

# German Politics and the Burden of *Kultur*: Mann, Meinecke and the Psychology of the *Vernunftrepublikaner* in Early Weimar Germany

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**I**N AN ESSAY intended for an American audience in 1923, Thomas Mann wrote that "the German citizen, impelled by a hard fate to catch up and to continue to learn, is on the point of recognizing that he decided too hastily and prematurely his idea of education, culture and humanity when he excluded from it the political element."<sup>1</sup> Such a forthright assessment of the "German problem" was characteristic of Mann at his most critical and perceptive. Yet it was hardly typical. Like so many intellectuals of his generation, Mann's development took place within a tradition that posited the idea of *Kultur* as something independent from and superior to rational ends or utilitarian value. For educated Germans the concept of *Kultur* involved an idealization and veneration of culture as the key to personal growth and self-awareness. In direct contrast to the Enlightenment emphasis on reason and the pursuit of practical knowledge, the German tradition stressed the inner cultivation of the individual (*Bildung*) as the highest goal of the educational process.<sup>2</sup>

This "mandarin tradition," as Fritz Ringer has called it, played a crucial role in the development of educated elites in Germany throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> It also had several important consequences for the development of politics and culture—consequences that became especially important after the creation of a unified German state under Otto von Bismarck. On the one hand, the pull of this tradition led many German intellectuals to turn their backs on politics altogether, to leave politics to the politicians and to pursue their own inner development. A related, and equally important, development was the creation of the idea of a *Kulturstaat* [cultural state]. Here again the emphasis was on inner development, but the *Kulturstaat* included as well a specifically political dimension. In essence, educated elites in Germany agreed to support the

monarchical government; in return, the Monarchy "gave unstinting support to education, without demanding immediately practical returns, and without exercising too strict a control over the world of learning and of geist [intellect]."<sup>4</sup>

This tradition characterized the world of German learning and cultural development—as well as the relationship of intellectuals to politics—until World War I. There were, of course, challenges to this world-view prior to the war. Socialism, the rise of mass politics, and the spread of democratic ideals within the nation all questioned the hegemony of the mandarin tradition. It was military defeat, the abdication of the Kaiser, and the formation of a Republic under the Social Democrats, however, that forced this older generation of German intellectuals to reconsider their long-held assumptions and question their beliefs. Their search for answers in this changing world constitutes one of the most interesting features of the intellectual history of twentieth-century Germany.

The present work represents an attempt to examine the mental world of two prominent intellectuals in the early years of the Weimar Republic: the writer Thomas Mann and the historian Friedrich Meinecke. It is not an attempt to provide a complete intellectual biography of these thinkers, nor is it an effort to judge the strength of their respective commitments to the Republic. Rather the aim is to assess, within a particular political context, the emotional and psychological burdens faced by both as they made what was for them an extremely difficult turn toward democracy.

On one level, the choice of Mann and Meinecke is an odd one. There is no evidence to suggest they knew each other. They did not correspond, nor did they review or comment upon each other's work. Nevertheless, a study of their published writings reveals that they were responding to a similar set of problems, and their support for the Republic—as well as their significant qualifications and concerns—suggests important parallels. Several historians have pointed to similarities between Mann and Meinecke, but none has examined the close intellectual and psychological affinities between the two.<sup>5</sup>

Such an examination seems warranted for a number of reasons. Both Mann and Meinecke were among the most perceptive and intelligent observers of their day. Both were conservatives largely sympathetic to the monarchy, and both were educated and cultured members of the bourgeoisie who cultivated an elitist and "aristocratic" ideal within the authoritarian framework of the Wilhelmine state.<sup>6</sup> Despite differences in emphasis, moreover, both thinkers adhered to a German conception of culture that, as George Mosse has written, "centered upon an inward feeling rather than emphasizing those social and economic realities which to many are a prerequisite for orderly progress in the

world."<sup>7</sup> It was in essence an attitude toward life, and in an important sense Meinecke and Mann formed two poles of this cultural world-view that was typical of the German educated elite in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A political historian with a strong interest in the *Kulturstaat*, Meinecke devoted his early career to an examination of the development of the power-state and its role in shaping a national and cultural ideal. An artist and explicitly nonpolitical aesthete, Mann cultivated a studious indifference toward politics in favor of the pursuit of culture through personal artistic achievement.

The crucible of war, and especially the shock of defeat and revolution, prompted both thinkers to reexamine their traditions and to assess their intellectual positions anew. At the same time, the creation of the Weimar Republic forced them to attempt to come to terms with new political realities. That the introduction of a republican government created a "conservative dilemma" is now a commonplace of historical scholarship.<sup>8</sup> Historians have especially stressed the importance of the split between younger "conservative revolutionaries" who rejected the Weimar Republic and an older generation of conservatives who transferred their loyalties to the government.<sup>9</sup> In spite of their support for the Weimar Republic, however, its creation challenged many of the fundamental beliefs and assumptions of this older generation, and scholars have not always appreciated the strong psychological burdens these "elders" faced as they made their way from the familiar world of the nineteenth century into the uncharted terrain of the postwar world. It is here that the writings of articulate conservatives such as Meinecke and Mann provide important insights. Torn between the pressing needs of the moment and the psychological pull of the past, both Meinecke and Mann tried to find their bearings in a new world, and their writings during this time clearly reveal the sharp inner conflict of the old struggling with the new. Taken together, their experiences form a prism through which to view the dilemma of a generation of conservative intellectuals in a world turned upside down.



In a letter to his wife during the last months of the First World War, Friedrich Meinecke wrote that "Conservative Prussia is irretrievably gone."<sup>10</sup> Germany, he realized, was clearly defeated. It now became necessary to throw overboard an "enormous ballast of conservative thought," to resist any attempt at a restoration, and to accept democracy in order "to preserve the Reich and national unity."<sup>11</sup> The alternative, he feared, would be anarchy and the spread of Bolshevism among the masses. A renowned historian and an astute student of the

political scene, Meinecke possessed a keen awareness of political realities. As his letter indicates, he realized at an early date that the loss of the war would necessitate dramatic political changes in Germany, including the introduction of democratic reforms. Yet Meinecke was also "a German nationalist politically and philosophically,"<sup>12</sup> and it was in large measure his own "ballast of conservative thought" that would have to be discarded. Not quite half a century old, the German Reich created by Bismarck now faced the prospect of military defeat and political upheaval, and German intellectuals who had rallied to the cause of the nation found themselves struggling to come to terms with the consequences of defeat. For Meinecke, as for other intellectuals, the acceptance of political realities proved vastly more difficult than the recognition that change was necessary.

The son of a minor state official, Friedrich Meinecke was born in the small Prussian town of Salzwedel in 1862. His father was both conservative and patriotic, and Meinecke's childhood was dominated by the Bismarckian wars of unification and the rapid rise of the new German Reich to the status of a world power.<sup>13</sup> Choosing a career in history, Meinecke studied at the so-called "Prussian school of history" in the University of Berlin, where he absorbed a blend of romanticism and nationalism under the influence of Johann Droysen and Heinrich Treitschke.<sup>14</sup> Following fourteen years in the Prussian State archives, he finally entered the academic world as a professor, first in Strassburg then later in Freiburg and finally Berlin. At the same time, he became an assistant editor, and quickly rose to the post of editor, of the prestigious *Historische Zeitschrift*.

Meinecke's early career was conventional and his development as a historian somewhat slow, but his major breakthrough came in 1908 with the publication of *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*.<sup>15</sup> Into this work, which was immediately recognized as a major contribution to German history, Meinecke poured all of his thinking about the development of the German state up to that moment. The primary aim of *Cosmopolitanism* was, as he expressed it, "to illuminate the true relationship of universal and national ideals in the growth of the modern German idea of the national state."<sup>16</sup> Meinecke outlined the tensions that had existed between the universal and cosmopolitan ideals of the Enlightenment and the national ideal that had steadily grown within German political circles during the nineteenth century. The *Realpolitik* of Bismarckian diplomacy had resulted in the creation of a strong, unified state under the domination of Prussia.<sup>17</sup> The success of Bismarck's policies had, in turn, led to the triumph of nationalism and "political egoism" as the highest ideals of the national state.<sup>18</sup>

On one level, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* clearly revealed Meinecke's nationalistic outlook and his appreciation for the hard-nosed realities of modern world politics. At the same time, the relationship between power politics and cultural development constituted an undercurrent of his work that suggests an important dimension of his thought. Following the lead of fellow historian Leopold von Ranke, Meinecke maintained that the state had a moral obligation to insure the "inner freedom" necessary to allow the development of cultural and spiritual values. "The condition of [the state's] existence," he wrote, "is that it create an avenue of expression for the human spirit, that it articulate this spirit in unique form and reveal it ever anew."<sup>19</sup> In essence, Meinecke argued that political life and cultural development constituted a symbiosis in which the absence of one severely curtailed the possibilities for the full realization of the other. It was not, however, a relationship of equal parts. Cultural life and spiritual values served to legitimate the egoism of the state, but it was the strong, centralized state that created the conditions of order and propriety necessary for a national culture to flourish. Thus, in this fusion of politics and culture, statism emerged as the crucial component. It was this vision of the national ideal that dominated Meinecke's thinking in the years before World War I, and it was this vision that would be severely challenged by the events of the war.

In his memoirs, Meinecke maintained that the "dream" of his generation in the years before the war "was to realize a harmonious union of the heritage of Goethe and Bismarck through which to arrive at a new synthesis of spirit and power."<sup>20</sup> In *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, Meinecke believed he had identified the crucial elements for this new synthesis, but political realities in the prewar years seemed to frustrate his hopes continually. In particular, class conflict and the emerging demands for political participation among the German masses created barriers to the realization of Meinecke's ideal of the state. Ever the political realist, Meinecke recognized the need for the state to respond to these developments, and he became involved with the National Liberals in the belief that they more fully represented the conservative interests of the state than the older, hide-bound Conservative party.<sup>21</sup> According to Meinecke, statism did not stand for reaction but for strong, progressive leadership in the best interest of the state. Yet it is important to note that Meinecke conceived of political participation from within an elitist framework that sharply limited the scope of significant liberal and democratic reform.<sup>22</sup> Accordingly, the task of national leaders was to respond to political pressures and to channel discontent into a renewed commitment to the state. Only in this way could Germany create a national consciousness suitable to the new age.<sup>23</sup>

These considerations are crucial in understanding Meinecke's response to

the events of 1914. The outbreak of war naturally came as a challenge to Meinecke's view of the state, but the initial response in Germany seemed to provide a realization of his hopes for a "new synthesis of spirit and power." Like many intellectuals, Meinecke responded to the war by rallying to the national cause, and there can be little doubt that nationalism and patriotic considerations played a significant role in his thinking. Yet Meinecke placed heavy emphasis on the unity within the nation that seemed to accompany the event. On August 3rd, Social Democrats joined with other parties in the Reichstag and voted in favor of war credits, and Meinecke later recalled this as "one of the happiest days of my life."<sup>24</sup> Finally, it seemed, the nation had found unity in a common cause. In an essay written early in the war, Meinecke wrote that "the time of the split between politics and culture" was over.<sup>25</sup> Henceforth, Germany would be known as a nation of people who unified both state and culture (*Staats- und Kulturvolk*), and this ideal—"the highest ideal of modern life"—would be upheld and defended against the world.<sup>26</sup>

For the most part, Meinecke resisted the bellicose rhetoric adopted by many German intellectuals during the war.<sup>27</sup> But the stress of the war, and particularly the anguish of defeat, left him struggling to adjust to new realities. By 1917, he had already begun to question his beliefs about the role of power and of the nation-state in the modern world.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps more importantly, military defeat signaled the end of his long-cherished dream of the ideal, unified state. Neither the state nor the *Volk* [people] had lived up to his ideal, and the result left Meinecke bitter and disillusioned. In late 1918, he lamented in his diary that the nation was too exhausted to resist further, and he ended his entry with a philippic that speaks volumes about the attitude of many German intellectuals and their fears of what defeat might mean for the German nation: "All of the heroes have been abandoned," he declared, "and now only shopkeepers remain."<sup>29</sup>

Meinecke's postwar writings starkly reveal the dilemma of a political realist attempting to come to terms with a new political world that he did not truly love. During late 1918 mass demonstrations and political violence plagued the new government, and in early 1919 abortive communist uprisings in Berlin and Munich led to bloody fighting in the streets. Faced with this unrest, Meinecke's orientation toward *Realpolitik* led him at an early stage to declare his support for the German Republic, and in 1919 he wrote his friend Siegfried Kaehler explaining that "in the conflict between statesmanlike conduct and inherited ideals, which we all face today, I believe we must follow with firm stride the demands of reason."<sup>30</sup> At the same time, his writings following the war contain an emotionalism and empathy with the irrational seldom found in his prewar

thinking. His elitist bias became, if anything, more pronounced, and throughout this period his reasoned defense of the Republic conflicted with the largely conservative "inherited ideals" that formed the core of his emotional and psychological makeup.<sup>31</sup> In an essay written immediately after the war, Meinecke formulated in precise terms the attitude he was to share with so many intellectuals of his generation: "I remain, in regards to the past, a monarchist at heart and am becoming, in regards to the future, a republican of reason (*Vernunftrepublikaner*)."<sup>32</sup>

The attitudes that led to Meinecke's emergence as a *Vernunftrepublikaner* are summarized in an early collection of essays published in 1919 as *Nach der Revolution*. Meinecke criticized the course of German political development in the years following the fall of Bismarck. In particular, he argued that national leaders had been slow to respond to political realities in a mass age and had failed "to practice the art of timely concessions."<sup>33</sup> Before the war, Meinecke had argued for limited political reforms that would more fully integrate the *Volk* and the nation. During the conflict, he even seemed to suggest that an enlightened bourgeoisie might become the standard-bearer of a national culture and carry forward the task of unifying the nation.<sup>34</sup> Military defeat and the abdication of the Kaiser, however, had made his calls for reform obsolete. In the aftermath of the war, social and political unrest represented the greatest danger, and the German Republic formed the best, and perhaps the only, bulwark against revolutionary upheaval.<sup>35</sup>

Written under the impact of defeat, *Nach der Revolution* demonstrated both a longing for the past and an anxiety for the future. In this work, Meinecke deplored the enervating effects of the industrial age upon the soul of the nation. Despite his defense of the Republic, he also raised doubts about the validity of parliamentary government in Germany. Such views were close to those of younger "cultural pessimists" such as Moeller van den Bruck, who despised the Republic and argued that industrialization and parliamentary democracy were destroying the cultural traditions and true spirit of the nation. As Robert Pois has written, "two souls now strove mightily in Meinecke's breast,"<sup>36</sup> and the concerns raised in *Nach der Revolution* clearly suggest limits to Meinecke's republican sympathies. In an imaginary dialog that ends the work, "Ein Gespräch aus den Herbst 1919," Meinecke's characters argue the merits of parliamentary government for Germany. The defender of monarchical values, Eberhard, describes himself as embodying an "aristocratic and humanitarian ideal of development" (*Bildungsideal*) and maintains that there is little in the idea of democracy to warm the heart. Significantly, the defender of the Republic, Reinhold,

declares that "I am not enthusiastic about democracy, but it is inevitable."<sup>37</sup> Taken together, these attitudes form the core of the *Vernunftrepublikaner* that Meinecke had become.

Throughout the early 1920s, Meinecke struggled with limited success to reconcile his commitment to the Republic with the elitist and "aristocratic" values that were central to his world view. The failure of the power state forced him to reevaluate his own views on politics. At the same time, the infusion of democratic ideals into national life forced him to rethink the relationship between state and culture. In *Die Idee der Staaträson*, first published in 1924, Meinecke addressed these issues within the context of a discussion on the historical role of morality in politics.<sup>38</sup> *Raison d'état*, Meinecke argued, was a necessary feature of statecraft, but it was one that was subject to abuse. "Whoever holds power in his hands is continuously subject to a moral temptation to misuse it and to overstep the boundaries of morality and justice."<sup>39</sup> Here, Meinecke is clearly reassessing his earlier views of *Machtpolitik* in *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*. Indeed, Meinecke maintained that he wrote *Die Idee der Staaträson* in order to trace the "tragic" impact of *raison d'état* as a corrective to the celebration of power politics in his earlier work.<sup>40</sup>

The details of Meinecke's lengthy analysis are less important than his realization that the "idealization of power politics" in Germany had led to a "false deification of the state."<sup>41</sup> Richard Sterling has argued that *Die Idee der Staaträson* marked an important turning point in Meinecke's thinking, and "the history of the idea of *raison d'état* was a heroic attempt to make the sense of duty to the moral law as insistent and immediate as the sense of duty to the state."<sup>42</sup> Such an analysis is true so far as it goes. Yet it remains equally true that Meinecke failed to resolve fully the contradictions within his own thought. In the last section of the work, Meinecke again expressed his reservations about parliamentary democracy. The "old type of monarchy" could not be restored, he argued, but a properly understood *raison d'état* now required that the democratic Republic accord the State "as great a measure of independence and self-reliance" as possible. Thus, Meinecke maintained, "the setting up of a strong plebiscite presidency offers more guarantees than does parliamentarianism for a form of government in accordance with purified *raison d'état*."<sup>43</sup>

As important and symptomatic as were Meinecke's reconsiderations on the role of politics, his views on the relationship between culture and the state are equally significant, and it is here that his divided sympathies found perhaps their most problematic expression. In *Die Idee der Staaträson*, Meinecke suggested that the encroachments of "civilization" had undermined the moral au-

thority of "true" culture, but his conception of what culture might mean in a new era remained vague at best.<sup>44</sup> Throughout the work, he loosely identified culture as a kind of spiritual and moral quality—the very quality, in fact, that should provide ethical restraints upon the potential abuse of *raison d'état*. In doing so, he took the important step of separating the fusion of culture and the power-state that had dominated his prewar thinking. Yet it is surely significant that he was unable to suggest a new unity based upon postwar political realities. In a world of parliamentary government, with political parties competing for special interests, Meinecke could find little scope for a new synthesis of culture and politics that would serve to unify the nation. In an essay from early 1925, he held forth the possibility for a new *Kulturideal*, but it was to be one that would transcend the divisiveness of parliamentary parties and unify culture and the state through a subordination of the individual to the whole.<sup>45</sup> In the realm of day-to-day politics, Meinecke defended the republic as the form of government that divided least, but he was unable to allay his suspicions that party politics and mass democracy were in some way foreign to the German mind and inimical to the development of true *Kultur*. In an important sense, the *Vernunftrepublikaner* remained the apostle of an aristocratic cultural creed.



Like Meinecke, and like so many European intellectuals in 1914, Thomas Mann rallied to the national cause at the beginning of the war. Also like Meinecke, he placed his prolific pen in the service of the State, and his spirited polemics on the superiority of the German nation were, if anything, even more strident and immoderate. In contrast to Meinecke, however, Mann's embrace of an openly political stance marked a sharp departure from his prewar attitudes and concerns. An artist and self-conscious aesthete, Mann before the war had been disdainful of politics and had shied away from political involvement in favor of the pursuit of his art. His about-face during the war came as a shock to many of his contemporaries and provides perhaps the most prominent example of what Fritz Stern has called "the political consequences" of the tendency of many prewar German intellectuals to ignore politics.<sup>46</sup>

At the outbreak of war, Mann was already the famous author of literary works such as *Buddenbrooks* and *Death in Venice*. An inheritor of the humanist tradition that he found embodied in Goethe, Mann was also deeply influenced by German romanticism and by the intellectual tradition that emphasized the inner development of the individual. Where Meinecke's early influences were

conservative academics like Droysen and Treitschke, Mann's influences were philosophical aesthetes such as Richard Wagner and, above all, the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, whose hatred of politics and contempt for bourgeois conventions profoundly colored both Mann's art and his attitude toward life.<sup>47</sup> In a letter of 1904 to his brother Heinrich, Mann offered a rare glimpse of his "political" views on the relationship of the individual to the state: "Freedom is a purely moral, intellectual concept, equivalent to 'honesty,'" he wrote, "but in political freedom I have no interest. The mighty literature of Russia surely grew up under an enormous pressure? Would perhaps not have grown up at all without that pressure? Which would at least prove that the struggle for 'freedom' is better than freedom itself. The mere fact that so much blood has flowed for the concept gives it, for me, something disquietingly unfree, something positively medieval."<sup>48</sup>

In his usual literary style, Mann reveals in this letter his affinity for a strong government of order, but, perhaps more importantly, he suggests his relationship to the concept of *Bildung*—his belief that the cultural development of the individual and the realization of "inner" freedom take place independently of the world of politics. True culture was the result of a lengthy process of inner growth and aesthetic maturation. Especially for Mann, this meant the pursuit of his own art, and he concluded his letter in characteristic fashion: "Am I striving for happiness? I am striving—after Life; and *thereby* after my work."<sup>49</sup>

Against this inward-looking background of aesthetic humanism, Mann's emergence as an ardent and vocal defender of the German nation came as a surprise to his contemporaries and, no doubt, to himself. Several months before the war he had resigned from the Board of Censorship on the grounds that he was "not fitted for political activity."<sup>50</sup> Nevertheless, another letter to Heinrich shortly after the declaration of war indicated the direction in which he was heading. Maintaining that he felt as if he were "dreaming," Mann asked "shouldn't we be grateful for the totally unexpected chance to experience such mighty things?" He continued: "My chief feeling is a tremendous curiosity—and, I admit it, the deepest sympathy for the execrated, indecipherable, fateful Germany which, if she has hitherto not unqualifiedly held civilization as the highest good, is at any rate preparing to smash the most despicable police state in the world."<sup>51</sup>

The bellicose patriotism that would mark his wartime writings is already apparent in this letter, and shortly thereafter Mann published the first of several works in which he would both defend the German cause and rationalize his own heated response. In an article for the *Neue Rundschau* in November 1914, "Thoughts in a Time of War," Mann developed the theme of the antithesis

between “culture” and “civilization.” Culture, Mann maintained, “is unity, style, form, breeding and taste. It is, in a sense, the true organizing principle of the world, and this is so no matter how adventurous, scurrilous, wild, bloody or terrible.” In contrast, civilization stood for “reason, enlightenment, softening, manners, skepticism, disillusionment—in short, for mind.”<sup>52</sup> At least in part, such a shocking contrast was no doubt a rhetorical flourish in the deliberately provocative style of Nietzsche. At the same time, however, Mann’s statement points to strong infusion of aggressive Treitschkean nationalism under the impact of the war and unquestionably reflected the views of many other German intellectuals.<sup>53</sup> In the current struggle, Mann made clear, Germany stood for culture and the belligerent “western powers” for civilization.

After defining the terms of the debate, Mann unleashed an impassioned defense of the values of German *Kultur* against the intrusions of western civilization, of “nature” against rationality and “mind.” Taking up the theme of war, he compared Voltaire—“the father of the Enlightenment and of anti-heroic civilization”—with Frederick the Great. In the latter, Mann saw the embodiment of the warlike spirit and military values that he now identified as among the elemental sources of Germanic culture and art.<sup>54</sup> “Militarism,” he declared, “is in reality the expression of German morality,” and he concluded with an assessment of Germany’s condition that is worth quoting at length:

It is true the German soul has something deep and irrational which makes it appear disturbing, worrying, alien, yes offensive and wild to the feeling and judgement [sic] of other, less profound peoples. It is its “militarism,” its moral conservatism, its military morality—an element of the demonic and the heroic which strives to attain civil “spirit” only as the last and most humanly worthy ideal.<sup>55</sup>

With this idea, Mann had come full circle. The nonpolitical artist had become the ardent defender of a romanticized power-state, and cultural development—the attainment of the ideal of “spirit”—was closely linked to the fate of the military and civil authorities.

In 1915, Mann elaborated these themes in a lengthy essay, “Frederick the Great and the Grand Coalition.” Comparing Frederick’s invasion of Saxony in 1756 with the events of the summer of 1914, Mann drew upon the historical memory of Frederick to justify the German violation of Belgian neutrality.<sup>56</sup> “An attack may be of sheer necessity,” he wrote, “but then it is not an attack but a defense.”<sup>57</sup> The sophistry of such arguments aside, the essay is important because Mann identified the anger that Europe directed toward Frederick with

the anger currently directed at Germany—and at himself. “King Frederick is called Great, not only because of the audacity with which he laid siege to destiny, but also and especially because he had the strength to bear up—alone, with almost superhuman nervous strength—under so heavy a burden of hate.”<sup>58</sup> The task of the nation was to face up resolutely to its destiny in war even if this meant breaking the accepted codes of international conduct; Mann’s task was to defend the German nation, and himself, against the hatred of the world.

In an important study on Thomas Mann, Terence Reed has argued that Mann’s writings during the war mark “the low point in his career as a critical intellectual.” Nevertheless, Reed correctly maintains that, in order to understand fully Mann’s later writing and attitudes, it is necessary to take his war writings seriously for what they were, “the expression of a whole-hearted emotional commitment desperately seeking to rationalize itself.”<sup>59</sup> Nowhere, perhaps, is this more clearly revealed than in his *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*. First published shortly before the end of the war in 1918, the *Reflections* absorbed Mann’s energies throughout the latter stages of the conflict even to the exclusion of his own art. Mann once more took as his starting point the antithesis between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, and then moved on to a lengthy discussion on the uniqueness of German cultural development and of his own position within that tradition. For present purposes, the most important sections of this work are those that elaborate Mann’s views on the questions of politics and culture and their relationship to this German tradition.

Mann maintained throughout the *Reflections* that his views during the war were, in fact, a continuation of his prewar attitudes. In an early chapter on “Burgherly Nature,” Mann wrote that “I am nonpolitical, national, but nonpolitically disposed, like the German of the burgherly culture and the one of romanticism.”<sup>60</sup> He then identified himself with the romantic nationalism of Richard Wagner. In Wagner Mann saw an artistic genius who stood as the defender of the German ideal of culture against the intrusion of “foreign” and “un-German” concepts, namely Western democracy. Wagner hated democracy, Mann maintained, “because he *hated politics itself*, and because he recognized *the identity of politics and democracy*.”<sup>61</sup> Political democracy was the antithesis of the “old-Germanic relationship between the absolute king and the free people.” In an idea ascribed to Wagner but clearly his own, Mann wrote that “in the absolute king the concept of freedom is elevated to the highest, God-fulfilled consciousness, and the people are only free when *one* man rules, not when *many* rule.”<sup>62</sup>

Here, in language strikingly similar to that of his 1904 letter to his brother

Heinrich Mann reiterated his views on the inner development of the individual within an authoritarian framework. Now, however, he specifically defended this ideal against what he saw as the levelling tendencies inherent in Western democracy. In a later section of the *Reflections* Mann elaborated upon this theme. "The German concept of freedom will always be spiritual," he argued, because it developed independently of political institutions. "Never will the mechanical-democratic state of the West be naturalized with us. Let one Germanize the word, let one say 'national' instead of 'democratic'—and one names and grasps the exact opposite: for German-national means 'free'—inwardly and outwardly, but it does not mean 'equal'—neither inwardly nor outwardly."<sup>63</sup> German culture was nonpolitical and aristocratic, and Germans had to defend national culture and art against the intrusion of politics and the democratic spirit: "the politicization of the German concept of art would itself of course mean its democratization, a most important feature of the democratic levelling and assimilation of Germany."<sup>64</sup>

For all of its abstractions and self-deceptions, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* is important as a document of Mann's attitudes and opinions during the final stages of the war. It was his last public attempt to defend the German war effort, and it was his most elaborate effort to explain his own position during the war. His tortured attempts at self-rationalization left him unable to admit that his own views were decidedly political, but the work is nonetheless crucial to understanding his attitudes and anxieties in the years following the war. As Mann would himself later describe it, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man* was "a last great retreat-action, fought not without gallantry, of a romantic bourgeoisie in the face of the triumphant new."<sup>65</sup>

If Mann's public pronouncements at the end of the war retained an aggressive quality, his private reflections suggest a more realistic assessment of political realities. It is here that one sees him attempting to come to terms with the "triumphant new," and it is here that one sees the first glimmer of his emergence as a *Vernunftrepublikaner*. In a diary entry for October 1918, Mann reiterated his hope that Germany would persevere in its opposition to "democratic civilization," but he clearly realized that the war was lost. It was now his view that "the worldwide triumph of democratic civilization in the political sphere is an accomplished fact." Consequently, he maintained, "if the German spirit is to be preserved, one must recommend the separation of cultural and national life from politics, the complete detachment of one from the other."<sup>66</sup> In an entry several weeks later, Mann clarified this distinction even more forcefully:

All we can do is recognize and accept the political direction in which the world is moving, salute the democratic new world with good grace as a kind of world convenience that it will be quite possible to live with. . . and keep everything cultural, national, philosophical separate from politics and *free*, on a plane high above politics, something not in the least affected by democratic utilitarianism. This is the only viewpoint that is appropriate for me.<sup>67</sup>

This was the opposition to the fusion of politics and culture that Mann had advocated in the *Reflections*, and the elitist and aristocratic views of culture that he retained at the end of the war could not be more certain. His response to political developments, however, was clearly in transition.

The abdication of the Kaiser and the creation of the Republic in November prompted another curious diary entry from Mann: "My attitude toward the Greater German social republic that seems to be forming is completely reconciled and affirmative. It is something new, something appropriate to the German spirit. . . . The social republic is something well in advance of and superior to the idea of the bourgeois republic and plutocracy of the West."<sup>68</sup> Exactly what Mann meant by this odd formulation is far from clear, and it seems to provide an example of what Erich Heller has described as the "singing out of tune to which Thomas Mann was so prone whenever the song was a political one."<sup>69</sup> What is certain, however, is that Mann worried above all that anarchy would spread if order was not maintained. Like Meinecke, Mann feared that defeat could result in a revolution along Bolshevik lines, and his diary entries for late 1918 and early 1919 are filled with references to the unrest and mass demonstrations in the streets. In a letter to Joseph Ponten in March 1919, Mann revealed his fears of what Bolshevism might mean for Germany. Maintaining that there was no doubt "much that is good and human" in communism, Mann then suggested his major concern in typical style: "To be sure," he wrote, "I too cross myself twice and thrice at the prospect of 'proletarian culture.'"<sup>70</sup>

As these considerations suggest, Mann's concern over the need for order and the future prospects of German culture characterized his early response to the Weimar Republic. For Mann, as for Meinecke, the Republic seemed to offer the best safeguard against revolutionary upheaval, and his support—however hesitant and publicly non-committal—seems to have been genuine.<sup>71</sup> This is not to say, however, that Mann retreated from the conservatism that was so central to his psychological makeup. In early 1920 he wrote to his friend Hermann Keyserling that "I was very interested in your suggestion that in a little while the conservatives must once again have the main say in Germany. I

believe it myself; for nature in the end adjusts itself somehow, and, as Wagner correctly said, 'Germans are conservative.'"<sup>72</sup> To the conservative mind, democratic reforms and parliamentary politics might be distasteful, but the demands of the hour seemed to require allegiance to the Republic.

In these years immediately following the war, Mann refrained from public pronouncements on political affairs as he attempted to come to terms with a rapidly changing world. In his *Reflections*, he had written that "I do not want politics. I want objectivity, order, and propriety."<sup>73</sup> Yet as his diaries and letters of the period suggest, politics would not leave Mann alone. He had little taste for radical political adventures of either the left or the right. The right-wing Kapp Putsch of 1920 left him worried that this "premature act" would "seriously compromise conservatism" within the nation, and he was glad to see it fail.<sup>74</sup> For all of his conservatism, Mann could not countenance the rising tide of crude right-wing reaction within the country. The assassination in 1922 of the foreign minister Walter Rathenau by nationalist youths shocked the nation and prompted an important response from Mann. In a lengthy letter to Ernst Bertram he wrote:

Rathenau's death was a great shock for me too. What benighted minds these barbarians have! Or are they misguided idealists? . . . The distortion of the German countenance causes me acute suffering. I am thinking of turning a birthday article on Gerhart Hauptmann into a kind of manifesto in which I appeal to the conscience of the young people whose ear I have. I am not going back on the *Reflections*, and I am the last to demand that young people should be enthusiastic about things like democracy and socialism that their inner development has left far behind. But I have already on a previous occasion called mechanical reaction sentimental coarseness, and the new humanity may perhaps after all flourish no worse on the basis of democracy than on that of the old Germany.<sup>75</sup>

This was the authentic voice of the *Vernunftrepublikaner*. Torn by his past and struggling to come to terms with the future, Mann realized that his vision of *Humanität* required a public statement appropriate to the new political conditions. The result was Mann's speech on "The German Republic"—his first public pronouncement on the Weimar Republic and an important key to understanding his own psychological dilemma.

Arguing that political reaction was "sentimental barbarism," Mann declared in his speech that his aim was to win converts to the Republic—"to the side of what is called democracy, and what I call humanity, because of a distaste I share

with you for the meretricious overtones of the other word."<sup>76</sup> It was, Mann maintained, "a Germanic instinct to cherish the idea of a state-shaping individualism" that was both "aristocratic and social" and that was far removed from the "radical and anarchistic individualism" of the West.<sup>77</sup> The Republic was the realization of a specific form of German democracy, the culmination of a tradition of German humanism that offered a middle way between "romanticism and enlightenment, mysticism and rationality."<sup>78</sup> This was, he argued, the idea of humanity that he had supported in the *Reflections*, and this was the idea he now found embodied in the Republic.<sup>79</sup>

As a statement of political realities, Mann's speech was as valiant as it was confused. His sincerity can scarcely be doubted, and given the political atmosphere of the day it was a courageous stance for a known conservative. Nevertheless, Mann's view of politics remained trapped within an aesthetic framework, and his attempts to reconcile democracy with the tradition of German romanticism—through a discussion of Wagner, Nietzsche, Novalis, and even the American poet Walt Whitman—was little short of ludicrous. It was highly symptomatic, however, because the conflicts that Mann noted within the Republic were conflicts within himself. For all of his groping toward a political expression, Mann remained an artist, and it was through his art that these conflicts would find their fullest and most complex expression.

In a letter to Ernst Bertram in 1923, Mann wrote that, in an age that called for "articles and manifestos," he was trying to complete a lengthy novel.<sup>80</sup> The work Mann referred to was *The Magic Mountain*, his long and complex creation that was nearly twelve years in the making and was first published in 1924. This multi-layered *Bildungsroman* has been the subject of numerous studies, both literary and historical, and a close textual analysis is beyond the scope of the present study.<sup>81</sup> What is important for present purposes, however, is the extent to which the many layers within the work represent the many layers within Mann's own thought and character. Part spiritual autobiography and part personal confession, *The Magic Mountain* is, as T. J. Reed has written, "the summa of [Mann's] life, thought, and technical achievement to the age of fifty."<sup>82</sup>

Mann first began work on the novel in 1912 and continued on and off through the first years of the war. In a letter to Paul Amann in 1915, Mann described the nature of the work in progress:

Before the war I had begun a longish tale, set in the mountains in a T.B. sanatorium—a story with basically pedagogical-political intentions, in which a young man has to come to terms with the most seductive power, death, and is led in a comical and spine-

tingling way through the spiritual antitheses of humanitarian and Romantic attitudes, progress and reaction, health and disease. . . The spirit of the whole thing is humorous-nihilistic and the tendency on the whole is rather towards sympathy with death.<sup>83</sup>

The novel that eventually emerged was a work that was profoundly shaped by the war and by Mann's own complex and often contradictory responses to the German Republic. Throughout the novel, the intellectual development of its protagonist, Hans Castorp, takes place within the framework of a debate between two key figures: Naphta, the apostle of Romanticism, nationalism, and reaction, and Settembrini, the advocate of reason, Enlightenment, and cosmopolitanism. The rich and philosophically-laden word battles between Naphta and Settembrini defy simple analysis. Neither view is the absolutely correct one, but both represent the emotional and psychological tensions within Mann.<sup>84</sup>

If this dialectical interplay suggests the two poles of historical development between which Mann was torn, the intellectual growth of Hans Castorp points to another possibility that increasingly occupied Mann's attention during the years following the war. Torn between the conflicting views of Naphta and Settembrini, and constrained to choose between "East and West," Hans Castorp chooses neither. As Mann wrote:

He said nothing. They forced everything to an issue, these two—as perhaps one must when one differed—and wrangled bitterly over extremes, whereas it seemed to him, Hans Castorp, as though somewhere between two intolerable positions, between bombastic humanism and analphabetic barbarism, must lie something which one might personally call the human.<sup>85</sup>

This was the middle way Mann had advocated in "The German Republic," the attempt to reconcile the new political realities with the ideal of German culture that was so central to his being. But the contradictions that haunted Mann—the conflict between the "death" of the past and the "life" of the future—and that are debated throughout the novel are never fully resolved. "Man is the lord of counter-positions," he wrote, and, through Hans Castorp's "dream of humanity," Mann gave voice to these tensions. "I will keep faith with death in my heart," Hans declares, "yet will remember that faith with death and the dead is evil, is hostile to mankind, so soon as we give it power over thought and action. *For the sake of goodness and love, man shall let death have no sovereignty over his thoughts.*"<sup>86</sup>

By the time he had completed *The Magic Mountain*, Mann's position clearly

suggested an orientation toward a vision of humanity and an affirmation of "life" that was closer in spirit to the cosmopolitan humanism of Settembrini than to the "sympathy with death" that Mann had first mentioned to Paul Amann in 1915. As with all of Mann's writings, however, *The Magic Mountain* provided no simple answers. His deeply-felt concern for Germany prompted him to reconsider his political ideas, but his attempt to locate a "middle way" for humanity was not so much a real political solution as a rationalization for his own inner conflicts. Throughout the early years of the Republic, Mann retained an aesthetic understanding of politics that prevented him from fully coming to terms with postwar political realities.<sup>87</sup> In a letter to Joseph Ponten in early 1925, Mann described the views of "the author" of *The Magic Mountain*: "He is in his heart no Settembrini, but he is resolved to be in his thinking free, rational, and good."<sup>88</sup> In language strikingly similar to Meinecke's earlier formulation, this was again the voice of the *Vernunftrepublikaner*. It was a voice—deeply steeped in the past—of a humanist, artist, and aesthete in a new and strange political world.



The central problem for Mann, as for Meinecke, was his inability to reconcile an essentially aristocratic vision of German cultural development with the realities of parliamentary government in a mass age. In the early years of the Weimar Republic, both Mann and Meinecke declared their support for a form of government that neither liked but that both truly felt was best for the nation. At the same time, however, they retained a deeply-rooted psychological commitment to an older ideal of German *Kultur* that divided their loyalties in ways that neither seemed to have fully understood. Meinecke, as we have seen, was never able to reconcile his understanding of *Kultur* with what he felt to be the divisive nature of parliamentary rule. Mann's idea of *Kultur* led to an aesthetic conception of politics and a vision of humanity that, however noble, had little to do with the real world of everyday politics.

This was the division of heart and mind that was the burden of Weimar Germany. In the scholarly literature on Weimar, the responsibility of conservatives for the collapse of the Republic and the rise of National Socialism remains a topic of considerable controversy.<sup>89</sup> In regards to the *Vernunftrepublikaner*, no simple answer is possible. Certainly, neither Mann nor Meinecke welcomed or supported the Nazi regime. For his part, Mann's stance was unequivocal and his vocal opposition to Nazism is well documented. Meinecke's relationship to

Nazism was more ambiguous if only because, as Robert Pois has argued, he continually underestimated the danger it represented.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, Meinecke, like Mann, abhorred the nihilism and anti-intellectualism of the Nazi movement, and his opposition to the Nazis cost him both his professional position and the editorship of the *Historische Zeitschrift* in 1935.

Still the question of responsibility cannot be easily dismissed. As prominent prewar intellectuals, Mann and Meinecke were ideally positioned to promote the idea of democracy in Germany, but the qualifications of their early support were highly symptomatic of the dilemmas facing the fledgling Republic. To emphasize this point is not to endorse the normative assumptions of much of the older scholarship on modern Germany—that, for example, German development was inherently “faulted,” or that the Weimar experiment was doomed to failure.<sup>91</sup> As a number of recent historians have argued, there were political options available in Weimar, and any analysis of the failure of the Republic must take into account the specific historical forces operating in the postwar era.<sup>92</sup>

Yet it remains true that the viability of the Republic was tested from the beginning, not only by the active opposition of its opponents but also by the qualifications of its supporters. Neither Mann nor Meinecke fit easily into categories of historical analysis such as “reactionary anti-modernism” or “cultural pessimism.”<sup>93</sup> Moreover, both clearly believed they were supporting the Republic. Like many conservatives of their generation, however, both were subject to the pull of a past that was fundamentally at odds with many of the assumptions of democratic society in the postwar era. During the critical years following the war, neither thinker was able to reconcile fully the realities of this past with the needs of the day. Their attempts to do so, as well as their significant failures, highlight the “peculiarities” of a tradition of German intellectual development that haunted the Weimar Republic.

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#### NOTES

1. Thomas Mann, *Aufsätze, Reden, Essays*, vol. 3, 1919–1925 (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1986), 394.
2. Fritz Stern has noted that the German term *Kultur* has far wider connotations than the English word “culture,” especially in regard to the reverence invested in the “mystery of the arts.” For Germans, the pursuit of *Kultur* through inner development was both a philosophy of life and a way of understanding German identity. Its origins lay in German Idealist philosophy and in the *Aufklärung*, the specific German response to the Enlightenment in the late eighteenth century. Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism: Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (New York: Columbia University Press, [1955] 1992), 5–7. See also, James J. Sheehan, *German History, 1770–1866* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 203–06.
3. Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890–1930* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), chap. 2, *passim*.

4. Ibid., 116.
5. Comparing Meinecke's *Die Idee der Staaträson* with Mann's *The Magic Mountain*, Peter Gay has written that "Friedrich Meinecke is the Thomas Mann of German historical writing." *Weimar Culture: The Outsider as Insider* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968), 93–94. See also, Dagmar Barnouw, *Weimar Intellectuals and the Threat of Modernity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 13–14.
6. On the concept of an "open-yet-authoritarian" elite, see Walter Struve, *Elites Against Democracy: Leadership Ideas in Bourgeois Political Thought in Germany, 1890–1933* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), esp. 3–20. Struve does not discuss in depth either Meinecke or Mann, but the author nevertheless provides an important framework for understanding the idea of an "intellectual aristocracy" among the German middle class.
7. George L. Mosse, *The Culture of Western Europe: The Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* 3rd ed. (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), 1. See also Larry Eugene Jones, "Culture and Politics in the Weimar Republic," in Gordon Martel, ed., *Modern Germany Reconsidered, 1870–1945* (London: Routledge, 1992), 76–77.
8. See, for example, the classic study by Klemens von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism: Its History and Dilemma in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957).
9. Ibid., chapter 2, passim. Detlev J. K. Puckert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989), 14–18. For a reassessment of the younger generation of conservatives, see Peter Fritzsche, "Breakdown or Breakthrough? Conservatives in the November Revolution," in Larry Eugene Jones and James N. Retallack, eds., *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance: Studies in the History of German Conservatism from 1789 to 1945* (Providence: Berg Publishers, 1993), 299–328. The best introduction to the importance of "generations" during this period is Robert Wohl's pioneering, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1979).
10. Friedrich Meinecke, *Ausgewählter Briefwechsel*, Ludwig Dehio and Peter Classen, eds, vol. 6, *Werke* (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler, 1962), 95 (5 October 1918).
11. Ibid.
12. Richard W. Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power: The Political Ideas of Friedrich Meinecke* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958), 5.
13. A brief sketch of Meinecke's early years can be found in an essay by a former student, Henry Pachter, "Friedrich Meinecke and the Tragedy of German Liberalism," in *Weimar Etudes* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 135–70.
14. Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power*, 14–18.
15. *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat*. English translation, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, Robert B. Kimber, trans. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970). Page references are to the English translation.
16. Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, 21.
17. See, for example, Ibid., 64–70, 217–30, 341–63.
18. Ibid., 224–28. See also Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power*, 75–79.
19. Quoted in Ibid., 123. The idea of Ranke as political theorist of the national state and Bismarck as its architect are closely linked in Meinecke's work. See, for example, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, chap. 12, passim.
20. Friedrich Meinecke, *Strassburg, Freiburg, Berlin, 1901–1919: Erinnerungen* (Stuttgart: K. F. Koehler, 1949), 284.
21. Ibid., 130. In a letter of 1911, Meinecke wrote that he wanted to "make Conservatism useful once again." *Ausgewählter Briefwechsel*, 35 (22 December 1911). For an understanding of Meinecke's prewar attitudes, I am indebted to Robert Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke and German Politics in the Twentieth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 14–17.
22. In *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, Meinecke wrote that there were two strands of "modern individualism": "one branch, deriving from natural law and democratically oriented,

sought to achieve equal rights for all, while its other branch, aristocratically oriented in an intellectual sense, sought to achieve the liberation and elevation of the best minds." (p. 15). It is clear that Meinecke's sympathies lay with the latter strand, and this tendency became more pronounced following the war.

23. Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke*, 16.
24. Meinecke, *Strassburg, Freiburg, Berlin*, 137.
25. Friedrich Meinecke, "Politik und Kultur," in *Politische Schriften und Reden*, vol 2, *Werke* (Darmstadt: Siegfried Toeche-Mittler, 1958), 81.
26. *Ibid.*
27. See, for example, "Nationalismus und nationale Idee," in *Ibid.*, 83–95. Meinecke argued that individuals should support the state as free and cultured men rather than as stereotypical patriots, p. 88. For more extreme examples of Meinecke's stance, see, "Deutschland und der Weltkrieg," *Ibid.*, 96–100.
28. Meinecke, *Strassburg, Freiburg, Berlin*, 194–95, 233–39.
29. *Ibid.*, 271.
30. Meinecke, *Ausgewählter Briefwechsel*, 335 (January 1919).
31. Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke*, 27–28. For a spirited critique of Meinecke's elitism, see Shulamit Volkov, "Cultural Elitism and Democracy: Notes on Friedrich Meinecke's Political Thought," *Jahrbuch des Instituts für Deutsche Geschichte* 5 (1976): 383–418. A valuable discussion of Meinecke's immediate postwar views, to which I am heavily indebted, is Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power*, chap. 8, *passim*.
32. Friedrich Meinecke, "Verfassung und Verwaltung der deutschen Republik," *Politische Schriften und Reden*, 281.
33. Friedrich Meinecke, *Nach der Revolution: Geschichtliche Betrachtungen über Unsere Lage* (Berlin: R. Oldenbourg, 1919), 22. See also, Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke*, 37–41.
34. See, for example, "Das Deutsche Bürgertum im Kriege," *Politische Schriften und Reden*, 247–251.
35. Meinecke, *Nach der Revolution*, 113, 118–119.
36. Robert Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke*, 41–48. The quotation is on page 46. On Moeller van den Bruck, see Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961). In an important reassessment of "revolutionary conservatism," Peter Fritzsche has recently argued that younger conservatives such as Moeller van den Bruck originally welcomed the November Revolution and only turned to reactionary conservatism and "cultural pessimism" after the revolution, in their view, failed to deliver its promise of "renewal." See Peter Fritzsche, "Breakdown or Breakthrough?, Jones and Retallack, eds., *Between Reform, Reaction, and Revolution*, 299–328.
37. Meinecke, *Nach der Revolution*, 110–111, 119.
38. Meinecke, *Die Idee der Staaträson*. English translation, *Machiavellism: The Doctrine of Raison d'état and Its Place in Modern History*, Douglas Scott, trans. (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957). References are to the English translation, although I have chosen to retain the German title in the text.
39. *Ibid.*, 13.
40. *Ibid.*, 21–22.
41. *Ibid.*, 429.
42. Sterling, *Ethics in a World of Power*, 231.
43. Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, 430. Here, Meinecke is echoing his earlier call for a strong presidency in Germany as a substitute for the Monarchy (*Ersatzkaisertum*). *Strassburg, Freiburg, Berlin*, 258–59. See also "Verfassung und Verwaltung der Deutschen Republik," *Politische Schriften und Reden*, esp. 292–98.
44. Meinecke, *Machiavellism*, 410–11.
45. Meinecke, "Die Kultur Frage und die Parteien," *Politische Schriften und Reden*, 386. Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke*, 101–02.

46. Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism*, 3–25.
47. On Nietzsche's early influence, see Terence J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974), 17–21. During the war, Mann explicitly mentioned the importance of Nietzsche's apolitical attitudes on his own view. See note 62 below.
48. Quoted in Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 196–97.
49. *Ibid.*, 197.
50. Nigel Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), 158.
51. Thomas Mann, *Letters of Thomas Mann, 1889–1955*, Richard & Clara Winston, trans. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1975), 66–67 (7 August 1914).
52. Thomas Mann, "Gedanken im Kriege," *Von Deutscher Republik: Politische Schriften und Reden in Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1984), 7.
53. Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 214–19. Throughout the nineteenth century, German thinkers had drawn a distinction between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation*, but especially during the war this idea acquired strong nationalistic and militaristic overtones. See Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 86–90, 180–88.
54. Mann, "Gedanken im Kriege," 14–15. See also Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 186–88.
55. Mann, "Gedanken im Kriege," 17 & 24. For the last quotation, I have drawn from Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann*, 162.
56. Thomas Mann, "Frederick The Great and the Grand Coalition," in *Three Essays*, H. T. Lowe-Porter, trans. (London: Martin Secker, 1932), 192–94. Mann wrote this essay, in part, as a polemical attack on the "internationalism" of his brother Heinrich. The rift between Heinrich and Thomas is beyond the scope of this study, but readers may profitably consult Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann*, chap. 9, *passim*.
57. Mann, "Frederick the Great," 171.
58. *Ibid.*, 200. On Mann's self-identification with Frederick II, see Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 188.
59. Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 179.
60. Thomas Mann, *Reflections of a Nonpolitical Man*, Walter D. Morris, trans. (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1983), 81.
61. *Ibid.*, 85.
62. *Ibid.* Mann described his other influences in a letter to Paul Amann in 1916: "The great Germans who shaped my nature" all adhered to the separation of "philosophy" and "politics": "Schopenhauer most decidedly, Wagner, after 1848 — he hated politics . . . and above all Nietzsche, who with great accuracy called himself the 'last unpolitical German.'" *Briefe an Paul Amann* (Lübeck: Verlag Max Schmidt, 1959), 50.
63. Mann, *Reflections*, 201.
64. *Ibid.*, 229.
65. Quoted in Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann*, 191.
66. Thomas Mann, *Diaries, 1918–1939*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Harry N. Abraham, 1982), 12 (5 October 1918).
67. *Ibid.*, 13 (12 October 1918).
68. *Ibid.*, 23 (12 November 1918).
69. Erich Heller, *The Ironic German: A Study of Thomas Mann* (Boston: Little Brown, 1958), 12–21.
70. Mann, *Letters, 1889–1955*, 86 (29 March 1919).
71. The episode of the Bavarian Soviet served to strengthen this feeling for Mann. See, for example, the diary entries for 13 April, 1 May and 5 May, 1919 in *Diaries, 1919–1939*.
72. Thomas Mann, *Briefe, 1889–1936* (Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1961), 173 (18 January 1920).
73. Quoted in Struve, *Elites Against Democracy*, 35.
74. Thomas Mann, *Thomas Mann an Ernst Bertram: Briefe aus den Jahren 1910–1955* ([NP]: Verlag

- Günter Neske, 1960), 16 March 1920, 88. *Diaries, 1918–1939*, 90 (15 March 1920).
75. Mann, *Mann an Ernst Bertram*, 112 (8 July 1922). For this translation I have drawn from Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 290.
  76. Thomas Mann, "The German Republic," in *Order of the Day: Political Essays and Speeches of Two Decades*, H. T. Lowe-Porter, trans. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1942), 10–11.
  77. *Ibid.*, 29.
  78. *Ibid.*, 24.
  79. *Ibid.*, 22.
  80. Mann, *Thomas Mann an Ernest Bertram*, 117 (21 February 1923).
  81. The best full-length study of the work is still Hermann J. Wiegand, *The Magic Mountain: A Study of Thomas Mann's Novel Der Zauberberg* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1965). On the political context see, Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, esp. 226–274, *passim*.
  82. *Ibid.*, 226.
  83. Quoted in *Ibid.*, 237.
  84. As T. J. Reed has pointed out, the dialogues between the two actually contain fragments from Mann's earlier writings, especially the *Reflections*. See Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 256–57.
  85. Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, H. T. Lowe-Porter, trans. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955), 523.
  86. *Ibid.*, 496–97.
  87. On Mann's "aesthetic" understanding of politics see, Keith Bullivant, "Thomas Mann and Politics in the Weimar Republic," in *Culture and Society in the Weimar Republic* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), 24–38.
  88. Mann, *Briefe, 1889–1936*, 5 February 1925, 232.
  89. For a recent survey of the literature, see Larry Eugene Jones and James Retallack, "German Conservatism Reconsidered," in Jones and Retallack, *Between Reform, Reaction, and Resistance*, esp. 18–27.
  90. On Mann's opposition see Reed, *The Uses of Tradition*, 310–16 and especially Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann*, chapters 12 and 13, *passim*. For Meinecke, see Pois, *Friedrich Meinecke*, 116–30.
  91. This was the perspective that informed many of the classic studies on the roots of Nazi ideology. Among the best known and most important are Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of German Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961) and George Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Schocken Books, [1964] 1981). The literature on the German "Sonderweg" is enormous. See, for example, Helga Grebing, *Der "deutsche sonderweg" in Europa 1806–1945: eine Kritik* (Stuttgart: W. Kahlhammer, 1986) and David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).
  92. Larry Eugene Jones, *German Liberalism and the Dissolution of the Weimar Party System, 1918–1933* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988). Geoff Eley, "What Produces Fascism: Pre-Industrial Traditions or a Crisis of the Capitalist State?" in *From Unification to Nazism: Reinterpreting the German Past* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1986), 254–82. Several general histories that stress the options available in Weimar are E. J. Feuchtwanger, *From Weimar to Hitler: Germany, 1918–1933*, 2nd ed., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1995) and Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).
  93. Fritz Ringer, for example, locates Meinecke among the "modernist" mandarins, e.g., *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, 210. For an interpretation linking Mann with the "Conservative Revolutionaries," but sensitive to their differences, see Keith Bullivant, "The Conservative Revolution" in Anthony Phelan, ed., *The Weimar Dilemma* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1985), esp. 56–57, 68–69.