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the stronger aspect, but with the development of high capitalism, rationalism, its reifying nature, came to dominate.

As Sombart moved to the right, his vitriolic attack on high capitalism and its impersonal, calculating spirit increased. He believed that this system would be replaced by some kind of socialist heroism, at first by French syndicalism, then by Russian Bolshevism, and finally by German National Socialism.

Colin T. Loader

See also Association for Social Policy; Economics; Nationalism; Political Economy; Schmoller, Gustav von; State and Economy

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Sommerfeld, Arnold (1868–1951)

Arnold Sommerfeld belongs to the leading pioneers of quantum theory. He achieved important results in this sphere, but more as the head of a school of theoretical physicists. "What I especially admire about you is the way, at a stamp of your foot, a great number of talented young theorists spring up out of the ground," wrote Albert Einstein to Sommerfeld in 1922.

Sommerfeld, the son of a physician, was born and raised in Königsberg, East Prussia. After passing the *Abitur* (senior matriculation) in 1886, he entered the University of Königsberg to study mathematics; in 1892 he received his doctoral degree there. From 1893 through 1897, he was an assistant at the University of Göttingen, occasionally to Felix Klein (1849–1925), who became his teacher and who qualified him as *Privatdozent* (unsalaried) private lecturer (1895). In 1897, he was appointed full professor for mathematics at the *Bergakademie* (Mining Academy) in Clausthal. Subsequently he was called to Aachen (1900) and Munich (1906) as a professor of theoretical physics.

In 1935, he officially retired but continued his teaching duties from semester to semester, pending the appointment of a successor. The appointment of his most important student, Werner Heisenberg (1901–76), did not materialize, because of Nazi opposition. In 1940, "the worst conceivable

successor," Wilhelm Müller, a follower of so-called "German Physics," was appointed. As a pensioner, Sommerfeld edited his lectures as a series of textbooks, and after the war he took over his old position at the university for several years. He died in Munich in 1951.

Sommerfeld's first scientific successes were achieved by investigations of the hydrodynamics of viscous fluids (1903). As professor for technical mechanics in Aachen, he had gained the attention of the leading contemporary physics professors with papers on electron theory. With the help of Einstein around 1910, he became one of the early supporters of the quantum theory; he had already taught the theory of relativity in his courses. In 1913, he immediately perceived the importance of Niels Bohr's atomic model, which he improved during the next years. On this basis he and his students explained numerous physical phenomena, for instance, the Zeeman and Stark Effects. He created a new style of theoretical spectroscopy, and his book *Atombau und Spektrallinien* (published as *Atomic Structure and Spectral Lines*), 1919, became the bible of atomic physics. During the late 1920s, he used the new quantum mechanics for the description of atomic processes, the behavior of electrons in metals, and solid-state physics in general.

Dieter Hoffmann

See also Einstein, Albert; Heisenberg, Werner; Klein, Felix; Physics; Science and National Socialism; Universities

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Sonderweg (Special Path)

The *Sonderweg* thesis is a term used in German historiography to describe a particular model of historical development in Germany. Proponents of this concept emphasize the peculiarities of German history, such as political institutions, social structures, or mentalities and experience, usually in comparison with other Western countries, to demonstrate the unique course of German history and to show how this led to catastrophe in the twentieth century.

Although the *Sonderweg* thesis has a long history, it has come under disrepute in recent decades and has given rise to considerable scholarly debate. Initially, German historians in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stressed what they considered to be the positive attributes of Germany's unique historical path. They regarded the strong central state and military as essential in preserving German liberty and countering radical democracy, admired its tradition of reform from above rather than revolution, and viewed the course of Ger-

man industrialization and culture as superior to similar developments in France and England.

Following World War II and the defeat of Hitler's Germany, historians revised the theory of Germany's unique development, this time to answer the question why Germany, and not other developed countries, became authoritarian and why Adolf Hitler could have come to power. Germany's development appeared as an aberration from the Western norm, and its uniqueness was now viewed in negative terms. This manifested itself in various forms. Ideology, politics, intellectual and cultural life, as well as social and economic development, were studied in order to discover why Germany was unable to develop a modern, liberal democratic form of government and to explain how this led to the rise of National Socialism.

In particular, scholars stressed Germany's failure to develop secure democratic political institutions, which prevented the emergence of a modern liberal democratic state and facilitated the rise of Nazism. Using France and England as norms, scholars such as Hans-Ulrich Wehler argued that German industrialization was not accompanied by political and social modernization because of the continued existence of pre-industrial power and social institutions during the Empire.

The continued dominance of German political life by "pre-industrial elites" and the lack of responsible government was attributed to the failure of Germany to have a bourgeois revolution. The Revolution of 1848 and the inability of the Frankfurt Parliament to gain political power, therefore, assume great significance in the *Sonderweg* thesis. Rather than seizing power for themselves, German liberals are accused of acquiescing in the monarchy and the rule of conservatives. Missing this opportunity for reform, they were consequently coopted by the forces of reaction.

There have been many critics of this view. Among the most important are Geoff Eley and David Blackbourn. In their controversial work *The Peculiarities of German History*, 1984, they first questioned whether or not there was a "normal" model of development, and to what extent France and England constituted this norm. Second, they raised basic doubts about the supposed failure of the Revolution of 1848. The liberal bourgeoisie may not have gained political power at the national level, Eley and Blackbourn argue, but they did dominate German economic, social, and cultural life, and the embourgeoisement of German society was no less thorough than that in other European countries. Indeed, it may have been more thorough, as comparative studies have shown. During the nineteenth century there was greater aristocratic influence in England and France than in Germany.

Eley and Blackbourn may have exposed some of the weaknesses of the *Sonderweg* thesis, but their interpretations are not universally accepted, and the *Sonderweg* thesis still informs much scholarship. In particular, as Jürgen Kocka has pointed out, although the thesis may not be especially helpful in explaining the rise of Nazism, the peculiarities emphasized by the thesis can still offer valid arguments for the failure of the Weimar Republic and its inability to prevent the rise of Nazism.

John R. Hinde

See also Bourgeoisie; Historikerstreit; History; Industrialization; Kultur; Liberalism; National Identity; National Socialism; Nationalism; Social Imperialism

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Sonnemann, Leopold (1831–1909)

As founder and editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung* (Frankfurter newspaper) and as a Reichstag deputy of the (South) German People's Party (DVP), Leopold Sonnemann was an outstanding democratic publicist and politician. He also ranked among the first bourgeois leaders of the emerging German workers' movement.

Sonnemann was born in Höchberg, near Würzburg, on October 29, 1831. His father, a Jewish cotton weaver, built up a flourishing business in Frankfurt am Main. The Revolution of 1848 proved a decisive event for Sonnemann, as for a whole generation of democrats. Far from being discouraged by its failure, Sonnemann decided to work continuously for a German national state based on the sovereignty of the people. After experiencing some success in the stock market, he founded the *Frankfurter Handelszeitung* (later renamed *Frankfurter Zeitung*) in 1856 to propagate democracy and social reform. Under his editorship, the newspaper gained an excellent reputation for fast and reliable information.

In 1861, worried about the human cost of industrialization, Sonnemann organized a program to promote worker education, which he considered a precondition for political emancipation of the proletariat. He cooperated with socialist leaders Ferdinand Lassalle (1825–64) and August Bebel (1840–1913), but the socialists' insistence on class struggle soon alienated him. Sonnemann nevertheless continued to support social reform.

Although an advocate of national unification, Sonnemann remained critical of the militaristic and authoritarian spirit of German unification in 1871. At the height of national enthusiasm he criticized the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine because it violated the will of the local population. This prompted Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck to denounce