,  
Wie so verloren gehst du hinab  
Ruhmlos ins umfruchtbare Grab. (76)

In the final scene of the play, when the Elector pardons Blechschmidt, who defends his home against the soldiers, rather as Schiller’s Tell defends
his family, his words repudiate what most people would regard as traditional
Prussian values:

Männer will ich, keine Knechte,
Männer verteidigen ihre Rechte.
Buchstabe saß zu Gericht —
Gnade macht ihn sunicht —
Geh hin in Freiheit, lebe! (77)

The poet reappraises the idea of duty, which in German politics and
letters had not only lost its relevance to human values but which, in the
Hegelian philosophy of state, relegated the scruples which prevail in
Wildenbruch's Elector to a lower level of morality.

With the growing power of the social-democratic movement in Bismarck's
time as Chancellor, one would think that the time had come when in some
respects at least the primacy of the State in its relation to the subject
would be challenged and that this would provide the dramatist with new
material. It does not appear that this was so, however. Naturalism,
characterised as it is by "Heldenlosigkeit", is more concerned with the
victims of the economic order than with men of action. It was not until
the Great War of 1914-1918 that the dramatists generally tended to return
from the social problems of the subject to the political problems of the
ruler.

It is all the more strange, therefore, to find Hebbel's plea for
"Staatsräson" upheld in the work of Gerhart Hauptmann. But Hauptmann's
treatment of what is essentially the theme of Hebbel's "Agnes Bernauer" is
a confused echo of the latter play, entirely lacking in conviction. The
Emperor of "Kaiser Karls Geisel" (1908) shows good intentions. He will put
down the Roman practice of selling Christians into slavery. There are
marshes to be drained and a harvest to be gathered in. He is obsessed,
however, by his love for Gersuind, the girl sorceress. He keeps ambassadors
waiting. He ignores the threatening letters which he receives from the King
of Denmark and neglects innumerable other correspondents. His own Chancellor
begs him in vain to listen to him. The people are dissatisfied; a mob
gathers. It is rumoured that Godfried the Dane has set foot on Frisian soil,
fallen on the settlements, razed the towers and slain or enslaved the
garrison. The cumulative picture of neglected duty, its dire consequences,
on the one hand, and of the evil compelling influence of Gersuind on the
other, are intended to prepare us to accept her being poisoned in the interest
of the State. When the girl is murdered, the Emperor quickly recovers his
sense of duty. He begs to be forgiven: "... habet Nachsicht, weil ich
feierte, ein wenig meine Pflicht - ich kenne sie! - verärgere!" (78)

It is not Alcuin, "eine hohe und edle Greisenerscheinung, zugleich die
eines Gelehrten, Dichters und Mennes von Welt" (79), who here corresponds to
the Duke Ernst of Hauptmann's play; it is not Rorico, whose own sense of
duty is benumbed by his love for Gersuind; it is Excambald, the Chancellor,
"nicht weit vom achtzigsten Jahre ... mit bedeutenden aber fanatischen
Gesichtszügen, die Spuren senilen Verfalls zeigen." (80) Although we may
deplore the equanimity with which Kleist's Elector or Hebbel's Duke seem
ready to perform tasks which we would rather they regarded as distasteful,
their situation is at least credible and they themselves are neither senile
nor fanatical.

The idea that the scruples governing private conduct need not impede
the ruler in the accomplishing of his main task is reaffirmed a little more
convincingly in the work of Paul Ernst. Whereas in Kleist's play mistrust
and ruthlessless are shown to fail and trust and clemency work, as means of
securing obedience to orders, in "Demetrios" (1905) trust and clemency are shown to fail and mistrust and ruthlessness succeed. The more important difference here, however, is the difference between what Kleist and Ernst appear to think of ordinary people.

Demetrios is a slave. But he has reason to believe that he is the son of Orestes and Dyne. He defeats Nabis the usurper and is recognised as King of Sparta. He is quite unaccustomed to authority, political or any other. He is kindhearted. As ruler he is obliged sometimes to be harsh, and this he finds unpleasant. But he does not shirk unpleasant duties so long as he believes that he is doing what is right. The slave who ran away and fought for him, and helped him to power, must be sent back to his master.

Er tat mir leid, doch war ich hart mit Willen;
Nach dem Verstand, nicht nach dem Herzen handl' ich.
Nicht unser Traum und Wünschen hält die Welt;
Notwendigkeit und Ordnung, Zwang und Angst. (81)

He is prepared to be severe but he will govern justly. He will maintain the civil peace and at the same time he will uphold morality. He believes that if only the will is good, it will enable him to do so.

But he soon discovers that his choice is less straightforward. Can the expensive mercenary force that will destroy Nabis once and for all only be secured if he sells the treasures of Apollo's temple, as Orestes's widow Dyne insists?

Demetrios.  
Darf Recht durch Unrecht siegen?

Dyne.  
Wenn es kann.

... ...

Demetrios.  
Rein war mein Leben bis zu diesem Tag.
Dyae. Des Jünglings Reinheit ziemt nicht dem Mann.

Demetrius. Du hast wohl recht.

... ... ...

Das Erste, das ich schwachen Herzens tue,
Doch zwingt mich Not – die erste Not als König,
Da sie als Sklaven nie mich zwang. Ich muß. (82)

He comes to see that the ruler over men who are not habitually disciplined, but violent, finds himself in a peculiar situation morally. It is something which we who are looking on may not readily appreciate:

Als ich noch jung war, glaubt ich an das Gute,
Und dachte: Sagen muß man's nur dem Volk;
Das Gute ist so leicht doch einzusehn,
So leicht auch zu befolgen ... (83)

It distresses him to find that he deceives himself. The man who comes to power, he concludes, must be prepared to kick away, if needs be, the friends who helped him up and supported him, to ally himself with his enemies and to disregard morality.

Alkamenes, sehr schwer ward mir die Einsicht.
Denn König bleiben und den Thron verdienen
Kann der, der verrät, was er geglaubt,
Den Freunden schadet, die ihm groß gemacht,
Mit denen Bündnis schließt, die er bekämpft,
Abschwört, was er vorher für gut gehalten,
Und was ihm türicht scheint, zur Herrschaft bringt. (84)

He fails. He has come to think that he can only serve his people well if he resorts to evil methods. But his intention is still good. This, being known, is itself a handicap. The better his intentions are, the less the people are afraid of him. We are to understand that a man who is prepared to act immorally, for good purposes, will keep the peace better than
someone who will only serve a good end by good means. But the man who is
better fitted than either of these to keep the mob in check is the man who
has no end in view but his own interest and who does not weaken his position
by admitting to benevolence:

**Demetrios.**  Will ich denn Schlechtes?  Nur das Gute
will ich.

**Lykortas.**  Das Gute ist ein Wort, das mir bekannt
Aus Volksverführerreden auf dem Markt.
Sonst kenn ich's nicht; bei uns ward's
nicht gebraucht.

**Demetrios.**  So gehe dann, und fürchte deinen König.

**Lykortas.**  Ich fürchte, wo ich fürchten muß, nicht hier,
Wo ich des Königs leeren Namen sehe,
Doch nicht die Macht, die einen König hält.  (85)

Demetrios discovers that he is not after all the son of Orestes and Dyme
but of Orestes by the slave girl Tritae. He now knows that he is not the
rightful King of Sparta. To maintain himself in power, and at the same time
keep order, it is necessary to conceal the truth, and the only certain way of
doing this, he believes, is to kill his mother. He cannot bring himself to
do this. On the contrary he feels that he himself must make known the truth.
He does so and is slain instantly. Confusion reigns. The people as
represented here, cruel and stupid to a man, do not know whom they should
obey. Of the three candidates for power, one perhaps will restore the civil
peace in Sparta, but only at the cost of great disorder. Apparently we are
expected to infer from this that, by lapsing into virtue for its own sake,
Demetrios does incalculable harm. The good government of others should come
before a clear conscience. An act may be required which appals the moral
sense, but the happiness of thousands may depend on it.
The problem which confronts Demetrios is a very different one from that which confronts Kleist's Elector. Demetrios shrinks from an act which is brutal in the extreme, wholly unjust, but which may save the lives of many at the cost of one. The Elector appears to contemplate an act which is merciless if not brutal, which the accused himself acknowledges as just and which eventually threatens to disrupt the good discipline which its purpose was to strengthen. The Elector is dealing with real persons who are well known to him. Demetrios must contend with the masses, whom, slave though he is, he does not really understand. When he eventually comes to know them as they are, the solution which he offers to the problem changes. Let officers and noblemen of good will wield power as an elite and tie the people down through their combined strength.

Ich schaffe neu dies Reich, so kann's nicht leben.
Mich haßt das Volk, die Reichen, und der Söldner
Schlechterer Teil, wie sie einander hassen;
Wie wilde Tiere würden sie sich fressen,
Nicht Treu und Einsicht haben sie, wie Menschen.
Ich stehe wie der Erboder, mein Ahn.
Den wilden Tieren will ich Bändger geben,
Die sollen zwingen, was sich selbst nicht zwingt. (86)

We are reminded of Plato's view of the philosopher in politics as a man among wild beasts, who, unprompted by his own advantage, is qualified to exercise political power simply because he is disinclined to do so:

Was gelt ich mir noch selbst! Mir gilt das Reich. (87)

But Plato's ruling class of men, qualified by reason and by self-control, working under no handicap of family or wealth, are not quite what Demetrios proposes. His ideal government is the timarchic Spartan government as it actually was - a military aristocracy, living in a serf population. At the same time it is a vision (1905) of a future that is now past:
Der Söldner wählt die besten, du, von Volk
Und Adel ich; das sind die neuen Herrn,
Die teilen sich das Land und nehmen Weiber
Zur Ehe sich, damit sie Kinder kriegen,
Und dienen mir als Krieger und Spartisten;
Die andern frohnen ihnen als Heloten,
Wie ihre Väter einst den alten Herrn.
Heloten von Natur, sein sie's nach Recht. (88)

This, says Plato, is the beginning of the end, when the austere communal
life of the rulers breaks up, when private property reappears among them,
when philosophers cease to rule and when all power in the state passes into
the hands of the warriors, who neglect truth for the sake of physical culture
and war. The love of wealth prevails over love of honour. In time the
warriors fall out among themselves. Power passes into the hands of the
rich. The poor grow poorer and finally revolt. A "democracy" is
established. It degenerates into demagogy. The tyrant seizes power and
the subject is no longer an end in himself but a mere means, serving the
material advantage of the ruler.

In Plato's view the qualities of the good ruler-philosophers can only
be secured by subjecting them to a long course of training which shall so
fix their minds on right values that the degenerative cycle does not begin.
But Ernst says that the rulers must be such as men deserve, that is to say
despotism. Rousseau's assumption has been put to the test and has been
found wanting. The benevolent ruler is only despised. His good will is
looked upon as weakness. It does not conciliate the unruly men, it only
puts temptation in their way.

Hegel's idea that Christ's injunction to his followers was sentimental,
impracticable and politically dangerous had already taken root in German
drama. It remained only to extend it and to say that, if morality and the
individual were lightly to be set aside for the State's good, the dramatist
should teach us to believe this, and what was more, that it did not matter
if the arguments employed to do so were dishonest.

In "Preußengeist" (1915) Ernst takes up Laube's theme of the treatment
meted out by Frederick William I to his son, the future Frederick the Great
and his son's friend Katte. He endows him with the same endearing qualities
that distinguish him in Gutzkow's "Zopf und Schwert". His feelings for his
son urge him to be clement. He believes, however, with St. Paul,
St. Augustine and Luther, that all political authority derives from God.
The law, therefore, is also divine and he may not lightly set the law aside
for the comfort of his own feelings. He sympathises with the young lady
whom Lieutenant Katte was to marry but feels that his duty as a King requires
that he should not give way to his pity. As Ernst portrays him, the King
is caught between the horns of a dilemma. It is to him that the dramatist
directs our sympathy:

Mein Gott, mein Gott, aus meinem Vaterherzen
Schrei ich zu dir: Du weißt, ich war nicht schlecht,
Ich wollte nur das Gute für mein Volk
Und für ihn selbst. Gott, Gott, du mußt es wissen. (89)

He is thinking of his son, the Crown Prince. As for the Lieutenant,
he does not despise him because of what he did, he admires him for the kind
of man he is. Not only shall he die as an honourable soldier may, with his
sword hanging at his side, it is the King's own sword that he shall carry.
He was loyal to the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince led him astray. But
he has disobeyed the law and to point out that someone tempted him hardly
justifies his action:

Doch was ändert das?
Verbrechen bleibt Verbrechen. (90)
The King performs his duty because, he believes, God wills that he should do so. The punishment which Katte will receive is not necessary as a deterrent. As the Crown Prince says, no one else need ever know that Katte and he attempted to desert the country. The King replies:

Doch sah ihn Gott.
Ich hab es in der Hand, ihm zu begnadgen,
Auch wenn die Menschen alles von Euch wüßten,
Denn keinem bin ich Rechenschaft verpflichtet,
Als Gott allein, der mir die Krone gab. (91)

The King sees himself as another Abraham, whom God is testing. He hopes that God will be content to see that he did not refuse to raise his sword against his own son and that God will stay that sword when he has once raised it. His paternal feeling stirs. But so faintly does the interest of the State impress itself upon us that the King's "anguish" can only leave us with a feeling of distaste:

Friedrich. Du weinst ja, Vater!
König. Um dich, mein Sohn. Ich habe dich doch lieb!
Auch will ich beten. Gott ist gültig, Sohn;
Vielleicht bedenkt er deine große Jugend. (92)

The struggle in the King between paternal feeling and his duty, as he understands it, continues. He sympathises with Katte's argument that the Crown Prince must live for Prussia's sake. But he resists in turn the "Natalie" argument - "Eures Herzens Stimme"(93) - and the "Kottwitz" argument - "nicht nach den toten Worten des Gesetzes"(94) - which Frau von Winterstein advances. He is confused. He passes on the burden of decision to a court martial.

The court martial does not sentence Katte to death. It takes into account the unusual circumstances in which he deserted from the army and his
country. It condemns him instead to life imprisonment. With regard to
the Crown Prince it feels that it has no authority to judge him and refers
the question of his punishment to his father the King. The King receives
its verdict on Katte and at once rejects it:

Nach des Gesetzes klarem Wortlaut steht
Auf der versuchten Fahnenflucht der Tod;
Von einer Milderung ist nichts geschrieben.
Ihr wagt das Todesurteil nicht aus Mitleid. (95)

As to the Crown Prince he consults off-stage what it pleases him to call
his God or conscience. It pains him to do so. But the Crown Prince
lightens his task. He agrees that he deserves to die. In this way he
appears to his father the King to be a fit person to survive and to succeed
him. To recognise his fault, and to agree that the penalty was just, did
not save Katte, but according to the King it saves the Prince and rightly so.

The problem of reconciling the interest of the State with the statesman's
desire to act humanely does not arise. The King feels that he must summon
up the strength of mind to resist the temptation to be clement. If clemency
were always a virtue, the burden of kingship would be much lighter than it is.
But for a king, at least, to be virtuous means that he must always put his
duty to the state first, and this may sometimes mean that he must act ruthlessly
where his heart inclines him to be merciful:

Denn dazu hat Gott Könige geschaffen,
Daß sie das tun, was andre Menschen fürchten. (96)

The dramatist himself is not entirely satisfied. The King does right.
He does his duty. If his duty is unpleasant, we have more reason to admire
him. But we still yearn for a time when duties such as this will no longer
need to be performed; when the citizen, by carrying out his own duty, will
no longer force the ruler into his, which is to punish him in such a way
that other men will not dare to neglect theirs also. The play ends on an exultant patriotic note, pointing far ahead - unwittingly - to the "new order" of National Socialism. In this new order men will habitually carry out their duties and will spare the ruler his unpleasant task:

Und staunend stehen alle andern Völker
Vor diesem Volk, das recht tut; und ein Sturm geht vor ihm her, der Alles niederwirft.
Und so, wie du, mein Sohn, gestorben bist,
In deinem alten Menschen, und als neuer
Nun auferstanden, werden alle Völker
Durch dieses sterben und neu auferstehn.
Tot ist dann Lüge, Knechtschaft, List, Gewalt,
In Wahrheit lebt die Welt dann und in Pflicht;
Mit goldenen Pfeilen das erschrockne Dunkel
Zur lügnerischen Unterwelt verjagend
Steigt donnernd hoch am morgendlichen Himmel
Die deutsche Sonne für die ganze Welt. (97)

We have heard about the war to end wars. What Ernst apparently believes in is a policy of force and conquest creating the conditions under which goodness will eventually flourish. There are those on the other hand who feel that, on balance at least, no good can come of evil. It serves only to encourage that which it was meant to counteract.

In Unruh's "Louis Ferdinand, Prinz von Preußen" (1913) Frederick William III speaks of the burden imposed upon him in his dealings with foreign powers. "Kennen Sie", he asks, "das Amt des Monarchen? Wer wog nur im Traum Krieg gegen Frieden ab und erwachte nicht schweißgebadet von Alp solcher Verantwortung?" (98) But these are not the words of a sensitive man, pondering the fate of many thousands of his fellow-men, but of a king who fears what will happen to himself if Napoleon defeats him. He confirms the penalty of death rather as the Prince of Guastalla does in Lessing's "Emilia
Galotti:

**König**

Ich mache keinen Gebrauch vom Begnadigungsrecht.

**Graf Rewitz**

Hier. Das Todesurteil.

**König (signiert)**

Noch eins?

By this time the Romantic and neo-Romantic tendency for the monarch to be portrayed as the writer wished to see him in real life appears to have weakened. The autocratic methods of the Prussian ruler are attacked more and more, not only by implication but directly. In his play "Katte" (1914) Bursic presents Frederick William I as Harriott and Robertson describe him, as a Prussian martinet contemptuous of culture:

... wichtig ist nur, daß der König Herr ... im Staate bleibe ...
halte er den Russen oder den Osterreichern, wenn sie in Berlin einziehen, seine Bücher, Bilder, Töpfe, Büsten, seine Musik und all seinen Affenkram unter die Nase, blase er ihnen ein Menuett auf der Flöte und sage: Höhere Kultur! denkt er, sie kehren um? ... Wo die Kunst gedeiht, verdirbt der Staat ... (100)

When the King defends his cruel decision, with regard to Katte, his arguments suggest, not so much the "non-commissioned officer and the stud-groom"(101), however, not so much the uneducated, as the wrongly-educated men, hinting at political philosophy:

... meine Stadt wimmelt von unruhigen Leuten, auf den Gütern sitzen die starren Herren Junkers, an allen Grenzen Feinde ringsum ... Was ist mein Staat? Ein Rittergut ohne Züge; aller Nationen Leute darin; da muß der Halt im Innern sitzen; ... jedes einzelne Herz muß eine uneinnehmbare Festung sein! Muß! ... Wenn die Herren Richter ihre Pflicht in den Sand laufen lassen, so muß der König das Schwert handhaben ... (102)
None of the repellent features of the character of Frederick William I have been left out. He is portrayed throughout the play as an inhuman bully. But the real King appears to have been too insensitive and self-assured to wish to justify his actions, too primitive and ineluctable to do so as in Burte’s play. By causing the King to substitute conscious reasons for unconscious or half-conscious motives, the dramatist has widened his attack. He causes a disreputable King to represent, and therefore to discredit, not only political ruthlessness but the arguments for ruthlessness. He indicts not one man but all those for whom the one man speaks.

In the time of the first World War, plays with a political or military theme appear more frequently. A play that has anything to do with war may be said to have something to do with "Staatsräson". The dramatist who loathes war, however, is likely to see this problem from the viewpoint of the subject. The victims of war claim more of his attention than the ruler who believes, or discovers, that his duty forces him into doing conscientiously something which is brutal or dishonest. If the King in Kaiser’s "Bürger von Calais" (1914) does evil it is simply because he is heartless and unprincipled. He will punish the citizens of Calais because of their defiance. For the almost frivolous reason that a son has been born to him, he relents. The King himself does not appear. His decisions are reported. There is no sign that "Staatsräson" presents itself to him as a problem. It is not shown here to be a problem for the ruler but only for those whom the ruler oppresses. Eustache de Saint-Pierre persuades the citizens of Calais to accept the humiliating terms of surrender which the English King has stipulated. His desire to save Calais as a port, and to sacrifice his life instead, contrasts with the senseless readiness to destroy and to allow
to be destroyed respectively of the English King and the French military commander.

In his play "Der Retter" (1915) Hasenclever appears to side with those who feel that it is wrong to compromise with evil by hitting back at the aggressor. The King himself is a weak character who feels himself buffeted about by the promptings of his own kind heart, on the one hand, and what others urge upon him on the other as his country's need. The poet in the play calls upon him to renounce force and to resist the invaders passively. St. Paul has appeared before him in a vision. He believes that God has chosen him to convert the rulers of the world from war and guide them into peace. It is for one country or the other to break the vicious circle of war and counter-war and to lay down their arms without condition.

What is the King to do? He is irresolute. He has no mind of his own. If he does not agree to have the poet put to death, his Field-Marshal will resign. The Prime Minister supports the Field-Marshal. In the circumstances mercy is a moral luxury. It may satisfy the ruler in the short run. In the long run it will ruin both his country and himself. The King yields reluctantly to his advisers and sacrifices the poet. But before the poet dies the Queen consoles him. He will not have sacrificed his life in vain, his ideal of brotherhood and peace will survive him.

If there is any doubt where Hasenclever himself stands with regard to the problem which the King faces, his next play, "Antigone" (1916), removes it. Creon the King of Thebes, a self-justifying bully, speaks words which are a paraphrase of those once used by the Emperor William II:

Gott gab mir Majestät,
Daß ich Euch würdig führe,
Ihm allein schulde ich Rechenschaft!
Gehorsam fordere ich in seinem Namen.
Ich werde gut den Guten sein;
Wer gegen mich ist, den zertrete ich. (104)

Thus "Antigone" obliquely but unambiguously attacks the German Emperor. Presumably, therefore, if the author of "Der Retter" sides with anyone, it is not with the King, who has no will of his own and therefore represents no policy, nor with the Field-Marshal and the Prime Minister, who anticipate Creon, but with the poet-pacifist. It is the King's duty to obey the moral law. This means that he must turn the other cheek to the aggressor, not just in his private capacity but rather on behalf of an entire people. It is true that Hasenclever does not go as far as to suggest that the present rulers of the world are likely to follow the advice which the poet offers. But the poet takes the first necessary step. Time is on his side. His ideas will spread from one generation to the next till they are generally accepted.

The King in "Antigone" calls to mind Laube's Frederick William I. When he declares that he cannot pardon Antigone he clings to what he understands by justice. Justice means nothing more nor less to him than "what the law says". What the law says is what he wishes it to say:

Ich wär ein Hund und würdig für die Hütte,
Wenn ich als König auf des Thrones Säule
Das Unrecht mit dem Mitleid krüne,
Das einer Dirne ziemt. (105)

The Great War of 1914-1918, which influenced the work of Hasenclever, exerted a similar influence on other German dramatists. Their work reveals how intense their feeling was that war was senseless. In the hopes which they cherished that the rulers and the peoples of the world would not only come to see that this was so but would renounce war under all circumstances,
however, they differed. The fifth sailor of Goering's "Seeschlacht" (1918) speaks for man's higher duty to the law of God as literally interpreted, "Thou shalt not kill." He exalts this law above the State's command: "Ich weiß, Wahnsinn und Verbrechen ist es, was wir tun, und nur aus diesem Grunde ist es so: weil es Dinge gibt zwischen Mensch und Mensch, die zu erfüllen heiligere Pflicht den Menschen ist als jeder andere Kampf!" (106)

But the heat of battle carries him away. Even he, the rebel, cannot resist the group feeling which drives men to act in conformity with one another: "Die Schlacht geht weiter, hörst du? Mach deine Augen noch nicht zu. Ich habe gut geschossen, wie? Ich hätte gut gemeutert! Wie? Aber schießen lag uns wohl näher? Wie? Muß uns wohl näher gelegen haben?" (107)

The pacifist may reproach the ruler. He must know, however, that the ruler's feelings on the question, whether it is right that he should answer force with force or lay down arms, is one which most ordinary people continue to share.

In Rubiner's play, "Die Gewaltlosen" (1919), a political prisoner converts the prison governor and warders to his own pacifist ideas. Let us, he says, unconditionally love our enemies. For although the kindness that we show to them may not appear to justify itself at once, it must do so in the end. The governor responds to the prisoner's advice wholeheartedly. "Wir geben uns", he says, "dem Feind. Er fordert - wir geben alles. Er fordert Waffen, wir legen sie hin. Er will Geld, wir geben ihm, was da ist, er will Speise, wir geben ihm die unsere. Er will unser Leben, wir zeigen ihm, daß wir es opfern. Er kann nichts mehr fördern. Er ist allein, und ihm bleibt nur noch zu verlangen, daß er werde wie wir selbst." (108)

The movement - "Gemeinschaft gegen die Gewalt!" - gains ground. But
traitors undermine it. The true voice of Christian love degenerates into mere parrot-talk. In the believers' own ranks men thieve and murder. Mistrust among them spreads. By sacrificing their own lives to the mob the leaders reinspire their followers, but no one can suppose that their restored faith will last for ever. Men being what they are, the best that Rubiner can offer us is not so much a picture of what is possible as of something to which we may at least aspire.

The feeling that, not so much a ruling class, as man generally, is not yet morally equipped to cleanse the state of evil methods, again reveals itself in Unruh's "Platz" (1920). The "Platz", or square, with its idol glorifying war and force, symbolises the military rule of Prussia. It is occupied by the "Oberherr", who represents the political philosophy of "Staatsrätson", and by the commandant Graf Gutundblut, who stands for "Junkertum". The liberal-minded Dietrich overthrows these two. The people acclaim him. But he does not base his hopes on them but on a small, moral élite which is not confined to any single part of society.

Of the dramatis personae, "Christian Schleich, ein Zeitgenosse" suggests the product of a way of life in which obedience ranks as the supreme virtue. He willingly accommodates himself to all authority, no matter what. He represents the degenerate idea of "Pflicht", of which Clemens says in Unruh's prose-epic "Opfergang" (1916):

\[\text{Pflicht! ... wahrlich der Name ist groß und schlägt jede eigene Regung um. Aber was hinter ihr steht, das wurde klein! Daß pünktlich die Züge fahren, daß wir schnauzen wie ein General und unsere Seele abtöten - das nennt sich heute die Pflicht! Der Krebs am Herzen des Volkes ist sie! Sie trägt eine Pickelhaube, nicht unsere Liebe. Ja, umfaßte Pflicht noch wie einst Himmel und Wahrheit ...} (109)\]
In his play "Masse Mensch" (1920) Ernst Toller repudiates the idea of "Staatsräson" explicitly. The heroine of the play, a woman-leader of the masses, can escape from gaol if she agrees to sacrifice a warder's life. She lets the chance go by. For however sacred a cause might be, "Kein Mensch darf töten um einer Sache willen." (110) Generals have murdered for the State. Now, with missionary zeal, men murder for the good of man.

Ich sehe keine Unterscheidung:
Die einen morden für ein Land,
Die andern für die Länder alle.
Die einen morden für tausend Menschen,
Die andern für Millionen.
Wer für den Staat genordet,
Nennt ihn Henker.
Wer für die Menschheit norden,
Den bekränzt ihr, nennt ihn gütig,
Sittlich, edel, groß.
Ja sprechet von guter, heiliger Gewalt. (111)

War and hatred of war tend to direct the attention of the dramatist away from the generals and statesmen who must sacrifice the lives of others and to focus it instead on the soldier or the citizen whose task is simply to obey. When even victory seems worthless, arguments for "Staatsräson" may come to be regarded as anachronistic and dangerous. After Carl Hauptmann's "Krieg" (1913) many more plays were written condemning war: Unruh's "Ein Geschlecht" (1917), Zweig's "Jeremias" (1917), Toller's "Die Wandlung" (1919) and "Hinkemann" (1922), Kraus's "Die letzten Tage der Menschheit" (not
published until 1922), Kaiser's "Lederköpfe" (1928), "Der Soldat Tanaka" (1940) and "Das Floß der Meduse" (1943), many plays by Bertolt Brecht, including "Träumeln in der Nacht" (1922), "Die heilige Johanna der Schlachthöfe" (1932), "Furcht und Blind des dritten Reichs" (1939) and "Das Verhör des Lukullus" (1939) and Weisenborn's "U-Boot S-4" (1929).

The problem of "Staatsrasson" as more a problem for the ruler himself than for his people is resuscitated in Johst's "Der König" (1920). The character and situation of the King are too absurd to be instructive. It appears nevertheless that a political lesson of some kind is intended. The King believes that his fellow-men are good at heart. He will coax their goodness out by setting them the right example. "Es bedarf nur eines Anstoßes, Mutter, und diese träge Güte rollt über alle Welt! Alle Welt ist gut! Sie ist nur befangen in Arbeit und Alltage, daß sie keine Zeit findet zur Güte." (112)

The dramatist presents a King who is merciful and kind. He then proceeds to discredit the idea of monarchic benevolence by endowing him with further qualities of character which are ridiculous and unfortunate. The King is frivolous. He brushes aside the pomp of royal office and with it the mystique on which his power depends. A harlot turns his head. He judges her to have sinned much less than she was sinned against. She receives a peerage. For this he offers an oblique pretext. Is it not a more usual practice, and a worse, to make a harlot of a Countess? The Princess, whose love for him is injured in this way, takes her life. In his zeal for doing good the King is reckless. He misapplies his generosity and imposes a heavy strain on the treasury.

It is not through kindness as such that the King fails but through kindness misconceived. The people whom he governs belong less to this world
than do the characters of Ernst's "Demetrios". "Die Zeit der Legenden oder des Rokoko" seems an unlikely period for a harlot Countess nailed to the Cathedral altar by the mob and, as the choir sing, publicly defiled. The people, foolish, irresponsible and easily swayed, behave like grotesque beasts who despise kindness and who, for their own good and for the good of all, must be intimidated. "Das Volk", says Melior, "sieht in der Güte nur Willkür, Macht, Überhebung ... Wer das Volk aber züchtigt, an dem glaubt es."(113) Since the King is eccentric, in so far as he is credible at all, since his situation is bizarre and the people are a pure figment, the problem of authority as we find it here is intolerably artificial. It is left unsolved, the King taking his life before the mob seizes him.

In Werfel's "Juarez und Maximilian" (1924), Maximilian, as a figure of history, shares the ideas of Johst's king more credibly. His character resembles that of Uhland's Ludwig, his tragedy that of Grillparzer's Rudolph. He believes that good will is as infectious as bad will. "Plötzlich habe ich das Mysterium der christlichen Feindesliebe verstanden."(114) He must love his enemy. "Man muß das Gute oktroyieren."(115) "Die guten Ströme meines Herzens wollen in die Welt."(116) "Ich kann Menschenglück begründen, dann ich will nichts für mich."(117) He is more anxious to reconcile Juarez than to defeat him. "Weg mit allem Haß!"(118) "Des Souveräns Tugend ist Güte!"(119) "Ich bin kein Cäsar, kein Diktator, kein Usurpator! ... Der legitime Herrscher ist der Stellvertreter der weltlichen Liebe Gottes. Guten Willens muß er sein."(120)

Pierron argues as Machiavelli does. The Emperor's actions must be governed by the situation in which he finds himself. He must issue a decree condemning to death anyone found bearing arms. "Das Dekret ist kein
unsanfteres Kriegsmittel als Bomben und Granaten." (121) Being brutal to a few first offenders will eventually save the lives of many. "Recht besehen ist dieser Erlass ein Akt der Menschenliebe. Drei, vier scharfe Exemplar werden statuiert. Das Gerucht verhundertfacht sie. Der Schreck demobilisiert den Feind." (122)

Neither Maximilian nor Pierron order the course of events. The perfidious Bazaine and his "Quisling" generals, ruthless or corrupt or inefficient, neither reproaching nor seeking to justify themselves, indirectly incriminate the Emperor and bring about his downfall.

The distinction which Werfel seems to make between those who direct the course of history, men like Bazaine, and those whose blessing they do not seek, political theorists, like Pierron, appears in Bruckner's "Elisabeth von England" (1930). In this play Francis Bacon contrasts the world of politics as he would like to see it with the real world which is ruled by selfish interest. "Es ließe sich davon träumen, ..." (123) We can imagine how beneficent a man might be in high places were he not just a military hero but, like Plato, the seeker after truth, applying his knowledge to the common weal and to the body politic. But good men will never be allowed to govern if they are not prepared to leap across the barrier of their own integrity:

Die Macht hat zwei Gesichter. Das wirkliche gibt ihr der Geist, und nur das Außere ist ein Schwert. Manchmal scheint es, als wäre der Instinkt für die Forschung unverbindbar mit dem Instinkt für die Karriere, der das eigentliche Handwerk der Politik ist. Aber es scheint nur so. Ein genügend überlegener Mensch muß sich entschließen können, die Karriere auf sich zu nehmen, wenn er nicht anders die Macht erreichen kann. (124)

As Bacon uses it the word "Karriere" has a pejorative sense. The immobility
of pure purposes can only be rectified by an initial sacrifice of integrity. The man whose purposes are wholly pure will never bestir himself to political action or find his way into the King's council-chamber. The person who does succeed in reaching a position of political responsibility will find that his moral choice was predetermined. "Er verliert sie (die Kontrolle über seine eigenen Handlungen) bewuβt", says Bacon, "denn er ist in das Wesentliche vorgedrungen, das weder Angst vor Leichen kennen darf noch vor einer moralischen Verurteilung." (125) This must be. An action, he says, which we may call despicable, may be intended as a blessing. In the Last Judgement it is not "die Moral" - he appears to mean our methods - which will go into the scales against us, but only the intention or result.

The other characters of Bruckner's play do not reflect on principles. Elisabeth herself is coarse. She no more knows what it is like to be morally tormented than Schiller's Elisabeth does in "Maria Stuart". We could say this of the other twenty or so historical figures of the play. They do not know what compunction means. Their chief motive is their pride. As Bacon says, the map of Europe would be very different if someone could repair the effects of wounded vanity. But he cannot see in Elisabeth the ill-motived person that she is. He wraps himself in theories. He treats man as an idea. In Elisabeth compassion dies a natural death from selfish interest. But in him, the political philosopher, it dies of argument, as it does in the philosophy of Hegel and in Hebbel's drama.

The plea for "Staatsräson" in the time of National Socialism was made ad nauseam. It is in any case a restricted theme; it is difficult to see what could be said in defence of "Staatsräson" that had not been said already, in German drama no less than in German political philosophy. War or the State and usually both are exalted in the work of Eckhart, Bötticher, Coltz,
Goetz, Franck, Hintse and Graff before 1933 and in that of Zerkauen, Euringer, Bethge, Heynicke, Langenbeck, Lauckner and Rehberg in the period since. In his "Friedrich Wilhelm I" (1936), Rehberg presents us with the King more or less as he appears in Ernst's "Preûßengeist", thrusting his humanity aside and accomplishing what he thinks to be his duty.

It is true that from time to time whoever governs, however well-intentioned he may be, must surrender one principle of right to another principle of right. That which in the short run appears to be humane—pardon or appeasement—may reveal itself in the long run as irresponsible. To act responsibly towards one's own people may—arguably at least—be to act ruthlessly towards another people. The "Gottesstaat" of Bacmeister's "Der Kaiser und sein Antichrist" (1934) can only be maintained "mit Schwert und Schweiß und Blut"(126) against the heathen. Therefore, Charlemagne's sons are called upon to be "schwerterfromm"(127). The word "schwerterfromm" is original. Its candour may surprise us. But the idea which it contains is old and it is one which, unthinkingly or thinkingly, most men accept. Presumably what Charlemagne calls the "Gottesstaat" refers to St. Augustine's "civitas caelestis", as the "civitas terrena" represents it. This, too, had to be maintained by the political power of the state, acting as the Church's strong right arm.

The ruler, most of us agree, must sometimes act against his conscience when the public interest demands that he should do so. But where are we to draw the line between justified and unjustified infringements of the moral law? If a line is to be drawn at all, the question, where, is one which only feeling can decide, and which, in practice, it usually does.

But when this difficulty has been overcome, another, more insidious difficulty arises. For not only does it matter whether evil methods are
admissible or not in the interest of state or country. What also matters is the attitude which men adopt, or come to adopt, towards what many would regard as an unfortunate necessity at best. If abhorrent means are continually employed, our feelings about them are sure to be affected. Our sensitivity is dulled and our compassion weakened. Eventually we accept methods which in time past we felt to be distasteful. Heiseler, in his play "Čēsar" (1941), shows himself aware of this. He contrasts the character of Caesar with the character of Brutus. His Brutus is a man whose mind is governed, not by any love of man, but by political theories. He opposes "Tyrannei und wär sie sanft wie Katzenpfoten."\(^{128}\) But Antonio suggests that, when Brutus says "Recht", what he really means is "Rechtlichkeit"\(^{129}\). Cassius describes him as "eitel". "... man kann ihm nützen."\(^{130}\) Portia notes how quick he is to see himself as the gods' chosen instrument. It is he who would like to govern Rome by the light of "Staatsrāson" and his character disgraces the idea which he represents.

In this way Brutus serves as a foil to a Caesar whose character does honour to the idea of benevolent despotism. As Brutus himself admits, Caesar is a man "voll Güte"\(^{131}\). The soldiers worship him. Among the citizens, "ein Gleicher unter Gleichen"\(^{132}\), he does not affect the dignity of office. In his presence all men feel at ease. He does not incline to war but to public works. He is conciliatory:

_Erschlagner Feind ist das Gefährlichste_  
_Und Gnade das Beste, was der Sieg uns bringt._ \(^{133}\)

It is true that he wishes to be made a King, but not to gratify his own ambition. He believes that to govern as a King is to govern single-mindedly. He looks upon group-rule as rule by a faction or a clique. If his successor
is to keep the civil peace, he will best do so as a monarch.

As a sensitive man, who must impose the penalty of death on someone who for mere gain tortured and then killed the servants of his house, he suffers:

Trifft denn die Todesstrafe den so schwer,  
Der sie erleidet, wie den, der sie verhängt?  
Ich muß das Bittre tragen, was ich tu.  
Er aber ruht, zu langem Schlaf erlöst -  
Sterben ist leichter als töten. (134)

He believes that he who exercises power must incur guilt. He does not fear this, although it pains him. What he does fear is that a time may come when he will all too readily accept it:

Cäsar. Gewöhnen muß di's, mit der Schuld zu leben.  
Brutus. Gewöhnen!  
Cäsar. Ja. Und achten, daß das Herz  
Dir doch nicht stumpf wird, das die Schuld erträgt. (135)

Since Heiseler wrote this, we have seen for ourselves that, when men believe that the end justifies the means, they may so habituate themselves to unpleasantness as to resort to it unfeelingly. A young officer in Zuckmayer's "Des Teufels General" (1942) says, "Sie haben auf Wehrlose geschossen - nur zum Spaß. Sie haben gelacht, wenn die vor Angst gewimmert haben. ... Das hat doch nichts mehr mit Krieg zu tun. Nichts mit dem Ziel - nichts mit der Idee."(136) We shall not think that the Caesar of Heiseler's play is unduly sentimental. Reason must sometimes overrule warm feelings but it may do this too often. As Heiseler reminds us, a time may come when there are no warm feelings left for it to overrule.

The crude plea for "Staatsräson" which dramatists were encouraged to
make in the period 1933-1945, and the frightful things that happened, encouraged other writers to ignore the arguments for "Staatsraison" and to concern themselves instead with its consequences. In 1945 as in 1918 the theme of "Staatsraison" in German drama tends to be presented from the point of view of the subject rather than from that of the ruler. This was already true of certain plays written by German dramatists in exile: Friedrich Wolf's "Professor Mamlock" (1935) and Bruckner's "Denn die Zeit war kurz" (1943), the one protesting against the persecution of the Jews and the other commemorating - in effect - the Norwegian resistance. In his play "Nun singen sie wieder" (1945) Max Frisch condemns the shooting of hostages and other, more usual brutalities of war. In "Die Illegalen" (1945) Weisenborn pays tribute to the Münch students who paid with their lives for betraying not so much their country as their country's leaders.

In Brecht's "Leben des Galilei" (1938-39) the Church of Rome is allowed to justify as best it can its decision to force Galileo - by torture if needs be - to deny publicly that the sun stands still and that the earth moves round it. The Church of Rome is contending with the Reformation. At the same time it is compromising with the Reformation politically in order to maintain its secular power. The Pope has fallen out with the Emperor; it is being rumoured that he has secretly allied himself with the Swedes.

Galileo himself is not a trouble-maker. But his work shows that the Church has misconceived the nature of the universe. As a scientist he proceeds from doubt rather than from faith. If he disturbs men's faith in some things, doubt may prove contagious and disturb men's faith in other things. His findings interest the common people, who will soon see him as the ballad-singer does - as a "Bibelzertrümmerer"(137).

But Brecht clearly does not sympathise with the Church, whose authority
rests, he believes, on cruelty and superstition. It does not act as it does from worthy motives, it does not seek to keep the civil peace for the sake of the people as a whole but for the sake of those who govern—"seine Feiniger. Diese selbstischen und gewalttätigen Männer". "Nun wird der Großteil der Bevölkerung von ihren Fürsten, Grundbesitzern und Geistlichen in einem perlmutterernen Dunst von Aberglauben und alten Wörtern gehalten, welche die Machinationen dieser Leute verdeckt."(138)

An exception to the rule that modern German drama tends not to show men in power as being morally distressed by the brutal measures which they feel that they must take is provided by Hochwälder's "Das heilige Experiment" (1762). In this play reasons of state induce the authorities in Spain (1767) to disband the Jesuit Society in Paraguay. Miura, the professional soldier who is sent out to effect this decision, finds that the charges preferred against the Jesuits, of establishing a state independent of Spain, mining silver for their own use, enslaving the Indians and profiteering, are false. But he is duty-bound to proceed with his appointed task. Feeling that he has no choice helps to ease his conscience: "... ich tue nur, was mir befohlen ist."(139) His apparent need to reassure himself, however, may indicate his doubts. "Für das Wohl meines Landes", he says, "nehme ich jedes Mittel in Kauf."(140) Though no one is asking him to justify his actions, he appears to feel that he must do so.

We first see Miura as he sees himself, as an instrument of the will of others. He cannot alter and is not responsible for their decisions. In the fourth scene of Act V, however, Miura and his fellow-officer, Arago, no longer appear merely as the puppets of the government in Spain. The powers which they exercise when condemning certain of the rebels to death are permissive powers. They decide that so-and-so many of the Indians must die,
one from each settlement, "zur Abschreckung" (141). They agree that they must be harsh however much they would prefer to be merciful instead:

Arago. Auch wenn wir Milde üben wollten - wir könnten nicht -

Miura. Denn die Dinge selbst - gehorchen nicht immer unsern Gefühlen und Absichten ... (Er unterschreibt) Zum Tod - zum Tod - zum Tod - Tod - Tod - Tod - Tod. (142)

A few lines later we hear Miura's "still small voice":

Und doch - ist in meinem Herzen ... etwas ... das spricht: 'Was hülfe es, wenn ich die ganze Welt gewonne - und nähme doch Schaden an meiner Seele ...' ... auch diese Stimme ist in meinem Herzen, ... (143)

The slow beating of the drum outside indicates the firing-squad.

Miura now utters his final words: "Ich bekenne -- -- ich bekenne." (144)

He does not - he cannot - plead "superior orders" now; his new plea, "necessity", fails to satisfy his conscience.

The Jesuits in Paraguay are the distant subjects of the Spanish King. In so vast, dispersed and cumbersome a state, their purposes and work are misrepresented and misunderstood. An ill-founded "necessity" decides their fate. The man on the spot who sees them as the victims of malice and deceit salves his conscience for as long as he is able to by reminding himself that it is not for him to reason and decide but simply to obey.

We are reminded of the words of Goethe's Götz. The small, patriarchal unit of society is disappearing. A central government, government from afar, will steadily replace it. The moral effect of this will be unfortunate. "Es kommen die Zeiten des Betrugs, es ist ihm Freiheit gegeben. Die Nichtswürdigen werden regieren mit List, und der Edle wird in ihre Netze fallen." (145) We have seen that Schiller's "Briefe über die Ästhetische
"Erziehung des Menschen" similarly draw attention to the difficulties which beset the relations of the ruler to his subjects in the big state. If we accept these views we shall agree that the Elector in Kleist's play is more fortunate. He and those whom he must govern have access to each other. If he thinks about his problem he must think of it in terms of people who are known to him. The King in Goethe's "Egmont" or in Schiller's "Don Carlos" could only do as the Elector must by forcing his imagination. Such is the nature of life at court that he hardly knows the Spanish people - let alone his subjects in the Netherlands. The Elector on the other hand governs much less formally. His rule is more direct. In his small state he can afford to concentrate in his own hands powers which in a larger state than Brandenburg he would need to delegate to others. His executive rôle is that of head of state and active commander-in-chief of the army. He enjoys, too, a sort of "home secretary" rôle in the administration of the law. In this case, the law happens to be military law, but his right of pardon presumably extends to the law in general.

In this country, and in most countries of the world, the time has passed when the political unit was so small that executive and judicial powers could be concentrated in the hands of a single man. In the place of the juridico-administrative chief or officer of early times, civil services and courts of law have been established and in truly democratic states these powers function independently. Unpleasant punitive decisions are taken in the law-courts. The French President may assume emergency powers to act against Algerian extremists. The extremists are his fellow countrymen. His task, however, is simply to apprehend these men as criminals. He does not himself constitute a jury.
Even in the law-courts the need to intimidate and restrain desperate or foolish men who might plunge the country into civil war hardly arises. Too many men own property, too many men lead comfortable lives, for any large body of the people to suppose that it can gain from violence or revolution. If it is not by military coup d'état, dissatisfied minorities cannot unseat the government by force and dissatisfied majorities need only wait until the next general election. In Kleist's time hereditary monarchs had either to be suffered or resisted. They could not resign their posts and they did not usually abdicate. They had to defend their power internally. To do this they might find themselves obliged to perform tasks which, if they were sensitive, might distress their feelings or disturb their consciences. Today dictators might assume the functions which hereditary monarchs used to exercise. But they, Schiller would agree, are where they are simply because they are not the kind of men who would regard Kleist's problem as a problem. We cannot see them in the part of Kleist's Elector. Kruschev directing a Russian secret court to condemn the Hungarian Prime Minister to death would hardly claim Kleist's sympathy today. Where government remains despotic, "Ottokars" create great problems for their fellow-men but they do not themselves appear to suffer from the need (if it arises) to be cruel to one man or to a few men in order to be kind to many. In the modern democratic state on the other hand the ruler who must wield single-handedly executive and judicial responsibilities, which he did not seek, finds no place. It is true that even democratic governments resort to war and that war is essentially a policy of "Staatsraison". But a nation sacrificed in war cannot take the stage as Hebbel's Agnes does or Kleist's young Prince. A character or two may represent that nation's plight. But their fate will be pathetic rather
than tragic and we shall pity them as men directly rather than the nation which they represent. The cabinet or government that sends them into war will not win sympathy in the way in which the Elector succeeds in winning ours. The task of a Home Secretary or High Court judge may sometimes call to mind the Elector's situation. But seldom if ever will a person in such authority find himself confronted by the real or even the apparent need to sacrifice an innocent or comparatively innocent man or woman for the state's good. A general in war may count on losing so many thousand men to win a battle. But he cannot say exactly which men will be sacrificed and few of them if any will be personally known to him. His duties will have broadly speaking been prescribed for him by his political superiors. For these and perhaps other reasons it seems likely that the problem into which we have enquired will never again be as topical in politics or as prominent in German drama as it was in the 18th and 19th centuries. The despot has not yet disappeared in Europe, but the dramatist will probably be more inclined to pillory or disregard him than to pity him. In the democratic state the burden which Kleist's Elector bears no longer rests upon the shoulders of one man. When a ruler who is sensitive of the moral problem of "Staatsraison" appears in modern German drama, we usually find him situated in a past, often remote period of history. This is not surprising. The nature of government has changed - even the despot governs less directly in the large modern state than in a small German state of before 1870. Modern German drama already reflects and will probably continue to reflect these changes.
NOTES

CHAPTER I.


2) St. Paul's Second Epistle to the Romans, Ch. XIII, vv. 1-2.

3) "Denkmäler der älteren deutschen Literatur" (1914), III, 3, Part II, p. 72.


5) ibid., p. 153.


7) ibid., p. 383.

8) ibid., p. 531.


10) Ibid., p. 449.


15) "Modern German History" (London, 1953), p. 79.

16) Mr. Norman Marrow, Head of the Classics Department of Watford Grammar School, and Mr. Kenneth Wellesley, Lecturer in Humanities in the University of Edinburgh have each tried and failed to trace this quotation. It may be that it is somewhere to be found in the Tauchnitz Cicero in 10 volumes containing 5422 pages. Mr. Wellesley doubts this and suspects that the words attributed to Cicero are bogus and neo-Latin.


22) Grüger ed. (1873), p.98, line 1088.


25) Ibid., p.207.


33) Ibid., Vol. X, p.98.

34) Ibid.


38) See F. Meinecke, op.cit., p.356.


40) Ibid.
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<td>18.1.1827. Ibid., p.200.</td>
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CHAPTER II.

1) "Discours sur l'inégalité", Vaughan ed. (1914), p.194.
3) Ibid., p.322.
8) H.S. Reiss, "The Political Thought of the German Romantics" (1955), p.11.
10) Ed.cit., Vol. I, pp.1173 [Reding], 1174 [Furst], 1211 [Tell], 1222 [Furst].
13) Ibid., pp.107-108.
15) i) To Andreas Reiner, 21.6.1811. Ibid., p.423.
   ii) To Friedrich de la Motte-Fouqué, 15.8.1811. Ibid., p.426.
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<td>&quot;Briefe Humboldts an Jacobi&quot;, Leitzmann ed. (1892), p.78.</td>
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61) Ibid., pp.52-53.
62) Ibid., Vol. V, pp.10, 33 and 34.
73) Ibid., Vol. III, p.70.
74) Ibid., p.86.
75) Ibid., p.87.
76) Ibid., p.83.
77) Ibid., p.88.
78) Ibid.
79) Ibid.
80) Ibid., p.87.
83) Ibid., pp.29-30.
84) Ibid., p.56.
85) Ibid., pp.56-57.
91) See F. de Coulanges, "La Cité Antique" (Harrap ed., 1898), Book III, Ch. XI ("La Loi").
93) See H.S. Reiss, op.cit., p.38.
96) Ibid., p.52.
97) Ibid.
98) Ibid., p.53.
99) Ibid., p.66.
101) See d'Entrèves, op.cit., pp.64 and 78.
104) "Der Prinz von Homburg oder die Schlacht von Fehrbellin" (1850), Werner ed. (1901), "Briefe", Vol. XI, pp.324-325.
108) Ibid.
109) Ibid., p.67.
110) Ibid., p.83.
111) Ibid., pp.89-90.
112) Ibid., p.89.
113) Ibid., p.90.
114) Ibid., p.34.
115) Ibid., p.35.
116) Ibid.
117) Ibid., p.87.
118) Ibid., p.89.
119) Ibid., p.68.
120) Ibid., p.87.
121) Ibid., p.123.

127) Ibid.
131) Ibid.
133) Ibid.
135) Ibid., p.83.
137) Ibid., p.90.
139) Ibid., p.97.
141) Ibid., p.98.

145) "The State and the Citizen" (London, 1948), Ch. VII, opening paragraph.
146) "Principles of Political Obligation" (1879-1880), para. 15.
147) Ed.cit., p.313.

149) Ibid., p.248.
151) Ibid., p.283.


156) "L'univers existentiel de Kleist dans le Prince de Hombourg" (Strasburg, 1953).
157) Ibid., p.8.
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3) Ibid., pp. 43-44.
4) Ibid., p. 103.
5) Fischer ed. (1892), Vol. II, p. 82.
6) Ibid., p. 121.
7) Ibid., p. 128.
8) Ibid., pp.129-130. 9) Ibid., p.144.
34) Ibid., p.181. 35) Ibid.
38) Ibid., p.228. 39) Ibid., p.184.
40) Ibid., p.142. 41) Ibid., p.250.


51) Ibid., p.204.

52) Ibid., p.234.

53) Ibid.


59) Ibid., pp.77-78.

60) Ibid., p.87.


63) Ibid., p.34.

64) Ibid., p.101.


69) Ibid., p.159.

70) Ibid., p.207.

71) Ibid., p.217.

72) Ibid., pp.142-143.

73) Ibid., p.216.

74) Ibid.

75) Ibid., p.217.

76) Ibid., p.219.

77) Ibid., p.220.


79) Ibid., p.207.

80) Ibid., p.163.


82) Ibid., p.148.

83) Ibid., p.151.

84) Ibid., p.152.

85) Ibid., pp.161-162.
86) Ibid., p.171.
87) Ibid.
88) Ibid., pp.171-172.
90) Ibid., p.118.
91) Ibid., p.119.
92) Ibid., p.120.
93) Ibid., p.120.
94) Ibid., p.122.
96) Ibid., p.127.
97) Ibid., p.137.
99) Ibid., p.162.
101) Marriott and Robertson, op.cit., p.102.
103) "Germany's War Mania. The Teutonic Point of View as officially stated by her Leaders. A Collection of Speeches and Writings" (London, 1914), p.90.
105) Ibid., p.44.
107) Ibid., p.92.
111) Ibid., pp.75-76.
112) Langen ed. (1921), p.36.
113) Ibid., p.90.
115) Ibid., p.44.
116) Ibid.
117) Ibid., p.46.
118) Ibid., p.57.
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127) Ibid.
129) Ibid., p.50. 130) Ibid., pp.10-11.
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