

## *The Walberberg Circle*

### **The Social Ethics of the German Dominicans**

WOLFGANG OCKENFELS

To understand the history of the 'Walberberg Circle', we need to look at the interest in social ethics espoused by some German Dominicans who, at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, were important in organising and providing an impetus for the Christian social movement. It was in the context of this movement that the 'Walberberger' were later to play an important part in the development of social Catholicism.

Of central importance here is Albert Maria Weiss OP (1844–1925), who taught in Fribourg. He was a close friend of Karl Freiherr von Vogelsang and a member of the Union de Fribourg, which did the preliminary work for the encyclical *Rerum Novarum* (1891). In his book *Liberalismus und Christentum* (Liberalism and Christianity), Weiss had strongly criticised the then dominant ideological liberalism. He had also written a two-volume work of apologetics, *Soziale Frage und Soziale Ordnung* (Social Question and Social Order). Karl, Fürst zu Löwenstein (1834–1921), was also active in the 'Union de Fribourg', and, as a member of the Centre Party and the General Commissioner of the Deutsche Katholikentage, was among the main figures in the Christian social movement. In 1908, Prince Löwenstein joined the Dominican order as 'Pater Raymundus'.

In the 1930s, and then especially after the Second World War, the Dominicans in Germany (the Dominican province of Teutonia) achieved a public significance that went far beyond the traditional Dominican preoccupations of preaching, pastoral work and theology. In the post-war regeneration of the Federal Republic, the activities instigated at, or associated with, the priory at Walberberg were of great socio-ethical, and also socio-political, consequence. This priory is situated in a (then strategically advantageous) small village between the cities of Bonn and Cologne, and, until the mid 1970s, housed the philosophical and theological studium.

The name of 'Walberberg' is connected mainly with a circle of five renowned Dominicans: Laurentius Siemer (1888–1956), Eberhard Welty (1902–

1965), Arthur F. Utz (1908–2001), Edgar Nawroth (born 1912) and Basilius Streithofen (born 1925). Via numerous initiatives and publications, and the establishment of various institutions, these figures achieved a high profile, even though one could hardly have talked about a ‘Walberberg mass movement’. Rather, the circle’s activities, and the activities of other figures connected with it, need to be seen within the broader context of the Christian social movement, for which the circle provided an important impetus.

In Siemer, the ‘Walberberger’ had someone who knew how to get initiatives moving; in Welty, it had a source of keen insight into the circle’s programmatic aims; in Utz, an outstanding systematic thinker; in Nawroth, an understanding of ideological critique; and in Streithofen, a political adviser effective with the public. These ‘strong’ personalities did not form a circle held together by teamwork or group dynamics; nor did they give rise to a common ‘school’. Rather, each had a strong sense of individualism, and from time to time this brought them into competition with each other – which may well have enhanced their productivity. For this reason, this cursory look back at the ‘Walberberger’ will introduce the main players individually, in order to relate them to each other. For all their spiritual and political diversity, and however we judge the level of individual contributions, the ‘Walberberger’, like the other Dominicans of their generation, cherished a common identification with the Order’s Thomist traditions, and were connected in their loyalty to the social teaching of the Church.

#### LAURENTIUS SIEMER (1888–1956)

Descended from an old line of farmers, Siemer was born on 8 March 1888, in Elisabethfehn (in Oldenburg’s Münsterland), the sixth of ten children. Even at school he was regarded as particularly self-confident, talented in speaking and interested in literature. After joining the Order in 1908, he completed his theological studies at the Dominican studium (then still in Düsseldorf), qualifying as a lector. After a short period teaching at the Dominican College for Missionaries, in Vechta, he studied languages and history at the university of Münster. His dissertation for the Staatsexamen in 1920 discusses *The Active Life and the Contemplative Life according to Saint Thomas Aquinas*. It was at this time that he first became involved with the Catholic Centre Party. Although his provincial intended Siemer for doctoral studies, the Master of the Dominicans appointed him Rector of the Dominican boarding school in Vechta. He held this office for 12 years, and devoted this time to extensive reform of the boarding school in the spirit of the Boy Scout movement.

In 1932 Siemer was elected provincial of the German Dominicans. He held this office until 1946, and in this second phase of his life he achieved political, perhaps even historical, significance. One of his first decisions in office was to set up a unified institution of learning in Walberberg, and to found further priories which were later assigned to the Dominican province of South Germany and Austria. He oversaw the publication of the *Deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe* (German edition of the works of Thomas Aquinas), and had the works of St Albert the Great edited.

He vehemently distanced himself from the National Socialist regime and rejected all possibility of compromise. Within the province itself he strictly forbade any collaboration. It was not long before the regime began taking arbitrary measures – above all through the Gestapo. In the spring of 1935 he was arrested, subjected to nine and a half months of examination, placed on trial, convicted of ‘obtaining money through unlawful means’, but was then acquitted on appeal in 1936. Siemer was lucky – some other Dominicans died in prison or in the concentration camps. The growing Nazi terror and war of aggression strengthened Siemer’s willingness to take part in active resistance. On the one hand, he justified resistance to the unjust state in biblical terms, citing Acts 5: 29: ‘We must obey God rather than men.’ On the other, he became increasingly convinced that natural law made it impossible to acknowledge the National Socialist state as a state, since it saw its essence as power and not in promoting the common good.

Another reason why Siemer’s readiness to take part in the resistance became much more radical, and led to his ‘reckless’ and ‘single-minded’ participation in the organised conspiracy against the Nazi state, was that he saw how ineffectual and half-hearted were the pastoral letters and other episcopal initiatives in which he was involved. First of all, Siemer joined a circle of resistance workers in Cologne, which had emerged from the *Katholische Arbeiterbewegung* (Catholic Workers’ Movement). Among its members, most of whom were executed following the assassination attempt on Hitler of 20 July 1944, was Eberhard Welty. Siemer had consulted his friend and fellow Dominican because Welty, with his established record in the field of social ethics, was in a position to develop a model for the system of government and society which, as we shall see, served after the war as the programmatic basis for one of the Christian democratic parties (the CDU).

Autumn 1942 brought the memorable encounter between Siemer, still working for the resistance in Cologne, and Carl Goerdeler. This meeting sealed Siemer’s involvement in the conspiracy against Hitler. As head of the

resistance in Kreisau, Goerdeler was directly involved in the plot to topple the regime, and, following a successful assassination attempt, was to become Chancellor. Siemer produced for Goerdeler a legal blueprint on the future relationship between Church and state. However, the assassination attempt failed, and Siemer fled to avoid arrest. He remained in hiding with friends in his native Oldenburg until the end of the war. The police 'wanted' poster read: 'Wanted: the Provincial of the Dominican Order, Josef Siemer, known as Pater Laurentius, who was involved in leading the preparations for the attack on the Führer of July 20, 1944. He fled immediately before arrest'.

After the British liberation, Siemer set up his headquarters in the priory at Walberberg. 'Under Laurentius Siemer, Walberberg has become a bastion of all those aims and aspirations directed at reawakening Christian social teaching', commented Leo Schwering, the driving force of the fledgling Cologne CDU, which, in July 1945, brought out its first manifesto – *Kölner Leitsätze* (Cologne Principles). But the actual intellectual head of these founding members of the CDU, recruited primarily from the ranks of resistance survivors, was Eberhard Welty.

It was also Welty who had developed the concept of a Christian socialism that would be sharply distinguished from Marxism, and which is mentioned in the preamble to the Cologne Principles. During the negotiations, Siemer insisted on including the adjectives 'Christian Socialist' in the name of the party. His request was turned down. Heated disputes with Schwering ensued, and from then on Siemer withdrew from party politics. He did still try to correct the CDU's manifesto, as later changed by Konrad Adenauer. When Siemer visited Adenauer in Rhöndorf, the latter 'gratefully accepted almost all my criticisms, but showed little willingness to carry out my proposed amendment to the section on the CDU's social demands,' reported Siemer. As a co-founder and friend of the CDU he was much respected in the party, but he never became a member.

The journal *Die Neue Ordnung* (The New Order) was founded in 1946, with Siemer as editor and Welty as chief writer, though Siemer contributed only rarely. An article on 'The German People and Militarism', in which he mounted a fierce attack on Prussian militarism, caused great uproar and brought Siemer widespread criticism, mainly because of the dubious thesis that 'militarism was almost inherent to the Prussian state, because it ran in the blood of the Prussian people.'

In 1946 Siemer seemed to be past his peak. He kept a low profile in the CDU, following the failure of his proposals. Within the Dominican Order he

was resented for his 14 years of strict rule. He was replaced as provincial, but new tasks presented themselves for him – primarily of an apostolic nature. In 1947 he was elected chairman of the West German Union of Superiors. In 1949 he co-founded and became secretary general of the Katholische Deutsche Akademikerschaft (Catholic German Academic Society), and held this office until 1951.

The respect and, indeed, popularity that he commanded in Germany were due largely to his numerous radio talks and television appearances. He was effortlessly at home in this new medium. He published a number of his addresses under the title *So sind wir Menschen* (This Is how We Are). Former Chancellor Heinrich Brüning said that ‘they express such deep thoughts in such simple words that they will make all good people think, and are bound to give them new and steadfast support’.

Siemer spent his last years at St Andreas Convent, which, under the ‘White Cardinal’ (as he was respectfully called), became a spiritual centre in Cologne. President Theodor Heuss awarded him the highest German honour, the Bundesverdienstkreuz (Cross of Merit). On 21 October 1956, Siemer died of a heart condition.

EBERHARD WELTY (1902–1965)

Welty came from a modest background. His father was a master tailor in Anholt, Westphalia. Welty was born there on 15 September 1902, the eldest of 11 children. In 1922 he joined the Dominican Order, studying at the Dominican studium in Düsseldorf, where, after qualifying as lector in 1930, and following the studium’s move to Walberberg, he would lecture on ethics and moral theology. In addition to lecturing, he studied economics and sociology at the University of Cologne, obtaining a doctorate in political science there in 1935. At Cologne, his thinking was influenced by the important sociologist Leopold von Wiese (who specialised in theories of relation), the economist Christian Eckhart, and, above all, Theodor Brauer, a Catholic social ethics specialist, who had close relations with the Christian trade unions. A major factor in Welty’s engagement with social philosophy was Albertus Magnus, whose ‘extensive and compelling interest in social questions’ aroused his admiration, and to whom he devoted his doctoral dissertation.

Welty’s deductive social philosophy and social ethics are based on a metaphysics of sociality which owes much to Thomas Aquinas’ thinking on wholeness and order, while also being strongly influenced by Thomist views of natural law. His dissertation (1935) was on the ontological determination

of 'community and individual', and the natural means of classifying them. This was his first substantial piece, and it is much respected. In it, the characteristic outlines of his life's work begin to emerge – the constant struggle to establish the proper connection between communal identity and personal independence.

For Welty, the community is ordered in a dual fashion: the whole of the community is ordered in accordance with its goal, while the different parts of the community are ordered in relation to each other. The common good is the essential goal of the community, which is seen as a 'living whole' and an 'organism'. In this organism the whole lives from the parts, and the parts from the whole. There is a mutual process of holding in place and being held in place. The community-organism's constitution reads: 'the welfare and the needs of the whole are fundamental. The place and the activity of the individual parts are determined by the whole. All will and all action is related to the whole. Within a community, people are not mere pieces or customers, but limbs and organs. They are not engaged in transactions, but perform functions, that is, they fulfil communal tasks in dedication to the whole – contributing to the whole on the basis of their understanding of the whole.'

Working out the natural ontological and teleological determination of the human person and community as communal beings allows Welty to draw conclusions about the obligations of individuals in their relation with the community, and the mutual rights and duties of the community and the individual are established in general terms. From this Welty develops an ideal social order: a community structured in tiers, whose unified character is guaranteed above all by the state as the highest and most encompassing form of community.

His reflections on the 'vocational order' (following *Quadragesimo Anno*, in 1931) make clear, though, that thinking in terms of wholeness does not have to lead to a collectivist conception of society, and that the unifying function of the state is not to be confused with the 'corporative' state or with the *Führerstaat*, both of which are totalitarian in nature. In Welty's model of community, structured 'from the bottom up', there is a guiding principle of subsidiarity and self-government, that is, communities can, in line with natural law, pursue their own goals. 'It should be governed and run in such a way that the lowest community is compromised as little as possible in its activities and decision-making ability – although this community is joined to the rest, it should perform its functions freely, so that it has the broadest

possible opportunity to find ways of integrating its actions and making them productive for the greater whole.'

Welty distinguishes his system from two other lines of thinking. Against Othmar Spann, whose mystical universalism admits the reality of the individual only as a component part, Welty emphasises the self-possession of the spirit in its determinate existence, the 'substantial reality of spirit'. But both Spann and Welty provide a critique of 'solidarism' (as propounded by Heinrich Pesch sj), which Welty accuses of 'unduly over-emphasising the individual'. It is methodologically legitimate, says Welty, to begin with the individual person, so long as this does not weaken the connection between individual freedom and an overall goal. But by using the community to counteract the individual's need to 'complete' himself, Welty argues, solidarism reduces the community's function to one of mere utility. Most advocates of solidarism pointed to the freedom of the individual with a vehemence that Welty found 'wearisome and almost oppressive'. But he was concerned to formulate a synthesis between the one-sidedness of universalism and solidarism, in order to express the mutual relationship between community and individual (the 'communal individual').

In response to Welty, Gustav Gundlach sj sought to defend solidarism as a 'timely concretisation of that most universal of social-metaphysical norms' which, Gundlach argued, Welty too had used to express nothing more than an aspect of the Scholastic legacy. For the rest, Gundlach did not, 'under present circumstances' (1936!), find it wearisome or oppressive to put the emphasis on freedom. In *Was nun?* (What Now?) in 1945, his first work after the war, Welty appears in some respects to have adopted this emphasis, though he has converted neither to solidarism nor, therefore, to the Jesuit personalist school:

so harshly have we been deprived of the good of freedom that its value has become clearer to us than before. Freedom does not, of course, mean totally relinquishing the ties that bind us. But we do not only want to recall those deep and far-reaching ties – we want above all to emphasise once more that freedom is a gift of nature given to humans, that it is the only just form, and the only just expression, of human action. Our nature is constituted by freedom; what defines us as people is our ability to act freely, to decide freely for ourselves and to integrate freely with others. This also applies completely to our attitudes towards the community, and within the whole of communal life.

During the Third Reich, Welty was more anxious than his mentor, Siemer, and cautiously kept a low profile, limiting his publications to politically neutral subjects: apart from *Gemeinschaft und Einzelmensch* (Community and Individual) only a few journal articles appeared. He devoted himself to further studies, worked on the *Deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe* and lectured on ethics and moral theology in Walberberg, where he was entrusted with the offices of Studentenmagister (Master of Students) from 1933 to 1937, Prior (1937–1939) and Regent of Studies (1937–1954). At the outbreak of war, the priory at Walberberg was converted into a military hospital, and later taken charge of by the Gestapo. Some priests, including Welty, were allowed to stay on at Walberberg as nursing staff and pastoral workers.

Via Siemer, his provincial, Welty entered the Cologne resistance movement in 1941. Siemer, who was not himself trained in social ethics and was out of his depth in theoretical matters, gave his confrere the task of working out principles for a new social order and system of government. Meetings took place in private residences, and necessarily took on a conspiratorial air. Documents were discussed which Welty, too, had been involved in drawing up. Following the attack on Hitler, Welty was saved from being arrested as a conspirator by having only once attended a meeting in Cologne (presumably in June 1944) and going unobserved. Such caution was certainly called for, since, in Walberberg, Welty was living under the same roof as the Gestapo, which had taken charge of the military hospital there.

Welty was able to keep his work on a 'Christian system of living' and 'the new order in the German lands' safe. Immediately after the war they were a central point of discussion in the deliberations for the Cologne Principles. During these deliberations, 'Christian Socialism' was spoken of for the first time within the nascent Rhineland CDU. The papers appeared in a shortened outline of principles and objectives in 1945, printed as a manuscript with the title *Was nun? Grundsätze und Hinweise zur Neuordnung im deutschen Lebensraum* (What Now? Principles and Remarks for the Establishment of a New Order in the German Lands), though it had not been approved by the British military authorities, who issued Welty with a warning. The papers then appeared in extended book form in 1946, with the title *Entscheidung in die Zukunft* (Deciding for the Future).

Both publications had considerable influence on the young party's theoretical objectives until the British zone CDU's 'Ahlen Economic Programme' of March 1947. The Cologne Principles of July 1945 were the result of discussions held by founders of the CDU in the priory at Walberberg, an obvious



venue for these meetings because it had survived the war unscathed. In the verdict of Leo Schwering, Welty deserves to be seen as the 'heart and soul of the negotiations': 'the mixture of his scholarly correctness and his priest's regard for the socially disadvantaged commanded respect and recognition.'

Siemer's proposed name for the party – Christian Socialist Union – was rejected by most of the founders, but not the idea Welty suggested, which, under the name 'Christian socialism' would assert itself in the CDU for some years to come. The confusing term 'Christian socialism', which Welty also defended vehemently in some articles for the journal *Die Neue Ordnung* (founded by him and others in 1946), caused a heated controversy. The term was in no way original, having been used many times and in various ways since the nineteenth century. Welty in no way wanted to adopt the Marxist view of socialism, or reconcile this with Christianity. His Christian 'socialism' was fiercely anti-Marxist, and was meant solely as an attractive label to indicate its Thomist social teaching.

The attempt, however, to introduce a new concept of socialism to increase the attractiveness of Catholic social teaching and bring workers nearer to the Church and to the new party failed. It ran aground because of opposition within the Church and within the party, and, above all, because 'socialism' had long been a politically loaded term. Nevertheless, in time, Welty's influence on social thinking inside the Church grew, though in the political sphere his influence on the objectives of the CDU receded, and was limited mainly to the 'committees for social affairs' – that is, to the workers' wing of the CDU. This meant that Welty's influence on the socio-political structuring of the Federal Republic, and on the development of state and society in it, was reduced. In the sphere of economic policy, though, the 'neo-liberals' associated with Ludwig Erhard were gaining prominence. With his concept of the 'social market economy', Erhard could demonstrate considerable success (the 'economic miracle').

Welty's concept of Catholic social teaching suffered the same fate as the 'Ahlen Programme' (1947), which adopted Welty's central terms, in that it was politically unrealisable. Both have a basic tenor of anti-Marxism and anti-capitalism, but do not specify any 'third way'. Both erect postulates (such as the meeting of need as an economic goal, organisation along comradesly lines, the distribution of power, co-determination, semi-socialisation, state control of the economy) without offering guidance for political action. The concepts of organism, common good and order were hardly suited, in the abstract, infinitely interpretable, form in which they were presented, to

overcoming the problems faced by post-war Germany, and served mainly as general points of basic orientation amid the enormous material and spiritual strictures that difficult situation imposed. And in those areas where they took on more concrete form – such as in plans for semi-socialisation – they proved to be very dependent on the particular time at which they emerged, and in need of revision.

Welty's conception of a post-war 'Christian social order' put a strong emphasis on the rights and dignity of the person, especially the right to life, the claim to freedom, and the principle of a just state in which possessions are regulated in accordance with their connection to the common good. Diverging from Thomas Aquinas (and also from Arthur F. Utz), and allying himself instead with the neo-Scholasticism of *Rerum Novarum*, Welty regarded the right to private property as an aspect of natural law, but sometimes interpreted the connection between possessions and society in such a radical way that property appeared able to be surrendered to the state. In later work, pre-eminently in his *Sozialkatechismus* (Social Catechism), he found occasion to correct this impression, since the system of property he basically favoured had middle-class tendencies, was structured by market economics and gave limited say to the workers. But he did demonstrate, particularly in his early work, a certain vagueness in thinking about ways in which demands made by the common good were to be realised in concrete terms, and a tendency to neglect institutional structures. General principles were often applied directly to real situations, with insufficient attention paid to empirical facts. Utz criticised Welty for this. He did not always respect his own basic demand that the 'sharp and meticulous observation of concrete reality from all sides' should be an 'absolute prerequisite for Thomist thought'.

But Welty's teaching on socio-ethical principles remains notable today, and is impressive because of its logical, systematic structure and its clarity of style. His chief work, the unfinished *Sozialkatechismus*, has made a fundamental contribution to the understanding and dissemination of Catholic social teaching in Germany. Its three volumes (1951–1958 – the incomplete manuscript of the fourth volume is in his unpublished work), with their didactically adroit question-and-answer structure, have been through four editions and were translated into six languages, including Japanese.

After the war, the priory in Walberberg served as a venue for meetings of Church groups as well as political and trade union groups concerned with the foundations of the new constitution and the new social order. Welty organised an adult education project – probably the first of its kind in West

Germany after 1945 – which offered courses in social ethics. The most notable aspects of this Walberberg Institute (in its capacity as ‘adult education centre’) were its ecumenical openness and its non-partisan ethos, which made it possible to disseminate basic tenets of Christian social teaching to a wide audience, especially workers’ groups and trade unions.

At this time Welty was in close cooperation with Oswald von Nell-Breuning SJ and Arthur F. Utz OP, to whom he gave all his manuscripts prior to publication so that they could offer their criticisms. In 1951, in cooperation with Christian politicians and business leaders, Welty founded the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences. Through research, publications and events such as the ‘conversations for days of prayer and repentance’, which take place annually to this day, the Institute was intended to contribute to the ‘new formation of the social and economic order’, and ‘above all to help ensure that the younger generation is brought up in the spirit of the Western democratic social and economic order, and mindful of its goals’.

As well as being home to the activities of both Walberberg institutes, Walberberg was also the hub of an extensive programme of missionary preaching, coordinated by Welty. Concentrating on the industrial cities of the Ruhr region, this was intended primarily to spread Catholic social teaching. One of the prime movers of the ‘preaching weeks’ was Edgar Nawroth.

The effect on the public of Welty and his fellow brethren was at times so considerable that some contemporaries spoke euphemistically of a ‘Walberberg Movement’. The main supporters of this movement were the Catholic workers’ groups, but Welty also cultivated links with Catholic employers, and was a member of their discussion circle in Cologne. Although he was especially close to the CDU’s committees for social affairs, and belonged to their ‘Königswinter Circle’, his advice was also valued by prominent Social Democrats like Kurt Schumacher, Erich Ollenhauer and Wilhelm Mellies. Welty was an important point of connection between the Church and the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), taking part in the discussions for the ‘Godesberg Programme’ (1959), in which the SPD dissociated itself from Marxism.

A mouthpiece and discussion forum for the work of both Walberberg Institutes was provided by *Die Neue Ordnung. Zeitschrift für Religion, Kultur, Gesellschaft* (The New Order: Journal for Religion, Culture and Society), which Welty ran until his early death. Welty died on 2 June 1965, in Freiburg im Breisgau, in the middle of work on the fourth volume of the *Sozialkatechismus*, which discussed economics. This extremely sensitive man, who suf-

fered from depressive tendencies and had worn himself out with his work, collapsed in the street on the way to talks with his publishers, and died of a heart attack. The 'Walberberg Movement' did not survive him by much, but his life's work continues in the institutions he founded.

His successor as chief editor of *Die Neue Ordnung* was Edgar Nawroth, who had worked closely with Welty and studied in Fribourg under Arthur F. Utz. Utz took over from Welty as head of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences, initially appointing Nawroth as Director, then later Basilius Streithofen, because he himself only sporadically made the journey from Fribourg to Walberberg.

ARTHUR F. UTZ (1908–2001)

When people throughout the German-speaking world, and far beyond it, hear the name of Arthur F. Utz, they think of how he developed, deepened and updated Thomist Catholic social ethics. Coming from a simple family background, Utz was born on 15 April 1908, in Basle, and was a citizen of that city. Although it enjoyed a reputation as a cosmopolitan centre with a humanist tradition, during Utz's childhood Basle was engaged in a delayed *Kulturkampf*, representing a considerable challenge for the young Catholic. The University of Basle would later award him an honorary doctorate.

Stimulated by his reading of Thomas Aquinas and Albertus Magnus, Utz joined the Dominican Order in 1928, studying first in Walberberg, then in Swiss Fribourg, where he took his doctorate in 1937, under the noted Spanish moral theologian Santiago Ramirez OP. The subject of his dissertation, which he wrote in Latin, was the inner relation of the moral virtues in Thomas Aquinas. In the same year, the Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith appointed Utz Professor of Moral Theology at the Regional Seminary of Fochow in China. At this time the seminary was intended for conversion into a theological faculty, from which a Catholic university could then develop. But political circumstances made it impossible for Utz to take on this task. He therefore went back to the Dominican University at Walberberg, lecturing in philosophy, and studying economics at the same time.

After the expropriation of the priory by the Gestapo, which prohibited Utz from staying there, he spent the war as parish rector in a small village in the Bergish region of the archdiocese of Cologne. His academic reputation was to be founded on his Aquinas commentaries, which were a completely new departure, and some of which were produced at this time. An undoubted classic is volume 18 of the *Deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe*, on 'Law and Justice'

(1953), which appeared in a revised and extended version in 1987.

At the end of 1945, Utz was appointed to the newly founded chair in Ethics and Social Philosophy at the philosophy faculty of the University of Fribourg. Commissioned by Staatsrat Joseph Piller,<sup>1</sup> he founded the International Institute for Social Sciences and Politics, of which he was the head until 1978 when he became emeritus. In his capacity as head of the Institute, Utz was, from 1949, editor of the journal *Politeia*, which quickly became a forum for international discussion on questions of social ethics, although it was discontinued in 1953 (the five yearbooks were later reprinted). Many of Utz's own works and most of the doctoral dissertations he supervised appeared in the *Sammlung-Politeia* (*Politeia* Collection), which he edited.

The founding principle and aim of the Institute was the application of Catholic social teaching to current political and social problems. For Piller, this meant rejuvenating the Union de Fribourg, an association of Catholic social scientists and politicians who had worked in Fribourg in the nineteenth century on the preparation of *Rerum Novarum*. Under the directorship of a social philosopher, the Institute was to facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation between lawyers, economists and political scientists. Numerous publications and conferences testify to the Institute's extensive activities. Following retirement, Utz continued the Institute's work from outside the university and, in accordance with its founding principle, gave it the name Union de Fribourg – International Institute for Social and Political Science.

From 1945 Utz worked closely with the International Association for Social Philosophy and the Philosophy of Law. As president he made significant contributions to the worldwide stature of this association, and for this reason was appointed its honorary president in 1979. In 1976, Utz became president of the International Humanum Foundation, in Lugano, and in this capacity also ran the Institute Scientia Humana in Bonn, which was connected to the foundation. The aim of this foundation is to fulfil the mission of *Gaudium et Spes*. This means promoting dialogue between the Church and the outside world, and creating an effective forum for this dialogue to take place. Utz was for many years Welty's successor as Chairman of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences. Particularly important to him in the 1990s was the Papal Academy of Social Sciences, which he was involved in founding, and which made him one of its first members.

The enormous amount of work he undertook, and with great discipline, is indicated not only by the offices he held. In a short time the scholarly Dominican had achieved a global reputation as a profound social philosopher

in the venerable tradition of Aristotle and Aquinas. Utz was, moreover, much sought after as an adviser and expert on ecclesiastical, political and social committees. His books, articles and collections on social and business ethics, on political philosophy and the philosophy of law, have been translated into many languages and fill a small library. They have inspired a 'school', whose members number some younger representatives of Christian social teaching – primarily in Germany, Austria, Spain and Switzerland.

Utz became famous, above all, because of his monumental collections of documents on Catholic social teaching.<sup>2</sup> But he did not see himself just as a commentator on, or interpreter of, the social encyclicals whose 'value core' he wanted to disclose and interpret. Time and again he addressed current economic, political und social problems, to remind people of the principles of Christian responsibility in understanding the world order.

Thanks to his immense reading, he had an almost unique overview of publications on widely differing areas of social ethics. His interest in new work fed into a bibliographical project, whose extensive reviews section he produced for the most part single-handedly. The 11-volume *Bibliographie der Sozialethik* (Bibliography of Social Ethics), published from 1960 to 1980, had a multi-language format and enjoyed an international readership.

Utz had particular influence in Spain. The convention on 'The Christian Conception of Pluralist Democracy', which he organised in Madrid in 1976, was seen by commentators as supporting Spain's early steps towards parliamentary democracy. Organising a number of conventions meant he could enable dialogue between academic theory and concrete practice. In the Holy Year of 1950 his Fribourg Institute was commissioned by the Holy See to organise a convention on the social order, during which Pius XII gave his famous address on co-determination. In 1958 the ideas expressed at a major conference on the middle class in Madrid directly affected the formulation of policy on the middle classes in Germany.

From the end of the 1970s, Utz organised regular symposia for the International Humanum Foundation, addressing current social, political or economic questions. The presentations and discussions were published, and topics included: 'The Open Society and its Ideologies' (1986), 'Crisis of the Unions – Crisis of Free Collective Bargaining' (1987), 'Might and Morality of the Media' (1989), 'Catholic Social Teaching and The Economic Order' (1991), 'Problems of Migration' (1994), 'Unemployment and the Economic Order' (1998) and 'Families between Risks and Opportunities' (2001).

Above all, Utz rendered outstanding service to the legitimisation of Catho-

lic social teaching via natural law, since it cannot be based on the foundations of biblical revelation alone. Furthermore, in the debates on human rights, for example, protecting the right to life of the born and also the unborn, it became clear that a merely pragmatic and positivistic view of rights can lead to serious acts of inhumanity. Recalling the tenets of classical Catholic teaching on natural law (looking not to neo-Scholasticism, but back to Thomas Aquinas) was a matter of great importance to Utz, since, as he saw it, it enabled a pluralistic society to achieve successful dialogue and consensus on core values. Without this spiritual basis, it seemed to him, a long-term effective system of understanding and implementing the common good would be impossible.

Utz's name is associated with the systematic grounding of social teaching through methods and categories derived from social philosophy and social ethics. These methods and categories have implications for (creation) theology and aim at a properly modern, consensus-based synthesis of social philosophy and social theology. His system of social ethics builds on theoretical knowledge of reality, and his arguments are based on natural law. At the centre of this system there is the common good, which results from the nature of the person as a social being. Utz shows that a dynamic system of thinking, based on natural law, can still make a significant contribution in an apparently 'post-metaphysical' age, and can be a force in intellectual discourse. In current discussions of ethical principles there is an increasing return to a mode of thinking rooted in natural law, which picks up on both ecological challenges and on problems associated with the validity, and universalisability, of human rights. We can therefore assume that, in the face of threatening worldwide catastrophe, Utz's integral philosophy, with its emphasis on the common good, could again be popular.

Utz demonstrated how important and current Thomist thinking is in discussions within and between disciplines, based, as it is, on rational ethical foundations and addressing itself to the 'secular' realm, as well as to facilitating dialogue between theory and practice. To understand Utz properly, we need to clarify the ideological assumptions of his thought and their roots in creation theology, revealing the epistemological framework within which his social ethics operates, and which provides insights into its metaphysical foundations. This is a summary of only some features of his system.

1. The autonomy of social ethics from the ethics of individuality. Here we see Utz's proximity to the ideas of Johannes Messner, and his distance from those of Victor Cathrein. The social is determined via a real defini-

tion as an object of social ethics. The concept of relation takes on a special significance – it not only signifies verifiable interaction between people, but provides a connection between individuals, making them into a real and effective unit of the common good.

2. A consistently systematic view of social ethics, differing in its basic idea (taking the common good of all people as a starting point) from Messner and others who opt for a personalist/phenomenological starting point and only as a result of that proceed to treat the common good.
3. An epistemological foundation based on classical ontology, and differing in its doctrines of abstraction and analogy primarily from Kantian epistemology.
4. The fundamental elements of general ethics are: inner experience as a method of ethics, proceeding from awareness of moral responsibility; integral abstraction in the legitimation of norms; analogous application of norms; developing and stating arguments more precisely *vis-à-vis* Thomas Aquinas; both proximity to and distance from discourse ethics; refutation of the charge of 'essentialism' in the debate with Franz Böckle.
5. Social ethics based on natural law assumes a dynamic concept of nature and avoids the 'naturalistic fallacy', which deduces from an empirical 'is' an ethical 'ought'. A major topic is the social nature of the person as a foundation of the common good.
6. The significance of a law-based logic of norms. Here the confrontation of pre-positive ideas of natural law and formal rights-positivism (Hans Kelsen) continues to generate interest.
7. The central concept of a final ethical goal in the common good, into which all aspects of individual well-being are to be integrated without sacrificing personal freedom. In giving concrete realisation to the analogous common good, respect for the principle of subsidiarity and the recognition of legitimate individual interest are fundamental.

In social ethics Arthur F. Utz was not, unlike some representatives of his discipline, a capricious or vacillating figure, trying to make up for deficient competence through prophetic gestures and public attention-seeking. Dilettante readers should be warned that his work offers nothing in the way of entertainment. Even his use of language, with its careful attention to the conceptual gravitas of traditional terminology, saved Utz's philosophy and theology from degenerating into confusion, an affliction that today often plagues discussions in social ethics.

In the century in which Utz lived, and which he outlived, the ideolog-



ical arena was characterised by constant coming and going. His happily early birth gave him the chance to take a serenely objective view of the madness engendered by the *Zeitgeist* – precisely because he had personal experience of it. Like the other ‘Walberberger’, he was able to resist rather than submit to the ideological errors of his age, and he owed this ability mainly to the sustenance he drew from the thought of Thomas Aquinas.

For a philosopher of natural law in this mould, the totalitarian ideologies and utopias of the twentieth century, together with the relativism of democratic pluralism, could represent no temptation. It is characteristic of his system of social ethics that its universalism, grounded in creation theology and natural law, was not given a fundamentalist or moralising slant, and this consequently appealed to non-Christians too.

Utz had some uncomfortable questions for the ‘open society’. To what and to whom is it open, and is it perhaps open to its own downfall? Where is integral development to lead? Searching for ways to give pluralism an underpinning that would allow consensus, he did not just ask questions, of course, but formulated obligations that he thought people needed to face. But Utz did not seem to fit in with the times, and this meant he did everything required to be ignored by the mass media, in their fascination with sensationalism, and to be deprived of a large audience.

He nevertheless succeeded, in a quiet and inconspicuous way, in achieving a public significance. This is especially the case where his mediation of apparently irreconcilable antitheses and his overcoming of ideological one-sidedness is concerned. In his dialogue with the spheres of academia, culture and politics, Utz manifests a cautious, one might even say humble, attempt to come close to what is unachievable, but at the same time an antipathy towards merely hypothetical thought which rides roughshod over reality. In this, the ‘Nestor’ of Catholic social ethics proved himself to be one of its most significant sources of renewal: as a scholar and teacher who did not follow whichever line happened to be prevalent, but rather sought to inform people about what he saw as the true hierarchy of values.

In social ethics, the extent of someone’s competence is revealed particularly by the rare ability to connect diverse fields and methods: the study of historical sources, empirical research on social matters, and the systematic ordering of values. Utz’s work is an exemplary instance of this very ‘catholic’ (that is, wide-ranging) spectrum of competence. He was, however, exactly the opposite of the academic freak, and his importance has not been

confined to the scholarly world.

Utz brought together awareness of new developments with allegiance to principles; he thought theology and philosophy could be united, and he combined an abstract philosophy of value with concrete, empirical facts. 'Is' and 'Ought', nature and culture, individual and society, theory and practice, life and intellect, tradition and progress, did not represent antitheses for him, but were taken up and reconciled in his integral perspective.

Utz's influence extended far beyond the Walberberg Circle, which gave him his starting point and to which, despite some tensions, he remained connected throughout his life. He was the recipient of many international honours, both ecclesiastical and secular. For his services to the Federal Republic of Germany (he has written several reports for the government), he was awarded the *Grosses Bundesverdienstkreuz* in the early 1970s. Into his old age Utz was busy completing his main work, the five-volume *Sozialethik* (the last volume, on political ethics, appeared in 2000). This work represents the summation of his thought on social ethics. Utz created an integral social philosophy of right which is unique in philosophy today and will no doubt remain so for some time. His intellectual power elicited high praise even from his opponents.

After finishing his main work, Utz began working on a book on the subject of 'luck'. Unfortunately, he was unable to finish it. He died on 18 October 2001, in Fribourg, aged 93. His prodigious life's work is an honour to the Order to which he belonged, but also represents an obligation it must live up to.

EDGAR NAWROTH (b. 1912)

Before the war, Utz was a lecturer in Walberberg, and during the war had already made a name for himself with his commentaries on Thomas Aquinas. Even when he was called to Fribourg, he continued to work on the *Deutsche Thomas-Ausgabe*. His professorial commitments kept him in Fribourg, but at the same time he cooperated with the various institutions in Walberberg, especially the journal *Die Neue Ordnung*. In this he was always eager to maintain his independence – even in his relations with Welty, who respected his authority.

After Welty's death, he succeeded him as head of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences, held discussions in Walberberg with politicians and business leaders, and was a valued political adviser to the CDU and the government it was leading. For a short time he appointed Edgar Nawroth

OP, his former student whose doctorate he had supervised, as Director of the Institute.

We can give a quick summary of Nawroth's life: he was born on 2 November 1912 in Görlitz, Schlesien. In the disastrous year of 1933, when the Nazis came to power, he entered the Dominican Order and studied at the studium in Walberberg. In 1939 he was ordained a priest. During the Second World War he served as a medical orderly and was captured. After 1945, Nawroth did missionary work in Düsseldorf and edited the devotional Dominican journal *Gottesfreund* (Friend of God). At this time he was forming close ties with Eberhard Welty.

Nawroth followed in the footsteps of his teacher Welty, and was to continue the Dominican tradition of social ethics. To this end, he studied social philosophy in Fribourg between 1953 and 1959, with minors in economics, medieval philosophy and German literature. His doctoral dissertation in philosophy, supervised by Arthur F. Utz, was of the quality of the Habilitation,<sup>3</sup> and treated the topic of Neo-Liberal Social and Economic Philosophy (1961). It caused a great sensation in liberal academic circles. But we are still waiting today for a conclusive 'neo-liberal' answer to the challenge issued by classical economic philosophy: how can economic freedom be both legitimated and limited?

Nawroth's activity as a university teacher began in Walberberg in 1960. Parallel to this, in 1963 he took over from Joseph Höffner (later Cardinal Archbishop of Cologne) at the theology faculty in Trier, and continued to teach there until 1985. In Walberberg and Trier he acquainted several generations of theology students with the methods and questions of social ethics, and the way problems can be solved. His lecturing style was refreshingly sober. He gave the impression of being an aristocratic Dominican of the old school – a committed Thomist and a passionate ascetic, he combined 'Teutonic' discipline and sobriety with a hint of irony and sarcasm.

Edgar Nawroth made a name for himself as editor-in-chief of the journal *Die Neue Ordnung*, which, taking over from Welty, he edited from 1965 to 1984. His publications include numerous essays, contributions and books. The talks that he gave all over Germany during these years would be difficult to number. His intellectual productivity continues unabated today.

He does not devote himself, however, only to abstract and metaphysical principles of social philosophy of the sort that are accessible to only a few experts. Rather, he has always been interested in practical questions and current challenges in the social, economic and political spheres. And it would

not be an exaggeration to say that Edgar Nawroth has made a major contribution to the socio-political formation of the market economy, and to the way it has understood its significance, though his effect on practical political matters is hard to judge. The intellectual foundations of the economic order, and changing social questions – particularly the working and living conditions of employees – remain of central interest to him today.

From the 1960s onwards he developed a reputation as a specialist in social policy, particularly with regard to questions of co-determination and social partnership, capital formation and social security. His competence in the field was proven mainly by the way he dealt with questions of land law policy and property law. He was recognised for his work in this field by the award of the Heinrich Plett Prize in 1987. His straightforwardness and integrity in matters of social ethics are beyond doubt. On the one hand, he was an adviser to the Catholic Workers' Movement, and gave welcome advice to the trade unions, though he also criticised them severely on occasion. On the other, he also advised business leaders, conducting productive dialogue with them at, for example, the Walberberg System Symposium, which became something of an institution. Over time he was able to advise governments, ministers, parties, associations and bishops of widely varying complexions, precisely because he remained independent of their respective positions and interests. In this way he acquired a growing reputation as a balanced and impartial authority who could be consulted by many different people.

HEINRICH BASILIUS STREITHOFEN (b. 1925)

Heinrich Basilius Streithofen *OP* took over the management of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences from Nawroth in 1967. Born on 25 December 1925 in Hüls (near Krefeld in the Niederrhein region) into a middle-class family, he lost his father at an early age. Among his relatives were newspaper publishers and politicians, who may have awakened his strong interest in politics. After an apprenticeship as a textile merchant, he served in a parachute regiment during the Second World War. Subsequently he attended a gymnasium and, after completing his Abitur, joined the Dominicans. He studied in Walberberg and quickly became one of Welty's colleagues. From his base at the priory in Düsseldorf he worked in pastoral care (as confessor and preacher), politics (mainly in the Rhine CDU), journalism (he was a co-founder of the Rhine Catholic Journalists' Group) and trade unions. His commitment to the Christian Trade Union Movement brought him into conflict with Welty, however, who was an advocate of the ideologically neutral

general trade unions (the Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund).

In 1962 Streithofen was transferred to Fribourg and began doctoral work under the supervision of Utz, treating both social ethics and economics. The title of his 1967 dissertation was *Wertmassstäbe der Gewerkschaftspolitik* (Standards of Value in Trade Union Policy). During his time studying in Fribourg, Streithofen was also active in politics and journalism. In 1967, Utz appointed his colleague, an efficient organiser with influential connections in politics, journalism and business, as Director of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences. Streithofen continued Utz's work in a rather more practical fashion. He mainly worked as a journalist, organiser of symposia and political adviser to the CDU. Through his friendship with Bruno Heck, the government minister and general secretary of the CDU, he also achieved influence in the 1970s on the CDU's political agenda. He was particularly active on Helmut Kohl's behalf, promoting the latter's rise to the Chancellorship. Through his presence and effectiveness in the media, 'Pater Basilius', who was regarded as somewhat conservative, both ecclesiastically and politically, achieved the reputation of being an 'activist Father'.

In 1983 Streithofen took over as editor of *Die Neue Ordnung*, thereby preventing its demise. The Dominican Province of Teutonia had distanced itself from the journal for financial – and no doubt ideological – reasons. Since then, the journal has been published by the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences. Since 1992 it has been under the editorship of Wolfgang Ockenfels OP (born 25 January 1947), who studied in Walberberg under Nawroth and did his doctoral work under Utz – *Gewerkschaften und Staat* (Trade Unions and the State) (1978) – before completing his Habilitation at the University of Augsburg under Anton Rauscher SJ (the title of the piece is *Politischer Glaube?*) (1987). In 1985 Ockenfels was appointed to the newly created professorship in Christian Social Science at the theology faculty in Trier, and there he continues the work started by Nawroth. In 1998 he took over the chairmanship of the International Humanum Foundation and the Scientia Humana Institute from Utz. By this time Utz had also stepped down as Director of the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences. He was succeeded by Streithofen, with Ockenfels as deputy.

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The key players in the Walberberg Circle were strong, very different characters from the Dominican Order, who at different times and in different ways made very productive contributions. They have since either died, or (in the

case of Nawroth and Streithofen) reached old age without there being sufficient numbers of suitable students and successors to continue the tradition.

What has remained of the Walberberg Circle are historical reminiscences and some organisations founded by Welty and Utz. The social difficulties of the pre- and post-war periods gave an impetus to the Circle, and it was stimulated by, and oriented towards, the Thomist interpretation of Catholic social teaching. The practical significance of this teaching concerned mainly the early phase of Germany's post-war redevelopment and the formation of its socio-political structures.

Of course, since the 1960s, the financial limits of the welfare state have become clear. The 'social question' (that is, the 'workers question') seemed largely solved – in any case, it was no longer making people fear for their existence. The 'masses' were no longer mobilising themselves in response to it. The working classes were socially secure, integrated into society and politically emancipated. The end of class-based society saw the proletariat become a relic in a museum. The Catholic social movement lost its 'classical' subject, its intellectual inspiration and its character as a movement. It had been killed by its own victory, and was not in a position to provide a timely response to the new questions (such as ecology, peace, the developing world, the world economy), or to make a political and ideological contribution to solving them. The Walberberg Circle was caught up in this development.

Further difficulties were presented by the general tendency of society towards secularisation, individualism and 'changing values', which also caused problems for the Order. There was a lack of young blood, and in the mid-1970s, study at Walberberg had to be suspended. The Walberberg Institute also became increasingly detached from its original socio-ethical agenda, and was completely depoliticised.

Dominican socio-ethical commitment in Germany was also weakened by ideological disputes within the Order at the end of the 1960s. On one side were the representatives of the Thomist social tradition (who formed the Walberberg Circle), and on the other the advocates of the 'new' political and liberation theology. A fierce but unproductive battle developed between them. In 1984 the Walberberg Institute for Social Sciences had to leave Walberberg as a result of fighting within the province of Teutonia. It settled in Bonn, where the editorial offices of *Die Neue Ordnung* are also to be found. The journal sometimes reminds us of the Walberberg golden age, aiming to continue that tradition. The story is not yet finished.

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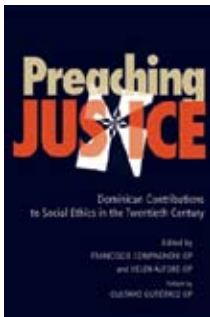
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## Notes

1. A Staatsrat is a member of the Swiss cantonal government.

2. A. F. Utz, Josef F. Groner OP, *Die Soziale Summe Pius' XII* (The Social Summa of Pius XII), 3 volumes, 1954–1961; A. F. Utz, Brigitta Gräfin von Galen, *Die katholische Sozialdoktrin in ihrer geschichtlichen Entfaltung* (The Historical Development of Catholic Social Doctrine), 4 volumes, 1976.

3. The Habilitation is a post-doctoral lecturing qualification.



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