

Peter Ghosh

Political and Unpolitical Germany: Max Weber and Thomas Mann

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Abstract: This paper presents a comparison of Max Weber and Thomas Mann from a historical perspective. It does not seek to override the obvious differences between them, but it suggests that these differences reflect on the remarkable diversity and plurality of a common context: Germany seen as a community of *Kultur*. Furthermore, very different views of the world could still lead to significant coincidence. This is particularly true of their views on politics, where both men emerged as robust democrats. Yet they also upheld a large “unpolitical” space, a position which was symptomatic of their class, the *Bildungsbürgertum*, but which was ordinarily a source of political weakness in that class in early 20th century Germany. The comparison is asymmetric however. While a wide range of Weber’s texts can be drawn upon, in Mann’s case *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* stands out as a focal point. This leads to a revaluation of that text. It was a central component in Mann’s intellectual formation; not an aberration which can be set aside.

Writers have occasionally broached the idea of a comparison between Max Weber and Thomas Mann but it has not found much favour.¹ Are not the believer in a pure, “value-free” *Wissenschaft* and the writer or *Dichter* too far apart, too much of an odd couple, for it to be worthwhile to consider their possible inter-relation? Yet I wish to make the attempt and for various reasons. Most obviously there are some direct links between them. As is well-known, in *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*

¹ Wolf Lepenies: *Between Literature and Science: the Rise of Sociology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1988, c. 13; Edith Weiller: *Max Weber und die literarische Moderne*. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 1994, c.V; and two books by Harvey Goldman: *Max Weber and Thomas Mann. Calling and the Shaping of the Self*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1988; *Politics, Death and the Devil. Self and Power in Max Weber and Thomas Mann*. Berkeley: University of California Press 1992. Goldman candidly states that his “purpose is not intellectual history or *Germanistik*” (Max Weber and Thomas Mann, 7).

Prof. Dr. Peter Ghosh, St. Anne’s College, Faculty of History, George Street, Oxford OX1 2RL, United Kingdom, E-Mail: peter.ghosh@history.ox.ac.uk

(1918) Mann refers to Max Weber's famous essays on *Die protestantische Ethik und den Geist des Kapitalismus* (1904–1905) (MBU, 159).² Today there is scepticism about this claim: did Mann really read these fiercely academic texts? I wish to suggest that whatever the literal truth of this (where in fact today's scepticism is probably mistaken), it is a point of entry into more substantial commonalities, though agreement, coincidence and difference of views are all present. Thus the centre-point of the inquiry lies elsewhere: in Mann's and Weber's thinking about 'politics' or, more accurately, the relation between politics and the unpolitical world outside it. Here there is a surprising amount of common ground, though the forms in which it is expressed are very different. This then reflects on a much neglected yet fundamental subject: the dual nature of "Germany", understood both as a political entity, the nation-state created in 1871, but also as something more expansive, whether as a society (in Weber's mind) or a community of *Kultur* (in Mann's).³

There is an evident contrast here with Britain and France. The latter possessed long established identities where there was no perceived disjunction between their various components, unless it be that France's distinctive identification of its culture with the culture of Europe under such headings as enlightenment and 'civilisation' – a claim so vividly portrayed and defiantly repudiated by Mann – had lost its hegemonic political foundation after the war of 1870–1871. By contrast Germany had no political identity before that date, and embraced a multiplicity of states as well as substantial communities in foreign states (Switzerland, Austria-Hungary, Russia). This unpolitical plurality led to a unique degree of public investment in arts such as music and in university *Wissenschaft*, and also a unique diversity in their pursuit. After 1871 the new *Reich* undoubtedly made its presence felt, yet Germany's wider cultural identity and institutions were untouched,⁴ and the idea that Germans

2 Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 13.1: Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2009, p. 159. Cited here after with the abbreviation MBU and page number. Note however that in important respects the 1918 text remains preferable. The modern edition does not reproduce the contrast between *Fraktur* and *Antiqua* which highlights the difference between German and non-German terms; it does not retain the original pagination, which distinguishes the 'Vorrede' (written last) from the main text; and in defiance of the idea of fidelity to the text the editor has introduced his own running titles to accompany Mann's text. This is a strange lapse in an otherwise indispensable work.

3 This subject has so far eluded even welcome attempts to escape a simplistic teleology of nation-state formation, for example Dieter Langewiesche: Vom vielstaatlichen Reich zum föderativen Bundesstaat. Eine andere deutsche Geschichte. Stuttgart: Alfred Kröner Verlag 2020.

4 Teaching personnel continued to move freely across the entirety of the German-speaking universities and the 'professors' trade union', embodied in the *Hochschullehrertage* that began in 1907, knew no national boundaries. The *Hochschulkonferenz der deutschen Bundesstaaten*, set up in 1898 to create a consultative body for the states in the *Reich*, included Austria from 1901, though technically as a

(within the *Reich* as well as without) continued to be an unpolitical people was common.⁵ Weber, for example, commented pointedly on the “eigenartig ‘unhistorische[n]’ und unpolitische[n] Geist” of the German bourgeoisie in 1895, which he held was a defiance of the logic of 1871.⁶ Mann’s attachment to pre- and unpolitical Germany is clearly evident in both *Buddenbrooks* (1901) and *Königliche Hoheit* (1909), and the popularity of these books with readers makes a similar point.⁷

So while there was a good deal of patriotic bluster in Mann’s wartime celebration of Germany’s uniqueness compared to the rest of Europe, it also contained a foundation of truth: both in regard to its unpolitical nature and when he stated that this was “ein Land, dessen innere Einheitlichkeit und Geschlossenheit durch die geistigen Gegensätze nicht nur kompliziert, sondern beinahe aufgehoben wird” (MBU, 60). Weber’s sense of intellectual plurality and division was couched differently, in terms of the “*Chaos von Wertmaßstäben*” that informed academic investigation. In principle this was a universal statement, yet it was also the product of a distinctively German context, and was accompanied by more specific remarks about Germany’s want of “innere[r] Einigung”.⁸ The overall result is a paradox: division, plurality, artistic and intellectual fertility, and disjunction between the political and unpolitical spheres were ‘common’ features of a German identity. In Mann’s words:

[W]ieviel Ähnlichkeit in der Richtung der geistigen Arbeit ist nötig, damit zwei fern voneinander, in ganz verschiedener Kunstsphäre lebende Arbeiter im Geist sich, äußerlich zusammenhanglos, auf das gleiche Wortsymbol für ganze seelische Komplexe einigen! (MBU, 461)⁹

The moral for our purposes is clear: almost any comparison between two German thinkers at this date would be somewhat unreal if it was without division and con-

‘guest’: Bernhard vom Brocke/Peter Krüger (eds.): *Hochschulpolitik im Föderalismus*. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 1994, p. xx, 23. The German university of Dorpat (Tartu in modern Estonia) was however subject to Russification from 1895.

5 For example Georg Jellinek: *Verfassungsänderung und Verfassungswandlung*. Berlin: Häring 1906, Vorrede; Hugo Preuß: *Das deutsche Volk und die Politik*. Jena: Diederichs 1915; Fürst von Bülow: *Deutsche Politik*. Berlin: R. Hobbing 1916.

6 Max Weber: *Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik*. Akademische Antrittsrede [1895]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/4: *Landarbeiterfrage, Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1993, pp. 542–74, here p. 568.

7 See also MBU, 125–6. At the end of 1918, *Buddenbrooks* was in its 102nd edition, *Königliche Hoheit*, his second most popular work, was in its 64th edition: advertisement, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: S. Fischer 1918), erste bis sechste Auflage, no page.

8 Weber: *Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik* (note 6), pp. 563, 567.

9 The specific subject here is Hans Pfitzner.

trast, yet one might also expect shared features which reflect this common context. The case of Mann and Weber surely fits this description.

I

At first sight it is the differences between them that stand out. Certainly any personal contact or reference was slight. On Weber's side we know that his friend, the Swiss pianist Mina Tobler, recommended *Royal Highness* (*Königliche Hoheit*) to him as holiday reading in Ascona in 1913, but that she failed to give him the book before he left.¹⁰ She may perhaps have sent it on, but no more is said, and one can hardly suppose that, if he read it, Weber saw anything in it other than frivolity and nostalgia. He could see a functional role for a monarch as a titular head of state in a modern democracy, but the minor princely houses left over from the pre-1871 Confederation were a matter of no interest.¹¹ Mann himself found the book hard to defend after 1914: it was too obviously "französisch" and "im höchsten Grade zivilisationsliterarisch" (MBU, 106–7). After Weber settled in Munich in September 1919, the two men met socially at the house of the lawyer and theatre critic Max Bernstein, which prompted Weber to remark in January 1920 that he and Marianne ought to see more "junge Leute und Schriftsteller (Th. Mann)".¹² Evidently Weber could see that Mann was intellectually interesting and there is a suggestion here of a desire to re-create the kind of fertile and intellectually plural social circle that the Webers had gathered around them in pre-war Heidelberg – Mann might perhaps have figured there as a successor to Georg Lukács, who was esteemed by both of them. But we can go no further, and in the six months of life that remained to Weber, nothing came of this. Mann's diary reports of these meetings are equally polite but non-committal. He views the "viel genannten Prof. Max Weber" primarily as a political orator: "[er] erwies sich als der gute, geschickte und lebhaftes Sprecher, als der er gilt".¹³ This is not necessarily to be identified with Mann's pejorative idea of a

¹⁰ Weber to Marianne Weber 1, 19.4.13. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Abteilung II: Briefe. 10 Bde. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen et alia. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1990–2015. Bd. II/8, pp. 163, 191.

¹¹ For an unusual mention: Weber: Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik (note 6), p. 569.

¹² Max Weber to Mina Tobler, 29.01.1920. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd. II/10, p. 907.

¹³ Thomas Mann: diary entries 09.11.1918, 28.12.1919. In: T.M.: Tagebücher 1918–1921. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 1979, pp. 317, 352. Curiously Mann corresponded with Alfred Weber in 1915, but Alfred was not then a channel of communication to his brother: Thomas Mann to Alfred Weber 22, 31.08.1915. In: Alfred Weber: Gesamtausgabe in 10 Bänden. Ed. Richard Bräun et al. Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag 1997–2003. Bd. 10: Ausgewählter Briefwechsel. Halbbd. 1. Marburg: Metropolis-Verlag 2003. Ed. Eberhard Demm, pp. 208, 214.

bourgeois rhetorician – it could as well be a purely descriptive comment, reflecting the number of lectures and speeches Weber gave in Munich between 1917 and early 1919.¹⁴ But still there is no positive assessment here, and any sign of this has to wait until the mid-1920s when Weber's treatment of 'Ancient Judaism' became a valued source for Mann when preparing the sequence of novels that would become *Joseph and his Brothers*.¹⁵

These limited personal connections are symptomatic, for any intellectual relationship between Mann and Weber is necessarily somewhat opaque. What may be conceived abstractly as the inter-relation of two canonical authors, is not a comparison of like with like. They differ just as much in how they think as in what they think; in both their categories and their belief in the worth of categories. Weber's affirmation of 'scharfer Begriffsbildung' as basic to the practice of *Wissenschaft*,¹⁶ may be compared with Mann's wartime association of the *Begriff* with Robespierre and the radical simplicities of Jacobinism (MBU, 423 cf. 190). Yet if we peer through this dark glass, they do not differ absolutely. Alongside disagreements there are evident points of affinity and, taken overall, difference lies more in the fact that their intellectual worlds are differently constructed than in outright contradiction. Mann's and Weber's interests may well be different; likewise the degree of interest at points where they coincide; but ultimately they inhabit the same world. So there is substance in the modern view which detects an *Wahlverwandschaft* between them, a phrase which is well chosen in that Weber himself took it over from Goethe, even if it strikes us more by its detachment than its specificity.¹⁷

The two men's nearest point of connection or adjacency was supplied by the World War and its aftermath. In this light most of Weber's intellectual and political ideas are potentially relevant, whereas for Mann it means an asymmetric focus on the agenda raised by the *Betrachtungen* (1918). The war disrupted Weber's life in all sorts of ways, but not its intellectual course. Thus his reaction to the outbreak of war was not – as it was for almost all other German intellectuals – to write about it;

14 Rilke describes Weber in identical terms at this time: Rainer Maria Rilke to Clara Rilke, 7.11.1918. In: Rainer Maria Rilke: Gesammelte Briefe. 6 Bde. Ed. Ruth Sieber-Rilke and Carl Sieber. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag 1936–1939. Bd. 4: Briefe aus den Jahren 1914–1921. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag 1938, p. 207.

15 Rede zur Eröffnung der 'Münchner Gesellschaft 1926'. In: Thomas Mann: Gesammelte Werke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 1960–1974. Bd. XIII, p. 597.

16 Max Weber: Die „Objektivität“ sozialwissenschaftlicher Erkenntnis [1904]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/7: Zur Logik und Methodik der Sozialwissenschaften. Ed. Gerhard Wagner. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018, pp. 142–234, here p. 228.

17 Lepenies: Between Literature and Science (note 1), p. 305, 311. Compare Max Weber: Die protestantische Ethik und "der Geist" des Kapitalismus. In: Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik 20 (1904), 1–54, here p. 54; Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft und Sozialpolitik 21 (1905), 1–110, here p. 56. Hereafter: Protestantische Ethik (1904), Protestantische Ethik (1905).

instead he volunteered for military service. The only thing worth talking about was not the war itself but the “Katastrophe” of how Germany got into it, which at first seemed pointless.¹⁸ When from 1916 he began to speak out on political subjects, this meant consideration of the future peace and post-war reconstruction so as to avoid pre-war mistakes, rather than the war itself. Even then “Sachliche Politik” meant: “keine Politik der Eitelkeit, des renommistischen Redens und Auftrumpfens, sondern eine Politik des *schweigenden Handelns*”, and here is a root for Weber’s ire at vacuously wordy *Literaten*, an epithet that he like Mann dispensed profusely in the war, though his intended targets were different.¹⁹ Meanwhile his academic production stayed loyal to the fulfilment of projects begun before August 1914: the comparative studies of the world religions to accompany the *Protestant Ethic* (1904–1905), first sketched in 1913, and his magnum opus, *Economy and Society*, an acorn in 1910 and already a mighty oak by June 1914.²⁰ The most radical change in Weber’s life had come much earlier, in the years 1898–1903, when he abandoned his confinement to single subject teaching (in law and economics), and set sail on the interdisciplinary sea of social science.²¹ Given this continuity there is no call to privilege any particular text or phase of his life. However, all of Weber’s ‘political theory’ (the sociology of *Herrschaft*) and most of his politically engaged writings stem from the decade 1910–20, so a close chronological coincidence remains.

The impact of war on Mann was very different. It called his previously “selbstverständlich und unbewußt ruhende Sein” as an artist into question at the most fundamental level. As an artist he found it impossible “etwas zu machen”. Instead it was necessary this “Sein zu begreifen, klar zu stellen und zu *verteidigen*” (MBU, 15 cf. 76). The *Betrachtungen* are thus a unique fruit of the one sustained period in his life when he abandoned artistic creation. Never again would he confront so openly and fully the interface between his own world and the wider one outside him, and it is this ‘extra-artistic’ agenda which makes comparison with the academic and pro-

18 Max Weber: Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland [1918]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 432–596, here p. 436.

19 Max Weber: Deutschland unter den europäischen Weltmächten [1916], In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 161–194, here 165. Cf. Peter Ghosh: Max Weber and the *literati*. In: P.G.: Max Weber in Context: Essays in the History of German Ideas c. 1870–1930. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag 2016, pp. 197–250.

20 Peter Ghosh: Max Weber and Protestant Ethic. Twin Histories. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2014, especially part II; Wolfgang Schluchter: Entstehungsgeschichte [2009]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/24: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Entstehungsgeschichte und Dokumente. Ed. Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2009, pp. 1–131.

21 Ghosh: Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic (note 20), part I, chapters 1–3.

saic Weber possible. However, the unique source is also uniquely difficult to read – more so (for example) than its near relation, *Der Zauberberg* (1912–24). Now there is a likeness between the profuse arguments of the two intellectuals Naphta and Settembrini in the novel and “[den] zwei Seelen in einer Brust” of the *Betrachtungen* (MBU, 23 cf. 461, 622). Settembrini is a direct descendant of one of the latter’s central targets: the *Literat* who preaches the naively progressive and insidiously political doctrine of ‘civilization’.²² Naphta is Settembrini’s dialectical opposite; but though he is contemptuous of progress and enlightenment, he too is a man of *Geist*, a politician, who is “vollständig unmusikalisch” (a crucial touchstone).²³ The unheroic hero, Hans Castorp, is a more charitable but essentially unaltered representation of Mann’s wartime relation towards such thinking. Yet the novel was a *Kunstwerk* with the characters having distinct voices within it; the *Betrachtungen*, quite explicitly, were not (eg. MBU, 14). In confronting “Wirklichkeit” and “das Tatsächliche” (MBU, 25), Mann might seek to situate his identity as an artist within an ‘unartistic’ world outside, but he could not abandon it. So practically every statement is double, as is signalled by his constant appeals to “Ironie” above all, but also to play, parody, scepticism and humour (MBU, 29). (Irony is almost entirely absent from *Der Zauberberg*.)²⁴ This was the prerogative of the artist relative to a ‘political’ commentator: “die köstliche Überlegenheit der Kunst über das bloß Intellektuelle [besteht] in ihrer lebendigen Vieldeutigkeit, ihrer tiefen Unverbindlichkeit, ihrer geistigen Freiheit” (MBU, 250). On top of this, as we shall see, there was the fundamental problem of self-contradiction in which Mann’s political views were entangled (MBU, 288). Hence the warning he delivers in the Preface: “Ein organischer und immer gegenwärtiger Grundgedanke wäre aufzuweisen, – wenn es nicht eben nur das schwankende Gefühl eines solchen wäre, von dem allerdings das Ganze durchdrungen ist” (MBU, 12). Note, however, that the *uniqueness* of the *Betrachtungen* does not mean that it was intellectually *isolated*. On the contrary. Mann was transparently loyal to it throughout later life – “Ich widerrufe nichts. Ich nehme nichts Wesentliches zurück”²⁵ – and our comparison will show that it was a central and formative compo-

22 Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 5.1: *Der Zauberberg*. Ed. Michael Neumann. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 232–245; cf. Thomas Mann: Diary entry 31.08.1919. In: T.M.: *Tagebücher 1918–1921* (note 13), p. 298.

23 Mann: *Der Zauberberg* (note 22), p. 673; cf. pp. 172–175 for Settembrini’s view of music.

24 See Mann: *Der Zauberberg* (note 22), pp. 335–6, 807.

25 Thomas Mann: *Von deutscher Republik* [1922]. In: Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 15.1: *Essays II: 1914–1926*. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 514–59, here p. 533, cf. 533–5. The revision of the text for the 1922 edition in no way contradicts this statement: Hermann Kurzke: *Textlage*. In: Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 13.2: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. Kommentar*. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2018, pp. 84–87. Compare by contrast Mann’s refusal to reprint *Gedanken im Kriege* (1914) after 1918: Thomas Mann:

nent in his intellectual biography. This was not a wayward diversion which can be written off as “politisch inkorrekt”.²⁶

II

Consider first Mann’s and Weber’s elementary, if far from simple, identities. Mann’s is that of the artist, and under that heading he sees himself as a *Dichter*. Art is the closest thing he knows to life: “Kunst als Leben, als durch die Form bezwungene, befreite und befreiende Erkenntnis des Lebens” (MBU, 338). It is not simply a thing – the work of art – but a mode of being: “eine ethische Äußerungsform [des] Lebens selbst” (MBU, 115 cf. 210). Because of its direct contact with life it is ‘naiv’, ‘absolut’ and free: “zu befreien vermag einzig das Werk der Kunst” (MBU, 339).²⁷ By the same logic it is subject to no conventional, moral restraint. To the moralist it will seem ‘verräterisch’, barbaric and parasitic, yet it is a route to the metaphysical and hence moral realm: “die Kunst [ist] eine Form der Moral, aber kein moralisches Mittel” (MBU, 431, 345).²⁸ Within this realm, “die Musik [bedeutete] das reinste Paradigma, den heilige Grundtypus aller Kunst” (MBU, 346). In his youth Mann found a literal foundation for his music enthusiasm in Wagner, but thereafter he moved on and there would be no successor (MBU, 81–90).²⁹ Music, too, was more of an idea than an embodied reality. *Buddenbrooks* was the creation of a ‘Geige’ (perhaps the amateur violinist that Mann had been in his youth?) (MBU, 99) and he was proud to claim, regarding his books, ‘gute Partituren waren sie immer’ (MBU, 348). Correlative to the promotion of art and music was his attack on the *Literat*, though there was considerable audacity in this coming from a man whose artistic achievement lay in what he wrote. Did he really not experience “eine leidenschaftliche Lust am bezeichnen-

Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 15.2: Essays II: 1914–1926: Kommentar. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, p. 12.

26 Cf. Hermann Kurzke: Das Kapitel “Politik” in den *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. In: Thomas Mann Jahrbuch 13 (2000), pp. 27–41, here p. 31.

27 Thomas Mann: “Der absolute Schriftsteller”: [Die gesellschaftliche Stellung des Schriftstellers in Deutschland, 1910]. In: T.M.: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 14/1: Essays I: 1893–1914. Ed. Heinrich Detering. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 225–30, here p. 228.

28 Compare the accompanying quotation from Goethe: “denn ein gutes Kunstwerk kann und wird zwar moralische Folgen haben, aber moralische Zwecke vom Künstler fordern, heißt ihm sein Handwerk verderben” (MBU, 345).

29 Thomas Mann: Auseinandersetzung mit Wagner [1911]. In: T.M.: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 14/1: Essays I: 1893–1914. Ed. Heinrich Detering. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2008, pp. 301–04. Pfützner (for example) is “ethisch noch höher stehend, als künstlerisch” and is in any case a “Schlußwort” (MBU, 458, 462).

den Ausdruck, eine [...] stets nach neuen Eroberungen ausschauende Abenteuerlust und Meisterschaft auf dem Gebiete des Wortes?"³⁰ When all allowance has been made for Mann's belief that words must always be linked to something higher – in this respect the *Betrachtungen* is as much an artistic credo as a political one – this seems unlikely, and we may suspect that the "Handwerkstreue" he applauded might include the fashioning of words (MBU, 105). Certainly he puts in ironical saving clauses to the effect "daß ich zwar Literat, aber mehr noch Musiker bin" (MBU, 348). But still the category of the *Literat* is itself surprisingly 'unliterary'. Such is the thrust of his well-known essay from 1913, *Der Literat*, which is reproduced in the wartime text (MBU, 108–111).³¹ Here mastery of verbal expression is identified with exclusively non-literary traits – enlightenment, moralism, philanthropy, doctrinaire radicalism, respectability, "das bloß Intellektuelle" – in contrast to the inscrutable naiveté and "unreinen Heldentum der Tat" which underlie the artist's creative action.³² In short, we must take Mann's priorities as he states them: art and music first; literature a distant second. Meanwhile *Intellekt* and *Geist* hover between the two: they are debased in words, but transfigured in art.

Weber shares Mann's simple priorities: not completely, but to a surprising degree. Like Mann he was a member of the *Bildungsbürgertum* and ingrained familiarity with the arts and literature was second nature to him. He read the 40 volumes of Cotta's edition of Goethe "unter der Bank" during school lessons,³³ and this is reflected in the Goethean ornamentation to the *Protestant Ethic*. Thus it laments "[den] Verzicht auf die faustische Allseitigkeit des Menschentums", and though in context this is a modern, Weberian point about specialization, Weber does not scruple to invoke Goethe as a patron of his ideas.³⁴ Again, he and Mann make an identical if far from original citation from Goethe's *Maxims and Reflections*: "Der Handelnde ist immer gewissenslos [...]" (MBU, 251, 629).³⁵ Like Mann Weber was intensely musical: "Musik [...] war für [ihn] geradezu ein Lebensbedürfnis", but his interests ranged more broadly than this and he paid significant attention to the

30 Thomas Mann: *Der Literat* [1913]. In: T.M.: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 14/1: Essays I: 1893–1914. Ed. Heinrich Detering. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2008, pp. 354–62, here p. 354.

31 Mann hardly discusses prose style in the *Betrachtungen*, except in tributes he pays on this score to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, presumably induced by Nietzsche's own passion for criticism of this kind (MBU, 80–1, 96).

32 Mann: *Der Literat* (note 30), p. 361.

33 Marianne Weber: *Max Weber. Ein Lebensbild*. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1926, p. 50.

34 Weber: 'Protestantische Ethik', 1905 (note 17), pp. 107–8.

35 Weber: 'Protestantische Ethik', 1905 (note 17), p. 71.

visual arts and architecture.³⁶ For example, he was much interested in the decay of public and monumental art and was vituperative regarding “die hohle Theatralik und den Ungeschmack der ‘terza Roma’” – the Victor Emanuel monument (1882–1911) is the best known example – as well as Berlin’s “elende[r] Dom” (completed 1895). Both were examples of formulaic neo-classicism generated (in Weber’s eyes) by bombastic “modernen Monarchen”. (Interestingly he passes over the Reichstag building completed in similar style in 1894.) He had no interest in French official art, but he was clear that “in den intimen Kreisen seines Kunstschaffens”, which is to say painting, France far exceeded any other European country in “Geschmackskultur” (the secularised successor to art determined by religious imperatives).³⁷ This view was unchanged by the World War and overall it is Weber rather than Mann, who better represents the aesthetic and artistic judgement of the day, whether in Germany or Europe. As Mann tells us “Ich verstehe nichts von Malerei” (MBU, 395).³⁸ Another broad similarity with Mann is that Weber placed art above literature, and this shared priority reflects the conventional truth underlying Mann’s description of Germany as “[d]as unliterarische Land” (MBU, 54). (In literature Germany had no comparative advantage like that generated in music and *Wissenschaft* by the lavish public funding of the pre-1871 states.) Once art was no longer controlled by religious imperatives, Weber considered it to be an aristocratic preserve: first, of a formally privileged elite and then, under 20th century circumstances, of a qualitatively gifted minority. Hence this judgement: “Der Kunstgenuß erfordert ein weit größeres Maß von Schulung, und Kunst ist weit aristokratischeren Gepräges, als Literatur gerade in ihren größten Leistungen”.³⁹ This then allowed him to turn the *Literat* into a pejorative, just like Mann.

However, there are clear differences alongside these similarities. Most obviously, Weber had no formed idea of literature. So far as print culture was concerned, his interests ran all the way from high culture to the newspapers whose

36 Paul Honigsheim: *Erinnerungen an Max Weber*. In: René König/Johannes Winckelmann (eds.): *Max Weber zum Gedächtnis. Materialien und Dokumente zur Bewertung von Werk und Persönlichkeit*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1963, pp. 161–271, here p. 243.

37 Max Weber: *Wahlrecht und Demokratie in Deutschland* [1917]. In: *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. I/15: *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 347–96, here p. 374–6; cf. Max Weber: “Kirchen” und “Sekten” in Nordamerika [1906]. In: Bd. I/9: *Asketischer Protestantismus und Kapitalismus*. Ed. Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014, pp. 435–62, here p. 447.

38 For Mann impressionist art was ‘Realismus’ (MBU, p. 614). The only painter who receives anything more than the most cursory attention is Dürer.

39 Max Weber: *Die Nationalität in ihrer soziologischen Bedeutung* [1912]. In: *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. I/12: *Verstehende Soziologie und Werturteilsfreiheit*. Ed. Johannes Weiß. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018, pp. 307–15, here p. 309.

content (in turn) ran “von der Sport- und Rätsecke bis zum Roman” as well as news, a perspective which left relatively little space to reflect on the literary authors who make up so much of Mann’s universe.⁴⁰ Thus Weber refers to ‘literature’ indiscriminately across the full miscellany of its ordinary meanings: religious, academic, national, with just the occasional reference to “schöner Literatur”.⁴¹ Nor was his attack on *Literaten* defined by an idea of literature. The *Literat* was one of several terms he used to lambast opponents in public debate (mainly academics) for what he saw as their ignorance of harsh realities about modernity: the rise of capitalism, impersonal rationalization, great power politics, and the need to uphold a shared “value-free” foundation to *Wissenschaft* in order to render it compatible with these other trends. In fact his use of the term *literati* derived from an accident. It was a part of the Western translation for what, more literally, was the ‘doctrine of the scholars’, *ju kiao*, or Confucianism in China.⁴² On the other hand, Weber may well have found the conjunction of Chinese *Bildung* with bureaucracy suggestive. He certainly saw an excessive promotion of literary culture in the public sphere as a source of mental softness and sloth, regardless of his own complicity in it. Hence an intemperate, if unusual, demand: “in die Ecke mit den alten Scharteken”, “die deutschen Klassiker”, which were only relevant to the era when Germany was not a nation state.⁴³ This sets his use of Goethe in perspective, and reminds us that, while Weber was well aware of the other, ‘unpolitical’ Germany, he was of course highly politicised.

However, Weber’s greatest difference from Mann lies not in any disagreement but in a different situation and viewpoint. Where for Mann art was central to life, not least his own, for Weber it was something external. Weber took over Lukács’ starting point, “es gibt Kunstwerke – wie sind sie möglich?”, since it expressed his view that ‘art’ was a definite something that must be defined and discussed in relation to social phenomena: above all, religion and the processes of secularization.⁴⁴

40 Max Weber: Rede auf dem ersten Deutschen Soziologentag [1910]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/13: Hochschulwesen und Wissenschaftspolitik. Ed. Rainer M. Lepsius and Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2016, pp. 258–86, here p. 271.

41 Max Weber: Protestantische Ethik. In: M.W.: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Religionssoziologie I. Tübingen: Mohr 1920, pp. 17–206, here p. 186, note 1.

42 Ghosh: Max Weber and the literati (note 19), pp. 213f.

43 Weber: Wahlrecht und Demokratie (note 37), p. 390.

44 Georg Lukács: Heidelberg Philosophie der Kunst (1912–1914). Ed. György Markus and Frank Benseler. Neuwied: Luchterhand 1974, p. 9. Compare Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf [1917/1919]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/17: Wissenschaft als Beruf / Politik als Beruf. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1992, pp. 71–111, here p. 107. See also Max Weber to Georg Lukács, 10.03.1913 and 22.03.1913. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd II/8, pp. 116, 135. Éva Karádi: Ernst Bloch and Georg Lukács in Max Weber’s Heidelberg. In: Wolfgang

Mann conversely was fiercely hostile to Weber's fundamental reference point: society. If there was a formula underlying social organisation, it was "die Formel des menschlichen Ameisenbaus, des menschlichen Bienenstocks" (MBU, 577). Now stripped of its gall, this definition was one that Weber, like the most famous contemporary exponent of this idea, Ferdinand Tönnies, would have accepted.⁴⁵ But whereas for the social scientist this was a stimulus to thought – what could one meaningfully say about this society made up of a swarm of individuals? – to Mann it was a dead end, and his aversion to thinking about society is an equivalent to Weber's disinclination to think about literature. For Mann,

[d]er Mensch ist nicht nur ein soziales, sondern auch ein metaphysisches Wesen; mit anderen Worten, er ist nicht nur Individuum, sondern auch Persönlichkeit. Es ist darum falsch, das Überindividuelle mit dem Sozialen zu verwechseln, es ganz ins Soziale zu verlegen: man läßt dabei das metaphysisch Überindividuelle außer Acht; denn die Persönlichkeit, nicht die Masse, ist die eigentliche Trägerin des Allgemeinen. (MBU, 271)

If one wished to go beyond the individual person, one must look to other, metaphysical entities, the *Nation*, *Volk* or state, since it was only through these, and not society, that a supra-individual unity was achieved. (The stringently nominalist and individualist Weber rejected "Solche Begriffe wie 'Wille des Volkes'" as "*Fiktionen*".)⁴⁶ This viewpoint allowed Mann to focus on great artists and *Dichter*, whereas Weber the social scientist had relatively little to say about music or art as autonomous spheres in their own right, just as the hallmark of modern life was its (capitalist and bureaucratic) impersonality.

So Weber's untitled text on music (1913) only treats those aspects of music that can be grasped according to social categories he applies in all areas of life: for example, the rise of tonality as a species of rationalization, or the correlation between musical consumption and the social profile of the bourgeoisie.⁴⁷ When after writing it Weber suggested that he might one day produce "eine Soziologie der *Cultur-Inhalte* (Kunst, Litteratur, Weltanschauung)", his interest lay in sociology; he did not

J. Mommsen/Jürgen Osterhammel (eds.): Max Weber and his Contemporaries. London: Routledge 1987, pp. 499–514.

45 For Weber's approval of Ferdinand Tönnies: *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft*, see for example Max Weber: *Grundriss der Sozialökonomik. Abt. III: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*. Tübingen: Mohr 1921–1922, p. 1. Cited hereafter with the abbreviation WuG and page number.

46 Max Weber to Robert Michels, 04.08.1908. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd II/6, p. 615.

47 Max Weber: *Zur Musiksoziologie*. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/13. Ed. Christoph Braun. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2004; Christoph Braun: Max Webers "Musiksoziologie". Laaber: Laaber-Verlag 1992.

intend to discuss artistic content as such.⁴⁸ In literature Weber's embrace of interdisciplinary social science after 1902 signalled a not inconsiderable engagement with contemporary writing. Yet a positive valuation of literature only attached to figures whom he felt able to interpret in a religious or post-religious light, since religion (as the *Protestant Ethic* tells us) was the overarching framework from which "moderne [...] Kultur" emerged.⁴⁹ Thus the primary figures in Weber's eccentric literary pantheon were Tolstoy and Stefan George. He regarded Tolstoy as an uncompromising exponent of New Testament literalism – something only possible in a Russian and non-Western context – which meant that his most interesting literary work was *Resurrection* (1899).⁵⁰ George and the circle around him were to be seen as modern, secular examples of sect formation, while Tolstoy, George and also Rilke appeared as 'akosmistisch' mystics, congruent with Weber's belief that the highest modern art must be private and not monumental.⁵¹ Mann's lack of religiosity, all the more compelling because it was so unforced, would have made it

48 Max Weber to Paul Siebeck, 30.12.1913. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd II/8, p. 450. "Weltanschauung" here means philosophy. See a synopsis of his views in Max Weber: Der Sinn der "Wertfreiheit" ... [1917]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/12: Verstehende Soziologie und Werturteilsfreiheit. Schriften und Reden 1908–1917. Ed. Johannes Weiß. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018, pp. 485–491.

49 Weber: 'Protestantische Ethik' 1905 (note 17), p. 107; Weber: Objektivität (note 16), p. 208. In the *Protestant Ethic* Gottfried Keller, a favourite of Weber's, is a pre-modern, Christian artist, who presents a kind of analogy to John Bunyan (ibid., p. 14).

50 Max Weber: 'Zwischenbetrachtung'. In: *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft* 41 (1915), pp. 387–421, here p. 411; Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf (note 44), pp. 87f., 93, 105; on *Resurrection* see for example Max Weber to Helene Weber, 13./14.04.1906. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). 1906–1908. Bd. II/5, p. 75. See further Ghosh: Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic (note 20), pp. 291ff.; Edith Hanke: Prophet des Unmodernen. Leo N. Tolstoi als Kulturkritiker in der deutschen Diskussion der Jahrhundertwende. Tübingen: Niemeyer 1993, especially chapter II.3. Mann's attitude towards Tolstoy was ambivalent. He showed up Zola's realism as second-rate and he had elemental force; yet, he was also a democrat, who made the Franco-Russian alliance comprehensible; and he paled in significance besides Dostoevsky, whose conception of religion in secular and national terms was so agreeable to Mann (MBU, 545–581 passim). By contrast while Weber read *The Brothers Karamazov*, he attributed no significance to Dostoevsky independently of Tolstoy: see for example Max Weber: Das stoisch-christliche Naturrecht... [1910]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/9: Asketischer Protestantismus und Kapitalismus. Ed. Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2014, pp. 747–64, here pp. 756–8; Max Weber: Religionssoziologie [1913]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/22-2: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Religiöse Gemeinschaften. Ed. Hans Kippenberg. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001, p. 288.

51 Weber: Rede auf dem ersten Deutschen Soziologentag (note 40), p. 282 (George); Weber: Das stoisch-christliche Naturrecht (note 50)], p. 756 (Tolstoy); Max Weber to Dora Jelinek, 09.06.1910; Max Weber to Lili Schäfer, 25.07.1910 and 20.09.1910. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd. II/6, pp. 559–563, 589–90, 615–7. See also Marianne Weber: Max Weber (note 33), pp. 463–472. Monumental art: Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf (note 44), p. 110.

hard for his writings to be interpreted on these lines, and Weber's personal contact with George and his circle could only have confirmed this view. They saw him as effete and decadent while, conversely, Mann was hardly prepared to admit George through the portals of German *Kultur*, even in wartime (MBU, 93–4, 117).⁵²

Yet Weber's respect for art was extremely high. His belief that "die ursprüngliche Beziehung" between art and religiosity was "die denkbar intimste" shows him conceiving of art in the highest possible terms after religion.⁵³ However, the modern secular creation of art as an independent sphere detached from religion meant that it had lost its *raison d'être*. It could now only offer "jene innerweltliche Erlösung, welche die Kunst nur rein als Kunst zu geben beansprucht" (here was Lukács' and Mann's *l'art pour l'art*), or a cloudy appeal to good taste rather than moral judgement. This shift was the product of "intellektualistischer Zivilisation", which for Weber signified a flexible and transferable modernist overlay upon a more rooted *Kultur*.⁵⁴ (There is a distant kinship to Mann's pejorative 'Zivilisation' here, but this is an uncommon usage for Weber. Not only does he lack Mann's judgmental and anti-French animus, but his identification of civilisation with art goes clean contrary to Mann.) Still he wondered whether it retained something of its original quasi-religious potency and hence "ob das Reich der Kunst nicht vielleicht ein Reich diabolischer Herrlichkeit sei?"⁵⁵ And overall Weber's idea of art as an elite activity, standing outside conventional morality, "deren Wesen von Grund aus arationalen oder antirationalen Charakters ist",⁵⁶ is not unlike Mann's: Mann too called art "die Sublimierung des Dämonischen".⁵⁷ But its placement is different. Thus Weber's closest analogy to the idea of artistic creativity does not lie in 'art' itself but in *Phantasie*. Like art this was beyond analysis, but it existed in all walks of life: for the mathematician, the entrepreneur, and for ordinary people.⁵⁸

52 Cf. T. J. Reed: Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1974, pp. 20 and note 31, 98f., 175. Mann's friendly relations with Ernst Bertram in the decade 1910–20 did not alter this.

53 Weber: Religionssoziologie (note 50), p. 410.

54 Weber: Religionssoziologie (note 50), p. 411. Cf. Max Weber: Rußlands Übergang zum Scheinkonstitutionalismus [1906]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/10: Zur Russischen Revolution von 1905. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Dittmar Dahlmann. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1989, pp. 293–679, here p. 477; Max Weber: Zur Frage des Friedensschließens [1915]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 54–67, here p. 55; Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf (note 44), p. 88.

55 Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf (note 44), p. 94.

56 Weber: Zwischenbetrachtung (note 50), p. 404.

57 Mann: Gedanken im Kriege (note 25), p. 28.

58 Weber: Objektivität (note 16), p. 208; Weber: 'Protestantische Ethik' 1904 (note 17), p. 30; Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf (note 44), pp. 81–3.

Despite Weber's want of interest in commenting on art, there are occasional exceptions. One set of remarks that comes close to Mann's agenda considers the relationship between German-language literature and the *kleindeutsch* nation-state. Weber supposed that while the *Prestige* deriving from great power politics might indirectly promote the prestige of a national *Kultur*, it was doubtful that political power promoted *Kultur* as such. As he noted c.1910, "Reine Kunst und Literatur von deutscher *Eigenart* sind *nicht* im politischen *Zentrum* Deutschlands entstanden" since 1870,⁵⁹ which does not suggest that the author of *Buddenbrooks* was of any great consequence to him. Furthermore, whatever indirect benefits a possible German victory in the World War might have for German *Kultur* reaching beyond the nation-state, Weber was clear that this was not a war for national *Kultur*. It was about power politics, "die Gesetzlichkeit des 'Macht-Pragma', das alle politische Geschichte beherrscht". If one thought differently then the best (but no longer practicable) strategy was to go back to the status quo *ante* 1871.⁶⁰ Here was a clear repudiation of Mann's claim (or of the famous 'Appeal' of the 93 artists and academics who lined up in defence of the war effort in October 1914)⁶¹ that the defence of German *Kultur* was a central object of the war.

Weber's *Beruf* was academic *Wissenschaft*. It was a proud edifice very unlike Mann's ambiguous *Geist*, which presented the "denkende Ordnung der empirischen Wirklichkeit" – the complex social infinity Mann refused to confront.⁶² The most distinctive feature in this conception was Weber's uniquely stringent insistence that its fruit should be "international" and "wertfrei": accessible even outside the Occi-

⁵⁹ Max Weber: Machtgebilde. "Nation". In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/22-1: Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Gemeinschaften. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001, pp. 222–47, here p. 247.

⁶⁰ Max Weber: Zwischen zwei Gesetzen [1916]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 95–8, here p. 98.

⁶¹ 'An die Kulturwelt!', 4 October 1914. In: Jürgen and Wolfgang von Ungern-Sternberg: Der Aufruf, "An die Kulturwelt!" Stuttgart: Franz Steiner 1996, 144–7, here p. 145: "Es ist nicht wahr, daß der Kampf gegen unseren sogenannten Militarismus kein Kampf gegen unsere Kultur ist [...]. Glaubt, daß wir diesen Kampf zu Ende kämpfen werden als ein Kulturvolk, dem das Vermächtnis eines Goethe, eines Beethoven, eines Kant ebenso heilig ist wie sein Herd und seine Scholle." This appeal was unusual because it was initiated by artists and writers rather than academics: *ibid.*, pp. 27–48. It was prepared in September 1914 and published 1–2 October. However, Mann's name does not appear. His patriotic stance did not become public until *Gedanken im Kriege*, published in November, and it may be that he was not invited to sign because he was perceived as unlikely to do so: "so war ich [...] viel zu urban und auch zu kosmopolitisch umgetan, um in Zeiten friedlicher Arbeit mit dem Nationalen einen trumpfenden Unfug zu treiben" (MBU, 202–3). In any case it is another mark of his isolation.

⁶² Weber: Objektivität (note 16), p. 148. Cf. Weber: Wissenschaft als Beruf (note 44), pp. 104–111.

dent, for example “einem Chinesen”.⁶³ This was a response to a much broader phenomenon: the perceived breakdown of traditional values, or what the theologian Ernst Troeltsch called “die Anarchie der Werte”,⁶⁴ that was widespread across Western Europe before 1914. This discussion was of course familiar to Mann, a man of no religious faith, an explorer of homoeroticism in his writings, and a longstanding reader of Nietzsche,⁶⁵ one of the first and most outspoken ‘anarchists’ in this sense. Mann knew nothing of Weber’s extremely original construction of ethics and values in two tiers, where formally rational procedures and imperatives which were effectively universal and uncontested – as for example in *Wissenschaft*, law, bureaucracy and the capitalist market – framed a diverse plurality of substantive choices for individuals in the areas that most concerned the artistic *avant-garde*, such as religion, sexuality and aesthetics.⁶⁶ Yet in the *Betrachtungen*, he presents his own resolution to these problems – a set of views that is of course present in all his writing but which here appears in peculiarly explicit terms. Thus he upholds the outward immorality and irresponsibility of art and artists; and he flays conventional *Tugend*, which for wartime purposes can conveniently be associated with the Western *Entente*. Yet genuine art flows (as we saw) seamlessly into metaphysics, morals and even *Glaube*.⁶⁷ These two schemes are very different – Mann sidelines the Nietzschean and intrinsically analytical idea of value that was central for Weber (MBU, 561–2) – yet they both have a rooted opposition to relativism, “laxes und formwidriges *tout comprendre*” (MBU, 31).⁶⁸ It is another example of the underlying unity-in-diversity which is symptomatic of German-speaking *Kultur* at this date.

Even so, one of the few simple truths about Mann is his want of interest in *Wissenschaft*. This goes back to his alienation from school education, and for Mann the artist there was “keine objektive Erkenntnis [...], nur eine intuitive und lyrische” (MBU, 562). He devoted no serious thought to the idea of *Wissenschaft* (as distinct

63 Respectively Weber: *Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik* (note 6), p. 559; Max Weber: *Beitrag... im Ausschuß des Vereins für Sozialpolitik* [1913]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/12: *Verstehende Soziologie und Werturteilsfreiheit*. Ed. Johannes Weiß. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018, pp. 336–382; Weber: *Objektivität* (note 16), p. 155.

64 Ghosh: *Max Weber and the Protestant Ethic* (note 20), p. 105.

65 Kurzke dates Mann’s ‘Nietzsche-Faszination’ to 1894 at the latest: Hermann Kurzke: *Thomas Mann. Das Leben als Kunstwerk*. München: Beck 1999, p. 39.

66 Peter Ghosh: *Max Weber’s ethics for the modern world*. In: Edith Hanke/Lawrence Scaff/Sam Whimster (eds.): *The Oxford Handbook of Max Weber*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2019, pp. 313–333.

67 Compare the chapters in the *Betrachtungen*, ‘Von der Tugend’ (MBU, 408–65) and ‘Vom Glauben’ (MBU, 533–83), but these subjects run through the entire text.

68 Compare Weber: *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (note 44), p. 110: “schwächliche Relativierung”.

from his literary interest in particular disciplines)⁶⁹ prior to 1914, and in the *Be-trachtungen* he attaches an inchoate spectrum of meanings to it. For example, it was routinely significant as one of several areas of free intellectual activity alongside religion, philosophy, art, and poetry (MBU, 121, 272). Yet he had little interest in the uniquely high status of the German universities across the then developed world – this was something he read about in a Spanish newspaper⁷⁰ – and more often than not he gave way to ignorance and apathy. Like Weber he recognised the “homogen-internationalen” character of the sciences, but that made them irrelevant in the national context that concerned him (MBU, 276). He saw that science as the agent of objective intellectual inquiry was ethically “indifferent”, but this was hardly a mark of approval, and it suggests that Mann, had he had any interest in the question, would not have approved of ‘value-free’ science (MBU, 636). More straightforwardly, there was simple vituperation: “Was ist heute Wissenschaft? Enges und hartes Spezialistentum zum Zwecke des Nutzens, der Ausbeutung und Herrschaft” (MBU, 151). However, *Wissenschaft* was too uninteresting to be a target, and Mann’s nearest equivalent to Weber’s *Wissenschaft* in his demonology is *Geist*, which went back to his major, but unrealised pre-war project to write an essay on *Geist und Kunst*.⁷¹ *Geist* embraces all the operations of mind “im Sinne der Vernunft, der Sittigung, des Zweifels, der Aufklärung und endlich der *Auflösung*” (MBU, 185–6).⁷² Much of this was or might be necessary and legitimate, but even so, mind alone was an inferior sphere in that it included neither art nor *Kultur*.

Where art was the sphere of life and freedom which led into order, *Kultur* was the principle of order which compensated for art’s outwardly “unzuverlässige[-]”, “Zigeuner” tendencies (MBU, 431, 438). It was “Würde, [...] Haltung, [...] Form” which supplied the “inneren Tyrannen” and “absoluten Werttafeln” that Nietzsche had called for (MBU, 561–2). Mann claimed that the antithesis he drew between *Kultur* and civilisation established a clarity in regard to these terms that was previously lacking (MBU, 185). Now so far as *Kultur* is concerned this simply reveals Mann’s ignorance, and of academic writing above all. There could hardly be stability or uniformity here when discussion of the term was so profuse – Weber is but one

69 Dietrich von Engelhardt/Hans Wißkirchen (eds.): *Thomas Mann und die Wissenschaften*. Lübeck: Dräger Dr. 1999.

70 Mann: *Gedanken im Kriege* (note 25), p. 43.

71 See Mann: *Der Literat* (note 30), p. 354; Hans Wysling: “Geist und Kunst”. *Thomas Manns Notizen zu einem „Literatur-Essay“*. In: Paul Scherrer/H.W.: *Quellenkritische Studien zum Werk Thomas Manns*. Bern/München: Francke 1967 (*Thomas-Mann-Studien* 1), pp. 123–227.

72 Compare Thomas Mann: *Notizen* (II) [1909]. In: T.M.: *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Bd. 14/1: *Essays I: 1893–1914*. Ed. Heinrich Detering. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2008, pp. 211–6, here pp. 213–4.

writer among hundreds. However, Weber's under-developed thinking regarding 'civilisation' suggests that there may have been justice in the other half of the claim. Paradoxically civilisation was the idea that Mann developed most. By contrast *Kultur* suffered, even though it was the object of his esteem. In the *Betrachtungen* there is in fact only one *Kultur*, that of Germany in its "nationale[n] Vereinsamung" (MBU, 97); the rest of the world has civilisation. Thus the contrast between them is not so much a conceptual one but that "des Krieges der 'Zivilisation' gegen Deutschland" (MBU, 36). Mann may place *Kultur* above civilisation, but civilisation is effectively universal whereas *Kultur* is not, and so it withers.

Mann has considerable difficulty even in defining German *Kultur*. Evidently it has music and art at its core, yet it must also embrace the German *Volk* as a whole (here drawing on Nietzsche).⁷³ This causes Mann to search for attributes such as "Romantik, Nationalismus, Bürgerlichkeit, Musik, Pessimismus, Humor" (MBU, 25) to which might be added barbarism, militarism, metaphysics and hostility to politics.⁷⁴ But at the same time, as we saw, he highlights the uniquely plural and divided nature of 'Germany', which leads to the conclusion (also Nietzschean) that "Deutschland ist keine Nation" (MBU, 213). None of this answers the central question: what was *Kultur* other than a catalogue specific to Germany? In what sense was it (as he claimed in 1909) "Geschlossenheit, Stil, Form, [...] irgendeine gewisse geistige Organisation der Welt"?⁷⁵ In fact these apparently neutral and universal terms are spurious because after 1914 *Kultur* only exists as *Nationalkultur*: "Wert, Würde und Reiz aller Nationalkultur [...] liegt ausgemacht in dem was sie von anderen unterscheidet, denn nur dies eben ist daran Kultur, zum Unterschiede von dem, was allen Nationen gemeinsam ist und nur Zivilisation ist" (MBU, 271). (Here is a case where Mann's attempts to find pre-war roots for his wartime thinking break down.) Because of the absolute specificity of *Kultur* and its embodiment, Germany, making a conceptual and universal argument on its behalf is extremely difficult, perhaps even impossible. As Mann tells us, "Deutschland [...] hatte kein Wort, es war wortlos, es war nicht wortliebend und wortgläubig, wie die Zivilisation", the alternative, rhetorical organisation of the world (MBU, 10 cf. 177, 306, 350).⁷⁶ But abandoning the

73 Friedrich Nietzsche: *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* [1873–1876]. In: F.N: *Werke*. Ed. Karl Schlechta. München: Hanser 1966. Bd. I, pp. 140, 233.

74 See on these lines Philipp Gut: *Thomas Manns Idee einer deutschen Kultur*. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2008, c.2.

75 Mann: *Notizen* (II) (note 71), p. 213; repeated in MBU, 185–7.

76 Later Mann forgets his admission that *Kultur* is "Organisation" and tries to create a distinction between civilization as "Organisation" and *Kultur* as an "Organismus". Here, verbal ingenuity – the skills of the *Literat* – outstrips any real return (MBU, 306).

field of discourse to the *Literaten* comes at a cost. If Germany is wordless, so too is *Kultur* and it cannot play the role for Mann that it does in Weber's thinking.

For Weber "[d]er Begriff der Kultur ist ein *Wertbegriff*".⁷⁷ This refers to the values of individuals, all individuals, German and non-German. *Kultur* is defined in universal terms and it becomes an instrument of immense power. It could expand or contract according to the range of individuals under consideration – for example, a multiplicity of national *Kulturen* was an inescapable reality⁷⁸ – but its principal meaning was universal in another sense: that of the "modernen Kultur" which bound together the Occident, Germany included.⁷⁹ At first sight one might suppose that there is a simple opposition between Mann and Weber here: is not Weber's Occidental *Kultur* Mann's *Zivilisation*? Yet one of many paradoxes about Mann is that, for all his insistence on an irreducible German *Kultur*, it has remarkably open frontiers: "In Deutschlands Seele werden die geistigen Gegensätze *Europas* ausgetragen" (MBU, 60 cf. 126). Hence the conventional recognition that the German *Bürger* was a *Weltbürger*: Mann is "ächte[r] deutsche[r] Patriot[-]/[...] und Weltbürger" (MBU, 640).⁸⁰ Furthermore, in the contrast between the *Kultur* of Germany and the civilization of the West, it is the categories of the latter which exert traction, however debased they may be, because they are universal or at least European: enlightenment, rationalism, liberalism, democracy. To these must be added those areas where distinctions between Germany and the outside world are wafer-thin, as between the German *Bürger* and the cosmopolitan *bourgeois*, the German *Volksstaat* and French 'democracy' (MBU, 268); and then there is the set of universals Mann takes up in his chapter headings which are not confined to the 'Western' or *Entente* lands, though they could be subjects of dispute: *Recht/droit*, truth, virtue, faith, humanity. So however important German *Kultur* was to Mann, it was always open to subversion from within and invasion from without.

Just as Mann is both national and cosmopolitan, Weber too has a dual identity. There is Weber, the politically engaged advocate of the nation-state, and Weber the value-free theorist, for whom the 'nation' had no conceptual status. He considered the unitary *Volk* to be a fiction (as we saw) while the nation-state was just one more form of "Machtorganisation".⁸¹ The *Nation* (though not the *Volk*) could be tolerated

⁷⁷ Weber: *Objektivität* (note 16), p. 182.

⁷⁸ Weber: *Wissenschaft als Beruf* (note 44), p. 100.

⁷⁹ Weber: 'Protestantische Ethik' 1905 (note 17), p. 107.

⁸⁰ Cf. Friedrich Meinecke: *Weltbürgertum und Nationalstaat. Studien zur Genesis des deutschen Nationalstaats*. Berlin: Oldenbourg 1908.

⁸¹ Weber: *Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik* (note 6), p. 561. Given Weber's insistence on "value-free" *Wissenschaft*, this distinction ought to be self-evident, but in regard to the nation it is persistently ignored. See recently: Dieter Langewiesche: *Nation bei Max Weber: soziologische Kate-*

in political argument, but it had no place in *Wissenschaft*. Hence another significant coincidence at the end of two long and winding roads: both Mann and Weber preferred to speak on behalf of what was ‘national’ rather than as ‘nationalists’, a term with evident chauvinist overtones (MBU, 532).⁸²

III

Having looked at Mann’s and Weber’s personal identities, we turn to specific areas where there might be supposed to be some commonality of outlook. Most obviously one asks: what is the significance of Mann’s reference to the *Protestant Ethic*?

As noted, both Mann and Weber were keenly interested in the debates over the possible dissolution of conventional ethics that mushroomed in Germany after c.1890, and both had family connections to the world of business and commerce. For Mann this was his father, and for Weber his uncle, the linen manufacturer Carl David Weber,⁸³ though Weber’s interest in this world was just as much formed through intellectual links: the commercial law in which he was trained and the emergent ‘social question’ in German politics after c.1880. For both, therefore, forms of ethical prescription in modern business life were of interest and this could produce striking coincidences. Besides the shared use of Goethe noted above, consider the injunction written in a Lutheran bible that recurs in the history of the Buddenbrook dynasty: “Mein Sohn, sey mit Lust bei den Geschäften am Tage, aber mache nur solche, daß wir bey Nacht ruhig schlafen können”.⁸⁴ In the *Protestant Ethic* (1904–1905) Weber quotes an analogous remark comparing attitudes to commercial life of Protestants and Catholics in Baden in the late 1890s: “Der Volksmund meint scherzhaft: entweder gut essen, oder ruhig schlafen. Im vorliegenden Fall ißt der Protestant gern gut, während der Katholik ruhig schlafen will”.⁸⁵ The prescriptions for conduct given here are by no means identical, but both Mann and Weber are interested in the same kind of popular and proverbial wisdom. A shared interest in ethical conceptions that are becoming detached from Christian orthodoxy leads

gorie und politisches Bekenntnis. In: Detlef Lehnert (ed.): Max Weber 1864–1920. Politik – Theorie – Wegegefährten. Köln/Weimar/Wien: Böhlau 2016, pp. 39–65.

⁸² See for example Weber: *Wahlrecht und Demokratie* (note 37), p. 349.

⁸³ Guenther Roth: *Max Webers deutsch-englische Familiengeschichte 1800–1950. Mit Briefen und Dokumenten*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2001, pp. 250–257.

⁸⁴ Thomas Mann: *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Bd. I/1: *Buddenbrooks. Verfall einer Familie*. Ed. Eckhard Heftrich. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 62, 190, 530.

⁸⁵ Weber: ‘*Protestantische Ethik*’ 1904 (note 17), p. 7, citing Martin Offenbacher: *Konfession und soziale Schichtung. Eine Studie über die wirtschaftliche Lage der Katholiken und Protestanten in Baden*. Tübingen: H. Laupp 1901, p. 68.

them to search for terms to describe this state of affairs, and they respond in similar fashion. They invoke a wide range of existing terms, *Moral*, *Sitte*, *Ethik*, *Tugend* (Mann), *Gesinnung* (Weber), but they also innovate. Both latch on to the same word, *Ethos*, which in the 19th century has been confined to use connected to its classical Greek root, but which begins to take off after 1900 in a more expansive and indiscriminate sense. For example, Weber prefers “protestantische Ethik” for the 17th century and “moderne[s] Wirtschaftsethos” in his own day.⁸⁶ The innovation also takes place at much the same time: Mann in the *Betrachtungen* (1918), Weber in 1917–1920. *Ethos* is a deliberately unexciting, neutral term; it does not stand out; but, like the use of *Literat*, it is testimony to a shared interest in language and shared linguistic community.

Besides these general perspectives, there is a more particular story. The bulk of the *Betrachtungen* derives from the ‘literary’ authors that Mann knew so well – more accurately *Dichter* writing in a variety of voices and non-literary authors who spoke to *Dichter*. However, in setting out upon the new enterprise of writing against or amidst politics, he made a concession to a more orthodox, academic mode of inquiry and consulted Emil Hammacher’s *Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur* (1914), a kind of superior *Reader’s Digest* written by a lecturer in philosophy, designed to introduce “eine[n] gebildeten Laien” to a wide range of subjects.⁸⁷ (Mann’s use of Georg Lukács’ essays in literary criticism, *Die Seele und die Formen* [1911], a genre he professed to despise, was another concession of this kind.)⁸⁸ A remark here about “neuere Untersuchungen” which identified Calvinism as having made “die rastlose Arbeit insbesondere wirtschaftlicher Art zum Inhalt der neuen Askese” caught Mann’s attention, and an endnote directed him to the *Protestant Ethic*, along with supplementary references to Ernst Troeltsch and Werner Sombart’s *Der Bourgeois* (1913).⁸⁹ Contrary to the suggestion of his modern editor,⁹⁰ Mann almost certainly

86 Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ [Vorbemerkung] (note 41), p. 12 (quotation); cf. pp. 33f., 38, note 1, 52. Earlier uses occur in Weber: *Wahlrecht und Demokratie* (note 37), pp. 356f., both times in a ‘capitalist’ context. Compare MBU, 29–30, 33, 42. *Ethos* does not appear in the original, 1904–5 text of the *Protestant Ethic*.

87 Emil Hammacher: *Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur*. Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner 1914, Vorwort, p. III.

88 Mann knew this book from its first publication because Lukács had mentioned *Buddenbrooks* as a ‘monumental’ portrait of ‘the mood of decay’ in German bourgeois life: Georg Lukács: *Die Seele und die Formen*. Essays. Berlin: Fleischel 1911, p. 165. The chapter in which this remark appeared, ‘Bürgerlichkeit und l’art pour l’art’, was also the one he drew on most in *Betrachtungen* (MBU, 112–163). But this does not alter the general point.

89 Hammacher: *Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur* (note 86), p. 14; cf. p. 298.

90 See originally Hermann Kurzke: *Die Quellen der “Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen”*. Ein Zwischenbericht. In: Internationales Thomas-Mann-Kolloquium [1], 1987, in Lübeck. Bern: Francke

followed up his reading of Hammacher by consulting Weber's text. This may seem unlikely, given Mann's aversion to academic *Wissenschaft*, yet the claim he wished to make was important to him. The point of contact between Mann and Weber appears in a chapter on what it means to be bourgeois, or more precisely, the metamorphosis of the healthy German *Bürger* of past times into the modern *bourgeois* who, as the term suggests, had taken on board a mutant French and international component (MBU, 148–9). Mann then comments:

Ich lege einigen Wert auf die Feststellung, daß ich den Gedanken, der modern-kapitalistische Erwerbsmensch, der Bourgeois mit seiner *asketischen* Idee der Berufspflicht sei ein Geschöpf protestantischer Ethik, des Puritanismus und Calvinismus, völlig auf eigene Hand, ohne Lektüre, durch unmittelbare Einsicht erfüllte und erfand und erst nachträglich, vor kurzem, bemerkt habe, daß er gleichzeitig von gelehrten Denkern gedacht und ausgesprochen worden. Max Weber in Heidelberg und nach ihm Ernst Troeltsch haben über 'die protestantische Ethik und den Geist des Kapitalismus' gehandelt, und auf die Spitze getrieben findet sich der Gedanke in Werner Sombarts 1913 erschienenem Werke 'Der Bourgeois', – welches den kapitalistischen Unternehmer als Synthese des Helden, Händlers und Bürgers deutet. (MBU, 159)

Now Mann the artist was not seeking instruction from Weber the man of science. Hence the summary treatment of the text here. Still it includes some extra matter, the emphasis on the crucial words '*ascetic*' and 'Puritanism', which do not appear in Hammacher's digest. This suggests that Mann did consult the text of the *Protestant Ethic*, and conclusive evidence on this point comes from outside the *Betrachtungen*, where he refers to the *Protestant Ethic's* distinctive sub-title and mantra "innerweltliche Askese".⁹¹ But while Weber's eminent academic contemporaries – Troeltsch, Sombart, Lujo Brentano – were radically unsettled by the *Protestant Ethic* and driven to extensive responses and reconstructions of their ideas, Mann's reaction was different. For Mann the text was a remarkable confirmation from an unexpected quarter of insights expressed in his pre-war fictional creations: in particular, Thomas Buddenbrook, the merchant trader who is central to *Buddenbrooks* (1901). Weber's central emphasis on asceticism was also familiar to him from Nietzsche – above all the famous discussion of "Was bedeuten asketische Ideale" in

1987 (Thomas-Mann-Studien VII), pp. 291–310, here p. 296 and note 28. Then MBU, p. 265. As a matter of principle I strongly support Kurzke's refusal to be impressed by Weber's name in the apparent absence of evidence to support this claim.

⁹¹ Thomas Mann: Diary entry 09.10.1918. In: T.M.: Tagebücher 1918–1921 (note 13), p. 28; Rede gehalten zur Feier... Friedrich Nietzsches, 15 Oct. 1924; Briefe aus Deutschland [VI], [October 1925]. In Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 15.1: Essays II: 1914–1926. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 790, 1007. Compare Weber: 'Protestantische Ethik' 1905 (note 17), pp. 1–73: 'Die religiösen Grundlagen der innerweltlichen Askese'.

Zur Genealogie der Moral (MBU, 94).⁹² Hence the (mistaken) supposition that “die psychologische Reihe ‘Kalvinismus, Bürgerlichkeit, Heldentum’” could only have been conceived under Nietzsche’s influence (MBU, 160). So Mann considered that he, not Weber, was the original. He had got there before “den gelehrten Psychologen des Kapitalismus” (MBU, 161), and this was another instance – alongside the pre-war definition of the *Literat* and the antithesis between *Kultur* and civilisation – where Mann could persuade himself that the war, though a turning point and maelstrom, had not detached him from his roots.

Nonetheless Mann’s use of this argument is surprising. The “Protestant ethic” (eg. MBU, 161, 349)⁹³ is presented as an alien incursion, corroding a more authentic German *Kultur* which had always been Protestant and protesting: “Nicht allein jene Formel des Protestantismus, die sich zu Luthers Zeiten entwickelte, sondern sein ewiges Protestantentum, sein ewiger Protest” going all the way back to Arminius ‘protesting’ against the Romans (MBU, 46). In wartime Mann sees Protestant Germany as ranged against a coalition led by France and French *Bourgeois*: “das Frankreich Poincarés und Eduards des Siebenten, das Frankreich des russischen Bündnis” (MBU, 195). But this raises an obvious question: the *Entente* has no religious identity, so how can the Protestant ethic be an invasion from without? Weber’s text, by contrast, is wholly rooted in Protestant lands. He may not rail against the French, but his demotion of French enlightenment and “Voltairianismus” is explicit,⁹⁴ and his blindness towards contemporary French *science* total. If Mann had wished to use Weber in support of the division between Germanic and Romance *Kultur*, he would have been fully entitled to do so; but instead the Protestant ethic is arrayed on the French and Romance side. There is an obvious message here. Mann is infinitely casual in regard to all things Christian: “so brüste ich mich nicht Religion zu besitzen. Das sei ferne von mir. Nein, ich besitze keine” (MBU, 583 cf. 376). The most prominent figure in his construction of Protestantism is Luther, but this is only because Luther was invoked as a patriotic hero during the war, regardless of the feelings of German Catholics.⁹⁵ Thus he appears alongside Bismarck (himself “einen zweiten Luther”) as conventional ballast in Mann’s eccentric German canon:

⁹² This is Edith Weiller’s subject in: Max Weber und die literarische Moderne. Ambivalente Begegnungen zweier Kulturen. Stuttgart/Weimar: Metzler 1994, c.V. She presents a careful search for textual parallels between Weber and Mann, which is however vulnerable because of its premiss – the idea that there must be parallels. The analysis also lacks a sense of historical context.

⁹³ Compare MBU, p. 596: “puritanisch-asketisch”.

⁹⁴ Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1904 (note 17), p. 35.

⁹⁵ See for example Karl Holl, a patriotic-national and theological Lutheran, who engaged extensively with Weber: Was verstand Luther unter Religion? [1917]. In: K.H.: Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Kirchengeschichte. Bd. I: Luther. Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr 1923, pp. 1–110; Ghosh: Max Weber in Context (note 19), pp. 315–338; and a series of works by Heinrich Assel beginning with: Der andere Aufbruch. Die

“Luther, Goethe, Bismarck... Nietzsche” (MBU, 261, 426). So his use of Luther is blatantly instrumental, when it is not hostile (MBU, 236, 543, 559). For example, the identification of Luther with Arminius derives from Dostoevsky! (MBU, 46–53)

The contrast here with Weber – someone who was steeped in Protestant theology and enjoyed talking to theologians – is stark. Weber is just as secular as Mann, yet he finds the origins of secular modernity in 17th century Calvinism. Because the workings of predestination were inscrutable and unknowable like those of capitalism, the Calvinist was “außerordentlich viel *moderner*” than the Lutheran: he had “kein[en] Gott” to help him.⁹⁶ At the same time Weber discounted the importance of Luther and Lutheranism. Luther (he held) was marginally relevant to the evolution of capitalist modernity in virtue of his pioneering development of a commitment to worldly labour driven on by a religious imperative, the *Beruf*; but this step alone (in contrast to its later Calvinist development) was inconsequential because in practice it entrenched social conservatism: “der einzelne soll [...] in den Beruf und Stand *bleiben*, in den Gott ihn einmal gestellt hat”. Luther personally might be a “religiöse [r] Genius”, but this detached him from “den lutherischen Alltagsmenschen”, and he had had no significant historical impact.⁹⁷

Another explanation of Mann’s profile of the Protestant ethic as alien is that he is thinking more about capitalism than Protestantism. Capitalism is an external, international phenomenon (MBU, 202); the corrosion of German *Bürgerlichkeit* it produced had been going on well before 1914 – this is a recurrent theme in the *Betrachtungen* – and so there was no direct link to the World War and the *Entente*. Like Weber and most Germans, Mann dated the capitalist invasion to the second half of the 19th century:

Hast du die Entwicklung, nein, die unvermittelte und wie durch den Stab der Circe bewirkte Verwandlung des deutschen Bürgers, seine Entmenslichung und Entseelung, seine *Verhärtung* zum kapitalistisch-imperialistischen Bourgeois verschlafen? Der *harte* Bürger: das ist der Bourgeois. Es gibt den geistigen Bürger nicht mehr. Du sprichst von Zeiten, die vergangen sind, von 1850 allenfalls, aber nicht von 1900. (MBU, 151)⁹⁸

Lutherrenaissance – Ursprünge, Aporien und Wege: Karl Holl, Emanuel Hirsch, Rudolf Hermann (1910–1935). Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 1994.

96 Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1905 (note 17), pp. 36, 11.

97 Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1904 (note 17), p. 47; ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1905, p. 38.

98 Compare Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1904 (note 17), p. 27. Consonant with the chronology in *Buddenbrooks*, Mann hails the years 1820–1860 as the last great age of German *Bürgerlichkeit* (MBU, 128). Seen through a literary lens Ludwig Uhland (1787–1862) and Theodor Storm (1817–1888) epitomise “Deutschlands bürgerlich-vorbourgeoise Epoche”: p. 255.

This change produced an “Art von Heldentum, die modern-heroische Lebensform und -haltung des überbурdeten und übertrainierten, ‘am Rande der Erschöpfung arbeitenden’ *Leistungsethikers*“ (MBU, 158–9), the type epitomised by Thomas Buddenbrook or Gustav von Aschenbach in *Death in Venice* (1912). Now at this point Mann diverges from the sociologists. The hero, the personality or great man, is not just a literary need for Mann, but an intellectual belief reinforced by Nietzschean elitism: the embodiment (as we saw) of a higher, metaphysical unity, which the social mass could not create. Mann might suppose that the idea of heroism was to be found in Sombart, and by association Weber. However, they were social thinkers and their category of heroism was collective: the “Helden” of Puritanism in the “heroischen Epoche des Kapitalismus”.⁹⁹ (The alleged link between Sombart and heroism in Mann’s mind arose from Hammacher’s misleading synopsis of Sombart’s book, which he simply reproduces [MBU, 159]).¹⁰⁰ It is true that, subsequent to writing the *Protestant Ethic*, Weber would develop the idea of the charismatic leader, an individual who could also be described as a ‘hero’. But this was ‘heroism’ of a most unusual kind, since it had to be certified by the approval of the hero-worshippers: “der charismatische Held [...], der genuin-charismatische Herrscher [...] den Beherrschten verantwortlich ist” and he can always be set aside.¹⁰¹ Even so Mann picked up, quite correctly, that Weber saw a humanly hard side to modernity which

99 Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1905 (note 17), pp. 6, 92, also p. 20. Cf. Sombart’s rare reference to “Heldenvölkern”: Werner Sombart: *Der Bourgeois. Zur Geistesgeschichte des modernen Wirtschaftsmenschen*. Leipzig/München: Duncker & Humblot 1913, p. 272. In wartime this mutated into a salute to the heroic German people as against the money-grubbing English in the tract *Händler und Helden. Patriotische Besinnungen*. Leipzig/München: Duncker & Humblot 1915. That Mann ignored the latter work is another testimony to his distance from conventional wartime jingoism.

100 Hammacher: *Hauptfragen der modernen Kultur* (note 86), p. 298.

101 Max Weber: *Herrschaft* [1910–1914]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/22-4: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Herrschaft*. Ed. Edith Hanke. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005, p. 466. Harvey Goldman sought to establish a unity between Mann and Weber based around two ideas which he took to be linked: the *Beruf* and the idea of ‘personality’ or self: Goldman: *Max Weber and Thomas Mann* (note 1); Goldman: *Politics, Death and the Devil* (note 1). However, these ideas are separate and Mann and Weber respond differently to them. Mynher Peeperkorn is an outstanding case of ‘personality’ for Mann (Mann: *Der Zauberberg* [note 22], p. 7): someone who is not even a true hero, but has personal magnetism without substance. (He reveals his vacuity by committing suicide.) For Weber, the ‘personality’ is not someone larger than life, but a person whose actions are rational and logically coherent. Nor does any positive valuation attach to this. The ‘personality’ may be well-adjusted to an ambivalent Weberian modernity, but they are neither more nor less estimable than less rational or logical persons, and Weber vehemently denounces romantic falsifications such as Mann’s: Max Weber: *Knies und das Irrationalitätsproblem* [1905–1906]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/7: *Zur Logik und Methodik der Sozialwissenschaften*. Ed. Gerhard Wagner. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2018, pp. 243–379, here pp. 251–257, 345–376.

corresponded to “eine gewisse zeitkritische Modernität” in his own work (MBU, 119) and Weber’s use of ‘hardness’ as a trope runs parallel to his own.¹⁰² Furthermore, Mann’s interest in an ethical sphere, however loosely defined, causes him to give quite extensive consideration to this theme.¹⁰³ So ‘the Protestant ethic’ and the ethical placement of modern materialism are recurrent tropes in the *Betrachtungen*, and they are rooted in modern democracy as well. Thus Mann felt obliged to admit that ‘Plutokratie und Wohlstandsbegeisterung’ constituted ‘die genaue Bestimmung der Demokratie’, just as ‘[die] Lebensnotwendigkeit jener psychologischen Versöhnung von Tugend und Nutzen, Moral und Geschäft’ was part of ‘der Notwendigkeit der Demokratie’ (MBU, 263, 394 cf. 388–94).

Mann’s dialogue with Weber is significant in two principal respects. For both the Protestant ethic is a central reality, whether one calls it social or heroic, which lies outside the political sphere; and Mann, unlike most of Weber’s academic readers, picked up on the absolutely modern and contemporary nature of Weber’s text. Academics might read Weber more closely, but in this respect Mann’s understanding is superior. Consider by contrast Ernst Troeltsch, who could never accept a Weberian modernity that was “gottfern”,¹⁰⁴ or Otto Hintze, who took up the *Protestant Ethic* after 1920, because it coincided with his view that the 17th century conversion of the Hohenzollerns from Lutheranism to Calvinism signified a new internationalism and rationalism in their outlook.¹⁰⁵ Nonetheless the *Protestant Ethic* is only of secondary importance in our comparison, because Mann’s interest in materialism and “[die] kapitalistische[-] Weltordnung” was a secondary and somewhat inconsistent feature within the world-view presented in the *Betrachtungen* (MBU, 569). Its primary themes – civilisation, politicisation, internationalism, democracy, enlightenment – are separate, because they are instruments of French cultural imperialism. But for Mann as for Weber or any contemporary, the epitome of capitalism and materialism is England. England may be a member of what Mann (unlike Weber) sees as a French-led *Entente*, but there is little community of *Kultur* between England and France. It is not democratic; its historic constitution is recognisably national rather than spuriously universal (MBU, 139–40); it had had no *philosophes* or enlightenment other than utilitarianism (MBU, 86 cf. 468); and it was Protestant and Puritan (MBU, 318).

¹⁰² For ‘hard’ asceticism: Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1905 (note 17), pp. 20, 32, 56, 81, 92.

¹⁰³ ‘Von der Tugend’ (MBU, pp. 408–465).

¹⁰⁴ Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1905 (note 17), pp. 11, 68. For a snapshot of Troeltsch’s perplexity: Ernst Troeltsch: Max Weber. In: René König/Johannes Winckelmann (eds.): Max Weber zum Gedächtnis. Materialien und Dokumente zur Bewertung von Werk und Persönlichkeit. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag 1963, pp. 43–6, here p. 46.

¹⁰⁵ Otto Hintze: Calvinismus und Staatsräson in Brandenburg zu Beginn des 17. Jahrhunderts. In: Historische Zeitschrift 144 (1931), pp. 229–286, here p. 230.

The youthful Mann had rooted for the English against the Boers in 1899 (MBU, 202), and this runs parallel to an early interest in Dickens as one of several narrative models when he was writing *Buddenbrooks*.¹⁰⁶ These modest English sympathies take him a step closer to Weber but not far. The account of the genesis of Occidental or Western modernity in the *Protestant Ethic* does not give an inch to the significance of national units in the way Mann does. Indeed, it goes so far as to declare: “Den Engländern des 17. Jahrhunderts einen einheitlichen ‘Volkscharakter’ zuzuschreiben wäre einfach historisch unrichtig”.¹⁰⁷ Nonetheless England lies at the heart of the Weberian Occident, and Weber attaches overriding significance to particular elements within the composite English character (Calvinism, sects, Puritanism), even though he repudiates collective ‘character’ *a priori*. So his reliance on English and New England materials in the construction of Western modernity far outweighs that of any other nationality (such as the Dutch or Germans), just as he saw England’s entry into the war in 1914 as the outstanding blunder in a bungling German diplomacy which went back to the Boer War.¹⁰⁸ Mann’s interest in England is marginal by contrast. Considerations of “ökonomischer Macht” are secondary to the hatred generated “*politisch*” by the French-led *Entente* (MBU, 40). Thus the only extended discussion of England in the *Betrachtungen* was inserted at almost the last moment, in February 1918 (MBU, 466–471).¹⁰⁹ Equally significant in any measurement of Mann’s priorities is the marginality of English literary authors. Byron, Kipling, Ruskin and Disraeli may be agreeable in various ways, and Mann defends an “undemokratische[n]” Shakespeare against Bernard Shaw (though he sees no other reason to mention him) (MBU, 344); but the only English-language writer of any importance is Carlyle, scourge of the French Revolution and laureate of Frederick the Great. However, he is not identified as English or Scottish but as a Protestant; a supporter of Hegel’s view “daß die [französische] Revolution nicht nötig gewesen, daß sie mutmaßlich ausgeblieben wäre, wenn überall die Reformation vorangegangen wäre” (MBU, 556).¹¹⁰

106 Thomas Mann: *Der französische Einfluss* [1904]. In: T.M.: *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Bd. 14/1: *Essays I: 1893–1914*. Ed. Heinrich Detering. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 73–5, here p. 74.

107 Weber: ‘*Protestantische Ethik*’ 1904 (note 17), p. 52, but compare Weber: *Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik* (note 6), p. 566, 571. — The identification of England as Calvinist, however surprising it may sound, was conventional in the German Protestant theology on which Weber drew.

108 For example Weber: *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland* (note 18), pp. 511–2.

109 Hermann Kurzke, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. Kommentar* (note 25), pp. 506–7. The final element in the text, the *Vorrede*, was written in March.

110 Compare very similar sentiments in the brief review essay: Thomas Mann: *Carlyles “Friedrich”* [1916]. In: T.M.: *Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Bd. 15.1: *Essays II: 1914–1926*. Ed. Hermann

The broader truth is that for Mann England was extraneous to Europe: it was “eine außereuropäische und geradezu antieuropäische Macht [...], die des europäischen Gewissens und des europäischen Solidaritätsgefühls vollkommen entbehrt[e]” (MBU, 468 cf. 469). This was in part a traditional recognition of England's semi-detached position vis-à-vis the Continent, but America's entry into the war prompted Mann to add a codicil (in English) that “The world is rapidly becoming english!” (MBU, 481). The world presence of the English or Anglo-Saxons was correlative to England's European absence. Weber would have none of this. For him the rationalizing, ascetic Protestant ethic exemplified by the English had been formative for the modern West or Occident, and this included both Europe and a youthful America that was subject to “Europäisierung”.¹¹¹ For Mann by contrast, the subject matter of a Protestant ethic, whether viewed as capitalist or English, is at most an interesting and one might say unpolitical cross-thread; one of the more obvious inconsistencies in the miscellaneous “Aufzeichnungen” (MBU eg.12) that make up the *Betrachtungen*, but no more.¹¹²

IV

The centrepiece of any comparison between Mann and Weber lies in politics and its relation to the unpolitical world around it. Politics was of course extraneous to Mann's artistic creation and it had no intellectual priority for Weber; yet both recognised it as a practical necessity – the *Betrachtungen* constitute the point of recognition for Mann – and it is the one substantial agenda they share. Our views here still stand in the shadow of the process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* which, even if it did not then have the name, began after 1945. It should be recalled that before c.1980, this focussed pre-eminently on what was called ‘the German problem’, centred on German nationalism and the World Wars rather than race and the Holocaust.¹¹³ Under this heading both Mann's and Weber's views in the First World War were impugned as excessively ‘German’. The longer-term consequence has

Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 177–183, though Mann records here that Carlyle was a Scot as a point of information (p. 178).

¹¹¹ Weber: ‘Protestantische Ethik’ 1905 (note 17), p. 88, note 40; cf. Max Weber: *Demokratie und Aristokratie im amerikanischen Leben* [1918]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 742–9, here p. 743.

¹¹² See similarly the brief treatment in Mann: *Von deutscher Republik* (note 25), p. 545.

¹¹³ Discussion under this heading commenced at the end of the 1930s: Andrew Szanajda: *The Allies and the German Problem, 1941–1949. From Cooperation to Alternative Settlement*. Basingstoke: Palgrave 2015.

been that what they actually said has been somewhat neglected and attention has focussed on other parts of two very wide-ranging oeuvres. For example, there has been no substantial treatment of Weber's politics to replace Wolfgang Mommsen's classic work *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik* (1959), and attention has turned from Weber's politically engaged writings to his sociology of *Herrschaft* where nationality is strikingly absent.¹¹⁴ Criticism of Mann was necessarily limited given his eminent loyalty to the Weimar Republic and anti-fascism, yet it too had an important consequence. The *Betrachtungen* were classified as a youthful sin, and today it remains received wisdom that it is "wohl das umstrittenste Werk Thomas Manns, ein Unding nach Form und Inhalt".¹¹⁵ The only plausible way round this Unding has been to minimise the significance of its political content.¹¹⁶ I suggest that such views are mistaken. While the text is foolish or eccentric in ways one might expect when a determinedly unpolitical man decides to situate himself in relation to politics, its political/unpolitical agenda is not at all an aberration or absurdity.

The unpolitical Mann and the politicised Weber were products of a unique German political context who, unusually, surmounted the problems confronting the educated bourgeois class from which they sprang. These problems lay not in deviant social formation, as was posited by the now discredited thesis of a German *Sonderweg*,¹¹⁷ but in politics: specifically, the reluctance of this class to participate in

114 See especially the work of Stefan Breuer beginning with: *Max Webers Herrschaftssoziologie*. Frankfurt/M./New York: Campus-Verlag 1991.

115 Philipp Gut: *Thomas Manns Idee einer deutschen Kultur*. Frankfurt: S. Fischer 2008, p. 76.

116 An authoritative post-war statement came from T.J. Reed, who held that the *Betrachtungen* was a case of "the 'unsimple man's becoming simple'", which reproduced "the propaganda clichés of the day". This then required "a total reversal in Mann's outlook" after 1921 to get him onto the right democratic and anti-fascist track: Reed: *Thomas Mann* (note 52), pp. 203, 222, 287. Today we uphold the individuality and complexity of the *Betrachtungen*, but only at the cost of neglecting its political agenda. Hermann Kurzke's commanding editorial work embodies this view: *Entstehungsgeschichte*. In *Thomas Mann: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe*. Bd. 13.2: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2009, pp. 9–55. In Kurzke: *Das Leben als Kunstwerk* (note 64), p. 274, he is more explicit and suggests that Mann's wartime political views were unimportant. His Weimar politicisation is "erstaunlich", and can only be explained by a set of unpolitical causes (pp. 358–9). Since Kurzke, see especially Sebastian Hansen: *Betrachtungen eines Politischen. Thomas Mann und die deutsche Politik 1914–1933*. Düsseldorf: Weltem 2013, and Erik Schilling (ed.): *Thomas Manns Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen nach 100 Jahren. Neue Perspektiven und Kontexte*. Frankfurt/M.: Vittorio Klostermann 2020 (Thomas-Mann-Studien 55). The problem of continuity in Mann's life is aired, but no satisfactory or consensus view has emerged. Note (1) systematic textual scrutiny of the *Betrachtungen* is surprisingly neglected, in particular Mann's complex views on democracy and politics; (2) the association of the text with conservative and radical right readings remains well entrenched; (3) none of these commentators is a historian.

117 The seminal critique is David Blackbourn/Geoff Eley: *The Peculiarities of German History. Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 1984.

mass, contested politics in the new *Reich* arena created in 1866–1871. By its size, its divisions and diversity, its universal and equal suffrage, it found no precedent in the politics of the individual states. This was just as true of Prussia, the effective creator of the *Reich*, as well as of the smaller states now gathered round it. Yet the *Bildungsbürgertum*, a natural pillar of a modern German politics and its leadership, continued to be determined to a high degree by their previous ‘unpolitical’ situation. Most were happy to support the united nation-state realised by Bismarck and Prussian arms, but once the institutional and legal work of nation-building was complete, the detachment from, and distaste for, ‘politics’ inherited from the past resurfaced. It is customary even today to blame the failure of the new *Reich* to establish a parliamentary and party system comparable to those emerging in France and Britain on Bismarck’s triumph over the National Liberal party. This culminated in 1878–1879 when he ended the longstanding connection which had allowed them to see themselves as the established foundation for government, and hence as a future party in government.¹¹⁸ Yet neither Mann nor Weber, the classical analyst of these years, viewed Germany’s evolution in such political terms. For both, German politics had to be understood in relation to its unpolitical hinterland. Given Mann’s ‘unpolitics’ this might well be taken for granted; but in Weber’s view, too, the underlying problem lay (as we saw) in the “unpolitischen Vergangenheit” of the German bourgeoisie, and a want of “*politischen Erziehung*” across the whole nation.¹¹⁹ So it was that the fall of Bismarck in 1890, far from removing the crucial obstacle to the rule of party politicians, left the political system he had established undisturbed.

The importance of politics to Weber needs little stressing, when we consider the volume of his politically committed writings in the First World War,¹²⁰ and his major theoretical treatments of *Herrschaft* either side of it (c.1911–1914, 1919–1920). There may be dispute about his particular views, but of his close engagement with politics there can be no doubt. In Mann’s case, it is the very nature of this relation which must be established. The title *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* tells us that the axis of the book lies in the contrast between politics and ‘unpolitics’. Yet even this has been doubted, and it would be wrong to lose sight of the book’s sheer abundance: this was after all a text in which Mann wanted “alles sagen” (MBU, 462 cf. 21). None-

¹¹⁸ See above all Dieter Langewiesche: *Liberalismus in Deutschland*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp 1988, pp. 128–180.

¹¹⁹ Weber: *Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik* (note 6), pp. 570, 572; cf. *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland* (note 18), pp. 437–450: ‘Die Erbschaft Bismarcks’. See further: Preuß: *Das deutsche Volk und die Politik* (note 5).

¹²⁰ Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: *Zur Politik im Weltkrieg*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984; Bd. I/16: *Zur Neuordnung Deutschlands. Schriften und Reden 1918–1920*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1988.

theless politics is the axis about which everything revolves: “Die Kunst politisiert, der Geist politisiert, die Moral politisiert, der *Begriff*, alles Denken, Fühlen, Wollen politisiert – wer möchte leben in solcher Welt?” (MBU, 428).

At first sight the ‘unpolitical’ Mann appears to be a conventional member of the bourgeois majority, the romantics and *literati* whom Weber condemned as ‘unpolitical’. The theologian Ernst Troeltsch and the historian Friedrich Meinecke, both well-known to Weber, are obvious examples, as was his eminent Jewish colleague at Heidelberg, the recently deceased state lawyer Georg Jellinek.¹²¹ As Weber remarked, “unpolitisch” did not mean “apolitisch[-] oder anti-politisch[-]”.¹²² It meant rather a distaste for a participatory politics where parliament and political parties would have been the centres of political power, in contrast to the so-called *Obrigkeitsstaat*, with the monarchical executive at its centre. *Reichstag* sanction was indeed required for legislation, but it and the parties were essentially passive practitioners of what Weber called “negative Politik”.¹²³ Meanwhile “ein Teil des Großbürgertums [sehnt sich] nach dem Erscheinen eines neuen Cäsar”,¹²⁴ a successor to Bismarck, who would revitalise the *Obrigkeitsstaat* in contrast to the rudderless body that followed his dismissal in 1890. One measure of the prominence of this body in public life lies in the fact that, with the exception of the political crisis of 1917 when a reforming majority was mobilized within the *Reichstag*, political debate during the First World War occurred primarily outside the parliament, in the media dominated by the highly educated. In these discussions, a large majority was opposed to promoting effective parliamentarization or democratization.¹²⁵

Mann stands apart from this debate: “hier bin ich und dort ist Deutschland” (MBU, 168). For most of the war, between ‘*Friedrich und die große Koalition*’ at the beginning of 1915 and October 1918 when the *Betrachtungen* appear, he is virtually silent – a mark of isolation comparable to Weber’s silence between 1914 and late 1916.¹²⁶ Even so some of what he says here looks like the views of the ‘unpolitical’

¹²¹ For example Jellinek: Verfassungsänderung (note 5); Stefan Meinecke: Friedrich Meinecke. Persönlichkeit und politisches Denken bis zum Ende des Ersten Weltkriegs. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter 1995, especially c.V; Friedrich Wilhelm Graf: Ernst Troeltsch. Theologe im Welthorizont. München: Beck 2022, especially c. 17.

¹²² Weber: Religionssoziologie (note 50), p. 287.

¹²³ Weber: Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland (note 18), p. 473. Compare Preuß: Das deutsche Volk (note 5), p. 184.

¹²⁴ Weber: Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik (note 6), p. 568f.

¹²⁵ Marcus Llanque: Demokratisches Denken im Krieg. Die deutsche Debatte im Ersten Weltkrieg. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2000; Steffen Bruendel: Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat. Die “Ideen von 1914” und die Neuordnung Deutschlands im Ersten Weltkrieg. Berlin: Akademie-Verlag 2003.

¹²⁶ Apart from pieces connected to the *Betrachtungen*, he publishes just one essay, defending Bruno Walter against anti-Semitic harassment: Thomas Mann: Musik in München. In: T.M.: Große kommen-

group who were opening a gateway to Caesarism and fascism. Consider, for example, a statement such as this: “Ich will nicht Politik. Ich will Sachlichkeit, Ordnung und Anstand“. When Mann dismissed politics he meant the democracy of the *Entente* abroad, and at home “die Parlaments- und Parteiwirtschaft, welche die Verpestung des gesamten nationalen Lebens [...] bewirkt” (MBU, 285). Thus he adhered to the standard German view that parties were “Faktionen” or (quoting August Strindberg) “einäugige Katzen”, which by definition could not consider the interests of the nation as a whole (MBU, 137, 249). If they were to rule, the real representatives of a higher unity, bureaucracy, the army, justice, and *Dichtung* itself, would be overthrown (MBU, 335–6). Here was “das Heraufkommen des parlamentarischen Blödsinn” (MBU, 223).

But despite such coincidences, Mann’s ‘unpolitics’ were entirely his own. “Ich bin einzeln, ich sehe zu” (MBU, 168–9), he tells us, and the suggestion that he became “a simple member of the community at war” is surely the reverse of the truth.¹²⁷ His ideas contrast, first, with the university academics who dominate wartime discussion: *Beamte* who had thought and reflected a good deal on public life. Thus the literal source of Mann’s ‘unpolitics’ was a most unconventional academic, “Nietzsche, der sich ‘den letzten unpolitischen Deutschen’ nannte”, because of his fierce critique of Germany’s political unification (MBU, 157, 267).¹²⁸ So while Mann could approve of Bismarck as a “großen Mann[-]”, he, like Nietzsche, “gegen das Werk [Bismarcks] oder den Geist des Werkes [...] opponierte”, because unification condemned Germany to greater involvement in great power politics (MBU, 426, 261).¹²⁹ This marked out Mann quite clearly from the “unpolitischen Literaten” whose hero-worship of Bismarck Weber disliked so much.¹³⁰ Mann was also isolated amongst his fellow artists and writers who, though they might support or criticise the war later on, did not abandon their creative activities unless they enlisted. (Heinrich Mann is a partial exception, but after the 1915 essay on *Zola* which provoked his brother, his principal wartime production was a novel, *Die Armen*, 1917.)¹³¹

tierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 15.1: Essays II: 1914–1926. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 184–202.

¹²⁷ Reed: Thomas Mann (note 52), p. 185.

¹²⁸ In fact Nietzsche called himself „der letzte antipolitische Deutsche“: Friedrich Nietzsche: *Ecce Homo*. Leipzig: Insel-Verlag 1908, § 3: Warum ich so weise bin. Mann’s adjusted terminology suggests a different emphasis. Unpolitical was not entirely anti-political.

¹²⁹ See (famously) Nietzsche: *Unzeitgemäße Betrachtungen* (note 73), pp. 137–141. Compare Mann: *Buddenbrooks* (note 83), pp. 793–797, 822, to which Mann refers.

¹³⁰ Weber: *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland* (note 18), p. 450 cf. p. 449.

¹³¹ Of the non-fiction writings collected in Heinrich Mann: *Macht und Mensch*. München: Wolff 1919, *Zola* is the only significant wartime piece. Its scale and ambition may be compared to *Friedrich und die große Koalition* (1915), but this falls far short of the *Betrachtungen*. For a general survey: Wolfgang

Yet his central agendum derived from his artistic situation: what was the place of his unpolitical art and mind (*Geist*) within the state? This question had been so completely absent from his mind in the “frei” Germany before 1914 (for example, he was blithely unaware of the exclusion of socialists from the universities that angered Weber),¹³² that he reached the age of 40 without having to think about his political ‘Herren’ (MBU, 376). But August 1914 put an end to this: “die Wende des persönlichen Lebens [wurde] von den Donnern einer Weltwende begleitet” (MBU, 17 cf. 236). The turning point was so fundamental to Mann that he would later date the birth of the Weimar Republic and its democracy to this great moment of national unity.¹³³ So began a wholly individual course of political education. Yet it was so prolonged and elaborate that its principal fruit, the *Betrachtungen*, was not published until three days after Ludendorff’s announcement of Germany’s military defeat on 3 October 1918.¹³⁴ There could hardly be a clearer testimony to Mann’s self-absorption, yet it was devoted to an unselfish, end. From now on he would admit his responsibility as a member of the intellectual class to speak out on the public issues he first confronted in 1914–1918. Publication of the *Betrachtungen* was the crucial point of transition from the “Jahre[n] bohemhafter Absolutheit” to the state of “soziale[r] Einsamkeit”, which dominated the whole of the rest of his life, where he recognised that ideas conceived in artistic isolation might nonetheless speak for others.¹³⁵

The *Betrachtungen* carried an epigram from Molière, “Que diable allait-il faire dans cette galère?”, a typical expression of Mann’s unusual relation to the political world. Throughout the war he remained a supporter of the muddled and ‘middling’ status quo, and in particular of the “Philosophen” Chancellor, Bethmann Hollweg, whom he took to be its personification (MBU, 157 cf. 281). As he wrote in his Preface in March 1918: “der vielverschrieene ‘Obrigkeitsstaat’ [ist und bleibt] die dem deutschen Volk angemessene, zukömmliche und von ihm im Grunde gewollte Staatsform” (MBU, 33–4). Mann held that the artist such as himself was “einer gesicherten Basis zur Entfaltung seiner besonderen Fähigkeiten wie irgend jemand be-

J. Mommsen: Bürgerliche Kultur und künstlerische Avantgarde. Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich 1870 bis 1918. Frankfurt/M./Berlin: Ullstein 1994, pp. 128–153.

¹³² Peter Ghosh: Beyond Methodology. Max Weber’s Conception of *Wissenschaft*. In: *Sociologia Internationalis* 52 (2014), pp. 157–218, § III.

¹³³ Mann: Von deutscher Republik (note 25), p. 528.

¹³⁴ Thomas Mann: Diary entries 6–7.10.1918. In: T.M.: Tagebücher 1918–1921 (note 13), pp. 25–7.

¹³⁵ Thomas Mann: Rede zur Gründung der Sektion der Dichtkunst der Preussischen Akademie der Künste [1926]. In: *Essays*. Bd. 3: Ein Appell an die Vernunft. Essays 1926–1933. Frankfurt: S. Fischer 1994, pp. 40–4, here p. 42; cf. MBU, 19: “öffentliche Einsamkeit”. In 1914 he stated that the collectivity of *Dichter* were a “Stimme” for the people, but as yet this is hardly thought out: Mann: Gedanken im Kriege (note 25), p. 30.

dürftig”, and he found this in the traditional German “metaphysischen” idea of the state, conceived as a supra-individual and supra-political entity – an idea Weber would always denounce (MBU, 276).¹³⁶ Yet this apparent adherence to pre-war conceptions is really a sign of the detachment of the *Betrachtungen*. One would not know from reading the text that Bethmann Hollweg’s cautious approval of proposals for future democratization (MBU, 267) had led to his fall from office in July 1917. He had been caught between the reforming majority in the *Reichstag* (supported by Weber),¹³⁷ and the army and Right wing populists moving in an opposite direction, where neither side could accept the maintenance of the old regime.¹³⁸ But while Mann uses terms from the contemporary debate, such as the *Volksstaat*, they are detached from the partisan context in which they arose, because this is a political world that he abjures.¹³⁹ In some sense the text remains ‘unpolitical’ — but what?

Mann is detached yet from his detached position he recognises the signs of the times. He voices *acceptance* “des tatsächlichen, unbeeinflussbaren und unaufhaltsamen Ganges der politischen Entwicklung, die geradlinig ins [...] Radikal-Demokratische führt”, even if for this reason he is anxious to uphold “die Notwendigkeit, das geistige Leben vom politischen zu trennen” (MBU, 294 cf. 284). Whatever might have happened during the war, he accepts that it was not the wartime *Literat* propagating the ideas of 1789 (Romain Rolland, his brother Heinrich) who began Germany’s ‘politicisation’. This had set in long before with political unification in the 1860s, where responsibility lay not only with Bismarck but with the German people: “Es ist wohl wahr, daß Bismarck Deutschland ‘in den Sattel gesetzt’ hat”, that is, of great power politics, “aber mit einem Fuß war es [Deutschland] schon im Steigbügel” (MBU, 259). It was a similar story with democracy or “*die Politik selbst*” (MBU, 133 cf. 33, 287). Now democracy was not a threat to the supremacy of a social elite as it was for the bourgeois majority; rather, it was a threat to the unpolitical world that was the essence of life to Mann, because it heralded the participation of everyone in politics. Yet he accepts that democracy or its German incarnation, “patriotische Op-

¹³⁶ Weber: Objektivität (note 16), pp. 216f.; cf. Weber: Nationalstaat und die Volkswirtschaftspolitik (note 6); Weber: Herrschaft (note 101), p. 529.

¹³⁷ Weber: Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland (note 18) propounds positive reform; Weber: Wahlrecht und Demokratie (note 37) is a critique of the alternative agenda.

¹³⁸ On the composition of the long chapter ‘Politik’ see Kurzke: Entstehungsgeschichte (note 115), pp. 52–3. Its first draft was finished in mid-June, just before Bethmann’s resignation. But Mann could have revised the text thereafter, if he had wanted to.

¹³⁹ The original proponent of the binary pair, *Volksstaat* / *Obrigkeitsstaat*, was Hugo Preuß: Das deutsche Volk (note 5). For the further development of this idea, albeit presented in schematic form, Steffen Bruendel: Volksgemeinschaft oder Volksstaat (note 125), especially pp. 114–32, 240–258. For possible routes by which Mann might have tapped into these discussions, Hermann Kurzke: Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. Kommentar (note 25), pp. 360–365.

portunitäts-Demokratismus” the *Volksstaat*, must come (MBU, 270, 296), because the reforming pressures that had come to the surface in the war were, again, just the conclusion of a long-term evolution. Bismarck was an initiator here, too, when he introduced universal suffrage in 1866–1871:

[D]ie Phase deutscher Politisierung und Demokratisierung, auf der man heute hält, oder die zu erklimmen man sich propagandistisch bemüht, ist nichts anderes, als eben eine neue Phase jenes von Bismarck in die Wege geleiteten Prozesses, gegen den Nietzsche [...] sich auflehnte (MBU, 298–9).

Overall, Mann holds, “Die Richtung aufzufinden, in der eine Kultur sich fortbewegt, ist nicht so schwer” – that is, towards democracy and greater politicisation – yet he “glaub[t] nicht, daß es Wesen und Pflicht des Schriftstellers sei, sich ‘mit Geheul’ der Hauptrichtung anzuschliessen” (MBU, 23).¹⁴⁰ This explains the relative ease of his change of viewpoint after 1918 once the *Volksstaat* arrived. He did not have to re-think the way of the world around him; only how he might relate to it. He had only to dry his tears.

A more straightforward consequence of Mann’s ‘unpolitics’, his wish to preserve the maximum freedom for art and play, is a repudiation of any tendencies pointing towards to fascism. He notes that, alongside democracy, “konservativ-nationale” opinion was also being strengthened by the war, and he has some sympathy for the right-wing “Patrioten” who were attacking Bethmann Hollweg (MBU, 290, 158). Nonetheless he recognised no category of opinion outside conservative patriotism and remained unyielding in his centrist support for Bethmann.¹⁴¹ He considered the *Vaterlandspartei* (set up in 1917 to rally support for the army and the conservative-national agenda) just as guilty of one-eyed partisanship as any other party, despite its protestations to the contrary. Its claim to be national was a “Selbst-

¹⁴⁰ Like many of Mann’s opinions this is a quotation, but the source (“ein zeitgenössischer Denker”) has not been identified: Kurzke: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*. Kommentar (note 25), pp. 152–3.

¹⁴¹ There is an echo of these views in January 1920, when Weber prefaced his student lectures with remarks about Count Arco-Valley, the aristocratic assassin of the left-wing revolutionary Kurt Eisner, who had been sentenced to death by the courts and then pardoned by the Bavarian government. Weber first praised Arco’s nationalistic detestation of Eisner, but then denounced the commutation of his death sentence as demeaning both to Arco and to the law. Mann’s daughter Erika was present and reported back to her father, who commented in his diary: “Die antirevolutionär-nationale Gesinnung der Studenten befriedigt mich im Grunde, möge auch Arco ein Tropf und die einzelnen Träger jener Gesinnung Flegel sein.” Mann makes no comment on Weber’s action, but, however differently they are expressed, both he and Weber have Janus-faced views: Thomas Mann: Diary entry 21.1.1920 cf. 24.2.1919, 16.1.1920. In: T.M.: *Tagebücher 1918–1921* (note 13), pp. 370–1 cf. 159, 367–8; Max Weber: *Sachliche* (angebliche: “politische”) Bemerkungen am 19.1.[1920]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/16: *Zur Neuordnung Deutschlands*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1988, p. 273.

widerspruch" (MBU, 286 cf. 268–9). His most forceful views were reserved for art. He loathed d'Annunzio, Futurism, and the idea of politicised, artistic "Aktivistentum", "[den] Künstler als Kriegspanegyriker", with a fervour utterly devoid of irony (MBU, 627). Here, rather than in the Francophile loyalties of his brother Heinrich, was the most absolute denial of Mann's conception of *'l'art pour l'art'* (a French expression domesticated for German use by Lukács, MBU, 338, 345), and Mann offers a guarantee for the future which, however mistaken, tells us exactly where he stands: "Und ich wenigstens bin dankbar, einem Lande anzugehören, das niemals 'dem Geiste' die Macht zu so elendem Unfug einräumen wird" (MBU, 628).¹⁴²

Bismarck supplies a litmus test once more and Mann's views here are quite precise. (Regardless of his alienation from formal education or *Wissenschaft*, he was eminently capable of close and consistent reasoning when it suited him.) Bismarck might be a great man, but Mann insisted that the tomb inscription he drafted for himself must be taken literally: he was "[e]in treuer deutscher Diener seines Herren" (Wilhelm I) and nothing more (MBU, 524). "Er hätte [...] auch mehr werden können" (Mann knew), but Caesarism was a French property. Hence the remark he puts in Bismarck's mouth addressing a French journalist: "Euere Zäsaren wären unter uns Deutschen landfremd und unverständlich", and traces the idea of the soldier-king back to Voltaire (MBU, 525 cf. 193).¹⁴³ In the same spirit he states that he would not oppose the appointment of Marshal Hindenburg, "eine Eckhart-Gestalt an monumentaler Treue", as Chancellor (MBU, 399). Mann, like everyone else, knew that army pressure was a major factor in Bethmann Hollweg's ejection from office in 1917, but as a patriot he saw no objection to Hindenburg benefiting from this, so long as the constitutional forms of the *Obrigkeitsstaat* were upheld. Now in fact the forms were upheld. The new Chancellor and more especially his successor (Georg von Hertling) were not chosen by the military. Hindenburg stayed in his military post and did not join the *Vaterlandspartei* at its foundation in September 1917, though its leadership was his for the asking.¹⁴⁴ So Mann's refusal to detect or avow a political danger here had its justification; it was not simply naive.¹⁴⁵ By common

¹⁴² Lukács: *Die Seele und die Formen* (note 88), chapter 'Bürgerlichkeit und l'art pour l'art: Theodor Storm', pp. 119–169.

¹⁴³ Compare Kurzke: *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen. Kommentar* (note 25), p. 549 for what Bismarck actually said.

¹⁴⁴ Heinz Hagenlücke: *Die Deutsche Vaterlandspartei. Die nationale Rechte am Ende des Kaiserreichs*. Düsseldorf: Droste 1997.

¹⁴⁵ Popular opinion in wartime revered Hindenburg's 'loyalty' more straightforwardly than Mann: Anna von der Goltz: *Hindenburg. Power, Myth, and the Rise of the Nazis*. Oxford: Oxford University Press 2009, pp. 43–57. With the arrival of the Weimar *Volksstaat*, Mann recognised that Hindenburg as a representative of the *Obrigkeitsstaat* was outmoded, and he withdrew his wartime remark in support of Hindenburg as Chancellor from the 1922 edition of the *Betrachtungen*: Kurzke: *Betrachtungen*

consent, Ludendorff not Hindenburg was the principal mover in this crisis, and Weber, too, a robust advocate of effective parliamentarization and democratization, was careful, like Mann, to direct his criticism away from the Army High Command. The alternative would have been to admit a political division in wartime of the most damaging kind.¹⁴⁶

We see then that, while Mann's and Weber's modes of reasoning were entirely different, there were important areas of common ground between them. Mann's acceptance of democracy as inevitable shows that his understanding of the contemporary public sphere, if not his instinctive personal preferences, placed him in agreement with Weber, an undoubted democrat. In loose association with Friedrich Naumann, Weber had called in the 1890s for "eine nationale Partei der bürgerlichen Freiheit", so as to create "eine Demokratie, der wir die Leitung Deutschlands durch unsere Wahlstimmen anvertrauen könnten".¹⁴⁷ He was then a founder member of the Deutsche Demokratische Partei which sought to realise that ideal in 1919. But the similarities between Weber and Mann go further than this external and (prior to 1922) latent conjunction. The major point is that both Mann and Weber set politics within a wider context: politics was not the centre of life (however construed) and it was essential to think outside it. For Mann this needs no rehearsing, but even for the politically aware Weber, although politics was necessary, there was no *primacy* of politics in his mind. Consider by contrast a doctrinaire liberal and democrat such as Hugo Preuß, another pillar of the future Weimar Republic, who traced Germany's ills to the absence of "*vollkommenerer Politisierung des Volkes*" – Mann's bogey.¹⁴⁸ As between these two, Weber's view of politics was closer to Mann's. In this respect it is noticeable that the 'political' theory of *Herrschaft* he

eines Unpolitischen. Kommentar (note 25), p. 86. Similarly he opposed Hindenburg in the 1925 presidential election as "einen Recken der Vorzeit" though he was obliged to vote for him as a *pis aller* in 1932 against Hitler: Thomas Mann: Rettet die Demokratie! In: T.M.: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 15.1: Essays II: 1914–1926. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, p. 978.

146 For the limit of what he was prepared to say: Max Weber: Gegen die alldeutsche Gefahr [Nov. 1917]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 724–32, here pp. 726–7. See too Weber's interview with Ludendorff in May 1919: Marianne Weber: Max Weber (note 33), pp. 664–5; Bd. I/16: Zur Neuordnung Deutschlands. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1988, pp. 546–553.

147 Max Weber: Über das Programm des Nationalsozialen Vereins [1896]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/4: Landarbeiterfrage, Nationalstaat und Volkswirtschaftspolitik. Schriften und Reden 1892–1899. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1993, pp. 619–22, here p. 621; cf. Max Weber: Die bürgerliche Entwicklung Deutschlands [1897]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/4: pp. 814–8, here p. 816.

148 Preuß: Das deutsche Volk und die Politik (note 5), p. 187; cf. p. 178. Mann probably read some of Preuß' writings, but we cannot say any more than this.

drafted after 1910 was not in fact political, but socio-political. Thus its intellectual origins go back to the *Herrschaft* exercised by capitalism.¹⁴⁹ Consonant with this, the theory of *Herrschaft* was “eine umfassende soziologische [...] Lehre”.¹⁵⁰ ‘Political’ behaviour (apart from international relations) had to be situated within a social context. Mann of course repudiated the ‘social’ label: his alternatives were ‘unpolitics’ or the Nietzschean “Begriff des Lebens” (MBU, 637). But the overall result was similar: both men had sceptical and limited views of what pure politics involved.

Weber famously defined politics in its strict sense as “Kampf” for power, with international relations (“*große Politik*”) as its principal, though not exclusive, forum.¹⁵¹ Power was *amorph* – subject to no rule or law – and so the instruments of political activity were “diabolisch” and amoral.¹⁵² But set alongside this was the sphere of legitimate *Herrschaft* or internal rule. It is this hybrid, double vision which produced his famous definition of the state as claiming “das *Monopol legitimer physischer Gewaltsamkeit*” within a given territorial area, where the combination of legitimacy with power and force is on the face of it a contradiction, and one that has given rise to much scholarly confusion.¹⁵³ Mann also had a double view of politics. Most obviously, he regarded it as a realm of words rather than deeds – they “liegen auf der Straße: Lies eine auf, hefte sie dir an” – where in principle no one opinion was better than another (MBU, 279). Hence the association of politics and politicisation with the *Literat* or master of words. Seen thus, politics was something “untergeordnet” and “unpersönlich” compared to those areas of life which were more truly human: “die Politik vergeht vor [Kunst] wie Nebel vor der Sonne” (MBU, 474). But this well-known view is not the only one. For Mann, while “*die Bejahung des Nationalen die Verneinung der Politik [...] in sich schließt*”, it was also possible “daß jene selbe nationale Sympathie [...] jemanden Deutschlands Sieg, Macht und historische Größe wünschen läßt” (MBU, 288). So Mann asks himself, was not he caught up in the “gegenwärtigen politischen Fieber”? Was not his wartime patrio-

149 Weber: *Herrschaft* (note 101), pp. 126–135.

150 Max Weber to Paul Siebeck, 30.12.1914. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd. II/8, p. 430.

151 Weber, *Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland* (note 18), p.460 note 2: ‘Politik ist: *Kampf*’cf. p. 537; WuG, pp. 20–1.

152 WuG, p. 28; Max Weber: *Politik als Beruf* [1919]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/17: *Wissenschaft als Beruf / Politik als Beruf*. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen and Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1992 pp. 157–252, here pp. 241, 247, 249.

153 Weber: *Politik als Beruf* (note 152), p. 159. See my essay: *Gibt es bei Max Weber eine Staatstheorie?* In: Walter Pauly/Klaus Ries (eds.): *Staat und Historie. Leitbilder und Fragestellungen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung vom Ende des 19. Jahrhunderts bis zur Mitte des 20. Jahrhunderts*. Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft 2021, pp. 143–165.

tism *political*? His answer was “Ja-und-doch-Nein”. It was “der Selbstwiderspruch dieses Buches” (MBU, 289).

Here is the fundamental fault-line lying beyond irony or artistic licence, which underlies all Mann’s equivocations about democracy and politicisation; about the dissolving distinctions between Germany and its wartime opponents; and about Germany itself. Was it “Bismarcksche[s] Deutschland” (MBU, 192), the nation-state created in 1871? Or was it “die Nationalkultur [...], [die] weiter reichen kann, als der Staat”, both geographically and qualitatively (MBU, 294)? The answer was both. Mann, unlike Weber, did not make a clean separation between the realms of power-politics and *Kultur*; but still this gave rise to political views resembling Weber’s. He starts from an acceptance that the democratic *Volksstaat* would be a creation of the war, that ultimate act of power-politics. Indeed he claimed he had realised this “am Tage seines Aufbruchs” (MBU, 360): “Der Volksstaat ist nichts zu Gewährendes [von oben]; er ist da, wenn das staatliche denkende und empfindende Volk da ist”, and here he, like Weber, was thinking particularly of “Jugend [...] aus dem Kriege zurückkehrend” (MBU, 297). (For Weber one of the weapons with which to break down the reactionary Prussian suffrage was to call for the enfranchisement of servicemen.)¹⁵⁴ This gives rise to an alternative definition of *Politik* beyond literary word-spinning, which comes close to Weber’s: it is a realm where “außermoralische und also weder gut noch böse zu nennende Gesetze” determine the outcome of struggles over power. In this world issues cannot be resolved with artistic purity and integrity; this must come about through “Reform, Kompromiß, Anpassung, Verständigung zwischen der Wirklichkeit und dem Geist” (MBU, 418, 470). Here too Mann is at one with Weber. Weber’s emphasis on the harsh realities of politics has made it easy to overlook the fact that for him too the *sachlich* or realistic inference to be drawn from *Kampf* and difference was compromise: “[d]er Politiker soll und *muß* Kompromisse schließen.”¹⁵⁵ The implied contrast here is not, of course, between politics and art but between politics and *Wissenschaft*; but still Weber was not at all an absolutist in politics, a doctrinaire ‘radical’ in Mann’s pejorative sense (MBU, 628).¹⁵⁶

Because they conceived of politics as a limited sphere, both Weber and Mann focussed on the greater human reality that underlay it: what Weber calls “*persönliche Qualitäten*”.¹⁵⁷ Neither believed that all people were equal in this respect, and

¹⁵⁴ For example Weber: Ein Wahlrechtsnotgesetz des Reichs. Das Recht der heimkehrenden Krieger [1917]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 217–221.

¹⁵⁵ Max Weber to Carl Petersen, 14.04.1920. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd. II/10, p. 986.

¹⁵⁶ Cf. Mann: Der Literat (note 30), p. 358.

this is central to their views of democracy. Weber held that in a group context, “Stets beherrscht das ‘Prinzip der kleinen Zahl’, d.h. die überlegene politische Manövrierfähigkeit *kleiner* führender Gruppen”.¹⁵⁸ This in turn underlies the theory of *Herrschaft*, which posits that all public life is hierarchical and though the degree of hierarchy might vary or be minimised, it could never be eliminated. How then could Weber be a staunch democrat in party politics? In fact he supported universal and equal suffrage as a formal instrument: “wie man unter den heutigen Verhältnissen noch eine allgemein akzeptable [einschränkende] Qualifikation innerhalb der *Wählerschaft* nach formalen Gesichtspunkten herausfinden will, das sehe ich nicht. [...] Die Zeit all dieser komplizierten Wahlrechten ist heute vorbei”.¹⁵⁹ This is not to deny – and here is a difference between Weber and Mann – that for Weber modern legal and political forms were important. Thus he held that, given the flagrantly unequal property suffrages in Prussia and Saxony, “[p]olitische Demokratisierung [...] ist gar nicht so wenig!”.¹⁶⁰ Access to an equal franchise could not equalize human quality, but it might optimise the chances for its mass development through “die Ermöglichung steigender Anteilnahme an den materiellen und geistigen Gütern unserer Kultur”.¹⁶¹ (Late 19th century British theorists, Alfred Marshall, Beatrice Webb, were coming to call this equality of opportunity.)

Even so, the presence of human quality in the political sphere depends not on the vote but on the creation of structures of rule which allow for its emergence: specifically, charismatic rule. Charisma is defined in stringently hierarchical terms: it is “eine als außeralltäglich [...] geltende Qualität der Persönlichkeit” which will not be found in most people.¹⁶² It has been easy to present this idea as problematic, not least because the term ‘charisma’ (meaning the gift of grace, derived from the

157 For example Weber: “Kirchen” und “Sekten” in Nordamerika (note 37), p. 454, note 1.

158 Weber: Parlament und Regierung im neugeordneten Deutschland (note 18), p. 483.

159 Max Weber: Verfassung und Verwaltungsorganisation der Städte [1907]. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/8: Wirtschaft, Staat und Sozialpolitik. Schriften und Reden 1900–1912. Ed. Wolfgang Schluchter. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1999, pp. 304–15, here pp. 305f. See similarly Weber: Wahlrecht und Demokratie (note 37), pp. 348–9; [Lauensteiner Kulturtagungen] In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Bd. I/15: Zur Politik im Weltkrieg. Ed. Wolfgang J. Mommsen. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 1984, pp. 706–7, here p. 707.

160 Max Weber to Robert Michels, 06.11.1907. In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd II/5, p. 423.

161 Weber: Objektivität (note 16), p. 159; cf. Weber: Wahlrecht und Demokratie (note 37), pp. 349, 369. Among many examples of this thinking note an interchange between Stefan George and Weber in December 1911 recorded by Marianne Weber in her diary: “[George:] ‘Sie glauben, daß alle Menschen über sich selbst Richter sein können?’ [Weber:] ‘Nicht daß alle es *können*, aber daß es ein letztes Ziel ist, sie dafür reif zu machen’” (Marianne Weber: Max Weber [note 33], p. 470).

162 WuG, p. 140.

early Christian church) was so esoteric, and Wolfgang Mommsen, writing in 1959, famously supposed that Weber's focus on charismatic leadership revealed a weakness in German thought that pointed the way towards Hitler. It was a mistaken, yet tenacious view,¹⁶³ which has been hard to dismiss outright because Weber never lived to testify against fascism and Nazism in the way Mann did. The reality is that, under modern conditions, charisma was to be promoted and identified through the electoral competition of mass political parties: "Der Herr ist nun der *frei gewählte Führer*". So the charismatic ruler Weber desired was a party leader: "Der [...] Herr [...], den [die Beherrschten] (formal) frei nach Belieben wählen und setzen, eventuell auch: absetzen".¹⁶⁴ When he spoke of dictatorship under these conditions, he meant – as was self-evident in 1919 – temporary dictatorship according to the classical definition. Thus his outstanding example was the leader of the British Liberal party, Gladstone: "der Diktator des Wahlschlachtfeldes".¹⁶⁵ There is no hint of proto-fascism here, yet Weber's thought remains attached to exceptional and unequal personal qualities, which formal democracy can promote via elections. Given a reliance on party and parliamentary politics, "liegt es aber nahe: daß diese Anerkennung [durch Wahl], statt als Folge der Legitimität, als Legitimitätsgrund angesehen wird (*demokratische Legitimität*)".¹⁶⁶ But this was a mistake. Weber accepts that theories of modern democracy constitute a "*Legitimitätsgedanken[-]*" in many people's minds; but it is an idea only.¹⁶⁷ Substantive legitimacy derives from the personal qualities of the leader; the electors only 'recognise' something that already exists. So all the types of Weberian *Herrschaft* – charismatic, bureaucratic and traditional – are hierarchical.

Weber remains a hierarchical thinker in politics, because he considers political forms and mechanisms within a wider human context. Both the premiss and the conclusion were shared by that self-confessed dilettante in politics (MBU, 20) and future opponent of Hitler: Thomas Mann. Now there is plenty of textual evidence to illustrate Mann's ineptitude here. His discussion of *Volksherrschaft* is embarrassing

163 Wolfgang J. Mommsen: *Max Weber und die deutsche Politik. 1890–1920*. Tübingen: Mohr 1959. Mommsen never went further than to suggest that there was a line of descent from Weber to pro-Nazi thinkers such as Carl Schmitt. This was indisputable, but it was also an effective device for tainting Weber by association. For a criticism, but one which still interprets Weber in relation to later history: Stefan Breuer: *Bürokratie und Charisma. Zur politischen Soziologie Max Webers*. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft 1993, pp. 161–175.

164 WuG, p. 156.

165 Weber: *Politik als Beruf* (note 151), p. 209.

166 WuG, p. 156.

167 Max Weber: *Probleme der Staatssoziologie* [1917]. In: *Max Weber Gesamtausgabe*. Bd. I/22-4: *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft. Herrschaft*. Ed. Edith Hanke. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck 2005, pp. 752–6, here p. 755.

in its banality. On the one hand, the people are the ‘mob’ or ‘rabble’, and on the other, they can constitute a noble, collective body (MBU, 399–407).¹⁶⁸ It seems not to occur to him that these are simply alternative epithets for a fictitious unity, which was vehemently denounced as such by Weber. In this sense Mann was a “schlechter Denker”, just as he said he was (MBU, 21). Yet elsewhere the poor thinker’s – or artist’s – scrutiny of human reality is more substantial. For example, he parallels Weber’s insistence on the continuance of hierarchy within democracy when he states: “Auch in dem Worte ‘Demokratie’ ist der Begriff des Herrschens enthalten, und man weiß, daß nicht das Volk es ist, daß es Personen sind, die auch im demokratischen Staate ‘herrschen’” (MBU, 274). (Like Weber’s ‘principle of small numbers’, this statement avoids the quagmire of pontificating for and against the merits of ‘the people’ at large.) So a universal, equal suffrage, however crude and primitive, need not be a disaster and, though he does not use the word, Mann practically pronounces in its favour on formal grounds like Weber: “in einer Sphäre, in der es unmöglich ist, jedem das Seine zu geben, nichts übrig bleibt, als allen das Gleiche zu geben” (MBU, 293).

He further recognises that it is a necessary function of a legitimate democracy to serve “als Mittel [...] zur aristokratischen Auslese im Staatsinteresse”. It should be “ein staatstechnisch-pädagogisches Mittel [...] zur Freimachung politischer Anlagen”, so that through social mobility those from a lower caste or class may rise up into to the upper, ruling one (MBU, 282, 41). Now the phrase “Freimachung politischer Anlagen” is as good a plain-language equivalent to Weberian charisma as one could hope to find. Furthermore, Mann derives his idea of ‘aristocracy’ from Nietzsche and it matches Weber’s, since they derive from the same classical root and education in the neo-humanist *Gymnasium* (even if Mann personally was denied this). Thus he shares Weber’s distinction between an aristocracy of “*Position*”, based on the hereditary transmission of group privilege, and that of human or ethical “*Qualität*” as in the classical definition, with a clear preference for the latter.¹⁶⁹ To be sure, the parallel here is far from complete. Mann hopes that education and social mobility will allow human quality to rise up, whereas Weber seeks to foster political aptitude and the selection of qualified leaders not by general social arrangements but by political instruments, above all through those party and parliamentary contests in which Mann had (and would always continue to have) little interest. But still Mann understands that in a mass democracy there is a question of political leadership to be considered; that it should, if possible, be based on human

¹⁶⁸ Kurzke gives it the running title “Mein Gott, das Volk!”: MBU, 399–407, a quotation (p. 402) which is also an editorial statement. For the thinking behind this: Kurzke: *Das Leben als Kunstwerk* (note 64), pp. 288–293.

¹⁶⁹ Weber: “Kirchen” und “Sekten” in Nordamerika (note 37), p. 454, note 1.

quality; and that democracy is by no means incompatible with this. This was “das Quantum ‘Politik’” he could accept (MBU, 296) and in these respects his views are “Weberian”.

To conclude: both Mann and Weber can be seen as unusual and unrepresentative products of a distinctive German bourgeois context in negotiation with its unpolitical heritage, though Weber had been wrestling with these problems for much longer, since the mid-1880s.¹⁷⁰ The result, regardless of personal preferences, was substantial acceptance of a coming democracy. For this reason, it is entirely comprehensible, without positing any post-war discontinuity, why Mann should have cleaved to the path that led away from the ‘unpolitics’ of the educated majority and a possible descent into fascism — a path which Weber did not live to follow, but which is more obvious in his case due to the clarity of his prior political engagement. Yet both men continued to preserve a large extra- or unpolitical sphere. Weber did so by his insistence that the starting point of all reflection lay in the social action of individuals. Hence legitimate rule or *Herrschaft* had social and universal roots: in the developing rationalism and specialization of knowledge that gave rise to bureaucracy,¹⁷¹ as well as the human qualities that constituted the resource for charismatic leadership. Mann’s post-war identification of the democratic state as “die Hauptangelegenheit jeder Person”¹⁷² might look like the politicisation he feared in wartime, but in fact it was a new synthesis of the political and unpolitical. Just as previously everyone had been co-opted within the metaphysical state, so the new state was “die unzweifelhaft höchste Stufe des Menschlichen”.¹⁷³ The Republic represented “die Einheit von Staat und Kultur” where, as before, Mann was upholding “die Sache der Nation und Kultur”, a “deutsche Mitte”, “zwischen [...] Innerlichkeit und Staatlichkeit”.¹⁷⁴ There were differences between the pre- and post-1918 schemes. The *Volksstaat* and “politische Humanität” had replaced the “Mächte” of the *Obrigkeitsstaat*, although the direct consequence of this was to make “die geistigen Spitzen” such as Mann more prominent than before. The literary idols through

170 See for example his correspondence with Hermann Baumgarten beginning 14 Oct. 1884: In: Max Weber Gesamtausgabe. Briefe (note 10). Bd II/1, pp. 459–467.

171 Weber: *Herrschaft* (note 101), pp. 214–234.

172 Mann: *Von deutscher Republik* (note 25), p. 544

173 Mann: *Von deutscher Republik* (note 25), p. 536. Mann comments here that “Als Anfänger des Lebens hätte ich mir nicht träumen lassen, daß ich jemals so sprechen würde.” This refers back to his appreciation of Schopenhauer, who mocks “den Staat als den höchsten Zweck und Blüte des menschlichen Daseins” (MBU, pp. 149f.). But there is little real change here. Schopenhauer is attacking Hegel, and while Mann always entertained an idealist conception of the state, he was never a Hegelian literary.

174 Mann: *Von deutscher Republik* (note 25), pp. 555, 525, 559.

which Mann channelled his thinking were also subject to change: Walt Whitman took over from Dostoevsky as the icon of his cosmopolitan loyalties.¹⁷⁵ But in their striving for the unity of the state, the nation and *Kultur*, and in their ostentatiously ‘naive’ and unpolitical presentation his views hardly differ.¹⁷⁶ For Mann, as for Weber, Germany’s regime change in 1918–19 was not the axis of change; rather it lay in the recognition, embodied in the *Betrachtungen*, that he could speak out on political issues relying on his qualification as an artist to do so.

So the cause of ‘unpolitics’ was upheld, but it was set in a definite relation to a legitimate but limited quantum of democratic politics – and this was a frame of reference which would become the common sense of Western Europe after 1945.¹⁷⁷ Weber and Mann remain an odd couple, but they are a kind of couple even so.

Acknowledgment: My thanks to Ritchie Robertson and Karolina Watroba for reading this essay in draft.

175 Mann: Von deutscher Republik (note 25), pp. 538, 524, 516; cf. Thomas Mann: Hans Reisigers Whitman-Werk [1922]. In: T.M.: Große kommentierte Frankfurter Ausgabe. Bd. 15/1: Essays II: 1914–1926. Ed. Hermann Kurzke. Frankfurt/M.: S. Fischer 2002, pp. 494–5.

176 Mann evokes Schillers *Über naive und sentimentalische Dichtung* in *Betrachtungen* (MBU, 619), but this is not to be taken too seriously. Mann’s naivete lies in his deliberately “kindlichen” (MBU, 622, cf. 270) use of literary authors of *any* kind in political and anti-political argument. This is not Schiller’s idea and there can be no true naivete in someone who, simultaneously, describes his art as ironical.

177 Cf. Martin Conway: Western Europe’s Democratic Age: 1945–1968. Princeton: University Press 2020.