

Seth Taylor
Left-Wing Nietzscheans



Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung

Begründet von

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Band 22

1990

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

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The Politics
of German Expressionism
1910–1920

by

Seth Taylor

1990

Walter de Gruyter · Berlin · New York

Anschriften der Herausgeber:

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Comparative Literature GN-32
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington 98195, U.S.A.

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Redaktion:

Johannes Neining, Ithweg 5, D-1000 Berlin 37

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Taylor, Seth. 1955—

Left-wing Nietzscheans : the politics of German expressionism,
1910-1920 / von (i. e. by) Seth Taylor.

p. cm. — (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-
Forschung : Bd. 22)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0-89925-695-3 (U.S.) : \$70.00 (approx.). —

ISBN 3-11-012457-2 (Berlin) : DM 112.00 (approx.)

1. Arts, German. 2. Arts, Modern — 20th century — Germany.
3. Expressionism (Art) — Germany. 4. Nietzsche, Friedrich
Wilhelm, 1844-1900 — Influence. I. Title. II. Series.

NX550.A1T39 .1990

700'.944'09041 —dc20

90-37937

CIP

CIP-Titelaufnahme der Deutschen Bibliothek

Taylor, Seth:

Left wing Nietzscheans : the politics of German expressionism,
1910-1920 / by Seth Taylor. — Berlin ; New York : de Gruyter,
1990

(Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung ; Bd. 22)

ISBN 3-11-012457-2

NE: GT

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Printed in Germany

Druck: W. Hildebrand, Berlin

Buchbinderische Verarbeitung: Lüderitz & Bauer, Berlin

**To My
Mother And Father**

Acknowledgements

I am indebted to numerous institutions and individuals for their help and encouragement. I wish to thank the *Friedrich Ebert Stiftung* and New York University for their generous financial support of my research in Germany. In Germany I was able to discuss my ideas with Dr. Richard Sheppard, Dr. Philip Mann, Dr. Helmut Kreuzer, and Dr. Paul Raabe. Acknowledgement is also gratefully made to Dr. Hartmut Geerken and *Das Deutsche Literaturarchiv* in Marbach for permission to quote from the *Salomo Friedlaender Nachlaß*. Moreover, I wish to thank the staff of *Das Deutsche Literaturarchiv* for both their patience and their hospitality during my visit.

Finally I wish to thank Ursula Auclair and Dieter Gerdes for their patient verification of my translations.

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Introduction

Politics is merely instrumental: culture is the goal.

Georg Lukács, 1919

Almost half of a century has passed since the end of the Second World War and still no consensus has been reached regarding the role of Nietzsche's philosophy in the development of National Socialism in Germany. For critics of the philosopher, Nietzsche's vituperative attacks on liberalism and socialism, his prophecies of great wars, and his irrational philosophy of life justified the aims of German imperialists during the First World War and played a pivotal role in those cultural developments in Germany which eventually led to fascism. The most untiring proponent of this position between the wars was the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács.¹ While this view of Nietzsche has been severely criticized in the postwar period, it nevertheless continues to find adherents.²

In the United States, the publication in 1950 of Walter Kaufmann's *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* played an important role in

¹ For Lukács' arguments against Nietzsche see his 1935 article "Nietzsche als Vorläufer der faschistischen Ästhetik," reprinted in Lukács *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Ästhetik* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1956); his 1943 article "Der deutsche Faschismus und Nietzsche" is reprinted in Lukács' *Schicksalswende: Beiträge zu einer neuen deutschen Ideologie* (Berlin: Aufbau, 1956); see also *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft*, translated by Peter Palmer as *The Destruction of Reason* (London: Merlin Press, 1980).

² For Nietzsche's contemporary critics see George Lichtheim, *Europe in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Praeger 1972), pp. 150-153; Geoff Waite, "The Politics of Reading Formations: The Case of Nietzsche in Imperial Germany," *New German Critique* (spring 1983) 29, pp. 185-209; Arno J. Mayer, *The Persistence of the Old Regime* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), chapter 5. For specific replies to Lukács' interpretation of Nietzsche, see Mazzino Montinari, "Nietzsche zwischen Alfred Baeumler und Georg Lukács" in *Nietzsche Lesen* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), pp. 169-206; also Henning Ottmann, "Anti-Lukács: eine Kritik der Nietzsche-Kritik von Georg Lukács" in *Nietzsche Studien* 13 (1984), pp. 570-586. For a review of recent Marxist criticism of both Nietzsche and Montinari, see Wolfgang Müller-Lauter, "Ständige Herausforderung: Über Mazzino Montinari's Verhältnis zu Nietzsche" in *Nietzsche Studien: Internationales Jahrbuch für die Nietzsche-Forschung*, 18 (1989), pp. 32-82.

dissociating Nietzsche from some of the harsher views of his critics.³ For Kaufmann, Nietzsche could not be claimed justifiably by either the right or the left. "...He opposed both the idolatry of the state and political liberalism because he was basically 'antipolitical'," a description Kaufmann assumed from Nietzsche's own autobiography.⁴ Kaufmann's view that Nietzsche completely dismissed politics, has served many of Nietzsche's admirers as a justification to dismiss the issue of politics altogether. While scores of studies have been written in the last decades touting Nietzsche as the precursor of almost every philosophic movement of the twentieth century, very few have focused on Nietzsche's politics or the role of his philosophy in German history.⁵

One of the few recent studies which does focus on Nietzsche's political views has been Peter Bergmann's *Nietzsche: The Last Antipolitical German*, a book which goes far in resolving the seemingly irresolvable issues separating Nietzsche's critics and defenders.⁶ Like Kaufmann, Bergmann focused on Nietzsche's own description of himself as "the last antipolitical German," but only to conclude the inadequacy of Kaufmann's position. Nietzsche's antipolitics did not mean indifference to politics. In contrast to Kaufmann's unpolitical Nietzsche, Bergmann found Nietzsche very involved with the politics of his day. In contrast to Nietzsche's critics, however, Nietzsche's antipolitics meant the resistance to the encroachment of the state on the cultural life of the nation. While it is true that Nietzsche assumed conservative positions hostile to liberalism, he did so at a time when German liberalism had betrayed its cosmopolitan origins and embraced nationalism and imperialism. In other words, Nietzsche's antipolitics stood against the developments in German history which reached their culmination in fascism.

Bergmann's distinction between the unpolitical and antipolitical does much to clarify Nietzsche's own attitude toward politics; it does little, however, to clarify the subsequent role of Nietzsche's philosophy in German history. It was, after all, not Kaufmann who first asserted the unpolitical character of

³ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed: (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974).

⁴ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I Am So Wise," 3. Unless noted otherwise, all references to Nietzsche's writings will refer to the English translations listed in the bibliography. All citations refer to the aphorism or section number, not the page.

⁵ It would be pointless to attempt to cite the vast literature about Nietzsche to emerge in the last few decades. See the excellent bibliography in *Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed., Harold Bloom (New York, New Haven, Philadelphia, 1987). This collection of modern critical essays is the best we have to date.

⁶ Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche: The Last Antipolitical German* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987).

Nietzsche's philosophy. In the context of pre-National Socialist Germany, Nietzsche's doctrine was brandished by his conservative followers as an affirmation of an unpolitical tradition which served to justify middle-class accommodation to the militaristic policies of Germany's ruling powers.⁷ In its most pernicious form, this unpolitical tradition, combined with Nietzsche's irrationalist philosophy and criticisms of liberalism, became part of what historians refer to as Germany's "conservative revolution" against modernity.⁸ It was Thomas Mann who first misquoted Nietzsche as the "last unpolitical (not antipolitical) German" in his defense of German policies during the First World War. His *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* represented the view of those in Wilhelminian Germany who saw Nietzsche as a conservative critic of western liberalism, rationalism, and materialism, and a defender of "Germany's special way."⁹

The irrational and antiwestern attitudes of the conservative revolution were eventually subsumed in National Socialism, and it is this fact which has led to the myth that Nietzsche's philosophy led to fascism, despite what Nietzsche's own political position may have been. This study attempts to do away with that myth through the analysis of an antipolitical tradition in Wilhelminian Germany which opposed militarism and the conservative revolution, and which likewise claimed Nietzsche as its standard bearer.

German Expressionism (1910-1920) represents the climax of this tradition; its significance lies in the fact that young artists of this movement saw in Nietzsche's antipolitical philosophy the material to combat the militarism, authoritarianism, and illiberalism of German society which Nietzsche is usually credited with engendering.

Irrationalism and a romantic critique of modernity are characteristic of Expressionism as well as the conservative revolution but these similarities obscure decisive differences. Irrationalism, it has been argued, produced a

⁷ See Fritz Stern, "The Political Consequences of the Unpolitical German" in his *The Failure of Illiberalism: Essays on the Political Culture of Modern Germany* (Chicago, London: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 3-25.

⁸ On the conservative revolution see Armin Mohler, *Die konservative Revolution in Deutschland 1918-1932* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1972); Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963); Klemens Von Klemperer, *Germany's New Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957); Kurt Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Munich: Nymphenburger, 1962). A critical analysis of the movement, dividing it from other right-wing groups, is provided by Louis Dapeux, *Nationalbolschewismus in Deutschland*, trans. from the French by Richard Kirchoff, (Munich: C.H.Beck, 1985).

⁹ Thomas Mann, *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (Berlin: S. Fischer, 1918). An English translation has been published under the title *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, trans. Walter D. Morris (New York: Friedrich Unger, 1983).

pervasive relativism in the Weimar republic which invited authoritarian solutions.¹⁰ For the Expressionists, the opposite was true: irrationalism was the remedy for a failed rational tradition which itself made German authoritarianism possible. Expressionism's romantic critique of modernity lacked every trace of nationalism and antiwesternism so characteristic of the conservative variety. Indeed the absence of nationalism and antiwesternism is an important aspect of the Expressionist revolt which gives an entirely different meaning to the qualities it shared with the conservative revolution.

Not all historians see an unequivocal link between the chauvinist movements which sprouted in Germany during the First World War and the irrationalist trends and criticisms of modernity popular at the end of the nineteenth century. Fritz Stern's *The Politics of Cultural Despair* is perhaps the most judicious attempt to distinguish Nietzsche's *Zeitkritik* from his adherents on the right.¹¹ Still the association of Nietzsche with the right remains, if only because the numerous studies tracing the ideological roots of National Socialism have highlighted Nietzsche's influence on the right while little research has been carried out documenting his influence on the left. Indeed, attitudes eschewing politics, science, and modern culture were endemic among all intellectuals at the turn of the century, not simply intellectuals predisposed to the right.

These attitudes, in fact, have a history in Germany that extends far beyond either Nietzsche or the conservative revolution. A disdain for politics and an antipathy toward practical knowledge and utilitarianism, the basis of the late nineteenth-century critique of modernity, were already present in German classicism and Idealism. Kant was the first German to distinguish between *Kultur* and *Zivilisation* though the distinction initially carried none of the antiwestern overtones it accrued in the conservative revolution.¹² For German classicists, *Kultur* meant, above all, to be an educated individual for whom knowledge was the basis of responsible action. To be a cultured nation meant a harmonious combination of all seemingly discordant individual elements, as Nietzsche put it, "a unity of style in all the expressions of the life of a people."¹³

¹⁰ This position is particularly stressed in Sontheimer, *Antidemokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik*. See chapters 2 & 3.

¹¹ See Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, pp. 283-289.

¹² On the classical and idealist notion of *Kultur*, see Hajo Holborn, *A History of Modern Germany, 1648-1840* (New York: Knopf, 1964), chapter 11; Fritz K. Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins: The German Academic Community, 1890-1933* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), pp. 81-90.

¹³ Nietzsche, *David Strauss, The Confessor and The Writer*, 1.

While both Nietzsche and the Expressionists derided the notion of German *Kultur* when it became the catchword of the Wilhelminian right, the fact is that their own philosophies of individualism were deeply indebted to this classical tradition. Nietzsche's *The Future of Our Educational Institutions* and *Untimely Meditations* defended that tradition against the increase of government control over the universities and the diversion of education away from personal cultivation to political and economic uses.¹⁴ The latter set of essays became an important influence on the young adherents of the Expressionist movement in their own campaign against Germany's authoritarian system of education.

Undoubtedly, the classical notion of *Kultur* was elitist and antidemocratic, as were Nietzsche and Expressionism. Yet even such a distinguished critic of German cultural development as Fritz Stern concedes that idealism and classicism served as "a spur to the creation of liberal society."

Indeed, in the pre-1848 movement, most academics sought to translate the inner freedom of man into external freedom as well, and the liberals of those days fought the establishment, the court, the nobility, and the church as obscurantist or tyrannical institutions that inhibited the growth of the free individual. However diverse the liberals' programs, they all demanded the legal freedom of the person, i.e., his protection from every form of public arbitrariness, his liberation from economic and social disabilities, and his spiritual freedom, i.e., his right to hold, exchange, and propagate dissenting beliefs.¹⁵

In Stern's account this rejection of the political order in favor of individual culture became a subservient unpolitical tradition only after the failure of the 1848 revolution and the decline of idealism.

It is in the very bankruptcy of liberal idealism and the consequent rise of a servile unpolitical tradition that we find the origins of Nietzsche's and Expressionism's irrationalist philosophies. Idealism adhered to the German historicist notion which viewed reason as working immanently in history and the state as the instrument of reason. Yet for idealists and Prussian historians prior to the revolution of 1848, the goal of reason, which the state served, was a more liberal and rational existence, with the state affirming basic individual rights. With German unification in 1871, the liberal commitment of Prussian historians went the way of liberal political demands in general. The state still

¹⁴ On German humanistic education and Nietzsche's relation to it, see Frederick Lilge, *The Abuse of Learning: The Failure of the German University* (New York: Macmillan, 1948), chapters 1-4; W.H. Bruford, *The German Tradition of Self-Cultivation: "Bildung" From Humboldt to Thomas Mann* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), particularly chapter 8.

¹⁵ Fritz Stern, *The Failure of Illiberalism*, pp. 11-12.

served reason but the goal of reason increasingly became the imperial expansion of the German state.¹⁶ As we shall see when we come to examine Expressionist ideology more closely, the revolt against reason by young intellectuals at the turn of the century cannot be understood without considering the exploitation of Germany's rational tradition by the German right.

A similar argument can be made about Nietzsche's famous immoralism. For the Expressionists, Nietzsche's immoralism became a progressive force in a state which directly administered the national religion through a ministry of church affairs. The established church was, therefore, the voice of the state inculcating obedience both from the pulpit and in the school, where pastors served the state as teachers.

Yet, it was the triumph of positivism over idealism, in the mid-nineteenth century, which played a more crucial role in undermining both religion and reason. Positivism's emphasis on the collection of empirical data at the expense of a more holistic science meant that reason lost its position in deciding moral and ethical questions. It became a mere instrument in the advancement of science and material welfare. At the same time, the great strides in science and technology undermined religious values. Thus the popular success of David Friedrich Strauss' *Der alte und neue Glaube* (1872) which argued against Christian faith and in favor of a scientific materialism whose practical wisdom was demonstrated on the battlefields of 1870 and in the factories of the new German state. It was this viewpoint which Nietzsche attacked in the first of his *Untimely Meditations*. Strauss' equation of culture with scientific advance and victory in battle spelled for Nietzsche "the defeat, if not the extirpation, of the German spirit for the benefit of the German Reich."¹⁷ The German right was thus adept at co-opting, not just Nietzsche's philosophy, but all of German philosophy, religion, and science. Yet this is hardly the point. The point is that both Nietzsche and Expressionism stood against that co-optation. Expressionism was a revolt, based largely on Nietzsche's philosophy, against an authoritarian regime for the sake of individual autonomy. Immoralism, irrationalism, and the search for individualism were the substance of this rebellion by young people, which was, on the one hand, directed against the repressive character of post-Victorian culture in general, on the other hand, against the authoritarian

¹⁶ On this development in German historical thought see Georg G. Iggers, *The German Conception of History: The National Tradition of Historical Thought from Herder to the Present* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1968).

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *David Strauss, the Confessor and the Writer*, 1.

and militaristic character of German society where reason and moral virtue had long been catch phrases for Prussian prerogative. Behind Expressionist irrationalism, immoralism, and the attacks on Wilhelminian liberalism lay a real concern with the individual freedoms which Germany's early liberal movement had promised, but had never delivered.

Nietzsche's irrationalistic philosophy appeared as the antidote to everything that was virulent in German culture. It sanctified the instincts above the much abused cult of reason, but it in no way abandoned reason like the later irrationalistic right. For the Expressionists, as for Nietzsche's later defenders, Nietzsche's irrationalism subsumed reason under life as one of a number of forces moderating the instincts, the latter the source of human excesses but also of human creativity. The Expressionist goal was to go beyond the coercive value systems and ideologies which served the state but not society. In practice this meant a new culture based on moral tolerance and individual self-responsibility. For the historian of Germany this means that Nietzsche's irrationalism, which has long been seen as a primary source of German militarism, was for this prewar generation of young intellectuals, a weapon against it.

Georg Lukács' Critique of Expressionism

In contrast to the defense of irrationalism presented above, the Marxist philosopher Georg Lukács traced the origins of National Socialism precisely to the rise of the irrational and romantic philosophies which came into vogue in Germany after the decline of classical Idealism. Writing primarily in the period between the World Wars, Lukács was the most vociferous critic of both Nietzsche and German Expressionism. True, Lukács' view of Nietzsche as the philosopher of German imperialism and antisocialism can no longer seriously be maintained, in spite of the not infrequent reappearance of these views among postwar historians.¹⁸ Too much is known today about Nietzsche's hostility toward the state and nationalism, and his ambivalent attitude toward socialism. What survives from Lukács' arguments, and what concerns us here, is the indictment of the traditions he found common to Nietzsche and

¹⁸ See note 2 of this chapter.

Expressionism: irrationalism and romantic anticapitalism.¹⁹ In Lukács view, Nietzsche's irrationalism undermined the conviction that knowledge of the real world was possible and that this could provide a way out of despair. Instead of objective knowledge, there is only the intuition of great men, an aspect of Nietzsche's philosophy which, according to Lukács, encouraged the tradition in Germany of expecting everything to come from the authorities. Lukács' most virulent attack on Nietzsche came in his *The Destruction of Reason* (1952), which rejected not only Nietzsche's irrationalism but all irrationalist trends in German history from Schelling to National Socialism, including the vitalist sociology of Lukács' mentor before his conversion to Marxism, Georg Simmel. Vitalism is the generic term for a variety of irrational trends which emerged in Europe in the early twentieth century. In Germany many of these vitalist ideas, including Simmel's, were indebted to Nietzsche.²⁰ Simmel is of particular importance here since, as professor of sociology and philosophy at the University in Berlin before the First World War, he mediated Nietzsche's philosophy to both the young Lukács and the Expressionists.

According to Lukács, Simmel's sociology established an insoluble opposition between the individual and culture, or, stated in vitalist terms, between life's unceasing creativity and its own previous creations which have become fixed by convention.²¹ Lukács' rejection of Simmel resulted from his discovery of a Marxist explanation of capitalism as the cause of the conflict between individual and culture, and of communism as the single movement capable of overcoming it. Simmel's refusal to accept the Marxist primacy of economic determinants meant that he too unwittingly participated in the mystification of the real causes of cultural despair, which inevitably led in German history, to the specious attempt to overcome that despair, through fascism.

¹⁹ It is difficult to label Nietzsche a romantic since he himself rejected romanticism in favor of the Dionysian, the latter affirming life, the former seeking "rest, stillness, calm seas" (*The Gay Science*, 370). Nevertheless, Lukács' point is that Nietzsche's romantic anticapitalism was more pernicious than other romantic forms. Instead of fleeing the barbarity of capitalism into a utopian past, as romantics, according to Lukács, are wont to do, Nietzsche criticized capitalism for not being barbaric enough. It was his call for unrestrained barbarism, implicit in the expression "will to power," which made Nietzsche the herald of fascism. See Lukács, "Der deutsche Faschismus und Nietzsche," pp. 24-25.

²⁰ In *Die Zerstörung der Vernunft* Lukács actually uses the German word *Lebensphilosophie*, a term first used in connection with the writings of Wilhelm Dilthey but which came into general use around the First World War. Lukács' translator has used "vitalism" in place of *Lebensphilosophie* and indeed many studies of Expressionism, even those in German, have assumed the broader term.

²¹ Simmel's pessimistic philosophy is most elaborately set forth in his *The Philosophy of Money*, translated from the German by Tom Bottomore and David Frisby (Boston, London, Melbourne: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978).

Undoubtedly Lukács was not completely wrong about vitalist philosophy since popular varieties of the doctrine did find their home in the chauvinistic and anti-Semitic literature of Germany's conservative revolution. Yet there were many vitalist trends in Wilhelminian and Weimar Germany, and Expressionist vitalism no more adhered to the chauvinism of the conservative brand, than it did to Simmel's own pessimistic sociology.²² For the Expressionists, Nietzsche's irrational elevation of life over reason and material determinants meant the restoration to mankind of the autonomy which nineteenth-century materialism and positivism denied. No longer was man simply a product of social and biological forces; he was his own self-creator. That was the meaning for Expressionists of Nietzsche's "will to power": not an invitation to barbarism, but the will to life, the will to overcome the opposition between individual and culture which Lukács lamented. Lukács recognized Expressionism's revolutionary intent but criticized it nevertheless as another form of irrationalism which, at best, led only to a romantic opposition to the real causes of the cultural crisis.

Lukács' initial attack against Expressionism came in an article of 1934, "Expressionism: its Significance and Decline."²³ The article grew, in the late 1930s, into a full blown debate among left-wing intellectuals after the conversion of Gottfried Benn to National Socialism, the most prestigious of the few Expressionists who followed this path. The debate took place in the periodical *Das Wort* published in Moscow; the variety of left-wing intellectuals participating reflected the policy of the Popular Front against fascism, adopted by the German Communist Party in 1935.²⁴

Alfred Kurella, once an Expressionist and now Lukács' disciple, led the assault on Expressionism, repeating the argument of Lukács' 1934 article, that Expressionism leads to fascism. Of the numerous replies, the most significant defense of Expressionism came from the Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch who

²² Simmel himself recognized the Expressionist attempt to bridge the gap between individual and culture in his essay "The Conflict in Modern Culture." See Simmel, *The Conflict in Modern Culture, and Other Essays*, ed. and trans. K. Peter Eitzkorn (New York, Teachers College Press, 1987).

²³ Georg Lukács, "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline," *Essays on Realism* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1980). Originally published in *Internationale Literatur*, 1 (1934) pp. 153-73.

²⁴ The contributions to the debate have been reprinted in *Die Expressionismusdebatte: Materialien zu einer marxistischen Realismuskonzeption*, ed. Hans-Jürgen Schmitt (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1973). For an analysis of the contributions see David R. Bathrick, "Moderne Kunst und Klassenkampf. Die Expressionismusdebatte in der Exilzeitschrift *Das Wort*" in *Exil und innere Emigration. Third Wisconsin Workshop*, ed. Reinhold Grimm & Jost Hermand (Frankfurt/M: Athenäum, 1972), pp. 87-109.

himself mingled in Expressionist emigre circles in Switzerland during the war. Bloch directed his reply only marginally against Kurella, focusing instead on the real source of the debate, Lukács 1934 article. The result was that Lukács returned to the fray, though his second essay turned less on Expressionist politics than on Lukács' preference for a neoclassical literary tradition as the only acceptable Marxist aesthetic, a preference which informed not only his criticism of Expressionism but which eventually brought him into conflict with Berthold Brecht and Theodor Adorno.²⁵ The literary debate does not concern us here and all the relevant references to Expressionist politics are contained in Lukács' and Bloch's initial contributions.

According to Lukács, Expressionist vitalism was just another decadent form of irrationalism, derived primarily from Nietzsche, which buttressed capitalism in decline. True, the Expressionists opposed capitalism, Lukács conceded, but only in a subjective and idealistic way. Even the abstract nature of their art was just a subjective revolt, a petty bourgeois cry of despair which refused to see the real source of their despair in capitalism.

Equally suspect in Lukács' view was Expressionist pacifism, which failed to distinguish between war in general and an imperialistic war, thus serving only the class interest of the bourgeoisie. Instead of attacking capitalism, the Expressionists attacked German culture and the German *Bürger* who, although the word literally translates as middle class, for the Expressionists included everyone but their own narrow bohemian group. For Lukács, then, the Expressionist critique was empty of all content, a romantic assault on Wilhelminian culture which mystified the connection between economy and society. Moreover, by posing as the only non-*bürgerlich* section of society, the Expressionists set themselves up as an elite, an ideology which paved the way to fascism.²⁶

Bloch's rejoinder decried Lukács' attempt to portray Expressionism as a forerunner of fascism, especially in light of the fact that the Nazis themselves had labeled Expressionism as degenerate art.²⁷ Nor could Expressionist pacifism prior to the revolution of 1919 be considered a pseudo-opposition since German politicians perceived it as a genuine threat. The subjective

²⁵ The relevant contributions to this latter part of the debate have been translated and edited by Ronald Taylor in *Aesthetics and Politics* (London: Verso, 1977); For an excellent discussion see Eugene Lunn, *Marxism and Modernism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982).

²⁶ Lukács, "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline," p. 92.

²⁷ Ernst Bloch, "Diskussionen über Expressionismus" in Schmitt, *Die Expressionismusdebatte*, pp. 180-91 (180). See also Taylor, *Aesthetics and Politics*, pp. 16-27 (17). Expressionist art was included with other modernist works in an exhibit, held in Munich in 1937, on degenerate art.

nature of the Expressionist revolt which exposed the contradictions of the bourgeois world view was not collusion with the imperialist bourgeoisie, as Lukács maintained, but an attempt to overcome those contradictions, to find the new latent within the old sterile ideologies.²⁸ In Bloch's view, Lukács' campaign against Expressionism represented the most dogmatic type of Marxist sociology based on Lukács' penchant for the German classical tradition out of which Marx evolved. In Lukács' ideology only the classical is healthy, the romantic tradition, especially as it evolved after Marx, is decadent. Inevitably every type of modern art must be rejected as reflecting bourgeois decline.

Ultimately, then, Lukács' argument against both irrationalism and romanticism were simply that they were not Marxist. Everything else that developed in the wake of Marx led to fascism. Yet the most glaring fallacy in the entire argument is one that Bloch did not even mention: its lack of historical perspective. It would have been impossible for the Expressionists to have embraced Marxism prior to the end of the war. Until then, Marxism was far too under the sway of positivism and the vulgar materialism which the majority of the intelligentsia rejected.

In fact, Lukács himself was, in his youth, a romantic anticapitalist. His own revolt against rationalism and the vulgar materialism of the age bore every similarity to Expressionism's, including traces of Nietzsche's influence. Only in December of 1918 did Lukács join the Hungarian Communist Party. His place among the most important philosophers of western Marxism derives from his dissociation of Marx from the vulgar materialism prevalent at the turn of the century and his recognition that Marx himself stood with one philosophical foot in the same idealism that was so necessary to Lukács' generation.²⁹

Lukács was able to have Marxism serve as the vehicle of his idealism because he rediscovered the idealistic foundations of that philosophy which

²⁸ Bloch's attitude toward Nietzsche are quite similar to his views on Expressionism. See his defense of Nietzsche in the second expanded edition of his *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1985), pp. 358-366. Bloch portrays Nietzsche's Dionysus as the most powerful symbol of subjective revolt against reified values. The analysis is thus similar to his analysis of Expressionism, though Bloch admitted the presence of another side of Nietzsche, that of the *Übermensch* and the blond beast, which was easily exploited by fascism.

²⁹ On Lukács' own romantic revolt see Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1979); Andrew Arato & Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York: Seabury, 1979); Lee Congdon, *The Young Lukács* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1983); Mary Gluck, *Georg Lukács and His Generation, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985). See Gluck, p. 148, for the young Lukács' attitude toward Nietzsche.

had been forgotten by the turn of the century. The Expressionists made Nietzsche's vitalism the vehicle of those same idealistic goals because there was no Marxist revolutionary ideology at the time capable of supporting those goals.³⁰ As David Bathrick and Paul Breines have already pointed out in another context, the Nietzsche cult at the turn of the century was very much the product of a crisis within Marxism.³¹

In Germany, that crisis consisted of the inability of the Social Democratic Party to present a disaffected youth with a viable alternative to mainstream society. The Marxist doctrine adhered to by the Party was characterized by the same rank materialism pervading all late nineteenth-century thought. In opposition to the SPD doctrine, which viewed man as the product of his material circumstances and ideals as the mere epiphenomena of class interests, an idealistic youth turned to Nietzsche's romantic notion of the *Übermensch*, the person who creates himself.

Even if the SPD had offered an acceptable alternative to Wilhelminian society, there would be no reason to criticize Expressionist romanticism. Indeed more recent historiography on romanticism has taken a more sympathetic view than Lukács. Robert Sayre and Michael Löwy's article on "Figures of Romantic Anti-Capitalism" has sought to dispel the stigma attached to romanticism by developing a typology with as many progressive as reactionary examples.³² In the specific context of German history, Eugene Lunn's examination of the romantic socialism of Gustav Landauer concludes by noting that the prevalence of a racist and imperial romanticism in German history should be treated as a development of Germany's social and political development and not necessarily as the inevitable result of romanticism.³³

Though Lukács' influence among literary historians decreased markedly after the Second World War, his view of Expressionist irrationalism as a flight

³⁰ Philosophically speaking, vitalism and Idealism are mutually exclusive since vitalism countenances only that which is the product of life, not of the mind. In practice, as noted already by Gunter Martens and Eva Kolinsky, the Expressionists, particularly during the latter part of the war, mixed the two. See Gunter Martens, *Vitalismus und Expressionismus: Ein Beitrag zur Genese und Deutung expressionistischer Stilstrukturen und Motive* (Stuttgart, Berlin, Cologne, Mainz: Kohlhammer, 1971), pp. 18-19; Eva Kolinsky, *Engagierter Expressionismus* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1970), pp. 73-74.

³¹ David Bathrick and Paul Breines, "Marx und/oder Nietzsche. Anmerkungen zur Krise des Marxismus" in *Karl Marx und Friedrich Nietzsche*, edited by Reinhold Grimm & Jost Hermand (Frankfurt/M.: Athenäum Verlag, 1978).

³² New German Critique (spring-summer 1984) 32; pp. 42-92.

³³ Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973).

from the real social origins of cultural despair still finds its adherents.³⁴ In contrast, Thomas Anz finds a wealth of social consciousness in Expressionist literature. In his interpretation, disorientation, alienation and Angst were not symptomatic of petty bourgeois despair, but artistic techniques employed to heighten awareness of a crisis impending within a social system that had lost its integrative power. Anz also noted the Jewish background of a large number of Expressionists which magnified their feeling of marginality.³⁵

In general, the literature on Expressionism since the end of the Second World War has contested the perception of Expressionist art as irrational flight. The majority of postwar literary histories portray vitalism as a revolutionary force, though there is little consensus as to what the revolt was actually against. Common themes have been the generational revolt against the father, against the intellectualism of Wilhelminian society, against the persistence of preindustrial values or loss of individuality in modern industrial society.³⁶ In these studies of Expressionist literature, drama, and poetry, Nietzsche's influence has been of paramount importance. Studies of Expressionist politics have only been summarily concerned with Nietzsche's influence.³⁷

The relative absence of Nietzsche in studies of Expressionist politics is explained by the fact that real political engagement is characteristic only of late Expressionism when Nietzsche's influence was already on the wane. Nietzsche's influence was paramount in early Expressionism which assumed his antipolitical stance and his critique of German culture. Their revolt was against that culture, its authoritarianism and servile conformism which undermined the creativity and autonomy of the individual.

The reason for the acceptance of politics in later Expressionism was the failure of cultural revolution itself. Cultural revolution proved impotent in a world war in which the Expressionists themselves were dragged off to the trenches. At the same time, the success of the Russian Revolution and the

³⁴ See for example Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Das Bild der bürgerlichen Welt im expressionistischen Drama* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1967; Lothar Peter, *Literarische Intelligenz und Klassenkampf: Die Aktion, 1911-1932* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1972).

³⁵ Thomas Anz, *Literatur der Existenz* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1977), see particularly 162-67.

³⁶ Walter Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford University Press, 1959); Gunter Martens, *Vitalismus und Expressionismus*; Silvia Vietta & Hans-Georg Kemper, *Expressionismus* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink, 1975). For a complete review of the literature on Expressionism see Richard Brinkmann, *Expressionismus: Forschungsprobleme, 1952-60* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1961); Brinkmann, *Expressionismus: Internationale Forschung zu einem internationalen Phänomen* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1980).

³⁷ Eva Kolinsky, *Engagierter Expressionismus*; John Zammito, *The Great Debate: Bolshevism and the Literary Left in Germany, 1917-1920* (Bern, Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 1984); Lothar Peter, *Literarische Intelligenz und Klassenkampf: Die Aktion, 1911-1932*.

more aggressive tactics of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg overshadowed the timid policies of the Social Democratic Party and saw the rise of Marxism to a new respectability among the left-wing intelligentsia. Indeed, the Expressionists largely followed Lukács' own path from cultural revolt toward Marxism.

This study, then, is not only about the existence of a Nietzschean left but also about its failure, a failure which in itself resulted from a contradiction within Nietzsche's own antipolitical philosophy. In Nietzsche's ambiguous and often contradictory writings, the artist is sometimes portrayed as an elite individualist and critic of culture standing far above society; at other times, the artist is an activist, the founder of a new and vital culture. In practice, the two themes proved irreconcilable as the Expressionists found out. Their own elite individualism undermined their chances of political influence while their notion of a vital culture precluded the political engagement necessary to bring that culture about.

The individual case studies, which follow two background chapters on the early reception of Nietzsche's philosophy by the left, highlight the failure of cultural revolution. The initial study of Kurt Hiller's Activist movement shows this failure in its extreme form. Hiller's attempt to make Nietzsche's philosophy into the foundation of political activism was undermined by his own reluctance to give up its elitist nature. The next chapter on Otto Gross represents another failed attempt to politicize Nietzsche's philosophy, this time in the cause of proletarian revolution. As we shall see, Gross was able to make Nietzsche's philosophy compatible with Marxism only by stripping it of its libertarian foundation.

The separate studies on Salomo Friedlaender and Anselm Ruest are about the dissenters from the political orientation of late Expressionism. In their philosophies of individual self-development, vitalism achieves its finest representation as an alternative beyond politics and ideology. At the very least, their stories challenge conventional historiography which regards the unpolitical tradition as support for the status quo. Their reluctance to support Germany's November Revolution recounts the dilemma familiar to all revolutionaries, Lukács included, who have considered the consequences of creating a new nonviolent culture with the violent means of the old.³⁸

³⁸ For Lukács' own dilemma, see his essay written days before his entry into the Hungarian Communist Party, "Der Bolschewismus als moralisches Problem," in *Taktik und Ethik: Politische Aufsätze*, ed. Jörg Kammler and Frank Benseler, translated from Hungarian to German by Jano Györkos, et al. (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1975), vol. 1, pp. 27-33.

A final case study on Dada brings us to the end of the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany when the Berlin Dadaists reject Expressionist elitist individualism in favor of politics and Marxism. This repudiation, though, hardly confirms Lukács' view about the role of Nietzschean irrationalism in German history. It is true, the rapid rise, during the war, of a right wing Nietzsche vogue raised doubts about the irrational tradition among a number of Expressionists. The difference between them and Lukács was simply that most of the Expressionists continued to defend Nietzsche against his right-wing interpreters even as they abandoned his philosophy. More importantly, the Berlin Dadaists rejected Nietzsche and Expressionism's elitist individualism, not for being irrational, but for being too closely tied to the German classical tradition which Lukács embraced but which the Dadaists discovered as the real source of German militarism.

Chapter One

The Nietzsche Vogue in Germany, 1890-1910

I am, no less than Wagner, a child of this time;
that is, a decadent: but I comprehended this,
I resisted it. The philosopher in me resisted.

Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner*

It is ironic that Lukács criticized Expressionism as decadent since the principle aim of the movement was to overcome the decadence of European culture in the late nineteenth century. For Lukács, Expressionism was decadent because of its break with the realist tradition, imbibed from German classicism, which made Expressionist art useless in the class struggle against capitalism. In reality, Lukács' notion of decadence distorted the original meaning of the term as it was used by nineteenth-century intellectuals in a debate about the vitality of European culture. The term decadence most explicitly refers to a movement of French and English writers stretching from Charles Baudelaire to Oscar Wilde who used the epithet "decadent" to express their conviction, in contrast to the liberal optimism prevailing in the late nineteenth century, that European civilization was in decline. What disturbed the decadents about nineteenth century culture was its mediocrity. To express their contempt, they developed an overrefined literary style. They assumed the pose of dandies, affecting extreme fastidiousness and elegance in dress and manner, to convey their alienation from a middle-class life-style and the moral norms of Victorian culture.¹

In Germany the notion of cultural decline became an issue among intellectuals only around 1890, the year Nietzsche's philosophy began its meteoric rise in popularity. This was no coincidence; Nietzsche's own notion of decadence defined the crisis of culture as it was perceived by Germans. The

¹ On decadence in the late nineteenth-century, see A. E. Carter, *The Idea of Decadence in French Literature, 1830-1900* (University of Toronto Press, 1958); Richard Gilman, *Decadence: The Strange Life of an Epithet* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1975); Richard Ellman, ed., *Edwardians and Late Victorians*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960).

reason for this is simply that, in spite of the diversity of phenomena he attacked as decadent-- morality, Christianity, reason-- Nietzsche's criticisms were primarily aimed at the German culture which came into being after unification in 1871. As one of the first critics of Germany during the *Gründerzeit*, Nietzsche articulated a sense of cultural decadence that became general among young intellectuals in the last decade of the century.

Nietzsche began to use the word decadence only in his later writings.² Yet he applied it as an epithet against all the evils which had inspired his philosophy of life since the publication of his first work in 1872, *The Birth of Tragedy Out of the Spirit of Music*. Thus Socrates was a decadent because he advocated "rationality against instinct. Rationality at any price [is] a dangerous force that undermines life."³ Nietzsche is saying here that the exaggerated use of reason erodes a person's will to act. Yet Nietzsche did not repudiate reason as indicated by his inclusion of the phrase "at any price." He recognized Socratic rationalism as an antidote to the decadence of ancient Greece where life was threatened, not by rationality, but because "everywhere the instincts were in anarchy; everywhere one was within five paces of excess: *monstrum in animo* was the general danger."⁴

Socrates erected reason as a counterweight to the excess of instincts which threatened Greece just as Nietzsche emphasized the irrational in his works because he thought life in the nineteenth century was threatened by an exaggerated rationalism which enervated the instincts, thereby thwarting individual initiative and encouraging conformity. The ideal life is a balance of both reason and instinct, the passionate human being who is in control of his passions.

A lack of spiritual vitality and a resistance to change were the links connecting the diverse phenomena which Nietzsche labeled decadent. Both Christianity and Schopenhauer were decadent because of their abnegation of the instincts, the driving force behind life itself. Wagner and romantic artists were decadent because, in their art, they fled the complex world of the present into myth or the simpler existence of the past. Even language was decadent since the subjective truths that are represented in a word become canonized

² The first appearance of the word in a work Nietzsche published was in *The Case of Wagner*. The word does appear in a note of about 1878. See Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th ed. rev. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 73.

³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Birth of Tragedy," 1.

⁴ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "The Problem of Socrates," 9.

over time through conventional usage. While reality changes, language continues to affirm a view of the world which is no longer valid for society.⁵

In its most general meaning, decadence was an ambiguous epithet which Nietzsche employed against innumerable bugbears. Its very vagueness, combined with its implicit demand for movement and change, made it likely to appeal to radicals from both sides of the political spectrum. Indeed, Nietzsche's philosophy is impossible to define by any conventional notions of right and left if only because of the diversity of causes he attacked. Democracy was decadent but so was German chauvinism. Anarchism was decadent but the state was the end of all culture. His philosophy offered something for everyone dissatisfied with the status quo.

Nevertheless, German chauvinism was unambiguously decadent in Nietzsche's philosophy and it only is an indication of the remarkable interpretive abilities of the right that they were able to make Nietzsche *reichdeutsch*. The left, at least in this case, proved more rigorous. Even in the early years of the Nietzsche vogue in Germany, Nietzsche's antidemocratic sentiments became something of a conundrum for the left. Gustav Landauer and Heinrich Mann, pre-Expressionist writers who would become role models for the next generation of young artists, would reject those sentiments. As we shall see, Mann in particular rejected Nietzsche's antidemocratic thought as a sign of the philosopher's own decadence, while he nevertheless attempted to salvage for the left other aspects of his vitalist philosophy.

The Origins of the Nietzsche Vogue in Germany

Nietzsche published his first major work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, in 1872, one year after the unification of Germany. While he remained a virtual unknown in Germany for the next two decades, by 1890, scarcely a year after his own mental collapse, he was rapidly on his way to becoming nothing short of a cult figure in his homeland. How are we to account for his sudden popularity? What was it about German culture around 1890 which seemed to accord with his notion of decadence?

At first glance, Germany in 1890 hardly seemed to lack vitality. In the thirty years after unification, German had undergone unprecedented economic growth. While the foundation for development was being laid as early as

⁵ Nietzsche's most probing critique of language appeared in his posthumously published essay from 1873 "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense." The essay was written before Nietzsche began to use the epithet decadence, but his critique fits his later use of the term.

1850, unification set the conditions for an industrial expansion that far outpaced England's own industrial revolution.

The demographic changes were equally dramatic. At the beginning of the nineteenth century the population of what would become Bismarckian Germany totaled just over 24 million. By 1914, it was almost 68 million. Moreover, the increase was primarily in the towns and cities, and at the expense of the countryside. The decline of agriculture which coincided with the rise of industry precipitated a massive migration of the rural population to the new industrial cities. Yet, as Roy Pascal points out,

It would be a mistake to identify the new post-1880 culture or literature with the great industrial city. In fact, the great industrial cities of the Ruhr, Saxony or Silesia hardly have any direct significance in the artistic life of the time. The old cultural centers like Berlin, Vienna, Munich, Dresden, Hamburg, or Leipzig, most of them still residences of Princes, retained their preeminence, and it is here that we find the most important theatres and museums, the great publishers and art dealers, the editorial offices of the newspapers and periodicals.... This great transformation of cultural life had its origins not in the purely industrial cities but in the great metropolitan centers.... Only in the metropolis, where marked features of industrialization and capitalism were breaking in upon a traditional cultural environment, could an effective challenge and also assimilation take place.⁶

It was precisely this contrast between the new and the traditional which made Nietzsche's notion of decadence relevant in the 1890s. Values had failed to keep pace with the movement of life. Nowhere was the contrast so evident as in Berlin, soon to become the center of Expressionism. The crass materialism of the new dynamic parts of the city sharply contrasted with the religious and moral values which held sway in provincial society. At the same time, the scientistic doctrines which were gaining currency in the new metropolises undermined the religious beliefs upon which the old morality was based. The background for the revolt against morality was, in part then, the Victorian culture of late nineteenth-century Germany which stringently enforced traditional moral values even as they became increasingly hollow in a more urban society.

The political system of the *Reich* exacerbated this anachronistic contrast between the new and the traditional. On the one hand the power of the state rested on the industrial wealth of a politically impotent bourgeoisie. On the other hand, the real rulers of industrial Germany were an aristocracy whose

⁶ Roy Pascal, *From Naturalism to Expressionism: German Literature and Society, 1880-1918* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1973), p. 125.

economic position was becoming increasingly precarious. Although the *Reichstag* was the supreme legislative body, legislation was initiated only by the *Kaiser's* chief minister. In order to get legislation passed, the chancellor would have to strike deals with the various political parties in order to muster a majority. The whole process revealed in Germany, more than elsewhere, the interests upon which political ideals were based. The liberals appeared most guilty, having given up parliamentary rule and acquiescing to the rule of the aristocracy in exchange for concessions on economic policy beneficial to industry and a strong hand against the growing socialist movement. Moreover, the economic competition with England and the desire to divert the working class from socialism inclined German liberals to an aggressive nationalism and the militarism of the aristocracy.

The aristocracy were thus predominant in Germany both politically and culturally. They maintained control of the peasantry through economic dependence and tradition, and they held the leading positions in the army. The spread of militarism meant that in industrial Germany feudal values still prevailed. Ennoblement was coveted by high ranking members of the bourgeoisie and even the less powerful sought the distinction of honorific titles. In the University, *Landsmannschaften* or fraternities carried on the aristocratic tradition of dueling. Whereas in England and France, the old aristocracy was absorbed by the increasingly powerful bourgeoisie and adopted the latter's values, in Germany the reverse occurred. The hollowness of liberal ideals and the persistence of feudal values, despite the increasing loss of the aristocracy's economic base, gave content to Nietzsche's call for a "revaluation of values."

Historians frequently refer to this "feudalization of the bourgeoisie" when accounting for the authoritarianism of Wilhelminian society.⁷ According to this view, the source of both feudal values and authoritarianism was the predominant position which Prussia achieved in the unification of 1871. Authoritarianism was already characteristic of Prussia where a huge administrative bureaucracy had been created centuries before industrialization. A position in the state bureaucracy was another ticket to high prestige that was eagerly sought after by the university trained bourgeois. This bureaucracy

⁷ Variants of this view can be found in Talcott Parsons, "Democracy and Social Structure in Pre-Nazi Germany" in Parsons, *Essays in Sociological Theory* (Glencoe Ill.: Free Press, 1954); Theodor Hamerow, *Restoration, Revolution, Reaction* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1958); R. Dahrendorf, *Society and Democracy in Germany* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1968); Barrington Moore, Jr., *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966); Hans Ulrich Wehler, *Das Deutsche Kaiserreich 1871-1918* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1973).

became the vehicle for the dissemination of the Prussian ideology of duty, aloofness from politics and loyalty to a patriarchal authoritarian superior. The consequence of this ideology was an abundance of petty officials who found their self-respect in the enforcement of a plethora of petty regulations empty of content.

In Wilhelminian society, this authoritarian ethos was disseminated in the schools as well, where the government maintained control over the appointment of teachers and school officials. It was, however, in the family that the authoritarian ethos was most strongly reinforced, particularly the middle-class family where the husband and father compensated for his public humiliation at the hands of a superior by overcompensation at home. No wonder that the revolt against the father was a favorite theme of Expressionist literature.⁸

This view of German history has recently been challenged by the historians David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley.⁹ They argue that the bourgeoisie, not the aristocracy, were the dominant force in Wilhelminian life, manifesting their hegemony in such diverse areas as culture, law, and the relations of production. Liberalism, they note, is not necessarily the ideology of a successful bourgeois class. That is the false assumption of historians who attempt to impose on Germany a universal pattern of development derived from an English or French model. In their view, the authoritarian ethos of Wilhelminian Germany resulted, less from the pervasiveness of pre-industrial values, than from Germany's "specific form of capitalist rationality."¹⁰

Whatever merit there may be in Blackbourn and Eley's view, the notion of a dominant bourgeoisie is contradicted by contemporary perceptions, perceptions which are crucial to understanding the origins of Expressionism. In Carl Sternheim's satirical comedies *Scenes from the Heroic Life of the Middle Classes* we witness a docile bourgeoisie slavishly imitating aristocratic tastes. Heinrich Mann's novel *Der Untertan* is perhaps the most famous example of the bourgeois who achieves his self-esteem through patriotism and the chasing after aristocratic titles.

Granted, as Blackbourn and Eley argue, that a liberal ideology is not the corollary of a triumphant bourgeoisie; nevertheless, there was a liberal

⁸ See for example Walter Hasenclever's *Der Sohn*, Arnold Bronnen's *Vatermord*, and Reinhard Sorge's *Der Jüngling*.

⁹ David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 109. For a critique of Blackbourn and Eley's position and a review of the debate, see Richard J. Evans, *Rethinking German History: Nineteenth-Century Germany and the Origins of the Third Reich* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), chapter 3.

tradition in Germany prior to 1848, and in spite of its attacks on Wilhelminian liberalism, the Expressionists were the true progeny of *Vormärz* liberalism. Franz Pfemfert, the editor of the Expressionist periodical *Die Aktion*, unceasingly attacked the bourgeoisie for sacrificing those liberal ideals in obsequious deference to a declining Junker caste.¹¹ As we shall see when we come to examine Expressionism more closely, bourgeois cowardice was the origin of the Expressionist epithet *Bürger*, as well as a litany of other contemptuous phrases, aimed at anyone who lacked the will to self-assertion, the will to power, which, in this context, was understood as the will to overcome the authoritarian and servile character of Wilhelminian culture.

The point to be made here is that dissident young intellectuals of the 1890s did perceive the German bourgeoisie as servile, and many found the expression of their contempt in Nietzsche's cultural critique. The same is true for Nietzsche's attacks on positivism, whose brief appearance in Germany coincided with bourgeois economic success. For the generation of 1890, which no longer shared in the euphoria of the *Gründerzeit*, and which was finding it increasingly difficult to maintain independence and identity in the face of rapid industrialization and urbanization, positivism proved unsatisfactory. It offered no transcendent view of man and it was marked by a soulless materialism which made man a mere product of his environment or his own biological constitution. Religion was no alternative since the same positivism and materialism had long undermined religious values in Germany. Nietzsche's vitalism was one of the few indigenous philosophies to emerge from Germany's *Gründerzeit* which promised to restore the very individual creativity and autonomy which the scientific doctrines of the nineteenth century denied.

Another alternative was socialism and, indeed, many young intellectuals allied themselves with the growing Social Democratic Party (SPD) during the 1890s. Yet the materialist doctrine of the Party only mirrored the positivist doctrines of mainstream society which a disaffected youth abhorred. Moreover, the SPD leadership became increasingly timid in challenging the authoritarian regime as it awaited the proper material conditions that would make revolution inevitable. Theoretically the SPD remained revolutionaries; practically it acquiesced to the Wilhelminian state in exchange for industrial reforms.¹² Long before the SPD approval of war credits in the *Reichstag* in

¹¹ See for example, "Der Marokko-Bluff und unsere Zeitungen" and "Die Schlafkrankheit" in *Die Aktion* 1 (1911), 737-738 & 1085-1086.

¹² On the development of the SPD during this period see Carl Schorske, *The German Social Democratic Party, 1905-1917* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1955).

1914, Franz Pfemfert, editor of *Die Aktion*, predicted that the Social Democrats would abandon revolutionary principles in favor of the national interest.¹³

Nietzsche was thus ripe for absorption by a young generation which was not only alienated from mainstream society, but also from society's main oppositional movement. This sense of alienation from all sections of society is of decisive importance when accounting for Nietzsche's sudden popularity at the end of the nineteenth century. For it was precisely among bohemian artists, who rejected conventional society, that the Nietzsche vogue first started around 1890. Georg Brandes, the eminent Danish critic, was the first to discover Nietzsche and to lecture in Copenhagen on his "aristocratic radicalism." It was as a critic of morals that Brandes understood Nietzsche at the expense of other aspects of his philosophy. Nietzsche was the proclaimer of the "new man," who frees himself from custom and tradition in order to cultivate his own individuality.¹⁴ Yet, just these themes were already in the air. Ibsen's success rested on his attack against middle-class convention and his conception of the hero who resists the conventional life in order to cultivate his own powers.¹⁵

In Germany, the Nietzsche cult sprang up among the bohemian artists affiliated with both the Social Democratic Party and the naturalist literary movement. Their socialism was characterized by a romantic individualism, drawn from Nietzsche, with which they hoped to counteract the authoritarian tendencies of the SPD leadership. In 1891 this group started their own party of Independent Socialists. From 1893, the newspaper of the Independents, *Der Sozialist*, was edited by Gustav Landauer under whom it took a decidedly anarchist direction.

Richard Hinton Thomas has already written the history of this group's involvement with Nietzsche and it is unnecessary to detail it any further.¹⁶ We are additionally indebted to Thomas for having demonstrated that Germany's conservative groups had little interest in Nietzsche at this time. The Nazis may have been able to obfuscate Nietzsche's negative attitudes towards Christianity, the state, and nationalism, but Germany's conservatives

¹³ Franz Pfemfert, "Ist die Sozialdemokratie revolutionär?," *Die Aktion*, 1 (1911), 1056-1060.

¹⁴ Brandes lectures have been translated by A. G. Chater as *Friedrich Nietzsche* (New York: Haskell House, 1972).

¹⁵ On the very early reception of Nietzsche, see R. A. Nicholls, "Beginnings of the Nietzsche Vogue in Germany," *Modern Philology* 56 (1958/59), pp. 24-37.

¹⁶ Richard Hinton Thomas, *Nietzsche in German Politics and Society, 1890-1918* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

recognized these aspects of his writings and rejected the philosopher as a consequence.

Thomas' contribution, while important, fails to point out that many of the ideas which developed into National Socialism were born not in conservative circles but in antiestablishment bohemian groups like the ones under consideration here. The important question, then, is what distinguishes a right-wing bohemian group from a left-wing group.

Helmut Kreuzer has done the most extensive study of bohemians;¹⁷ his description is worth repeating since the concept of bohemianism plays an important role in this analysis of why Nietzsche was important in Expressionism and why he was eventually given up. According to Kreuzer, bohemians are characterized by a resolute individualism by which they consider themselves liberated from the moral, political, and aesthetic conventions of bourgeois society. They congregate informally in the artistic or student-quarters of a large city, considering this part of their liberation. Most importantly bohemians oppose a market economy as well as a utilitarian value system. They also swing between a desire to remake society or to withdraw from politics completely, to become aesthetes. Considering themselves social pariahs, they identify not with the proletariat but with the lumpenproletariat, with prostitutes and vagabonds.

Does this mean that bohemians are inclined to the right or the left? Kreuzer noted that Marx found, in his own analysis of bohemians, the social basis for both extreme left and extreme right-wing opinions. He concluded his own analysis similarly, pointing out that the decisive characteristic of bohemianism is a rejection of society. "How humane or inhumane a political conception is, how despotic or constitutional (protective of minorities or observing basic rights), can only be ascertained from an investigation of concrete cases."¹⁸

Kreuzer raises a crucial point here. In 1890 it is extremely difficult to distinguish between a bohemian right and a bohemian left. In that year, Julius Langbehn published his *Rembrandt als Erzieher*, a book which played a key role in interpreting Nietzsche as a source for a conservative revolt against modernity. This book, whose title plays on Nietzsche's own *Schopenhauer as Educator*, contained all the condemnations of Wilhelminian culture, science, and education which were imbibed from Nietzsche by middle-class youths whatever their political orientation.

¹⁷ Helmut Kreuzer, *Die Boheme: Beiträge zu ihrer Beschreibung* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1968).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5 & 357

Yet, even Langbehn's biographer, Fritz Stern, pointed out the differences between Nietzsche and his self-appointed protege. According to Stern, Langbehn's criticisms of Wilhelminian education, unlike Nietzsche's, did not refer back to Germany's humanistic tradition. Whereas Nietzsche tried to preserve the validity of the scientific tradition against the soulless scientism that prevailed in the late nineteenth-century, Langbehn was "the prototype of the modern antiscientific temperament, yearning for mystery and religion, and disdainful of intellectual effort."¹⁹ Moreover, Langbehn's cultural critique was characterized by two elements essentially foreign to Nietzsche: anti-Semitism and German chauvinism. Langbehn's Rembrandt was the quintessential German; an artist-hero who could inspire the *Volks* first to unity and finally to world domination.²⁰

Nationalism is not entirely absent from Nietzsche's writings, or for that matter from the bohemian left. Yet, there have always been two types of nationalism in German history, a racist and imperialist type which became predominant in the late nineteenth century and a cultural nationalism, beginning with Herder and carried on by the cosmopolitan liberalism prior to the 1848 revolution, which views the spiritual products of a nation as only one particular manifestation of mankind's spiritual development as a whole. Nietzsche's nationalism is clearly related to this latter cosmopolitan tradition. His early works, *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Untimely Meditations*, which appeal for a spiritual regeneration of German culture, are balanced by the concept of the "Good-European" and the unrelenting hostility to anti-Semitism of his later works.

The same can be said of the *völkisch* thought of the literary left at the turn of the century. Gustav Landauer and Martin Buber both mixed *völkisch* ideas with various types of libertarian socialism.²¹ They could hardly have been inclined to German chauvinism since both, as well as a disproportionate number of the bohemian left, were Jewish. This disproportionate representation itself resulted from the discrimination against Jews within the established professions of mainstream society. They were drawn to Nietzsche,

¹⁹ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, pp. 124-127 (124).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

²¹ It is true that Buber based his concept of the *Volks* on blood. Yet, as George Mosse points out, Buber still saw each *Volks* as a stepping stone to a general European culture. See Mosse, "The Influence of the Völkish Idea on German Jewry" in his *Germans and Jews: The Right, the Left, and the Search for a Third Force in Pre-Nazi Germany* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970), pp. 89-93. On Landauer's *völkisch* thought, see Eugene Lunin, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 79-81, 258-61.

as they were drawn to socialism, because of their common cosmopolitan message.

There were, of course, many left-wing bohemians who were not Jewish. A Jewish background was only one more factor contributing to that sense of alienation which underlies Helmut Kreuzer's description of bohemians as suspended between a desire to remake society and to withdraw completely from it. Both socialism and Nietzsche's writings supported the former desire; Nietzsche alone justified their social isolation. Erich Mühsam, who with Gustav Landauer played an important role in linking the naturalist and Expressionist generations, illustrated the connection between Nietzsche and the feeling of being a social pariah in his 1904 collection of poetry, *Die Wüste* (The Desert). The motto of this collection was borrowed directly from a chapter of Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* entitled "Among the Daughters of the Desert": "The desert grows: woe unto him that harbors deserts." This is the title of the song sung by the wanderer, a character frequently appearing in Nietzsche's writings, who symbolizes the skepticism of the free spirit who is nowhere at home and always on the move.²² In Nietzsche's poem, the desert represents the antithesis to "cloudy, moist melancholy old Europe."²³ In Mühsam's poem the wanderer is a bohemian, the desert, a city with a coffee house and tavern for oases.

It was natural for Mühsam to have written about the city in this way. The metropolis was the home for bohemians and naturalists were the first artists in Germany to write urban poetry. The *Großstadtlyrik* was more than just a poem about the city, however. It reversed the traditional tendency of nineteenth-century art to extol the official order. Urban art was socially critical, portraying the plight of the proletariat and other oppressed and reflecting the disorientation brought on by rapid technical and social change.

Many naturalists considered themselves socialists but that more often than not meant a mere sympathy with the oppressed. It could hardly be more; naturalism ascribed to the fashionable scientific doctrine of the late nineteenth century, that individuals were physiologically determined. An individual's fortune in life was then, in part at least, fated.

Nietzsche, despite his hostility to positivism, was at least one source for German naturalism. His link to naturalist doctrine derived from three-works

²² See Rolf Kauffeldt, *Erich Mühsam: Literatur und Anarchie* (Munich: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1983), pp. 129-31.

²³ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* part 4, "Among the Daughters of the Wilderness." I have changed Kaufmann's translation of *Wüste* from wilderness to desert since it more closely approximates Mühsam's meaning.

of his middle period, sometimes called his positivist period, into which he entered after his break with Wagner brought a temporary halt to the dreams of cultural regeneration expressed in the *Birth of Tragedy* and *The Untimely Meditations*. Many of the aphorisms of *Human All Too Human*, *Daybreak*, and *The Gay Science* are devoted to unmasking the source of religious ethics and ideology as the will to power, itself a biologically determining drive.²⁴ The vitalist themes in Nietzsche's philosophy, which attributed to the same will a creative role in shaping reality, remained latent, or at least reserved for the heroic personality, until Expressionism.

Indeed the most fascinating aspect of the Nietzsche cult prior to the First World War is the very diversity of interpretation. Nietzsche's own aphoristic style, his resistance to philosophic systems, not to mention the actual shifts in position which Nietzsche made in the course of twenty years of writing, lent itself to such diversity of interpretation. Even contemporary defenders of Nietzsche, who insist on the unity of his philosophy, cannot agree on what that unity consists of. Thus, whatever change of course the Wilhelminian intelligentsia made, Nietzsche was there to justify it. He was protean. He was at once a materialist and an antimaterialist, at once an individualist and the prophet of the dissolution of individualism in dionysian ecstasy, at once a social activist and an aesthete frowning down on German society from his hermitage atop a mountain in Switzerland.

It was the latter pair of contradictory themes of Nietzsche's philosophy which is crucial to understanding the development of the German bohemian intelligentsia from naturalism to Expressionism. These themes are particularly evident in Nietzsche's later writings. In *Beyond Good and Evil*, an activist Nietzsche calls upon philosophers to apply the "knife vivisectionally to the chest of the very values of their times," to become "commanders and legislators" of new, morally tolerant values.²⁵ The same aphorisms are the source of Nietzsche's aesthetic philosophy which contradicted the activist theme just mentioned. Thus, greatness is described as "wanting to be by oneself, being able to be different, standing alone and independently."²⁶ This contradiction is resolved by recognizing that, for Nietzsche, activism was a mark of the "philosophers of the future"; philosophy, as he conceived it, was not possible in the heyday of positivism or in the Germany which came into existence after 1871. Nevertheless, this seeming contradiction in Nietzsche's

²⁴ See Roy Pascal, *From Naturalism to Expressionism*, p. 53-58.

²⁵ *Beyond Good and Evil*, 211, 212, and 43.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 212.

philosophy corresponded to the contradictory bohemian impulses to both change society and to withdraw from it.

With the decline of naturalism in the late 1890s, it was the aesthetic themes of Nietzsche's philosophy which prevailed. The circle around the poet Stefan George were typical representatives of Nietzsche's aesthetic side. The goal of the artist was to free himself from the constraints of conventional morality and politics. Their doctrine was not a socially active art but "art for art's sake." Certainly aestheticism seems a regression from the social activism of naturalism which would again emerge in Expressionism. Yet it was a bridge to Expressionism as well. Aestheticism meant that the artist was no longer bound by the mainstream ideologies of positivism and materialism. "Art for art's sake" freed the artist from conventional values as well. He lived the vital life of self creation liberated from the morality of *ressentiment*. The difference between aestheticism and Expressionism was the reemergence of Nietzsche's activism. The Expressionists became the "philosophers of the future" by attempting to make the vital life a possibility for everyone.

The Expressionists, however, were not the first artists to adhere to the activist side of Nietzsche's philosophy. As far back as the early 1890s, Gustav Landauer adopted Nietzschean vitalism as a way of overcoming his own passive aestheticism. His philosophy is important not only because of the leading role he played among the Independent Socialists in challenging the SPD leadership; his combination of ethical socialism and Nietzschean vitalism was the model upon which a number of Expressionists were to draw.²⁷

Landauer's synthesis of Nietzsche and socialism is depicted in his novel of 1892, *Der Todesprediger*, the title itself drawn from a chapter in Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.²⁸ The story centers on the character of Karl Starkblom who attempts to escape pessimism by devoting himself to the cause of Social Democracy, only to be repelled by the materialist doctrine of the party. On the verge of suicide, Starkblom is saved by the visit of a woman who inspires him to an affirmation of life by reading to him passages from *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Starkblom once again converts to socialism, but not the type espoused by the SPD. As Eugene Lunn, Landauer's biographer, noted in his rendition of Landauer's novel:

The kind of socialism that would realize Nietzschean teachings was not one based on rationalistic predictions of the future and "objective" analyses of the

²⁷ For attestations of Landauer's influence, see Erich Mühsam, "Selbstbiographie" in *Auswahl: Gedichte, Drama, Prosa* (Berlin: Volk und Welt, 1961), p. 474; Ernst Toller, *I Was a German*, trans., Edward Crankshaw (New York: William Morris, 1934), pp. 104-106.

²⁸ *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, part I, "On the Preachers of Death."

present, coupled with the continuing atrophy of the will's capacity to gain love of life in the present; it had to be a commitment of the individual will to struggle for a socialist society which he [Landauer] felt would bring joy and fulfillment to all mankind.²⁹

It did not matter to Landauer, according to Lunn, that Nietzsche was against socialism. In Landauer's view, Nietzsche's own lack of understanding of the social world caused him to fail to see that socialism was actually the realization of his teachings.³⁰ Whether one agrees with Landauer or not, the real point is that he was able to overcome his aestheticism only by ignoring the elitist nature of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Heinrich Mann's Ambiguous Repudiation of Nietzsche

Landauer's decision to ignore the elitist themes in Nietzsche's philosophy highlights the single most unresolvable problem of Nietzsche's philosophy which was characteristic of his bohemian followers as well. Whether bohemians adhered to Nietzsche's aestheticism or activism, the common characteristic of both was an elitist contempt for mainstream society. This contempt of mainstream society typified the bohemian situation while at the same time it gainsaid the very influence they wished to exercise in society. The only escape from this contradiction was for the artist to escape his bohemian status, to give up his contempt for society as a whole and to join at least one section of it in an unambivalent quest for influence. Landauer attempted to escape the contradiction simply by ignoring the elitist nature of Nietzsche's philosophy. For Heinrich Mann, another artist who would become something of a role model for Expressionists, the problem of Nietzsche's philosophy proved more intractable. He eventually resolved the problem by repudiating Nietzsche's philosophy, or at least part of it. As one of the most astute observers of German intellectual life at the turn of the century, Mann recognized the problems in Nietzsche's philosophy which would become obvious to Expressionists only during World War One. For that reason, it is worthwhile to examine in detail his early preoccupation with Nietzsche and the way he came to reject him.

Like Gustav Landauer, Heinrich Mann was older than most of the Expressionists, though his origins were far more conservative. Heinrich was born in 1871, and raised, with his younger brother Thomas, in one of the more prominent middle-class families of Lübeck. As grain importers, however, the

²⁹ Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, p. 48.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

Manns belonged to the declining pre-industrial *Bürgertum* whose position was being undermined and replaced by the new industrial bourgeoisie. Not only was a class being replaced but the traditional values, to which this class adhered, were also being undermined by the new ethics of industrial capitalism. The old *Bürger* practiced loyalty to class; the new bourgeois coveted societal advancement through capital accumulation. Whereas the *Bürger* were civic-minded, abstemious, and cultured, the bourgeoisie appeared to the former to be unethically competitive and greedy.

Both Mann brothers obviously did not follow their father in their choice of profession, and we should not discount the role of their Catholic, Brazilian born mother in that decision. Her background in the arts and her feeling of cultural alienation in Protestant Lübeck was important in instilling an artistic predisposition in her children. Certainly their mixed background predisposed both brothers to Nietzsche's remarks about the propensity towards art of those who combine in themselves both northern and southern temperaments, a reason for Nietzsche's and Heinrich Mann's preference for French culture.³¹

Nevertheless, the decision to abandon their father's occupation and to seek the artistic life was typical of young people of their class, the reservoir of the artistic renaissance which Germany began to experience at the end of the century. The gap between traditional *bürgerlich* values and the new competitiveness of industrial capitalism worked to invalidate the traditional values and rigid social norms of the former. Heinrich, like many of his generation would seek refuge in the aesthetic life, which rejected conventional moral values and posited personal creative expression as the highest goal.

Mann's aestheticism, however, had a distinctly conservative tendency as revealed by his position from 1894 to 1896 as the editor of *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert*, a conservative, anti-Semitic, and anticapitalist journal. Here, Mann expressed himself against materialism, science, liberalism, and the Social Democratic Party, the same bugbears the Expressionists had. As we have seen, these attitudes were common among intellectuals from 1890 on. What distinguished Mann and *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert* from Expressionism is that a resolution of these problems was sought in nationalism and its corollary anti-Semitism, in a greater devotion to the German way.

Mann's last article about Nietzsche in *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert* is worth mentioning because of the light it sheds on the author's subsequent political development. Mann commiserated with the philosopher and his

³¹ See Heinrich Mann's comment in his "Selbstbiographie" in Albert Langens Verlagskatalog, 1894-1904 (Munich, 1904), p. 92; Nigel Hamilton, *The Brothers Mann* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), p. 79; Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 254.

disappointment at the absence of a moral rebirth in Germany through art. Mann's observation that art had failed heralds his future turn to politics. Even more significant is his distrust of the incipient Nietzsche vogue in Germany, "the little poets who have made Nietzsche into a fashionable philosopher, making a just appraisal impossible."³²

Morality was also the subject of Mann's first major successful novel, *Die Göttingen* (1903), which contrasted the decadent morality of the bourgeois world with the nobler spirit of the Duchess of Assy, the remnant of a bygone aristocratic era. In his important article on Mann's early reception of Nietzsche, Roger Nicholls stressed the freedom from *ressentiment* as the key to nobility for Mann's Duchess and for Nietzsche.

The valuations of the bourgeois society with which the duchess comes in contact are inextricably involved in a sense of reactive envy and revenge.... Only she is able to make judgments freely, independently, disinterestedly.³³

In contrast to the reactive person, the Duchess lives the aesthetic life, always acting in accordance with her natural self. Yet even in *Die Göttingen*, written in 1901, there are indications that Mann had begun to question the feasibility of the aesthetic life. The Duchess experiences boredom and disappointment. She searches for convictions but falls only into goalless hedonism. "It is," concludes Nicholls, "the emptiness and longing for life that impels her, not fullness or excess."³⁴

If Mann's disappointment with aestheticism had been signaled in *Die Göttingen*, the subject was directly taken up in an essay written in 1905, "Gustave Flaubert and George Sand."³⁵ The autobiographical nature of the essay had been noted by Gottfried Benn and Wilhelm Herzog and more recently investigated by David Roberts and Renate Werner.³⁶ Mann's representation of Flaubert was based on Nietzsche's own appraisal of that

³² Heinrich Mann, "Zum Verständnisse Nietzsches," *Das Zwanzigste Jahrhundert* 2 (1895-6), 245-47.

³³ Röger A. Nicholls, "Heinrich Mann and Nietzsche" in *Modern Language Quarterly* 21 (1960), p. 167.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁵ "Eine Freundschaft: Gustave Flaubert und George Sand," *Essays*, (Hamburg: Classen Verlag, 1960), pp. 82-131.

³⁶ Gottfried Benn, "Rede auf Heinrich Mann" (1931) in *Gesammelte Werke* (Wiesbaden, Limes Verlag, 1959), 1:410; Wilhelm Herzog, *Merichen denen ich begegnete* (Bern: Frank Verlag, 1959, 253ff; David Roberts, *Artistic Consciousness and Political Conscience: The Novels of Heinrich Mann, 1900-1938* (Berne and Frankfurt/M: Herbert Lang, 1971); Renate Werner, *Skeptizismus, Ästhetizismus, Aktivismus: Der frühe Heinrich Mann* (Düsseldorf: Bertelsmann), 1972.

artist who, as a decadent, drew his own creativity from his contempt for life.³⁷ Criticism of society became a romantic fleeing from society with Flaubert. The cause of his decadence was that he perceived too much about society. As Nietzsche said about Hamlet, that "knowledge kills action," so Mann noted about Flaubert: "For the truth about him is that he not only ceased to believe in adventurous action but in all action; that his disappointments...made him flee the world (*weltflüchtig*)."³⁸

The disappointment which made Flaubert a decadent was the failure of the revolution of 1848, and, as Roberts and Werner point out, compares with the failure of liberalism in Germany in Mann's lifetime. His description of French society in the Second Empire recalls the critique of German society in Nietzsche's second untimely meditation, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life."

They have become more narrowly specialized, held themselves always less accountable to humanity and always more accountable to concepts, to science or business....[they] have become more historical and thereby always more unnatural for nature has only a present.³⁹

The possibility of an escape from decadence is the theme of the confrontation in the second part of the essay between Flaubert and George Sand who brings with her love and understanding as well as a faith in the ideals of 1789.

For her, the novel is not a flight from life. She sees no means for art in the historical, rather only in the human. She does not retreat into history: she makes a model out of the present. Again and again she hits upon the revolution and is not deterred by 1793....But her true field is, however, 1789, that arcadian festival of brotherhood....⁴⁰

Mann thus used Nietzsche's psychology of the artist to criticize Flaubert, himself and Nietzsche. He adopted Sand's principle of love and faith in the ideas of 1789 and concluded in his essay that "art must serve life,"⁴¹ a very Nietzschean solution even if he no longer agreed that solitary self-cultivation meant life. For Mann had noted the contradiction in Nietzsche's philosophy which would later plague Expressionists. The decadence of society could hardly be cured by an elitist artist whose very contempt for society undermined his own influence. The artist's decadence was his own rancor against society. The philosophers of the future would remain condemned to the

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, "We Antipodes."

³⁸ Heinrich Mann, "Gustave Flaubert und George Sand," pp. 100-101.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 109-110.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 109.

future until they could find their way to the people. For that reason, Heinrich Mann partly repudiated Nietzsche in his essay of 1910, "Geist und Tat."

"Geist und Tat" was an important influence on many among the literary intelligentsia, turning them away from aestheticism and individualism and toward political action.⁴² In this essay, Mann looked to France as a model, where politically active and socially critical intellectuals played a major role in leading their people to democracy. Mann commended the French literati for their part in the French Revolution. Yet the French literati had their task facilitated by the French people who, with literary instincts, trusted the reason of the poet. In Germany, where no such literary instinct prevailed among the people, the literati developed an elitist doctrine of self-cultivation. Instead of cultivating a great people, the German writer has looked only to the great man. And although it is his nature to have contempt for power, to sacrifice all utility for truth,

the writer, nevertheless, for decades worked for...the sophistic justification of injustice, for power, his deadly enemy. What uncommon decadence (Verderbnis) brought him to that. What does this say about Nietzsche, and all his followers, who loaned his services to this type.⁴³

With his doctrine of power, Nietzsche had, at least inadvertently, worked for the benefit of his natural enemies. Now, Mann calls upon German writers to "become agitators in league with the people against power...that their nobility should no longer be a cult of the self."⁴⁴

While there is no doubt that "Geist und Tat" represents a partial repudiation of Nietzsche, that repudiation has frequently been misconstrued by some scholars who portray Mann as a born again adherent of reason and democracy who turned away from the irrational and antidemocratic hero of his youth, now recognized as the source of militarism and reaction in Germany.⁴⁵ Nietzsche's elitism and antidemocratic sentiments have always been reasons for assuming Nietzsche to be one more milestone on the way to fascism. Yet elitism does not equate with fascism or for that matter a right-wing position. As we shall see, many of the Expressionists were drawn toward communism precisely because it seemed to promise the same leadership role for the

⁴² First published in *Pan* 1 (1910-11), "Geist und Tat" was reprinted in *Das Ziel* 1 (1915), 1-8, and *Das Forum* 6 (1921-22), pp. 215-23. All quotations are drawn from the copy in Mann's *Essays* (Hamburg: Classen, 1960).

⁴³ Heinrich Mann, "Geist und Tat," p. 13.

⁴⁴ Mann, "Geist und Tat," p. 14.

⁴⁵ Elke Emrich, *Macht und Geist im Werk Heinrich Manns: Eine Überwindung Nietzsches aus dem Geist Voltaires* (Berlin, New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1981); David Gross, *The Writer and Society: Heinrich Mann and Literary Politics in Germany, 1890-1940* (Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1980).

intelligentsia as Nietzsche's philosophy seemed to prescribe. The point here is that while Mann repudiated Nietzsche's antidemocratic teaching and even began to fear the influence of Nietzsche's philosophy on German society, he never came to associate Nietzsche himself with the forces of militarism and reaction. In fact, long after "Geist und Tat," Mann's thinking remained highly indebted to the hero of his youth.

Certainly Mann's predisposition toward the French intellectual tradition, expressed in "Geist und Tat," coincided with Nietzsche's own preferences. That becomes clearer from Mann's essay "Zola" of 1915: The intellectual "is determined to put reason and humanity on the throne of the world and is so occupied that they appear to him already now to be the true powers...

This was the common belief of the highest of Europe in that moment before it became imperialist. A short highpoint but Ibsen and Nietzsche stand on it with Zola. "Freedom and truth are the pillars of society," said the one; and the other appealed to Voltaire in order to philosophize over the Human all too Human.⁴⁶

It is thus misleading when Elke Emrich writes about "an overcoming of Nietzsche through the spirit of Voltaire."⁴⁷ Nietzsche and Voltaire were of the same spirit, in Mann's view, and it is more correct to say that Mann overcame Nietzsche out of the spirit of Nietzsche. Mann was ever more the activist "philosopher of the future," now criticizing Nietzsche with the latter's own critique of decadence: Nietzsche and Ibsen "learned to doubt and turned themselves away. The spirit for which they were responsible was finally only their own; they had only themselves; they mistrusted others."⁴⁸

Even Mann's new dedication to democracy retained a relationship to Nietzschean aristocratism. For what is democracy but

the means for breeding the better and the best. Thus correctly understood, democracy can be the new aristocratic form. For every state needs its aristocracy. This will, however, not be rooted in birth and property; it will

⁴⁶ "Zola" was first published in November, 1915 in *Die Weißen Blätter* and in several essay collections thereafter. The quotation comes from the Classen Verlag edition of Mann's *Essays*, p. 209. See also Mann's *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt* where he calls Nietzsche the "hater of the Reich" and "pupil of the French moralists" (Stockholm: Neuer Verlag, 1946), p. 181 and his comments on Nietzsche's relation to the French in his introduction to *The Living Thoughts of Nietzsche* (New York, Toronto: Longmans, Green and Co., 1939), p. 17-18.

⁴⁷ The subtitle of Emrich's book on Mann. See note 45 of this chapter.

⁴⁸ "Zola," p. 29.

be the ever renewed aristocracy of those who demonstrate excellence for the nation.⁴⁹

Clearly, Mann, in spite of his swing to the left, still analyzed German society, not in terms of class, but in terms of Nietzsche's psychological observations. *Der Untertan*, Mann's most critical appraisal of Wilhelminian society, was written in 1910 and 1911, thus at the time of "Geist und Tat." Both Werner and Roberts note that the character Wolfgang Buck, the respected liberal *Bürger*, had become the decadent aesthete paralyzed by his own skepticism and his criticisms of Wilhelminian society.⁵⁰

Less explored is the relationship between Nietzsche's philosophy and Diedrich Hessling, the small factory owner and member of the new bourgeoisie. This *Untertan* or *Little Superman*, as one translator significantly chose to render the title in English,⁵¹ is the epitome of Nietzsche's theory of *ressentiment*. Hessling has no trace of an independent personality but finds his entire purpose in servility to the Emperor, in being a German national, in brutally exercising power over others. Nietzsche gave his most elaborate explanation of the theory of *ressentiment* in his *On The Genealogy of Morals*, a book which Mann particularly singles out in later writings as having had influence upon him.⁵²

Other commentators have argued that power-seekers like Hessling or Immanuel Rat, the tyrannical school teacher in *Professor Unrat*, are meant to demonstrate the pernicious effects which Nietzsche's philosophy of power had on German society.⁵³ This is no doubt true though one must be cautious in determining whether Mann blamed Nietzsche for German militarism or whether he blamed the German militarists for distorting Nietzsche. It is true that in "Geist und Tat" Mann repudiated the doctrine of "power" but in all his writings thereafter Mann took pains to distinguish between what Nietzsche meant by power and the exploitation of the concept by nationalist groups.

His philosophic will to power gave wings to the German Reich. The object of will to power was certainly greater than this: it was the spirit. In reality, he, like Flaubert, would have desired the rule over an academy instead of a

⁴⁹ From Mann's speech "Der tiefere Sinn der Republik" before the 1927 Hamburg Congress of the DDP in *Essays*, p. 548.

⁵⁰ Werner, pp. 241-245; Roberts, p. 105

⁵¹ *Little Superman*, translated by Ernest Boyd (New York: Creative Age, 1945).

⁵² Mann praises *On the Genealogy of Morals* in his introduction to *The Living Thoughts of Nietzsche*, p. 19 and notes its influence on him in his *Ein Zeitalter wird besichtigt*, (1946), p. 182.

⁵³ See Emrich, pp. 188-201 and David Gross, *The Writer and Society*, pp. 86-89.

bunch of armament factories and generals. Freedom from morality meant to him knowledge, not bestiality.⁵⁴

Heinrich Mann was just the first to observe the effect of Nietzsche's philosophy on Germany and the first to repudiate it even as he continued to defend Nietzsche. Yet Mann's most astute observation was to see the contradiction in Nietzsche's philosophy which became the contradiction of bohemian artists in general. The bohemian artists were caught between their own elitist isolation and a desire to revitalize the world. Ironically, Nietzsche was the model they alluded to in order to justify both attitudes. It was the former attitude which limited artists to social criticism and prevented them from mounting an effective opposition to the Wilhelminian culture and society they abhorred.

Mann was also the first to try and overcome the artist's isolation, his aestheticism, and to find a more socially influential role. Expressionism is the next step in this attempt, though without wholly giving up the elitist position of the artist. Instead Nietzsche's own vitalist philosophy would be the standard raised in active opposition to mainstream society. The poet Stefan Zweig was the first to notice the change in attitude among the literary intelligentsia. In an article published in 1909 Zweig wrote:

...in our day a return to the original, inner contact between the poet and the listener seems to be developing, a new Pathos is rising....The time of segregating the poet from the many, which was once conditioned by the great distances between nations, appears today to have been overcome by new advances, by the industrialization of the cities. The poets are again reading their verses in the halls....Again, as formerly, the lyrical poet appears capable today of being, if not a spiritual leader of the time, than a master (Bändiger) and inciter of passion....Whoever wants to move the masses must have the rhythm of the new and turbulent life in himself: whoever wants to speak to them must be inspired from the new Pathos. And this new Pathos, "this Yes-saying Pathos in the sense of Nietzsche" is before all the desire, power and will to generate ecstasy....*The new Pathos must contain the will not to a spiritual vibration, to a fine aesthetic feeling of well being, but rather to action.*⁵⁵

⁵⁴ "Kaiserreich und Republik," in *Essays*, pp. 408-09. This essay was written in 1919 and appeared in *Macht und Mensch* of that same year.

⁵⁵ Stefan Zweig, "Das Neue Pathos," *Das Literarische Echo*, II (1909) 24. Reprinted in Paul Raabe, ed., *Expressionismus: Der Kampf um eine literarische Bewegung* (Munich: DTV, 1965), pp. 15-21. The italics in the quotation are in the original.

Chapter Two

Expressionism and Nietzsche

Actually everything my generation discussed, thought out, one can say suffered; one can also say expanded upon--had long been expressed and exhausted by Nietzsche, who gave it definitive formulation; the rest was exegesis.

Gottfried Benn, "Nietzsche--nach 50 Jahren"

The term Expressionism was originally coined in France in 1901 to differentiate Matisse and other painters from Impressionism. In Germany the term was later used in reference to those artists who followed the style developed by Munch and Van Gogh.¹ The contrast, at least in the latter case, was between the naturalistic attempt to reproduce reality and the expressionistic or emotive tendency to give voice to the artist's intention and state of mind. This was also the sense of the word Expressionism when it won acceptance as a literary term around 1911.²

Literary historians have, however, been unable to agree on what unifies Expressionism as a movement. The innovations in language that characterize Expressionist poetry, prose, and drama do not apply to all authors who called themselves Expressionists. The cultural criticisms projected in Expressionist art are frequently to be found in the works of pre-Expressionist writers. In fact, within Expressionism itself this critical tendency divided itself into two wings of the movement, one advocating a politically active role for the artist in society, the other rejecting it. There is also the difficulty of precisely defining the time boundaries of Expressionism. Expressionist drama continued into the early 1920s, long after the decline of Expressionist poetry and political involvement.

¹ Walter Sokel, *The Writer in Extremis: Expressionism in Twentieth-Century Literature* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1959), pp. 1-2.

² Egbert Krispyn, *Style and Society in German Literary Expressionism*, (Gainesville, Florida: University of Florida Press, 1964), p. 1.

Egbert Krispyn has suggested that the common denominator for all stylistic variations in Expressionism is the attempt to find a more socially influential art.³ While this study is not a literary history, and thus not particularly concerned with Expressionism's literary unity, Krispyn's suggestion is important since it is in agreement with the argument of this study: as far as the development of the German intelligentsia is concerned, Expressionism stood between aestheticism and political activism. In early Expressionism's cultural revolution, the artist was a prophet calling for the ethical self-transformation of every individual in society, not the political activist he would become in the Weimar years. Even for the more politically inclined wing of Expressionism, politics essentially meant a more active role in promoting a transformation of culture, not the attainment of concrete political goals in cooperation with other groups in society. Thus, as for Krispyn, the history of Expressionism must begin with the foundation of *Der Neue Club*, where Stefan Zweig's call for a new-- socially effective-- pathos was first taken up.

Der Neue Club was formed in 1909 by two students of Kaiser Wilhelm University in Berlin, Kurt Hiller and Erwin Loewenson. The need for the new club arose because of their discontent with the liberal fraternity *Die Freie Wissenschaftliche Vereinigung* which Hiller and Loewenson found intellectually dissatisfying.⁴ Thus, in March 1909, *Der Neue Club* was founded with Hiller as president and Erwin Loewenson, Jakob van Hoddis, Erich Unger, and a few others in attendance. At its height, the membership of the club would reach sixteen.

The first public evening of the club took place on November 8. Loewenson read his *Aufruf des Neuen Clubs* and his essay *Die Décadence der Zeit*. Hiller read his essay *Wesen der Kultur*.⁵ Although both essays agreed in their attack on contemporary culture and the call for the creation of a more balanced human being, there are differences between Hiller's and Loewenson's ideas which would eventually lead to a break between the two and to Hiller's

³ Ibid., p. 27.

⁴ Roy Allen, *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles*, (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), p. 75.

⁵ Most of the writings of *Der Neue Club* have been published recently in the two volume *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs, 1908-1914*, edited by Richard Sheppard (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1980). The *Aufruf* and *Die Décadence der Zeit* are found in vol. 1, pp. 182-208. There is no extant copy of Hiller's *Wesen der Kultur* but his article "Über Kultur" in *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), pp. 187-88, 196-97, 203-204, is another composition of the original lecture, though it is not clear if and how the two differed.

withdrawal from the club in early 1911.⁶ Since Hiller's development is the subject of the next chapter, the focus here will be on Loewenson's ideology which, in any event, became dominant in the club after Hiller's withdrawal.

Both Loewenson's proclamation and essay show the importance of Nietzsche to *Der Neue Club*. The proclamation consisted of a series of six quotations from the club's inspirational figures, Nietzsche being the first among Spinoza, Oscar Wilde, Goethe, Frank Wedekind, and Hugo von Hoffmansthal. That the quote "that we are effective beings...is our fundamental belief" is not to be found in the works of Nietzsche does not gainsay the fact that effectiveness was a quality which Loewenson associated with Nietzsche, effectiveness against, as his essay tells us, the decadence of the time.

In his essay, Loewenson cannot give a precise definition of decadence but he does name the primary symptom of this disease of culture: spiritual exhaustion. The most notorious example of this exhausted state is the German dandy. The dandy is one who is ashamed of life, more specifically his own desires. He follows the conventional rules of society. Thus, if decadence is a sickness of culture for Loewenson, "the highest grade of health can be reached when the deepest in the individual becomes real...when he finds his own style in which all his...capabilities come into swing and can be invigorated."⁷

In another essay, where his ideas of history are presented at length, Loewenson followed Nietzsche in contrasting the decadence of modern times with the ancient Greeks and Hebrews who were capable of creating their own world.⁸ Ancient man was able to do more because he believed he could do more. In contemporary Germany, Loewenson noted in *Die Décadence der*

⁶ The precise reasons for Hiller's withdrawal and break with Loewenson have been the subject of considerable debate. Gunter Martens initially claimed that the split resulted from the opposition of Hiller's rationalism to Loewenson's irrationalist vitalism. Roy Allen countered that no such division existed and that both Loewenson and Hiller were united in advocating a balance between intellect and emotion. The split was a result of the failure to maintain in practice, but not in theory, this balance. The publication and annotation of *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs* by Richard Sheppard reveal, in contrast to Allen's claims, a number of real theoretical differences between Loewenson and Hiller. The most important cause of the breach was not opposition between rationalism and vitalism but Hiller's increasing turn to political volunteerism and his rejection of metaphysics. See Martens, "Georg Heym und der 'Neue Club'" in *Georg Heym: Dichtung und Schriften*, ed., Karl Ludwig Schneider and Gerhard Burkhardt (Hamburg, Munich, Darmstadt: Ellermann, 1960-1968), Vol. 6, pp. 390-401; Roy Allen, *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles* (Ann Arbor: Umi Research Press, 1983), p. 89; Sheppard, *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, 2:422-425, 529-530.

⁷ Loewenson, *Die Décadence der Zeit*, p.191.

⁸ Loewenson, "Neopathos" in Sheppard's *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, 2, 102-113.

Zeit, it is German culture which produces decadence: The ordered life (*Lebensordnung*) which is forced upon people is hostile to individuals, to the geniuses who do not conform. The "herd" philosophers of the universities are against the genius who arrives at results which go against established conceptions.

The university itself is characterized by an odious specialization in which no one considers what the goal of his work is or if his work even has a goal. What remains is the positivist modern science factory which Nietzsche described in his second untimely meditation.⁹ Steeped in materialism and historicism, German academic life and culture obstructs the will to bring about change by the teaching that everything must develop on its own, that the world is a mechanism. At the same time, human spontaneity is obstructed by the school, the university, politics, morals, and values. "The core of potency dissolves....Nothing is so murderous as acting in the correct way."¹⁰

The way out of decadence was, according to Loewenson, through a new pathos, by which he meant more than excitement of the passions.¹¹ As he later recollected, "our new pathos was chiefly like other agitations but not only of the feelings as in the old spiritually irresolute, therefore all the more hollow sounding 'pathos' (Pathetik)....[It was] a new type which did not exclude the intellect."¹² The inclusion of the intellect as an important aspect of pathos is repeated a number of times within Expressionism and, as we shall see, distinguishes it from the completely irrational right-wing cults that were soon to take root in Germany. That is a significant point for historians considering the effect of Nietzsche's philosophy on Germany's cultural development, since the concept of pathos was imbibed by the literary intelligentsia directly from his philosophy.

In Stefan Zweig's article "Das Neue Pathos," the reference to a "yes-saying pathos in the sense of Nietzsche" alluded to Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*, which was published for the first time in 1908, one year before Zweig's article. In this work, Nietzsche linked a yes-saying pathos with his conception

⁹ Loewenson, *Die Décadence der Zeit*, p. 197. Loewenson is referring to Nietzsche's "On the Use and Disadvantage of History for Life," the second of four essays published as his *Untimely Meditations*.

¹⁰ Loewenson, "Neopathos" in Sheppard 2:105.

¹¹ Loewenson's ideas on the new pathos are expressed in his contemporary essay "Neopathos," recently published in Sheppard, 2:102-113; Later essays by Loewenson on the subject are "Bemerkungen über das Neopathos" in Georg Heym, *Gesammelte Gedichte*, ed. Carl Seelig (Zurich, 1947), pp. 243-246; "Erinnerungen mit Lebensdaten" in Jakob van Hoddis, *Weltende, Gesammelte Gedichte*, ed. Paul Pörtner (Zürich, 1958), pp. 96-100; and *Georg Heym oder vom Geist des Schicksals*, (Hamburg & Munich, 1962).

¹² Loewenson, *Georg Heym, oder vom Geist des Schicksals*, p. 61.

of tragic art and philosophy. For Nietzsche, a tragic outlook rejected the false sense of optimism associated with nineteenth-century rationalism as well as the pessimism resulting from the recognition of the apparent meaninglessness of existence. Tragic wisdom meant "saying Yes to life even in its strangest and hardest problems."¹³ It was precisely this tragic sense that Loewenson ascribed to his own notion of pathos which aimed at restoring a balance between the intellect and the instinctual to a humanity victimized by an over-intellectualized age. By virtue of this restoration, the apparent absurdities of the world, which had hitherto induced skepticism and social indifference, would be overcome and mankind would once again recover a lost sense of totality. Moreover, Hiller likewise defined the new pathos as a mixture of the intellect and passion and specifically pointed to *Ecce Homo* as the source of the concept.¹⁴

Hiller defined the new pathos in a talk given at the first public evening of the *Neopathetisches Cabaret* in June of 1910. The cabaret was itself the instrument by which *Der Neue Club* hoped to work toward the regeneration of mankind. It provided a forum at which the members of the club, or other invited artists, gave talks or read from their works. Programs and sketches of programs, reprinted in *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, reveal that a considerable portion of each evening was devoted to Nietzsche's works and essays about his philosophy.

In a section of the first two cabarets entitled *Von Rausch und Kunst*, Loewenson read a selection of Nietzsche's aphorisms and notes from *The Gay Science*, *Twilight of the Idols*, and *The Will to Power*.¹⁵ The majority of the selections refer to three intertwining themes within Nietzsche's works: artists, changing values, and the power received through reliance on the instincts. The aphorisms chosen from *The Gay Science* emphasize the role of artists in questioning values which have hitherto appeared absolute through their association with either religion or science. The selections from the *Twilight of the Idols* and particularly *The Will to Power* stress the power of the instincts to transfigure oneself and values. The large number of these aphorisms affirming sexuality indicate the extent to which Nietzsche's writings justified

¹³ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "The Birth of Tragedy," 3 and "Zarathustra," 1.

¹⁴ Hiller, "Das Cabaret und die Gehirne" in his *Die Weisheit der Langenweile: Eine Zeitschrift und Streitschrift* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913), vol. 1, p. 238.

¹⁵ See Sheppard, *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, 2:282; 362, note 135; 396; 449, note 31. Sheppard was able to infer which aphorisms were read from a list of chosen aphorisms on a draft of the first cabaret program and a postscript to a letter to Wedekind.

a radical rejection of the Victorian moral codes of the preceding epoch.¹⁶ Yet, Loewenson's choice of aphorisms hardly allow the interpretation of Nietzsche as an irrationalist who granted complete license to all instinctual desires; rather it was Nietzsche's notion of sublimation and self-mastery which were now to rule the instincts in place of invalidated social proscription. An excerpt from one of Loewenson's choices from *The Will to Power* demonstrates this point.

I desire for myself and for all who live, may live, without being tormented by puritanical conscience, an ever greater spiritualization and multiplication of the senses; indeed we should be grateful to the senses for their subtlety, plenitude, and power and offer them in return the best we have in the way of spirit. What are priestly and metaphysical calumnies against the senses to us! We no longer need these calumnies: it is a sign that one has turned out well when, like Goethe, one clings with ever-greater pleasure and warmth to the "things of this world":--for in this way he holds firmly to the great conception of man, that man becomes the transfigurer of existence when he learns to transfigure himself.¹⁷

The cabaret continued to meet regularly until the spring of 1912 and was attended by many of the leading artists of Expressionism. In fact one of the most important results of the initial sessions of the cabaret was to bring the members of *Der Neue Club* into contact with other critics of Wilhelminian Germany, particularly the circles around the radical *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*, soon to become Germany's leading Expressionist periodicals.

Der Sturm and Die Aktion

Most Expressionists were born between 1885 and 1896, though a significant number were old enough to have been involved in the Berlin bohemian groups of the politically motivated, late naturalism.¹⁸ The anarchists Gustav Landauer and Erich Mühsam, both exponents of Nietzsche's critique of Wilhelminian culture, have already been mentioned as important links between these earlier bohemian groups and Expressionism. Perhaps the most important forerunner of the Expressionist periodical was the weekly *Der Kampf*, edited by Senna

¹⁶ See for instance *Will to Power* 800, 801, 805, 807, 808 and *Twilight of the Idols*, "What I owe the Ancients," 5. A full list of the selected aphorisms is provided by Sheppard. See above note.

¹⁷ Nietzsche, *Will to Power*, 820.

¹⁸ For the average age of the Expressionists and other individual biographical information, consult Paul Raabe, *Die Autoren und Bücher des literarischen Expressionismus*, (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985).

Hoy, a pseudonym for Johannes Holzmann, a German Jew born in 1882. *Der Kampf*, published during 1904-05, espoused a typically bohemian anarchism which was above classes and was to be preceded by a spiritual revolution. Many of the contributors were to be leading figures of Expressionism: Else Lasker-Schüler, Ludwig Rubiner, Paul Scheerbart, and significantly Herwarth Walden and Franz Pfemfert, the future editors of the two most important Expressionist periodicals, *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*.

Walden founded *Der Sturm* in 1910 after a series of disagreements with the directors of periodicals which he had edited since his work for *Der Kampf*. The disagreements stemmed from Walden's commitment to art of the most avant-garde tendency which aroused the disapprobation of the journal directors. Walden's 1909 programmatic statement for *Der Neue Weg* reveals the distinctly Nietzschean overtones of this avant-garde tendency.

Der Neue Weg is the organ of free spirits, of the good Europeans. No other prefatory declarations shall be made here. Our actions shall reveal what we want and whether we can accomplish it. German actors had the courage to act. They will travel the new road, which they have set out upon, with the free spirits of all the arts and cultures. The pages of this journal are dedicated to their interests.¹⁹

The expression "the good European" was Nietzsche's coinage which he introduced in his *Human all too Human* (aphorism 435) in opposition to nationalism and to advocate the merger of nations and peoples as a means of enriching culture. *Human all too Human* is additionally subtitled *a Book for Free Spirits*, and although Nietzsche did not coin this expression, he did repopularize it in this work and in his *Beyond Good and Evil*, of which the second part is entitled "The Free Spirit." In German history, the word *Freie Geist* appeared as a translation of the English term "free thinker", a term originating in the religious debates of the eighteenth century. Throughout the nineteenth century "the free spirit" was someone liberated from dogmatic adherence to religious ideas.

Nietzsche gave the term "free spirit" additional meaning. He was one who challenged the conventions and mores of society. "It is not a part of the nature of the free spirit that his views are correct, but rather that he has released himself from tradition, be it successfully or unsuccessfully. Usually, however, he has truth or at least the spirit of the search for truth on his side: he demands reasons while others demand faith."²⁰ The free spirit does not proclaim new values, but like Nietzsche and Zarathustra, he critiques

¹⁹ Quoted in Roy Allen's *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles*, p. 101.

²⁰ Nietzsche, *Human all too Human*, 225.

contemporary values, paving the way for the value creators of the future. Walden's mention of the good European and the free spirit meant that Nietzsche's philosophy served the progressive attitudes represented in the programmatic statement of *Der Neue Weg*.

Walden was indeed a champion of Nietzsche's philosophy. Since at least 1905 he had been in contact with the Nietzsche Archives in Weimar, negotiating the publication of a periodical that would be devoted to articles about Nietzsche and publishing documents found in the Archives.²¹ Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche, the philosopher's sister in charge of the Nietzsche Archives, was impressed with the Nietzsche evenings held at the *Verein für Kunst*, which Walden founded in 1903, but was nevertheless reluctant to put the name of the Archives behind Walden because of his insufficient capital. When, however, he took over the editorship of *Der Neue Weg*, an established journal, Frau Förster-Nietzsche agreed to provide some of Nietzsche's unpublished letters and reports from the archives, only to withdraw the offer after Walden's dismissal in February, 1909.²²

Der Sturm was founded in 1910 as the first journal in which the forces in opposition to Wilhelminian culture finally emerged in what later became known as Expressionism. The first generation of writers included Else Lasker-Schüler, Walden's wife until 1911, as well as William Wauer, Salomo Friedlaender, Alfred Döblin, Paul Scheerbart, Gottfried Benn, and Peter Baum. The war and consequent conscription brought changes to the membership but not to *Der Sturm* ideology. An ideological change came about only after the Revolution of 1919, when Walden became a communist. In these early years, however, *Der Sturm* had little to say about politics. It had much, however, to say about culture.

The programmatic statement of the first issue, written by Rudolf Kurtz, a writer with ties to *Der Neue Club*, highlights the importance of Nietzsche's cultural criticisms for *Der Sturm*'s aesthetic theory: "We don't want to entertain them," Kurtz wrote, referring to the general public.

We want artfully to demolish their comfortable, eminently serious [*ernst-erhabenes*] worldview. For we hold their seriousness to be a weariness of life [*Lebensträgheit*], a provincial dullness [*Hinterwäldler-Dumpfheit*], whose psychology Nietzsche had long ago described.²³

²¹ See the letters from Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche to Walden of January 19, April 19 and September 5, 1905 in *Der Sturm* archive, Staatsbibliothek, West Berlin.

²² See Roy Allen, *Literary Life in Expressionism and the Berlin Circles*, p. 314, note 85.

²³ Rudolf Kurtz, "Programmatisches," *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), p.2

According to Kurtz, Nietzsche had "preached the gay message of dance" which allowed for the ironic approach necessary to deal with a complex and paradoxical world. The German intelligentsia, though, had rejected that as dilettantism and instead built a culture based on empirical deception which lent the world a completeness it actually does not possess. Man's possibilities became limited by the intellectualism to which German culture resigned itself while "the bodily organs were weakened, the instincts left without the power of buoyancy."

Once, not long ago, it was possible to think that an epoch of a 'révolutionized' [aufgewühlter] humanity...had unfolded. That was when Nietzsche wrote his books and one should have then taken them up in poetic praxis. But his contemporaries rejected the impulse with a world-historical banality and settled for the most narrow and contradictory idea: naturalism.²⁴

Kurtz went on to associate this intellectualism with a well-tempered liberalism which he called a sign of the times. This intellectualism can only be negated by "an emphasis on the instincts, on the dark powers, which it [intellectualism] should stand...in the service of life and with which it had long ago lost all connection."

This last statement is particularly interesting for two reasons. Again we see that the instincts, although now to be emphasized, remain nevertheless in the service of the intellect. More importantly, the instincts are associated with strength and determination while naturalism, intellectualism, and well-tempered liberalism are associated with weakness and the acceptance of the world as it is. It was liberalism's timidity which Kurtz rejected, not liberalism itself. Behind the so-called Expressionist irrationalism lies the disappointment of a young intelligentsia, not with liberal ideals, but with the betrayal of those ideals for economic advancement and liberal submission to feudal power. This is made clear in an anonymous gloss, entitled "Liberale Rebellen," which followed Kurtz's statement. The author charged that liberals go right or left in accordance with their business interests, that "liberalism is the party without convictions which must wait out the moment in order to know what to believe."²⁵

The significant point, though, about Kurtz's statement is that Nietzsche's irrationalism is associated with conviction, with being able to effect change by rejecting the compromises involved in rational calculation. True, Kurtz appended a footnote to his contribution, declaring that his statement reflected his own opinion, that of his close friends and not necessarily that of *Der*

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ "Liberale Rebellen," *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), p. 3.

Sturm. Yet, by friends, Kurtz meant the members of *Der Neue Club*, with which he was closely allied, and which was an important source of *Der Sturm* ideology in the initial years.

Erich Unger, a close friend of Loewenson, wrote an essay in *Der Sturm* which demonstrates, like Kurtz's statement, the association of Nietzsche's philosophy with the power to effect change. Unger observed that pathos is necessitated when mere wanting is not enough to push a desire forward to a result, "where the spirit is too weak to allow the logical details to lead to a result...where cognition does not unfold but is forestalled."²⁶

The problem, though, according to Unger, is that often the intensity of thought becomes so great that thought completely knows the object upon which it is directed even though it is prevented from mastering it by the impenetrable barrier between subject and object. Thought thus turns back on itself and vivisects itself mercilessly in order to understand its own origins. Self-observation, which can be a means to help understand the object, has now become a goal.

What Unger is driving at becomes clearer when he notes that the Christian moral conception of the deceptiveness of thinking and the denial of its results undermine the power of life and the security of original thinking. A clearer indication of his meaning comes from his observation that since Kant, the trend in Germany has been to ponder critically the possibility of knowledge. Only with Nietzsche does thinking cease to question itself and become what it might have been from the beginning: an unconscious sense. As Zarathustra answered the disciple who asked him why: "You ask why. I do not belong to those to whom you could ask why."²⁷ Thus the doubts about the possibility of true knowledge and absolute values, which had characterized the nineteenth-century philosophical tradition, were vanquished with Nietzsche's assertion of the individual self as the source of all values.

Hiller made the same point in his article "Über Kultur," in a way that highlights the opposition of this youthful intelligentsia to the values of Wilhelminian Germany. Criticizing the positivism of the nineteenth century, Hiller noted that Nietzsche had shown in his second Untimely Meditation that knowledge is not necessarily power (*Macht*) but can also be powerlessness (*Ohnmacht*). If, however, a cultured person becomes conscious of his own qualities and cultivates them, an ideal develops. A quality becomes an attitude and backed by will, these new values receive the opportunity to be realized.

²⁶ Erich Unger, "Nietzsche," *Der Sturm* 1 (1911), 380.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 381.

But, Hiller wrote at the end of his article, ideals do not become legitimized through reason. Their greatest advocate remains the will; "and with much luck, such a will finds comrades."²⁸

Hiller was unwilling at this point in time to commit that will to political action. *Der Sturm* was a "weekly for culture and the arts," read the masthead, and few articles contained any political content. In contrast, *Die Aktion*, founded in 1911, was, as its masthead declared, a "weekly for politics, literature and art." Its editor, Franz Pfemfert, had a long history of political affiliation beginning, at the turn of the century, with the anarchist intellectuals around Gustav Landauer known as the *Jungen*. He contributed to the spread of anarchism in Germany by translating the writings of Peter Kropotkin, after having met the Russian anarchist in London in 1901.²⁹ After working on Senna Hoy's *Der Kampf*, Pfemfert contributed regularly to Heinrich Illgenstein's periodical, *Das Blaubuch*, and in January 1910 he became coeditor for *Der Demokrat*, a "weekly for libertarian (*freiheitliche*) politics and literature."

Contributors to *Der Demokrat* included those who would become coworkers for *Die Aktion*: Kurt Hiller, Georg Heym, Carl Einstein, Jakob van Hoddis, Ludwig Rubiner, Salomo Friedlaender and others. Hiller, Heym, and van Hoddis were members of *Der Neue Club* while Einstein and Friedlaender were to participate in 1911 in the Neopathetic Cabaret.³⁰ It was when Pfemfert's employer refused to allow the publication of one of Hiller's contributions, that Pfemfert resigned. The recollections of Pfemfert's wife, Alexandra, brings to us the following developments:

The very same day Franz sought out his friend Tom, the printer Tominski,...reported what had happened and asked him if his works could bring out a new journal about the same size as the *Demokrat* within eight days. Tom promised to do so even if it meant having the page proofs printed by another press. And so a name had to be found for the new journal...When Franz said: *Die Aktion* at 2 a.m. I liked it immediately. Eight days later the first number of the *Aktion* appeared.³¹

According to Alexandra, Anselm Ruest and Kurt Hiller helped Pfemfert in founding *Die Aktion*.³² They were also frequent contributors as were other

²⁸ Kurt Hiller, "Über Kultur," *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), 204. See footnote 5 of this chapter.

²⁹ On Pfemfert's early career, see Paul Raabe's introduction to the reprint of *Die Aktion* (Stuttgart: J.G. Cotta'sche, 1961), pp. 7-21; see also Wolfgang Haug's introduction to a selection of Pfemfert's writings, *Ich setze diese Zeitschrift wider dieser Zeit*, ed. Wolfgang Haug (Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1985).

³⁰ Sheppard, vol. 1, 526; 523, & 527.

³¹ Alexandra Pfemfert, "The Birth of *Die Aktion*" in *The Era of Expressionism*, ed. Paul Raabe, trans. J.M. Ritchie (Woodstock, N.Y.: The Overlook Press, 1974), p.36.

³² Haug, p. 19.

members of *Der Neue Club*. In fact, as Pfemfert wrote in the first issue, *Die Aktion* was open to all ideas so long as they were against Wilhelminian culture:

Die Aktion favors, without taking the part of a particular political party, the idea of a great German left. *Die Aktion* wants to promote the imposing thought of an organization of the Intelligentsia and would like to restore once again the long forbidden word "*Kulturkampf*" (and, admittedly, not only in the clerical-political sense) to its old glamour.³³

Even in this programmatic note, the Expressionistic character of *Die Aktion* is obvious, despite a clear commitment to politics. By linking politics to a "*Kulturkampf*," Pfemfert sought the roots of Germany's problems, not in class conflict, but in German culture.

It would be too much to claim that Pfemfert was significantly influenced by Nietzsche. The important point, though, is that Pfemfert valued Nietzsche's critique of German culture in pursuit of his left-wing political goals. Evidence of this is the occasional excerpt from Nietzsche's works, appearing in *Die Aktion*, which stressed the transience of values.³⁴ The most important part of that critique, for Pfemfert, was Nietzsche's attitude towards nationalism. Thus, after the centennial celebration of the 1813 German victory over Napoleon at Leipzig, Pfemfert referred to the battle as "nothing more than a slave uprising against freedom and the absolute will to patriotic servitude, to bondage, as Nietzsche called the whole lot."³⁵ This theme received more extensive treatment by Pfemfert's friend Otto Corbach who put Napoleon, eighteenth-century German literary figures, and Nietzsche on the side of the Enlightenment, a united Europe, and in opposition to a Prussian bureaucracy and that part of the bourgeoisie which "flocked to the flag of an artificial nationalism around throne and altar."³⁶ Far from seeing Nietzsche in opposition to the Enlightenment, as so many of his critics have, Corbach quoted Nietzsche's own critique of German hostility to the Enlightenment:

The whole great tendency of the Germans was against the Enlightenment and against the revolution in society which was crudely misunderstood as its consequence: piety towards everything that exists sought to translate itself into piety towards everything that had ever existed, to the end that heart and

³³ *Die Aktion* 1 (1911), 24.

³⁴ See, for example "Tauwind" an excerpt from *Zarathustra*, part 3, "On Old and New Tablets," section 8, appearing in *Die Aktion* 2 (1912), 230.

³⁵ "1813," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 976.

³⁶ Otto Corbach, "Europäertum," *Die Aktion* 1 (1911), 390.

spirit might once more become full and no room be left for future and novel goals.³⁷

In another article directed against the state, Corbach's reliance on Nietzsche highlights how the latter's critique of Christianity informed the anarchist tendency within the bohemian intelligentsia of Wilhelminian Germany. Antiquity consisted of free, "self-glorifying" people who were conquered by the Christian mob, led by the tyrant Constantine. Armed with a morality which labeled everything evil in the world that successfully asserted itself, the state conquered for the benefit of a few cunning men, while oppressing the many. Thus the modern state calls its wars Christian, even though Christ had forbidden one to strike back.³⁸ *Die Aktion* was, then, against militarism and imperialism but saw their causes rooted, not in economic relationships, but rather in western culture, the most baneful example of which being Germany. Like *Der Sturm*, the goal of *Die Aktion* was the new man; its enemy, the German philistine.

The epithet "philistine," according to Peter Uwe Hohendahl, originated in the time of romanticism where it was used to describe those enlightened in a vulgar (*platt*) way. Goethe used the term in his *Die Leiden des jungen Werther* "to represent the negative pole of man in contrast to his positive possibilities"; and, as Hohendahl informs us, there was not much change in the meaning of the word when it was revived by Nietzsche.³⁹ Hohendahl additionally speculates that Nietzsche was probably the most important bridge for the reception of the term and its content by Expressionists. Nietzsche can also be credited with generalizing the epithet cultural philistine (*Bildungsphilister*)⁴⁰ and both terms are widely employed in *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*.

In *Der Sturm*, Hans Mayer's article "Die Bildungsphilister" reminded the reader how Nietzsche had decimated David Friedrich Strauss' philosophical pretentiousness with that epithet. Since then, he noted, the term has become a part of conversation since that type has reproduced itself in ever purer form

³⁷ The quotation comes from Nietzsche's *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, 197.

³⁸ Otto Corbach, "Christentum und Gewaltherrschaft," *Die Aktion*, 1 (1911), 323-324.

³⁹ Peter Uwe Hohendahl, *Das Bild der bürgerlichen Welt im expressionistischen Drama* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter Universitätsverlag, 1967), pp. 104-105. Hohendahl bases his analysis on H. Meyer's "Nietzsches Bildungsphilister und der Philister der Goethezeit" in *Festschrift für J.H. Soltte*, ed., C. H. Smith (Amsterdam, 1947).

⁴⁰ Nietzsche takes credit for coining the term *Bildungsphilister* in a letter to Georg Brandes, February 19, 1888. See Nietzsche's *Briefwechsel*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (New York, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), vol. 3:5, pp.258-260; Walter Kaufmann has shown that while Nietzsche generalized the term, he did not invent it. See note 2 to Kaufmann's translation of *Ecce Homo*, "The Untimely Ones," 2

in the last forty years. Nietzsche had attacked Strauss in the first of his *Untimely Meditations* as a representative of that smug arrogance which had come to the fore in Germany since the 1871 military victory over France.⁴¹ Strauss' particular offence was his recent book, *The Old Faith and the New*, which had just been well received in Germany. In this work, Strauss exemplified the scientific optimism of the late nineteenth century by his repudiation of Christianity and his affirmation, with no apparent justification, of Christian moral teachings. Slothful thinking and self-deception were always Nietzsche's favorite targets.

This union of audacity and weakness, of rash words and cowardly acquiescence...this lack of character and strength masquerading as strength and character, this defectiveness in wisdom with the affectation of superiority and mature experience--all this, in fact, is what I hate in this book....This confession of a pitiful, hopeless and truly contemptible philistinism presents itself as an expression of the views of those many thousands of 'we's of whom Strauss speaks, and these 'we's are in turn the fathers of the coming generation! These are gruesome presuppositions for anyone who wants to assist the coming generation to that which the present does not possess--to a truly German culture.⁴²

Mayer followed Nietzsche in his definition of philistinism and as Nietzsche had chosen Strauss to represent the problem, so Mayer chose Arthur Brausewetter, the editor of the liberal *Der Tag*. Brausewetter's offense was an editorial in which he declared the goal of philosophy to be "to see God", while questions which were not of a metaphysical nature were the affairs of shopkeepers. Although Mayer did not directly state it, the implication of his criticism is that liberalism has been too timid to challenge the social order and has traditionally sought refuge in the metaphysical realm.⁴³

The term *Bildungsphilister* appeared in *Die Aktion* where it was likewise attributed to Nietzsche. Hans Röhl attacked the cultural philistine of the university of which there were two types. There were the members of the fraternities and gymnastic groups which romanticized student life over an excessive consumption of alcohol and chasing after women. More dangerous, however, was the scholarly type who has a sharply defined area of specialization which he cultivates to the exclusion of all else. These "inhuman science machines" are dangerous because science enjoys such an exaggerated respect in Germany at the expense of all that is human.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Nietzsche, *David Strauss, the confessor and the writer*, 1.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 7

⁴³ Hans Mayer, "Die Bildungsphilister," *Der Sturm* 1, (1910) pp. 215-216.

⁴⁴ Hans Röhl, "Junge Bildungsphilister," *Die Aktion* 2 (1912), 323-324.

Expressionism had other epithets which were similar to philistinism and stem from Nietzsche's cultural critique but which, in *Die Aktion*, took on more political content. Paul Sellin-Altona wrote of the mass-man who is characterized as owning a business and having social ambitions. He is the protector of customary laws, the traditional religious order, and morality. He accepts the world and men as he finds them while nevertheless exploiting their weaknesses for his own advantage. Opposed to the mass-man is the individual who is uncomfortable in conventional society. Whereas the mass-man is a servant of society and capital, the individual is a servant of an idea and a new inner culture.⁴⁵ Taken together, the qualities attributed to the mass-man and the philistine approximate those of the *Bürger* or "bourgeois," the most popular epithet among Expressionists.

Far more important than the term "individual," and extremely important to this study, is the word *Geist*. *Geist* is usually translated as spirit or mind but, for the Expressionists, the term had evolved a new meaning intimately related to Nietzsche's philosophy. In an essay brimming with Nietzschean phrases Iwan Goll observed that the *Geist* is the creative part of life struggling against all that is old and decayed. "He is against the father who is name but no longer wills, against laws which are only written but no longer will."⁴⁶ Those without *Geist* are the parasites, the sated, whose first word is morality. They distinguish between good and evil in order to justify themselves. The *Geist* on the other hand knows no evil. He is an optimist who can only love. He is always naked and doesn't shame himself.

Here is a group in pre-Nazi Germany which did not interpret Nietzsche's "immoralism" as a license to kill. On the contrary, Goll understood that Nietzsche had seen *ressentiment* as the core of society's moral values. The other members of society without *Geist*, Goll noted, "hate because they feel weaker: they must kill, wage war and invent evil. The other party consists of the fathers, the blind, the slaves. To this Goliath there is always a David: the young *Geist*."⁴⁷

The term *Geist* contains more than the attributes which, as I noted, belong to Nietzsche's *Freie Geist*. Whereas the *Freie Geist* impartially examines the old values, the term *Geist*, as Goll used it, highlights the vitalistic content of Expressionist ideology. Life becomes the criterion for the creation of new values. Simply put, the *Geist* acts according to his will and not according to

⁴⁵ Paul Sellin-Altona, "Massenmensch und Individualist: Eine psychologische Betrachtung," *Die Aktion* 1 (1911), 169-175.

⁴⁶ Iwan Goll, "Vom Geistigen," *Die Aktion* 7 (1917), 677.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 678.

moral customs or laws which either have lost all validity or are based on *ressentiment*. Moreover, the *Geist* sets himself against all materialist ideologies which claim that the character of an individual is determined by factors outside the will. It was on account of its materialist doctrine that Kurtz rejected naturalism, in his programmatic statement for *Der Sturm*. It was for this same reason that the Expressionists rejected Marxism.

In Gustav Landauer's *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*, which had an notable effect on a number of Expressionists, the opposite of the *Geist* was the Marxist philistine. Marxist materialism, as it was understood in this period, argued that an individual is a product of his environment, incapable of acting upon ideals. "What the national bourgeoisie made of the German student, the Marxists made of the proletariat: cowardly, little people without youth, without wildness, without courage, without the desire to experiment, without sectarianism, without heresy, without originality and individualism (*Absonderung*)."⁴⁸ For Landauer, the *Geist* was one who fights for ideals. The *Geist* leads his people out of decline and into greatness, unity and freedom.⁴⁹

The question, of course, is whether a movement which thinks itself a *geistig* elite might not be considered a right-wing and not a left-wing movement. Indeed, an elitism characterized the entire Expressionist movement. Erwin Loewenson's lecture on the decadence of the time viewed the trend towards democracy as evidence of decadence and, in Nietzschean fashion, called for the establishment of "an order of rank."⁵⁰ In a letter to the playwright Frank Wedekind, Loewenson additionally indicated that "aristocratism" characterized the attitudes of all members of *Der Neue Club*.⁵¹

It is important to ask, though, what the Expressionists meant by this aristocratism. As we have seen, the characteristics of the mass-man are militarism, nationalism, a conservative adherence to dogma and tradition and an advocacy of a soulless materialism in both its philosophical and more mundane sense. Opposition to this by no means indicates a right-wing movement, especially when to belong to the new aristocracy one needed only to lose one's militarism and nationalism and assume a more tolerant attitude towards others.

⁴⁸ Gustav Landauer, *Aufruf zum Sozialismus*, ed. Heinz Joachim Heydorn (Frankfurt/M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1967), p. 95.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 58 & 61. Since the term *Geist* is particularly important in this study, and since it proves virtually untranslatable in this context, I will continue to use the German term as well as its adjectival form *geistig*, minus the German adjective endings.

⁵⁰ Loewenson, *Die Décadence der Zeit*, in Sheppard, 1:95.

⁵¹ A copy of the undated letter, written between May 5 and the end of June, 1910 is found in Sheppard, 1:393-395.

On the other hand, there is a noticeable streak of conservative aristocratism within Expressionism which smacks of the attitudes characteristic of the conservative revolution. In an article in *Der Sturm*, "Von den fröhlichen Menschen," Karl Hauer observed that "joylessness, according to the good word of Nietzsche, is the mother of debauchery."⁵² What concerns us, though, about Hauer's argument is that joylessness, according to him, comes from leaving one's "natural" position in society. "Whoever wants to be free, without being able to rule himself," will be unhappy. The proximity of this position to the hierarchical society propagated in the conservative revolution is made clear when Hauer states his objection to democracy on the grounds that it is not organic. Democracy turns the masses into the mob.

Such a position is, at least in part, derivable from Nietzsche. In most of his writings, however, Nietzsche described his aristocracy in terms of "we fearless ones," "we free spirits," etc., implying that anyone can belong simply by the abandonment of a moral rigidity based on *ressentiment* and the assumption of a more enlightened attitude. Indeed, those who have sought to defend Nietzsche have done so based on the perception that Nietzsche speaks to all who have ears to hear. Nietzsche's critics will no doubt point out that the core of Nietzsche's thinking is the notion that the mass of humanity serves for the elevation of a small group of individuals. Yet that may be the only sociological fact which Nietzsche ever recognized: people who produce cultural goods live off the fruit of those who produce material goods. Nietzsche's hierarchical society was not bent on increasing exploitation and he honored his *geistig* men precisely for their asceticism. The question of exploitation is actually ignored by Nietzsche for whom every individual is a tool only for the production of a great culture.

Moreover, Nietzsche never defined his *geistig* elite in biological or racial terms but in terms of artistic and philosophical creativity. Thus, there is no hereditary basis for a nobility and what we are left with is a socially porous elite that is characterized by their freedom from *ressentiment* and by either a self-imposed isolation from mundane politics or by a benign desire to uplift the cultural level of society.

This is the type of elitism represented in *Die Aktion* in its initial years. Alfred Wolfenstein's article "Herrenhaus der Zukunft" was a particularly interesting example of this attitude since it directly attempted to distinguish between what Expressionism understood by Nietzsche's "aristocratism," and the conservative and racist interpretation of the same idea. Wolfenstein's article was essentially an attack on Kurt Breysig, a cultural historian in Berlin

⁵² Karl Hauer, "Von fröhlichen Menschen," *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), pp. 275-277.

who had recently published in the newspaper *Der Tag* his call for a parliament of notables of the spirit which would have an advisory role in government. While in agreement with the goal, Wolfenstein distanced both Expressionism and Nietzsche from the way in which Breysig conceived his new nobility.

Breysig's enthusiasm for Nietzsche does not go with Breysig's nature. For this lies very northerly; human sensuality is to it basically an oxymoron; purity and orderliness carry it away. His head is contained within the borders of the German Reich....The "race", Chamberlain's race, inclines its blond cheek to the solemn childishness of the Breysigan ideal...Surely he holds, like Nietzsche, that the masses serve the ascension of the individual; but if Nietzsche wanted the *Übermensch*, Breysig wants the nobility (of blood and performance). It is a simplistic [*häuslich*] Nietzscheanism which rises to the rooftops, but not to the mountaintops [*zum Giebel, nicht zum Gipfel*].⁵³

In concluding his article, Wolfenstein offered candidates for a *geistig* parliament which he assumed would be unacceptable to Breysig's "Prussian individual aristocrats". These included the writer Gerhart Hauptmann, "our dearest German" as well as Heinrich Mann, "our dearest unGerman." In addition to scholars and philosophers which represented enlightened Germany, Wolfenstein called for the inclusion of numerous Jews "to which our fatherland is so much indebted."⁵⁴

Yet, if most Expressionists did not adhere to a naturally hierarchical society, allusions of that kind were not completely absent. Even Loewenson argued that an order of rank is a product of nature since it is nature which produces the genius.⁵⁵ Thus *Der Neue Club* did have a right-wing tendency and their cultural critique shared many of the characteristics of the critique of Wilhelminian Germany made by revolutionary conservatives. It would be wrong, though, to conclude that this is true of all or even a majority of Expressionists.

Nietzsche's philosophy was just as likely to draw Expressionists in the direction of anarchism as in the conservative direction of *Der Neue Club*. As for the importance of *Der Neue Club* itself, the last Neopathetic Cabaret was held in April 1912, and although the club lasted until 1914, it had already begun to lose members by 1911. Ernst Blass and Robert Jentzsch moved to Heidelberg to join the George Circle, betraying their affinities with the conservative elitism of that group. Loewenson himself played no significant role in Expressionism after the demise of *Der Neue Club* and in fact soon became involved in another movement: Zionism. Kurt Hiller was the only

⁵³ Alfred Wolfenstein, "Herrenhaus der Zukunft," *Die Aktion* 2 (1912) 965-968.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 967-968.

⁵⁵ Loewenson, *Die Décadence der Zeit*, p. 186.

member of the club to play a leading role in later Expressionism and his aristocratism will be the subject of analysis in the next chapter.

Politicization and the Effects of the War

Early Expressionism was characterized by a desire to escape from the aestheticism that was typical of the intelligentsia prior to 1910. Whether conceived, as by Loewenson, as artistic pathos, or, as by Wolfenstein, as a *geistig* parliament, the ambition to play a more effective role in society is clearly evident. Nevertheless, Expressionism maintained the other tendency typical of the bohemian intelligentsia in general. The longing for social involvement was contradicted by a libertarian desire to withdraw from society completely. The Expressionists described themselves as free spirits and individualists opposed to a society of philistines and mass men. In other words, they were bohemians, unable to decide between political impulses and an antipolitical disposition.

The publication of Heinrich Mann's essay "Geist und Tat" in 1911 played an important role in stimulating the literary intelligentsia to a new activism. In that essay, Mann had added a dimension of political responsibility and leadership to the notion of *Geist* which, hitherto, had been obscured by the libertarian side of the bohemian ideology. Mann's equation of *Geist* with the spirit created by intellectuals at the time of the French Revolution generated an enthusiastic response among Expressionist circles.

In a gloss entitled "Geist und Tat," Franz Pfemfert praised Mann's essay as a manifesto of a new political activism on the part of the literary intelligentsia:

The mercenary writers of reaction feel terrible. An adversary threatens them which they can't oppose with grapeshot: the men of *Geist*, the literati. Our best [writers] become agitators and work to loosen the stifling bands of reaction. That worries the professional representatives of non-culture [*Unkultur*]. With a pitiful smile, they try to ignore Heinrich Mann's call: "the man of fist and authority must be the enemy. The intellectual who cozies up to the ruling caste commits treason against *Geist*." Indeed, they dimly feel that this call will prove more dangerous, threatening, and revolutionary than all street demonstrations.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Die Aktion, 1 (1911), 425.

Kurt Hiller praised Mann, along with two other figures of the avant-garde, Alfred Kerr and Karl Kraus, for turning away from aestheticism to politics.⁵⁷ In 1912 Ludwig Rubiner wrote what became something of a manifesto of the activist position for *Die Aktion*, "Der Dichter greift in die Politik".⁵⁸ Like Mann's essay Rubiner called upon the artist to break out of his social isolation and lead the battle for *Geist*. Rubiner's battle for *Geist* was, however, less concrete than Mann's. He stood against a *Zivilisation* which was lethargic, hypocritical, and ruled by a materialistic doctrine of development inherited from the nineteenth century. Yet Rubiner suggested no practical methods to contend for power. He excluded an alliance with the working class which adhered to the materialist doctrine of development he decried. The notion of "development," according to Rubiner, is only the politician's method of forestalling real reform. In contrast, the poet-politician effects change simply through vital "intensity," "explosive power," "the will to catastrophe," by which Rubiner seems to have meant the destruction of obsolete values with the vital force of new ideas.⁵⁹ In bohemian fashion, Rubiner declared the comrades of the poet to be only other marginal groups in society: prostitutes, thieves, the unemployed, etc.⁶⁰

It was war which accelerated the trend away from individualism and towards political involvement. The war brought home to the Expressionists that they could not exist as an elite caste independent of political developments. On August 15, 1914, Franz Pfemfert explained to his readers that the threat of a shutdown by the government would force *Die Aktion* to confine itself to literary, cultural, and aesthetic pieces.⁶¹ This did not, however, prevent Pfemfert from printing his criticisms of the war and government in marginal glosses and letter columns.

René Schickele, who became editor of the Expressionist periodical *Die Weißen Blätter* in 1914, moved the monthly to Zurich in late 1915 to escape difficulties with the German censor. In Zurich, the pacifist *Weißen Blätter* became a center for Expressionists in exile. Political issues were hardly avoidable now that Expressionists themselves were conscripted into the army.

⁵⁷ Kurt Hiller, "Literaturpolitik," *Die Aktion*, 1 (1911), 138-39. Kerr, a theatre critic had been involved in creating the progressive program of *Pan*, the journal where Mann's "Geist und Tat" first appeared. Karl Kraus was the editor of the Austrian periodical *Die Fackel*.

⁵⁸ Ludwig Rubiner, "Der Dichter greift in die Politik," *Die Aktion* 2 (1912), 645-653 & 709-715.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 710.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 647. For an unsympathetic review of Rubiner's essay, taking a perspective similar to Lukács's view of Expressionism in general, see Lothar Peter, *Literarische Intelligenz und Klassenkampf: Die Aktion, 1911-1932*, (Cologne: Pahl Rugenstein, 1972), pp. 25-29.

⁶¹ *Die Aktion* 4 (1914), 693.

Wilhelm Herzog, who founded the pacifist *Das Forum* in 1914, described the transformation of the intelligentsia during the war in very blunt terms:

For a great number of the intellectuals, until August 4, 1914, culture meant that one bothered little with the political life of the people, being slightly nauseated by the parliamentary conflict, so that one gave oneself over to one's own affairs—in memory of famous models—dedicated oneself undisturbed to the painting of a canvas or the writing of a novel.... Then the war broke out, and cultivated, self-seeking aesthetes became politicians, idolizers of the masses. They swore off their individualism and only wanted to become one of the masses.⁶²

By the time of the November Revolution, Herzog's *Das Forum*, *Die Aktion*, and *Der Sturm* would become organs of communism devoted to the cause of the working class. This meant, of course, that the bohemian elitism and cultural critique of early Expressionism gave way, in most cases, to egalitarianism and a critique of society based on Marxism. This, in itself, implies important consequences for the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany. Yet the effects of this politicization were compounded by the rapid growth, during the war, of the Nietzsche vogue on the right.

The philosopher Max Scheler had been closely allied with the literary intelligentsia before the war, writing several articles for the *Die Weißen Blätter*. After the outbreak of war, he met with Gustav Landauer, Martin Buber and Max Brod to work on a peace program. Max Brod described their surprise when a few weeks later Scheler's *Der Genius des Krieges* appeared: "the advantages of war were glorified in Nietzsche's name. A slap in the face for every pacifist."⁶³

In *Der Genius des Krieges*, Scheler joined Nietzschean vitalism with the writings of the historian Heinrich von Treitschke to support his notion of war as the driving force in history, a process determining the growth and decline of peoples and states.⁶⁴ This vitalist conception of war was, for Scheler, typically German. For the English, who were burdened by a mechanistic philosophy and a mercantilist character, war was simply a struggle for preservation, which in the particular case of World War I meant the preservation of the decaying English Empire.

⁶² Wilhelm Herzog, "Klärungen," *Das Forum* 1 (1915), 553-577.

⁶³ Max Brod, *Streitbares Leben, 1884-1968* (Munich, Berlin, Vienna: F.A. Herbig, 1969), pp. 99-101.

⁶⁴ "Der Genius des Krieges" first appeared as an article in *Die Neue Rundschau* 25 (October 1914) pp. 1327-1352; Scheler enlarged it into a book in 1915 called *Der Genius des Krieges und der deutsche Krieg* (Leipzig: Weißen Bücher, 1915). Although Brod reacted to the initial article, the following description follows Scheler's more influential, larger work:

Yet the most notable point about Scheler's thesis is that while all of Nietzsche's vitalist virtues are ascribed to the Germans, the decadent values, imputed by Expressionists to the German philistine, now become English national characteristics. Thus where the German sees a warrior, the Englishman sees a robber; where the German sees the good, the Englishman sees the useful; where the German loves the weak, the Englishman hates the strong.⁶⁵ The same formulation is found in the work of Scheler's friend Werner Sombart. In his *Händler und Helden* (1915) the English mercantilist mentality is contrasted with German heroicism which, even if concealed in Nietzsche's time, was ready to come to the surface in response to the philosopher's exhortations.⁶⁶

In part, Nietzsche's own relativist philosophy is to blame for the distortion of his philosophy in the cause of nationalism. Ernst Bertram justified his creation of a *völkisch* Nietzsche on the basis of Nietzsche's own assertions that a text admits of many interpretations. His widely read *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (1918) was, by Bertram's own admission, a "mythology of the last great German...what the historical moment of our present sees in Nietzsche and as Nietzsche," independent of what the "first generation of enthusiastic confusion fancied it saw in the prophet of the *Übermensch* and the herald of the blond beast."⁶⁷ Thus, according to Bertram, Nietzsche was anti-liberal, for authority and tradition. He attacked the Bismarckian state only because it emulated western *Zivilisation*. For Bertram, Nietzsche was a German prophet calling upon his people to rise up to its true nature.

Certainly there are aphorisms in Nietzsche's writings which support a conservative and militaristic version of his philosophy, though it would be difficult, as it indeed was for Sombart, to dispose of Nietzsche's "good European."⁶⁸ Yet, the crucial point to note when evaluating the validity of the right-wing interpretation is that not only Nietzsche's philosophy was conscripted in defense of Germany's special way; so was Germany's entire cultural heritage. Sombart wrote:

When foreigners philosophize about the present war, oddly they always come back to the same thought: the 1914 war is Nietzsche's war. Germany began it and Germany was animated by a Nietzschean spirit. This, apart from the falsehood that we alone wanted the war, is not incorrect. But it is partial. As much as one can call this Nietzsche's war, so can one call it the war of

⁶⁵ See Scheler's "Kategorientafel des englischen Denkens" appended at the end of his book.

⁶⁶ Werner Sombart, *Händler und Helden: Patriotische Besinnungen* (Leipzig and Munich (Duncker and Humboldt, 1915).

⁶⁷ Ernst Bertram, *Nietzsche: Versuch einer Mythologie* (Bonn: H. Bouvier, 1965), p. 15.

⁶⁸ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, pp. 138-141.

Frederick the Great, or Goethe's, or Schiller's, or Beethoven's, or Fichte's, or Hegel's or Bismarck's; for it is the German war. And Friedrich Nietzsche was only the last singer and prophet who, descending from heaven, spread the tidings that from us the son of God would be born, which in his language he called the *Übermensch*.⁶⁹

Significantly, then, not just German romanticism but even German classicism was drafted in the cause of German militarism; Indeed, German militarism in itself, according to Sombart, was "Potsdam and Weimar in the highest unity."⁷⁰ Certainly a flood of German publications appealed to Nietzschean vitalism in order to galvanize Germany's war effort.⁷¹ Yet it is actually irrelevant whether Zarathustra was really read in the trenches since, according to Sombart, *Faust* and Beethoven's scores were there as well.⁷² We are thus left with the choice of either believing that all of German culture contributed to the rise of militarism or that all of it, including Nietzsche, was terribly misused.

The Expressionists were faced with the same choice and just at the moment when their own evolution toward politics and Marxism took them away from Nietzsche's cultural critique and the individualism they shared not only with Nietzsche but with many periods of German cultural history, including the classical tradition. The reactions of each of the Expressionists to the rise of the right-wing Nietzsche were diverse, as the following case studies will show. Basically the choice for the left-wing Nietzscheans was to go with the current and become Marxists, or retreat to the same rational and religious notions they previously disparaged. Whatever choice they made, almost every Expressionist moved away from Nietzsche; whether that meant simply a rejection of individualism or an out-right repudiation of the philosopher. Significantly, the left-wing Nietzsche vogue came to an end with the rise of Dada in Berlin, which rejected both Nietzschean and Expressionist individualism and elitism as being too closely tied to the nineteenth-century German culture they professed to oppose.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 53.

⁷⁰ Sombart, *Händler und Helden*, p. 85.

⁷¹ For a survey of this literature, see Steven Aschheim, *Zarathustra in the Trenches: The Nietzsche Myth and World War I* (Jerusalem: The Historical Society of Israel and the Zalman Shazar Center for Jewish History, 1986). I am indebted to Aschheim's article, a very useful sketch of the nationalization of Nietzsche during the war.

⁷² Ibid.

Chapter Three

Nietzschean Politics:

Kurt Hiller and the Philosophy of Goal

The formula of my happiness: a yes, a no, a straight line, a goal.

Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*,
"Maxims and Arrows", 44.

With the growing trend toward political activism among Expressionists, the left-wing Nietzsche vogue might have come to an end far earlier than it actually did. Heinrich Mann repudiated Nietzsche's elite individualism in favor of politics and his prestige among Germany's left-wing intellectuals suggests that Expressionists might easily have followed suit. More than any other Expressionist, Kurt Hiller is responsible for making Nietzsche's philosophy suitable for a later politicized Expressionism.

Unlike Mann, Hiller never rejected Nietzsche's elite individualism, but he nevertheless maintained that political militancy lay at the heart of Nietzsche's philosophy. Whereas Mann became suspicious of the influence of Nietzsche's irrationalistic vitalism, Hiller adamantly insisted that reason was at the core of vitalism and that this vitalism must serve an end. Hiller did not turn his back on the original irrational content of vitalism; rather, he more strongly insisted on a marriage between the rational and the irrational which, as we have already seen, was a hallmark of Expressionism. A militant and irrational zeal becomes the means for arousing the public enthusiasm necessary for achieving rational social goals.

A rational and goal oriented vitalism also characterized the Activist movement which Hiller initiated and led between 1914 and 1920. Emerging in the midst of the First World War, Activism mobilized an impressive array of Germany's left-wing intellectuals in an attempt to marshal popular support against the war and the expansionist policies of the German government. This contention for political power came at the end of a long process of politicization of the literary intelligentsia in Germany since 1890. Activism

rode the crest of that wave which finally broke when many of its members abandoned the movement's individualistic doctrine for Marxism.

Hiller's Activist movement, then, represents both the climax and the decline of Expressionism. His own curious mix of elite individualism and political activism repeated the contradiction rooted in Expressionism which in turn had assumed it from Nietzsche's philosophy: on the one hand, elite individualism places the "free spirit" above society and moral convention; on the other hand, a critical attitude towards society suggests a leading role for the intellectual in bringing about change. The implicit irreconcilability of these opposing tendencies remained obscure in Expressionism until, during war and revolution, Activism brought them to a new pitch.

Hiller himself represents the most engrossing attempt to resolve this contradiction. He was both an elitist and a political activist working for the creation of a socialist society. Indeed, his continuing adherence to an antidemocratic ideology has provoked a long debate over whether Hiller actually was on the left. That debate began with Lukács' virulent attack on Expressionism which singled Hiller out for drawing "a professedly extreme left section of the intelligentsia towards fascism: the path from mentally overcoming the class divisions in society, and class antagonisms, to the rule of the elite, the path from Nietzsche to fascism via Sorel and Pareto."¹ Since Lukács wrote, Hiller has had both his critics and his defenders.²

A fair assessment of Hiller's elitism can only be made by recognizing it as an offshoot of his real concerns which, like those of his fellow

¹ Georg Lukács, "Expressionism: Its Significance and Decline" in *Essays on Realism*, edited by Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1981), p. 92.

² For Hiller's defenders see Juliane Haberer, *Kurt Hiller und der literarische Aktivismus: Zur Geistesgeschichte des politischen Dichters im frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M., Berne: Peter Lang, 1981); Lewis D. Wurghaft, "Kurt Hiller and the Politics of Action on the German Left, 1914-33" in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* 67, part 8, 1977; In *Germans and Jews*, George Mosse counts Hiller among those left-wing Germans looking for a third force between nationalism and Marxism (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970) and Istvan Deak counts him among *Weimar Germany's Left-wing Intellectuals* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1968).

Dieter Saalman questions Deak's description on the grounds of Hiller's passing sympathy for Mussolini in 1926, even while conceding that this was true of many of Germany's left-wing intellectuals. See "Kurt Hiller und Mussolini" in *Orbis Litterarum* 38 (1983), 150-167. For other critics of Hiller, see Klaus Fritzsche, "Elite, Logos, Politik, Rationalismus als Ideologie: am Beispiel Kurt Hiller," *Frankfurter Hefte: Zeitschrift für Kultur und Politik*, 1970 and Elke Emrich, *Macht und Geist im Werk Heinrich Manns* (Berlin, N.Y. Walter de Gruyter, 1981), pp. 216-35. Günter Martens claimed that Hiller's exaltation of life must, as in the case of all Expressionism, end in an irrationalism which can recognize no concrete goal. See his "Nietzsches Wirkung im Expressionismus" in *Nietzsche und die deutsche Literatur*, vol. 2, edited by Bruno Hillebrand, (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1978), p. 45.

Expressionists, were with the individual freedoms which German liberalism had failed to achieve in the nineteenth century. He was an elitist in a society that was illiberal and overbearingly conformist. As a homosexual, the conservative moral values, made compulsory by the German criminal code, were reprehensible to Hiller.³ He justified his battle against them as well as against military conscription on the basis of the individual's right over his own body.⁴ He fought against Prussian militarism, for greater individual freedom, and for the introduction of reason into government.

All of these goals, which Hiller prescribed for the Activist movement, were based on the cultural critique which both Hiller and Expressionism imbibed from Nietzsche. Activism was therefore Expressionism *par excellence*,⁵ but it consequently fell victim to the contradiction implicit in Expressionism. For a movement could hardly develop into a mass movement when one component of its cultural critique was contempt for the masses.

Hiller's Road to Activism

In his 1969 autobiography *Leben gegen die Zeit*, Hiller acknowledged Nietzsche to be the greatest influence on his thinking.⁶ This was not always the case. As we shall see, it was only in the years 1908-1914, the years in which Hiller developed his Activist philosophy, that Nietzsche's writings assumed a particular importance for him.

Kurt Hiller was born in 1885 into a middle-class Jewish family of Berlin. In 1903, he graduated from his *Gymnasium* third in his class; the pride he took in that accomplishment was sustained by the praise of excellence found

³ Statute 175 of the Wilhelmine penal code forbade homosexuality. In "Homosexualismus und Deutscher Vorentwurf," Hiller argued that the liberal disposition means, not trade treaties, but the struggle for sexual freedom. The essay is in *Die Weisheit der Langenweile: Eine Zeitschrift und Streitschrift*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913), pp.24-44.

⁴ Hiller himself fled service in the German army in 1908 after two weeks of military life. At the sanatorium in Burghölzli he was diagnosed as suffering from a degenerative psychosis and, upon this basis, released from the service. See the introduction to *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs, 1908-1914*, edited by Richard Sheppard (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg, 1983), p.3.

⁵ As long ago as 1935, Wolfgang Paulson argued in *Expressionismus und Aktivismus* (Bern, Leipzig: Gotthelf, 1935) that Activism's rational and volunteeristic character distinguished it from the religious and romantic nature of Expressionism. Since Paulson wrote, the tendency has been to see Activism as a branch of a larger revolutionary movement called Expressionism. For a summary of the debate, see Juliane Haberer, *Kurt Hiller und der literarische Aktivismus*, pp. 21-31.

⁶ Kurt Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, *Logos* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1969) pp. 8-9 & 391.

in Nietzsche's writings, which Hiller began to read that same year.⁷ Other aspects of Nietzsche's work were to dovetail with Hiller's early experiences: His autobiography recounts his objection to authoritarianism, especially embodied in the form of the German-school teacher whom Hiller called "the greatest danger to peace"; he noted how he, along with the entire young generation, rejected Positivism as dogmatic and distrusted all moral values produced by contemporary decadent culture.⁸

Influences other than Nietzsche took precedence during Hiller's education in philosophy and law at the universities in Berlin and Heidelberg. Primary among them was Hiller's mentor in Berlin, Georg Simmel, particularly the latter's *Einleitung in die Morawissenschaft*. Richard Sheppard has demonstrated the influence of Simmel on Hiller's first work *Das Recht über sich selbst*.⁹ Hiller's book defended the individual's right, among other things, to commit suicide, to have an abortion and to be a homosexual. Like Simmel, Hiller argued that there is no objective morality; but whereas Simmel presupposed a propensity in man to the ethical good, Hiller based his call for a freedom from positive law on the freedom of the individual in cases where it does not impinge on the rights of others.¹⁰

Yet Hiller was disturbed by the ethical relativism of such a position and the nihilism implicit in treating all moral values as equal. In these early years he developed a stopgap antidote to this nihilism in his own philosophy of "Sensationism" (*Sensationismus*). The nihilism of skepticism, which Hiller thought to be the mark of decadence, is counteracted by an affirmation of life and the knowledge that man is free to act in spite of the apparent equality of all values. Sensationism, Hiller noted in a letter to Erwin Loewenson, derived from Simmel not Nietzsche. Its advantage was that the Sensationist was in no

⁷ Ibid., pp. 25 & 42. Hiller also noted in a letter to Loewenson that he had first studied Nietzsche in 1903 & 1904. See the letter of November 14, 1908 (*Hiller Nachlaß*) in the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach, Federal Republic of Germany (Hereafter cited as DLM).

⁸ Ibid. pp. 30, 44, 51, 88-89.

⁹ Kurt Hiller, *Das Recht über sich selbst: Eine strafrechtliche Studie* (Heidelberg, C. Winter, 1908). This was originally Hiller's dissertation *Die kriminalistische Bedeutung des Selbstmords* (1907); Georg Simmel, *Einleitung in die Morawissenschaft: Eine Kritik der ethischen Grundbegriffe* (Berlin: W. Hertz, 1892-3); Sheppard's comments can be found in his Afterword to *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, 2:464-465.

¹⁰ Hiller *Das Recht über sich selbst*, pp. 3 & 106; see also Sheppard, p. 464.

way dogmatic; its disadvantage was that he lacked all certainty as to the moral good.¹¹

Hiller recognized that Sensationism was only a transitional philosophy pending his discovery of a satisfactory criterion for judging values.¹² In respect to the breakthrough from Sensationism to Activism, both Richard Sheppard and Juliane Habereeder note the importance of the philosophy of the nineteenth-century Kantian, Jakob Friedrich Fries, whose ideas Hiller came into close contact with through his friends Arthur Kronfeld and Leonard Nelson.¹³ Hiller assumed Fries' concept of "reason's self-reliance" (*Selbstvertrauen der Vernunft*). According to this concept, the knowledge necessary to evaluate moral questions, which could neither be resolved through reflexion or the reduction of one moral assertion to another, was intuitively accessible to reason and thus intrinsically valid.

The importance of Fries for Hiller is indisputable and Hiller would later acknowledge that Leonard Nelson influenced him more than any other author except Plato and Nietzsche.¹⁴ Yet to emphasize the influence of Fries, whom Hiller appealed to primarily in his writings on jurisprudence,¹⁵ is to overlook Hiller's growing enthusiasm for Nietzsche during this same period. In a letter to Loewenson of October 8, 1908, Hiller noted that Kronfeld had gone from Sensationism to the Neo-Friesianism of Leonard Nelson but that he himself was unable to go from ism to ism; he had to produce the new out of himself.¹⁶ Two weeks later, Hiller reported that he was reading the most significant work of German literature: Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo*.¹⁷ Hiller found the book so overwhelming that it diminished the importance of all of his heroes of the last years. He considered beginning a second period of Nietzsche study, if only to catalyze (*agitieren*) the adherents of Fries. Hiller also had positive things to

¹¹ Letter, Kurt Hiller to Erwin Loewenson, December 4, 1908, (DLM). Hiller associated skepticism and decadence in a letter of January 27, 1909 (DLM). Unfortunately I was unable to secure permission to quote from the substantial collection of Kurt Hiller's letters at the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv*. The administrator of Hiller's literary papers declined to answer my request to excerpt from Hiller's letters. Dr. Richard Sheppard, who edited *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, also was unable to secure permission, meaning that most of Hiller's letters could only be summarized. See Sheppard, vol. 1, p. xv.

¹² Letter, Hiller to Loewenson, October 30, 1908, DLM.

¹³ Sheppard, *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs*, pp. 469-470; Habereeder, *Kurt Hiller und der literarische Aktivismus*, pp. 87-112.

¹⁴ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 391.

¹⁵ See for example Hiller's "Strafrechtskritik und Ethik," *Monatsschrift für Kriminalpsychologie und Strafrechtsreform*, 6 (1910), pp. 618-637; "Die philosophische Rechtslehre des Jakob Friedrich Fries," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* (Berlin, 1917), pp. 251-269.

¹⁶ Letter, Hiller to Loewenson, October 30, 1908 (DLM).

¹⁷ Letter, Hiller to Loewenson, November 14-15, 1908 (DLM). Nietzsche's autobiography *Ecce Homo* appeared for the first time in 1908 in an expensive limited edition of 1250 copies.

say about Nietzsche's *The Will to Power* which he was reading sporadically at the time.¹⁸

It was only logical that Hiller's growing enthusiasm for Nietzsche would begin with these two works for it is in them that Nietzsche most directly attacks the problem of decadence. In *Ecce Homo* Nietzsche portrayed himself as the first to have seen Christian morality as the morality of decadence, "invented in order to devaluate the only world there is--in order to retain no goal, no reason, no task for our earthly reality!"¹⁹

The Will to Power concerns the problem of decadence and nihilism even more directly and it is for that reason that Hiller became even better disposed to it after reading it carefully. On June 23, 1912, Hiller wrote Loewenson that he was reading *The Will to Power* again, but this time with a different attitude. Indicative of this new attitude is the brief aphorism from the work which Hiller quoted to Loewenson: "An antimetaphysical view of the world--yes, but an artistic one."²⁰ Hiller had quoted this aphorism in support of his own increasing turn to an antimetaphysical view and to political activism, changes that soon led to a complete break between Loewenson and Hiller even as it had already led to Hiller's withdrawal from the *Neue Club* in February, 1911.

Hiller's new attitude towards Nietzsche indicated that he found in the philosopher the legitimation of his turn to political volunteerism. He wrote to Loewenson on June 26 that for Nietzsche the primary concern of the artist is not merely to observe and reproduce the world, but to shape it.²¹ Yet, the connection between Hiller's turn to political activism and his original concern with ethical relativism and decadence is not yet clear. The connection becomes evident only when we examine the numerous articles which Hiller wrote between 1908 and 1912 and collected in 1913 in his two volume *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, the foundation of his Activist doctrine.

The prologue of *Die Weisheit der Langenweile* declared that no philosophical system would be presented. Alfred Kerr had called such systems "constructions of lies" (*Schwindelbauten*) and Nietzsche had certified that "the will to a system is a lack of integrity."²² Reflecting on the problem that had

¹⁸ Loewenson had given Hiller *The Will to Power* as a birthday present in 1908. See Letter, Hiller to Loewenson, August 19, 1908 (DLM).

¹⁹ Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am a Destiny," 8.

²⁰ Letter, Hiller to Loewenson, June 23, 1912 (DLM); Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 1048.

²¹ Letter, Hiller to Loewenson, June 26, 1912; See also his letter to Loewenson of July 2/3, 1912 (DLM).

²² Hiller, "Prologue," *Die Weisheit der Langenweile: Eine Zeitschrift und Streitschrift* (Leipzig: Kurt Wolff, 1913), 1:14; "Prologue" also appeared in *Die Weißen Blätter* 1 (1913) 1:54-62. On Kerr, see chapter 3.

plagued him since 1908, Hiller noted that the correct norm for humanity remains unknown. Earlier, the *Geist* had the choice of an insane asylum, of believing in a beyond, or of clericalism, which Hiller identified as any school commanding obedience. Now a new possibility emerged out of "the wisdom of boredom" (*Die Weisheit der Langenweile*), by which Hiller meant the spiritual torpor of the last years brought on by skepticism. Now the *geistig* person replaces obsolete and competing value systems with his own will, which itself becomes the norm for society.

Why must your fervent drive to world rule be something contemptible? Don't lie; rather, hold fast to the fact that insecurity is your surest possession, antinomy your single law.... Could you with good conscience not propagate? Sweet friends, (you would die), so at least propagate yourself....

Thus sings the wisdom of boredom: courage to power should flow into conscious powerlessness and generate, I hope, warriors. That is what Nietzsche, with marvelous regard for himself, called "active nihilism". A new naivete, the natural association of the cultured [*Naturburschentum der Kultürlichen*].²³

The term "active nihilism" appears in *The Will to Power*, in the first book "European Nihilism." Nihilism for Nietzsche is, of course, the process of values losing their validity. Historically man has searched for the "goal" of life at first in a superhuman being, then in reason, in the happiness of the greatest number, finally to become dispirited.

One says to oneself:

1. a definite goal is not necessary at all,
2. cannot possibly be anticipated.

Just now when the greatest strength of will would be necessary, it is weakest and least confident. Absolute mistrust regarding the organizing strength of the will for the whole.²⁴

Active nihilism is "a sign of increased power of the spirit." This power is exercised in the destruction of previous value systems and the creation of a goal.²⁵

This, though, is also the theme of *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, asserting itself in such articles as "Der Eth," "Seine Stellung zur Metaphysik," and "Der Relativismus in der Rechtsphilosophie und seine Überwindung durch die

²³ Hiller, *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, 1:19-20.

²⁴ Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, 20.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 21-26, 55.

Restitution des Willens."²⁶ In this last article, Hiller again recounted the impossibility of finding an objective basis for norms. He rejected utilitarianism, positivism, and simple Kantian rationalism since, as Simmel had shown, these doctrines simply derived one "ought" from another. Against these false criteria for morality, Hiller opposed his own concept "volunteerism." The volunteerist does not search for an objective norm but posits his own "table of values"; he does not want to found a system; he simply wants. The coming ethic and political philosophy will have as its guideline aphorism 972 of Nietzsche's *Will to Power*.

...I recognized at last that there are two distinct kinds of philosophers.

1. Those who want to ascertain a complex fact of evaluations (logical or moral);
2. Those who are legislators of such evaluations.

The former try to master the world of the present or the past by concentrating and abridging the multiplicity of events through signs: their aim is to make previous events surveyable, comprehensible, graspable and usable...The latter, however, are commanders; they say: "Thus it shall be!" They alone determine the "whither" and the "wherefore," what is useful and what constitutes utility for men.²⁷

Hiller's article "Über Kultur", which originally was written in 1909, was also reprinted in *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, though, with an important addendum. The original article was a critique of overspecialized modern culture based on Simmel's analysis in *Philosophie des Geldes*. In the new addendum, Hiller noted that the analysis still held but he repudiated Simmel's "lofty feeble (*edle-flauen*) aestheticism".²⁸ Hiller's move from Sensationism to volunteerism was paralleled by his move from Simmel to Nietzsche.

No essay demonstrates that move more effectively than Hiller's essay "Unwesentliches Denken", one of Hiller's first manifestos of the Activist position which is conspicuously modeled on Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life."²⁹ In that essay, Nietzsche evaluated three types of history, monumentalistic, antiquarian, and critical, in terms of their

²⁶ Hiller, *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, 1:25-28, 1:38-42, 2:85-124. These articles appeared respectively (if in slightly altered form) in *Der Sturm* 1 (1910) p. 443; *Die Fackel* 12 (1911) pp. 61-64; *Der Sturm* 2 (1911) pp. 468-470, 476-477, 486-487.

²⁷ Hiller, *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, 2:122.

²⁸ "Über Kultur" was originally written in 1909 for the Neopathetisches Cabaret. It appeared next in *Der Sturm* 1 (1910) pp.187-188, 196-197 though it is not known whether this article is identical with the original since the original is not extant. It appeared in *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, 1: 49-75.

²⁹ "Unwesentliches Denken" first appeared in *Der Neue Merkur*, (Oktober, 1914-March, 1915) p. 321 and was reproduced in his collection of essays *Geist werde Herr: Kundgebungen eines Aktivisten vor, in und nach dem Krieg* (Berlin, Erich Reiß Verlag, 1920).

use or disadvantage for life. Hiller, in turn, examined three types of "formalisms" which were currently being applied, in Germany, to philosophical thinking: the positivistic, the methodological, and what Hiller called "niveau thinking." He rejected all three. Positivism cannot contribute to solving ethical problems since the facts of experience cannot supply answers to questions of reason. Methodological thinking, which was Kant's discovery, reveals the limits of human reason. It is thus useful for a critique of the thinking process but it is not applicable to the goal of philosophy which is, according to Hiller, the determination of values. A philosopher who answers questions of fact will suit the political regime more than one who defines which questions are important.

Hiller illustrated the third type, "Niveau thinking," by reference to Georg Simmel's *Einleitung in die Moralwissenschaft*. While acknowledging his debt to his former teacher, Hiller rejected his ethical objectivism, his attempt to evaluate, not what kinds of problems are discussed in scholarly work, but how they are discussed. Simmel's mistake was to conclude that scientific research should not mix its own moral values into a scientific investigation of a moral phenomenon. The result was research for the sake of research, "a philosophical nihilism," while the new generation, noted Hiller, wanted to change things, to improve them. Objective reason is not enough and the intellectual has a duty, Hiller insisted, to take on a creative function in society.

Hiller was not, however, advocating the surrendering of objectivity by the intellectual or their assumption of a politics based on interest. The true philosophers, or *Geist* as Hiller referred to them, were in a position to determine society's goals precisely because they stood above party interest. They were idealists who represented "the party of the partiless." In other words, the difference between Simmel's philosophy and Hiller's new position is precisely the difference between Nietzsche's two kinds of philosophers. The latter type goes beyond the so-called objectivity of the former which treats all values as equal and therefore implicitly acquiesces to the world as it is. The *geistig* philosophers distinguish between qualities of different values and are able to assert new ones. The will of the *Geist* becomes the criterion of what should be.

Hiller's road to Activism led away from many of his former friends. His political volunteerism led to his withdrawal from the *Neue Club* in 1911 and his eventual break with Loewenson.³⁰ Accompanied in his secession by Ernst Blass, Arthur Drey, and Armin Wasserman, Hiller established the *Cabaret*

³⁰ For the precise reasons behind Hiller's break with Loewenson see chapter 2, note 6.

Gnu as a platform for his ideas, to take the place of the *Neopathetisches Cabaret* of *Der Neue Club*.³¹ In 1912 Herwarth Walden broke with Hiller and in 1913 Franz Pfemfert did the same.

The break with Pfemfert was not due to Hiller's growing political volunteerism but to his aristocratic principles which contradicted Pfemfert's egalitarianism. The conflict erupted over an article by Hiller, "Kaiser Wilhelm und wir," which reproached the government for not ennobling the *geistig* artists of Germany as the true aristocrats of the nation, thereby forcing them into an alliance with republicanism. Pfemfert published the article along with several vitriolic attacks on Hiller, calling him a career revolutionary (*Karriere-Revolteur*) who was willing to abandon the struggle for political reform in exchange for personal gain.³² Hiller's response was just as caustic; he argued that his article was, in no way an approach to the regime but merely pointed out how *ungeistig* the regime actually was.³³ Whether that is true or not, the equivocal article suggests a willingness on Hiller's part to have his dissatisfactions with Germany addressed within the framework of the Wilhelminian monarchy. All that, however, changed in August 1914. The war brought an end to all uncertainty.

...the "outbreak" of the war...gave the most powerful jolt to the still unclear tendency of the development of my thoughts. That such mass-murdering insanity was still possible in Europe in the twentieth century - no thinking person would like to believe it; but it was real. Now all doubt and hesitation ceased in me. There were no more "turns" in my street to wanting, to purposeful [*zielhaft*], ethical-political thinking and to the attempt to act according to this thinking.³⁴

The Ziel Anthologies

During the early months of the war Hiller discussed his plans for a new movement with Alfred Wolfenstein and Rudolf Kayser.³⁵ They discussed possible names for the movement, excluding "Volunteerism" and "Politicalism," finally settling on Hiller's favorite: "Activism." While the other two names were rejected, they were clearly an implicit part of the meaning of Activism

³¹ On the *Gnu*, see Richard Sheppard, "The Expressionist Cabaret Gnu, 1911-1914: An Analysis and Documentation" in *Deutsche Vierteljahrschrift* 56 (1982), 431-446.

³² Hiller, "Kaiser Wilhelm und wir" in *Die Aktion* 3 (1913) 635-637; Pfemfert denounced Hiller in an addendum to the article and published two further attacks: "Der Karriere-Revolteur" 3 (1913), 1129-1136 and "Der Meliorist" 5 (1915), 103-106.

³³ Hiller, "In mein Buch muß ich flüchten" in *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, pp. 57-66.

³⁴ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 98.

³⁵ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 98.

as Hiller understood it. Activism was political in that the intelligentsia now intended to involve themselves in politics with the purpose of transforming society, instead of superciliously standing apart from it. Volunteerism reflected the belief that the activist could impart his will to the world. It negated the deterministic ideologies of the past such as materialism, positivism, and historicism.

Certainly, viewed causally, the will is not free. However, what does causality have to do with wanting. To see causally is to look backwards; our forward-looking will feels itself free to set goals....So the Activist is a volunteerist.³⁶

The word goal (*Ziel*) in the above quotation is used precisely in the sense Hiller meant it to be understood when he established the *Ziel-Jahrbücher* (Goal Yearbooks) as the organ of his league of Activists. Hiller probably took the word from Nietzsche's writings. It appears, with the same meaning, in a number of aphorisms surrounding that important passage in *The Will to Power* about active nihilism. Hiller himself alluded to the source. As the motto of the third volume of the *Ziel-Jahrbücher* he quoted Nietzsche's "The formula of my happiness: a Yes, a No, a straight line, a goal."³⁷ The *Ziel-Jahrbücher* were to be the chief means of marshaling support for the Activist goal of changing society.³⁸

In his article in the first volume, "Philosophie des Ziels," Hiller underlined the necessity of Activist intervention in society. In his view, religion and the organized lies of the privileged have crippled the instincts so that the average person is no longer capable of experiencing the empirical world as bad. Instead of bread, the privileged have fed the people metaphysics as a way of pacifying them. The *Geist* of yesterday previously did nothing to stop this; his individualism and art for art's sake attitude was thus indirectly responsible for the war. Now, however, the *Geist* has decided to take power. Other parties have demonstrated their bankruptcy through their allegiance to mere economic interests. Only the *Geist* is capable of representing the broad interests of the people.

Hiller thus added the same political dimension to the meaning of *Geist* as Heinrich Mann did in *Geist und Tat*, though significantly the latter did it by a partial repudiation of Nietzsche, the former through a stronger adherence. No longer is the *Geist* merely a vital idealist living above the material interests

³⁶ Hiller, "Ortsbestimmung des Aktivismus," *Die Erhebung* 1 (1919), p. 364.

³⁷ Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Maxims and Arrows," 44.

³⁸ The *Ziel-Jahrbücher* came out five times with slightly varied titles. The first two volumes, 1916 and 1918, were entitled *Das Ziel: Aufrufe zu tätigem Geist*. The next three volumes, 1919, 1920, and 1924, were entitled *Das Ziel: Jahrbücher für geistige Politik*. Hereafter all volumes will be cited as *Ziel*, along with the respective volume number and year.

of everyday life. Now Hiller, like Mann, adds the notion of social responsibility.

The *geistig* ones -- what does that mean? It means...those who feel themselves responsible...not for the past, but for the future. To feel responsible: the experience of carrying a message; to suffer on the world fruitfully; to be possessed by the idea to improve it [the world], without contemplating whether following the idea might also bring private gain.³⁹

Hiller did not associate the *Geist* exclusively with any particular group, neither with young people nor with intellectuals. He appealed to Nietzsche to argue that "one can even be a great scholar without *Geist*."⁴⁰ Yet he openly broke with Nietzsche in declaring the literati as the epitome of the *geistig* type. The literati possess the positive qualities of the artist, the scholar, and the philanthropist (*Wohlfahrtsmann*). They are achievers, prophets, and leaders. In contrast to his own negative opinion of the literati, according to Hiller, Nietzsche, along with Moses and Luther, belonged to them.

The literati were, however, not the only source of *Geist*. In an argument which will become ever more strident as he increasingly found himself in competition with Marxism, Hiller rejected the notion that *Geist* was a characteristic of any particular class or group. The *geistig* type is found in all classes, including the proletariat. In general, however, Hiller did not think the "masses" to be *geistig*. They would do anything to eliminate the causes of their suffering, measures which were not always consistent with *Geist*. Yet, if the *Geist* felt himself at odds with the "masses", he was always supported by the "people" because the *Geist* acts in the interests of the people. Through the *Geist* the people become conscious of their distress. They give power to the *Geist* because they see him as their ruler and representative, not as their tyrant. When the people turn against the *Geist*, it is the result of instincts gone bad; for it is the function of *Geist* to lead the people into paradise.⁴¹

Paradise is another central concept of Hiller and the one which makes Activism comparable to Bolshevism, at least in this one respect. Paradise, like the future communist society, is stateless, though the state is necessary for the transition. Thus, Hiller rejected anarchism. Anarchism would free the beast in man before activist education has taught him how to master the beast.⁴² By the same token, the need for an elite *Geist* disappears once it has

³⁹ Hiller, "Philosophie des Ziels" in *Ziel* 1 (1916), pp. 206-207. Hiller maintained the antimaterialist side of the *Geist* as well. See "Wir", written in the winter of 1914-15 and appearing in *Geist werde Herr*, pp.34-43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 208; Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "What the Germans Lack," 2.

⁴¹ Hiller, "Philosophie des Ziels," p. 196.

⁴² Kurt Hiller, "Ortsbestimmung des Aktivismus", p 376.

transformed the world.⁴³ In paradise, each has assumed responsibility for his or herself.

Despite the utopian implications of both the name and content of paradise, Hiller made a conscious effort to distinguish it from eudemonism⁴⁴ which would clearly contradict Hiller's adherence to Nietzsche on other points. His vision is not of eudemonia, but of a society of vital overmen.

Over the inhabitants of paradise (who are not phantoms or angels, but rather humans) rules the happiness of unconscious creatures⁴⁵—without the dullness of the unconscious. Paradise knows no poverty, only variety of requirement; no sickness, only the rhythm of turgor: a procreative back and forth between fatigue and superabundance. In paradise, enmity (because the glory of friendship would not be possible without it) is not abject; hate, for the sake of love; indeed, no lies. Not barren war of the bodies, but struggle; not work, but activity; not service, but performance.

Right and power coincide so that power as an institution becomes superfluous. The notion of value applied to people is done away with. For all come to their rank as a matter of course for the sacred building of community.⁴⁵

Paradise, though, like the future stateless society, was a long term goal. For the immediate struggle, Hiller suggested a program around which the *Geist* could rally. This program demanded the unconditional freedom of thought, speech, and press. War would no longer be permitted since physical superiority was no measure of *Geist*. Wealth would be equally distributed, a point of the program which Hiller saw as advancing the cause of *Geist*. By the same token, the cause of *Geist* was to be served by a reform of the educational system whereby school would encourage creative thinking, not learning by rote.

Indeed, all facets of *bürgerlich* culture which impeded the progress of *Geist* were opposed in this program. The Wilhelminian monarchy had led to a bloody world war and "the rule of blind nature." Hiller's program called for the constitutional unification of all states and the rule of reason through "the monarchy of the best."⁴⁶

Hiller's program listed two additional goal which at first glance appear contradictory: the emancipation of love and the rationalization of the procreation of children in accordance with eugenic goals. This last point is likely to raise eyebrows since it could appear to some as a step along the way

⁴³ Hiller, *Gustav Wynekens Erziehungslehre und der Aktivismus* (Hannover: Paul Steegmann, 1919), pp. 15-16.

⁴⁴ Hiller, "Philosophie des Ziels," p. 198.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 196-197.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 214-217.

from Nietzsche's comments regarding the benefit of racial mixture to the Nazi eugenic policy promoting the creation of a master race. In fact, Nietzsche is only indirectly the source here. Hiller's demand emerged from his relationship with one of Wilhelminian Germany's most progressive feminists, Helene Stöcker.

As founder of the League for the Protection of Motherhood and Sexual Reform (*Bund für Mutterschutz und Sexualreform*), Stöcker was, to say the least, an unlikely adherent of Nietzsche. Nevertheless, if the Nazis could make Nietzsche into the philosophic source of National Socialism, then Helene Stöcker is certainly entitled to make him into a source of feminism. Stöcker herself attempted to refute the perception that Nietzsche was hostile to women, arguing instead that his message to women was to become more independent.⁴⁷ More importantly, Nietzsche's philosophy served her in her battle against a patriarchal, authoritarian society and against conventional morality which maintained a double standard for men and women.

While the notion of eugenics does appear to blight this otherwise progressive outlook, it must be seen, according to Amy Hackett, in context.⁴⁸ In Stöcker's mind, eugenics meant breeding out disease to alleviate misery and to improve mankind, not the German race. Like Hiller, she had no disposition to nationalism and she could not have foreseen the eugenic policies of Nazi Germany. In addition, eugenicist ideas were popular in other countries as well during the turn of the century, and seeing its particular manifestation in Germany as a foreshadowing of National Socialist policies is simply not justified.

Hiller and Stöcker first met in 1908 when she, according to Hiller, was the only leftist to review his book *Das Recht über sich selbst*. They met, became friends, and Hiller became a member of the League for the Protection of Motherhood.⁴⁹ In addition to their common concern for moral questions, both Stöcker and Hiller found the answer to the problems of modern culture in the combination of socialism and Nietzsche's philosophy.⁵⁰ More important

⁴⁷ Helene Stöcker, "Nietzsches Frauenfeindschaft" in her *Die Liebe und die Frauen* (Berlin, 1908, 2nd edition), pp. 24-29. On Stöcker, see Richard J. Evans, *The Feminist Movement in Germany, 1894-1933* (London & Beverly Hills: Sage, 1976); Amy Hackett, "Helene Stöcker: Left-wing intellectual and Sex Reformer" in *When Biology becomes Destiny*, ed., Renate Bridenthal et al. (New York: Monthly Review, 1984), pp. 109-131.

⁴⁸ Hackett, "Helene Stöcker: Left-wing Intellectual and Sex Reformer," pp. 118-119.

⁴⁹ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 72; Stöcker's review of Hiller's book appeared in her *Die neue Generation* 4 (1908), p. 270-73.

⁵⁰ Stöcker, *Lebensabriß*, p. 20; cited in Hackett, "Helene Stöcker, Left-wing Intellectual and 'Sex Reformer,'" p. 117; For Hiller's comment on this theme, see his "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus" in *Ziel* 3 (1919), p. 217.

is their work together in the cause of pacifism. She was a member of the Activists, as well as Hiller's pacifist groups of the 1920s.⁵¹ Pacifism was, in fact, the focus of her two articles appearing in *Ziel*.

"Militarisierung der Jugend und Mütterlichkeit" and "Die Revolution des Herzens" both concern the special role of women who, as producers of life, are best prepared to reeducate the youth away from militarism and violence.⁵² The former article is particularly interesting since it appeals to Nietzsche's theory of *ressentiment* to find the causes of militarism. The desire for war comes from the "herd" mentality which causes men to hate others because they themselves are not vital. Unlike the militarists, Stöcker noted, the *Ziel* group does not idolize the state or raw power, "the lowest level of culture". Their moral goal is the higher development of the individual who ennoble the state into the higher form of community of culture (*Kulturgemeinschaft*).

"Die Revolution des Herzens" bases the struggle of the *Ziel* group against militarism and capitalism on Nietzsche's philosophy which holds life as the highest of values. This article, written after the November Revolution, stressed a theme which received increasing emphasis in the later volumes of *Ziel*: the failure of Marxism to initiate the real revolution, i.e.; the internal revolution of the spirit, thereby preparing the way for the counterrevolution. We shall return to this theme below.

Stöcker's contributions to *Ziel* reflected Hiller's attempt to bring a wide selection of the left-wing and youthful opposition into the Activist movement. Heinrich Mann's "Geist und Tat" led off the first volume of *Ziel*. Mann played an important role in the organization of Activism in Munich, and Hiller credited him with being the real leader of the activist tendency emerging in Germany in 1910.⁵³

The contributions to *Ziel* from Gustav Wyneken and Hans Blüher testify to the link between Activism and the German youth movement. Both Blüher's "Die Untaten des bürgerlichen Typus" and Wyneken's "Schöpferische Erziehung" demand a change in the educational system where youth would learn to build a new culture according to ideals.⁵⁴ Wyneken, though not officially a member of the youth movement, was influential upon it as both an educator and because of his cosmopolitan ideas which he opposed to the

⁵¹ Hiller, *Köpfe und Tröpfe: Profile aus einem Vierteljahrhundert* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1950), pp. 324 & 345; See also Hiller's essay on Stöcker, "Kameradin im Kampf," pp. 259-264.

⁵² Stöcker, "Militarisierung der Jugend u. Mütterlichkeit," *Ziel* 2 (1918), pp. 150-166; "Die Revolution des Herzens," *Ziel* 3 (1919), pp. 16-21.

⁵³ Hiller, "Vom Aktivismus" in *Die Weißen Blätter* 4 (1917), p. 88.

⁵⁴ Gustav Wyneken, "Schöpferische Erziehung" and Hans Blüher, "Die Untaten des bürgerlichen Typus" in *Das Ziel* 1 (1916), pp. 121-134 and 9-30 respectively.

increasing chauvinist trend among its members.⁵⁵ It was his educational doctrine, described in his *Schule und Jugendkultur* and employed in his own *Freie Schulgemeinde* (Free School), which was important for Activism.⁵⁶

Wyneken's doctrine called for a deemphasis on the teaching of ancient history and languages. As Walter Lacquer points out in his history of the youth movement, these demands must be viewed in the context of Wilhelminian Germany where it was precisely the old aristocratic order which insisted on a classical education.⁵⁷ In general, Wyneken wanted to reduce learning by rote of huge amounts of information which to the young seemed to have no relevance for the important questions of the day. In place of the old educational system, he established a relationship between teacher and student approaching that of master and disciple. Through his model, the pupil, no longer burdened by an undigested knowledge of previous cultures, learns to contribute to the creation of modern culture. This aspect of Wyneken's system captured Hiller's imagination. He compared it to Nietzsche's "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." Activist education meant that German pupils were to be freed from an unassimilable profusion of scientific facts in order to learn how to live ethically, in accordance with ideals.⁵⁸

Hans Blüher's presence in the pages of *Ziel* indicates the difficulty for the historian in deciding exactly what is right-wing and what is left-wing in Wilhelminian Germany. Like the Activists but also like Germany's cultural conservatives, Blüher attacked the decadence of liberalism whose lassitude and lack of ideals were to be replaced by the new *Geist* of the young.⁵⁹ He attacked materialism, positivism, *bürgerlich* morality, and, like the Activists, proposed the creation of a league of *Geist*.⁶⁰ In addition to sharing these bohemian concerns, Blüher evinced anti-Semitic and antifeminist attitudes as well as a sympathy for the nationalist right. Although he never became a Nazi,

⁵⁵ It is true that Wyneken initially supported the German war effort, but only out of patriotism. He unstintingly fought the rise of chauvinism in Germany. See his *Der Krieg und die Jugend* (Munich: Georg Steinicke, 1915).

⁵⁶ Wyneken, *Schule und Jugendkultur* (Jena, 1914); On Wyneken and his free school see Walter Lacquer, *Young Germany: A History of the German Youth Movement* (N.Y.: Basic Books, 1962). pp. 13, 35-38, 53-55; See also Haberer, *Kurt Hiller und der literarische Aktivismus*, pp. 154-170 and Wurghaft, "Kurt Hiller and the Politics of Action," pp. 29-31.

⁵⁷ Lacquer, p. 54.

⁵⁸ Hiller, *Gustav Wynekens Erziehungslehre und der Aktivismus*, p. 8. Hiller saw Wyneken's teaching as directly dependent on Nietzsche's writings even though Wyneken had rejected Nietzsche, arguing that the latter had been scientifically refuted through socialism. See p. 17.

⁵⁹ Blüher, "Die Untaten des bürgerlichen Typus," pp. 9-26.

⁶⁰ Blüher, "Der Bund der Geistigen" in *Ziel* 2 (1918), pp. 12-50. For more on the League of *Geist*, including its homosexual overtones, see Wurghaft, pp. 35-37.

he belongs as much to Germany's cultural conservatives as he does to the literary left.

Walter Benjamin's contribution to *Ziel* "Das Leben der Studenten," further illustrates the ambiguities of oppositional ideology in Wilhelminian Germany.⁶¹ Benjamin had met Hiller at the *Néopathetisches Cabaret*. Although persuaded by Hiller to contribute to *Ziel*, he disliked most of the other articles because of their "rationalism" and demands for social reform. He was sympathetic only to Franz Werfel's essay "Brief an einen Staatsmann", which was critical of Activism and like Benjamin's own essay called instead for a spiritual renewal.⁶²

The point is that a vague antimaterialism, antipositivism, and a commitment to idealism or *Geist* was a common concern of all young intellectuals at the time. Whether the notions of *Geist* and aristocracy ultimately carried humanistic or racial, liberal or reactionary overtones depended on the individual case and was often not evident until the First World War radicalized the youth in a variety of directions. Some became zealous nationalists; some gave up the vocabulary of cultural criticism altogether to assume the vocabulary of Marxist class struggle, and some, like Hiller became radicalized exponents of the same liberal ideas and cultural criticisms which were at the very heart of prewar Expressionism.

This same radicalization occurred within Activism, though only a few opted for chauvinism or racial mysticism. Instead, a large section of the movement was drawn away from Hiller's cultural elitism and towards an identification with the working class. The success of the October Revolution in Russia and disappointment with the regime established after the November Revolution in Germany augmented their enthusiasm for the once derided masses, now the only group seemingly capable of bringing about real change. Hiller himself identified three conflicting directions within Activism that eventually led to the failure of the movement: an anarchist direction of absolute non-violence, a "libertarian-socialist-left pacifist direction" to which Hiller adhered, and "a direction of aggressive red violence which was fascinated by Lenin."⁶³ The latter two directions are evident in the *Ziel*

⁶¹ Walter Benjamin, "Das Leben der Studenten" in *Ziel* 1 (1916), 145-155.

⁶² Gershom Scholem, *Walter Benjamin: Die Geschichte einer Freundschaft*, (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 21-22, 25-26; Franz Werfel, "Brief an einen Staatsmann," *Ziel* 1 (1915), pp. 91-98.

⁶³ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 136. The anarchist direction is not evident in the pages of *Ziel*. Hiller described these divisions in reference to an Activist national congress. The anarchist direction probably refers to Munich Expressionists who, though present at the congress, did not contribute to *Ziel*.

volumes of 1918 but especially 1919 and 1920, after the German revolution exacerbated tensions within the group. These articles demonstrate a movement unsure whether its allegiance is to Lenin or Nietzsche.

Such notable Activists as Rudolf Leonard, Walter Rilla, Leo Matthias, and Ludwig Rubiner transferred their sympathies, after the November Revolution, from Activism to the communist Spartacus League. Walter Rilla was perhaps the most abrupt conversion. As late as the third volume of *Ziel*, he criticized Lenin's etatism. "The perfect human being, not the perfect state, is the goal," he argued against Lenin. More importantly, he quoted Nietzsche to reinforce his position. "Only where the state ends, there begins the human being who is not superfluous: there begins the song of necessity, the unique and inimitable tune."⁶⁴ By the latter part of 1919, however, Rilla became convinced that Bolshevism was the single way to ensure the success of a socialist revolution in Germany.⁶⁵

A prerequisite for the conversion to Marxism by a great part of the young intelligentsia was a reevaluation of that doctrine, an attempt to free it from the stigma of "materialism" which it bore throughout the Wilhelminian years and to view it now as productive of *Geist*. An outstanding example of this process is Hugo Sinzheimer's article "Zur Ideenlehre von Karl Marx." Here Sinzheimer argued that Marx was never a materialist in that way of the "present pure Marxism." "The presupposition of his whole system of the socialization of the world is the suffering, self-uplifting, the wishing, evaluating, demanding, and active (*handelnde*) person who intervenes in the present world in order to make a future one."⁶⁶ Georg Lukács' own discovery of the idealist component of Marx's doctrine falls into perspective when viewed in the context of a large section of the young left-wing intelligentsia switching from cultural criticism to class struggle under the impact of war and revolution.⁶⁷

Alas, there were those who refused to convert. Robert Müller's "Gralschar des Geistes" called Marxist theory a dogma bandied about by intellectuals while the masses adhere to one towering figure or another. The growing number of educated people, not the masses, are responsible for improvements

⁶⁴ Walter Rilla, *Ziel* 3 (1919), p. 63; Nietzsche, *Zarathustra* part 1, "On the new Idol."

⁶⁵ See Rilla's article "Demokratie--Revolution--Bolschewismus" in the November 1919 issue of his journal *Die Erde*.

⁶⁶ Hugo Sinzheimer, "Zur Ideenlehre von Karl Marx," *Ziel* 3 (1919), pp. 70-75.

⁶⁷ On Lukács' discovery of the idealist component of Marxism, see Andrew Arato and Paul Breines, *The Young Lukács and the Origins of Western Marxism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1979); Michael Löwy, *Georg Lukács: From Romanticism to Bolshevism*, trans. Patrick Camiller (London: NLB, 1979).

in history.⁶⁸ In Paulus Tieck's "Fiktionen", a Nietzschean critique of Marxism comes to the fore. According to Tieck, the root of Marxist ideology is *ressentiment*. Marxism is the ideology of chandalas who cloak their will to rule under the cry of social justice.⁶⁹

Hiller, who considered himself a socialist, contributed the most cogent and sustained critique of Marxism and Leninism throughout these volumes of *Ziel*. He considered his own radical pacifism to the left of Bolshevism. The latter doctrine, which pits class against class, was, according to Hiller, just another version of militarism. Instead of a violent conflict between classes, Hiller called for a nonviolent clash between "types": the *Geist* against the non-*Geist*, a war to be waged with the pen.

One of the most important characteristics of *Geist* was, for Hiller, the devotion to pacifism. Almost as if anticipating Lukács' critique of Expressionist pacifism as failing to recognize the capitalistic causes of World War One, Hiller called "foolish" and "reactionary" the communist assertion that the proletarian revolution will put an end to war.

As if no conflicts of interests will arise between the various soviet republics...Even within a nationally unified council quarrels between countrymen or professional groups can be imagined; it is to be considered why they should not come to a martial resolution if not for the fact that the *Geist* of internal pacifism rules in the state, with all the guarantees for the peace of the land. It is just not true, that the exclusive reasons for war are feudal-dynastic, more recently capitalist interests. Without a remnant of some primitive, cannibalistic lust for war in the blood of peoples, without atavisms which the heinous interested cleverly use for those interests, catastrophic outbreaks, as we have experienced, are impossible.⁷⁰

The proletariat, Hiller noted, failed to prevent the outbreak of war even though it was better organized than any other class. The abolition of compulsory military service is nowhere demanded in their programs and, in fact, their revolutions in Russia, Hungary, and in German cities have turned imperialist war into civil war. Those who oppose the violence are put on the blacklist, their throats later to be cut without trial.⁷¹

Hiller challenged not only the Marxist position on pacifism, he questioned the moral basis of the materialist ideology itself. Even if the materialist doctrine were true, it was not an adequate justification for action. The *Geist*

⁶⁸ Robert Müller, "Gralschar des Geistes," *Ziel* 4 (1920), pp. 13-14.

⁶⁹ Paulus Tieck, "Fiktionen" in *Ziel* 4 (1920), pp. 93-100.

⁷⁰ Hiller, "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus," *Ziel* 3 (1919), p. 201.

⁷¹ Hiller, "Logokratie oder ein Weltbund des Geistes," *Ziel* 4 (1920), p. 226.

knows that moral ideas have a higher reality and will be victorious because of the will of *Geist*. In contrast, Hiller charged, the proletariat acted in the November Revolution, not for the sake of *geistig* ideals, but for the sake of fleeting and ignoble interests.

...one should guard against overestimating the merit of the proletariat in the November collapse, although it can little be denied. The value of an action is determined not by its effect but rather according to its motive. Did the masses overthrow the Kaiser because the senselessness of the principle of hereditary monarchy finally dawned on them? Did they overthrow him because the pompous narrow-mindedness of this man, to whom the stupid coincidence of birth conferred the power over peoples and nations, decisively helped to bring about the unspeakable horror of war? They overthrew him because he lost the war; not for the sake of his guilt but for the sake of his failure. The masses concern themselves with success; they act not out of *Geist*. The same proletariat who tore the defeated military Emperor from the throne would have celebrated him if he had been drawn through Brandenburg gate as the victor over a world.⁷²

Not only did Hiller think that the working class lacked the ethical idealism to make a real revolution, it had also become the subject of a Marxist "myth," a "metaphysic," which was historically inaccurate. In contrast to what Marx had written, the working class grows richer, not poorer. The growing number of handworkers and professionals can no longer be disposed of as a petty bourgeoisie condemned to the trash heap of history. And while Hiller conceded a "philistinism" and "reactionary element" among this middle class, he nevertheless saw "the free spirit much better preserved by the educated philistines than by the delirious revolutionary, whose delirium is a delirium of materialism...."⁷³ In his less combative moods, Hiller sought to emphasize that many of the future *Geister* were sure to come from the proletariat. Yet, even then he was wont to caution that the proletariat is not granted the right to rule because historically it has been oppressed, no more than women, Jews, or blacks. *Geist*, not oppression, is the criterion for the right to rule.⁷⁴

⁷² Ibid. Hiller did acknowledge, in an essay many years later, that the young Marx was motivated by ethical considerations. He saw a break in Marx's thinking after 1845 when the materialist doctrine was developed. See Hiller's "Marx-Kritik in der Nußschale" in *Köpfe und Tröpfe*, pp. 153-170.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 228.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 222.

A Council of Geistig Workers

In spite of his critique of Marxism, Hiller, as already noted, considered himself a socialist. It was democracy that he was against since democracy ran counter to the primary theme of Activism, that it was incumbent upon *Geist* to rule. Democracy has been an important force in history as a revolt by the people against a tyrant or false aristocracy. In such a case, the *Geist* is always on its side. It was that democracy which set itself against the freedom of the individual, that Hiller opposed.

This evil type of democracy, which brings the good type into discredit, aspires, not to uplift the level of society to its most excellent members, but rather...to press it down to the middle. Instinctively, from the start, it takes the part of the many against the few....It suspects the enormous as diseased because it is abnormal. The uncommon person, yes uncommon only through the fervency of his devotion to the common people who bristle, admittedly in incomprehension...[and] hold him [the uncommon person] down...in opposition to the true interest of society....Nietzsche's work is the titanic curse of this Democratism.⁷⁵

Hiller objected to democracy because it taught that all were of equal value to society and consequently that all had to the same right to equal influence in the running of the state. For Hiller, only the *geistig* had that right or rather duty since only they could be relied upon to steer the state in a rational direction. Yet, since the people are the source of *Geist*, Hiller proposed, in an article in *Ziel* prior to the revolution, the establishment of a bicameral legislature. The lower house would be elected by universal and equal suffrage and by proportional representation. There would be no division of the country into voting districts in order to insure the fair representation of minorities.

The upper house would be a home of wise men, of *Geist*. They will sketch a general program of action for the country which Hiller assumed would include the elimination of war and military conscription, a rational economic order, a libertarian criminal code, and a new system of education.⁷⁶ The respective powers of both houses could be decided in the future but Hiller envisioned that the lower house would preside over material matters relating to the institution of economic socialism. The upper house would produce general principles and norms to which the lower house would have to conform. It would have the right of veto on all resolutions of the lower house; The lower house would also have the right to veto war resolutions of the upper

⁷⁵ Hiller, "Ein deutsches Herrenhaus," *Ziel* 2 (1918), p. 388.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 410-411.

house, an almost unimaginable possibility "for only *Geist* which has gone astray, which has gone off course, could want war."⁷⁷

Hiller listed Plato, J.F. Fries, and John Stuart Mill as sources for his conception of a legislative house of *Geist*. Yet, none of these figures had ever found an adequate way of choosing its members.⁷⁸ In another article, we learn the source of Hiller's conception of the selection process to be an aphorism in Nietzsche's *Human, All Too Human*.

It is easy, ridiculously easy, to erect a model for the election of a lawgiving body. First of all the honest and trustworthy men of a country who are at the same time masters and experts in one or another subject have to select one another through a process of mutual scenting out, and recognition... If these constituted the lawgiving body, then finally in each individual case only the voices and judgments of those experts in a specific matter would be decisive and all the rest would, as a matter of honor and simple decency, leave the vote to them alone....⁷⁹

According to Hiller, the *geistig* people in each region of the state should select each other. Gradually their combined wisdom will win such respect and influence among the people that the authorities will be unable to rule without first consulting this league of *Geist* for fear of public outcry. Each regional league will send delegates to a central league which will become the upper house within the constitution of the German state.

Revolutionary outbreaks in Europe provided Hiller the opportunity to implement his ideas. In the summer of 1917, after the republican revolution in Russia, about thirty members of the *Ziel* circle in Berlin convened and established the *Bund zum Ziel*. The name was changed to the Activist League at the second meeting of the group which took place on November 7th and 8th 1919 in response to the public disorder that had broken out throughout Germany, beginning with the sailors revolt in Kiel of October 30th. On the next day, the 9th of November, *Reich* Chancellor Prince Max of Baden announced the abdication of the Emperor and handed the government over to Friedrich Ebert, the leader of the Social Democratic Party. Yet at this stage of the revolution, Ebert had to contend for power with the workers and soldiers councils which sprang up throughout Germany during the initial days of disorder.

On November 9th, on his own authority, Leo Matthias visited Hans-Georg von Beerfelde, a member of the Executive of the Berlin Workers and Soldiers

⁷⁷ Ibid., p 419.

⁷⁸ Ibid., pp. 407-408.

⁷⁹ Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, part 2, 318; Hiller alludes to this aphorism in "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus", p. 210.

Councils who would on the following day be elected one of its chairmen. Matthias discussed with Beerfelde the possible contributions the Activist League might make to the revolution. According to Hiller's account, Beerfelde offered to make the League a third power, in charge of culture, on the council executive. The only condition was that the name "Activists" had to go and Matthias immediately agreed to rename the group "the Council of *geistig* Workers" (*Rat geistiger Arbeiter*).

Hiller turned livid when he heard the new name of the group. The implicit analogy with hand worker meant that the title "hasn't the slightest to do with our *Geist* notion, will most certainly be misunderstood, also by well-wishers, and is simply just kitsch."⁸⁰ He reluctantly agreed to go along only under pressure from Matthias who called him a "miserable philistine, pedant, aesthete, and other Activist insults and epithets which are found in my own writings directed against the cultural boor."⁸¹

The Council of *geistig* Workers was granted space in the Reichstag but, as Hiller predicted, the name invited a fiasco. They received about ten thousand letters from demobilized soldiers who thought the Council to be an employment agency. When Beerfelde lost his position three days later, the Council of *geistig* Workers was evicted from the Reichstag with the explanation that only political parties belonged there.⁸² One disappointed participant recounted the activities of those days:

Those three days in the Reichstag, I'll never forget...Naively idealistic and blissfully innocent, the Council of *geistig* workers sat in the middle of this witches cauldron. They spoke, dealt with differences in concepts, drew up statutes, made an agenda, resolved after many hours of consultation to pass a resolution, as soon as a subcommission presents a report whether or not the matter is ready for resolution; and were Activists, as if perhaps the trumpeter of the battle cry "Go at it with might and main" was a pet student of Simmel.⁸³

All was not completely lost. Councils of *geistig* Workers had in the meantime appeared in Vienna, Munich (under the chairmanship of Heinrich Mann), Leipzig, Dresden, and other German cities involving a host of

⁸⁰ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, pp. 128-129.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 129

⁸² Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, 133-134; See also Wurghaft, "Kurt Hiller and the Politics of Action," p. 52.

⁸³ Siegfried Jacobsohn, "Antworten" in *Die Weltbühne: Wochenschrift für Politik, Kunst, Wirtschaft* 14 (1918) p. 558.

prominent names from the literary intelligentsia.⁸⁴ In addition, the Berlin council secured temporary financial backing through the mediation of Siegfried Jacobsohn and Alfons Goldschmidt of the periodical *Weltbühne*. Working against the movement were, however, its own internal divisions, which Hiller's arrogance and purism did not help to mollify. On December 2nd, 1918, Hiller spoke at an open public gathering designed to introduce the public to the Activist movement. To the conservative audience which appeared, Hiller preached socialism and attacked that "freshly baked republican" Friedrich Naumann of the newly founded German Democratic Party. The ensuing tumult brought about the resignation of three Activists from the Council, including Jacobsohn.⁸⁵

In June 1919 an "All German Activist Congress" was convened in Berlin. Hiller's report, printed in the fourth volume of *Ziel*, depicts a Congress rent "between intransigent Activists and those in league with world revolution."⁸⁶ Hiller himself was only partially satisfied with the resolutions which emerged. They maintained the core of the Activist program in their advocacy of internationalism, pacifism, socialism and, most important for Hiller, aristocracy; the fourth resolution also resoundingly rejected the democratic parliamentary system. Yet, Hiller objected to the close identification of activism with revolutionary socialism which won out despite his own recommendation that Activism stand "left above the parties." In any event, the disagreements at the congress prompted one other resolution with which Hiller could agree: a resolution to disband the Political Council of *geistig* Workers.⁸⁷ Activism which, according to Hiller, was a movement based on the unity of *Geist*, dissolved because of the divisions within it.

Such a conclusion should not preclude the recognition that Activism was a completely ineffective movement to begin with. What sort of mass movement could it hope to become when its message to the masses was only the promise of benevolent rule? Hiller seems to have learned at least that much. The post-revolutionary volume of *Ziel* contained his "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus" which indicated a significant change in his

⁸⁴ Ibid., p. 132. The propositions of the *Bund zum Ziel* and the program of the *Politischer Rat geistiger Arbeiter*, Berlin, are printed in *Ziel* 3 (1919), pp. 218-223. The program, which hardly differs from Hiller's ideas as they have been set forth here, is followed by a list of intellectuals from a variety of cities in Germany and Switzerland who subscribed to the "spirit" of the program.

⁸⁵ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 134; *Köpfe und Tröpfe*, pp. 276-277; The speech, "Wer sind wir? Was wollen wir?" has been reprinted in *Geist werde Herr*, pp. 71-90 and *Ratioaktiv, Reden 1914-1964* (Wiesbaden, 1966), pp. 19-26.

⁸⁶ Hiller, "Kongressbericht," *Ziel* 4 (1920), p. 209.

⁸⁷ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 138

ideas. The upper and lower legislative houses of his earlier conception were replaced by the double dictatorship of proletariat and *Geist*. This time, however, the workers councils had the veto over the council of *Geist* since only the former is formally anchored in the constitution of the state.⁸⁸ This, of course, was only a temporary concession to the realities of revolution and the very next year Hiller once again argued for a socialist society presided over by *Geist*.⁸⁹ In one thing though he remained consistent: the necessity of synthesizing the historical antinomies of Plato and Christ, of Marx and Nietzsche. It was a belief he maintained for the rest of his life.⁹⁰

Hiller and Nietzsche: Will to Power in the Service of Reason

Hiller, compared with other Expressionists on one side and with Germany's cultural conservatives on the other, presents an interesting paradox. He maintained the cultural elitism found among the cultural conservatives but fading among the Expressionists and yet, he vehemently asserted a rationalist tendency found within Expressionism but absent in irrational cultural conservatism. There is no doubt that Hiller, like the entire Wilhelminian intelligentsia (both left and right) was dissatisfied with the smugly optimistic rationalism inherited from the nineteenth century. Empiricism and positivism induced scientific laws regarding the natural world, but it provided no ethical guide on how to live. Nineteenth-century historicism compounded this failure with a complacent optimism that all was as it should be.

Hiller distinguished between the rational faculty (*Verstand*) of these nineteenth-century methodologies and the "Ratio" of Activism which goes beyond the so-called objectivity of rationalism to the appraisal of moral values and the assertion of ethical goals. The source of this Ratio was not scientific insight, but the will. "Its deepest-essence is therefore not quasi-mathematically graspable, but rather mystical....The impulse to good messianic world-transforming action remains dark and defies (*entrückt*) justification."⁹¹

⁸⁸ Hiller, "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus," *Ziel* 3 (1919) p. 208.

⁸⁹ See "Logokratie oder ein Weltbund des Geistes."

⁹⁰ Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, pp. 141-142. During the Weimar Republic Hiller was a contributor to the *Weltbühne* and a member of the *Deutsche Friedensgesellschaft*. In 1926 he founded the *Gruppe revolutionärer Pazifisten* and was its president until 1933 when he was twice briefly detained in a concentration camp. He was released in 1934 and he fled to Prague; In 1938, he moved to London. He returned to Germany in 1955 and lived in Hamburg until his death in 1972.

⁹¹ Hiller, "Ortsbestimmung des Aktivismus," p. 366.

Hiller's new rationalism then; like irrationalism, had mystical origins. It differed from irrationalism, though, in that it in no way did away with reason.

But a better organ of knowledge than reason is not given to the inhabitants of earth. Every vague intuition (Denk-Fühlen) escaping all control, which in regular intervals of the history of philosophy ever again extols, under various labels (the most recent irrationalism) a method of approach to the absolute which is deeper than thinking, means in truth only bad thinking.⁹²

Hiller rejected irrationalism as a cowardly way out of the philosophical problem left by the failures of nineteenth-century rationalism. Like Lukács, he was also clever enough to see that this philosophic choice served particular political interests as well.

To be an irrationalist...means capitulation: before the given, before that which has become, before nature and history, before mysterious powers, and finally before the unmysterious: before the state, the saber, the rabble, the plutocracy, brutality, stupidity. Irrationalism, this self-exclusion of the best in human beings, is often only the "metaphysical" absurd excuse of traitors who have sold themselves to the bad powers or have the intention to do so.⁹³

Furthermore, the Activists associated Nietzsche not with the irrationalists but with their own new type of rationalism. Thus Max Brod counted Nietzsche's tendency to contradict himself within his writings as an example of the new rationalism which stood between the old rationalism and irrationalism. Both the old rationalism and irrationalism are forms of capitulation before contradictions, the former declaring that reason has reached its limit, the latter flying off into an infinite which is inexpressible in words. The new, "truly noble" rationalism illuminates a problem as far as it can and resists the temptation to mystify questions it cannot answer. Moreover, Brod observed that irrationalism was being used in Germany to promote very practical goals such as Germany's territorial demands. He feared that the youth movement was also falling prey to this unhealthy doctrine.⁹⁴

The aristocratic notion of the Activists differed as well from that of the cultural conservatives. Hiller himself distinguished his aristocracy of the "type" from Houston Stewart Chamberlain's aristocracy of "an estate" (*ein Stand*).⁹⁵ That type was of course the *geistig* type who ruled not out of desire for gain but because of a duty to improve the world.

⁹² Hiller, "Philosophie des Ziels," p. 189.

⁹³ Hiller, "Ortsbestimmung des Aktivismus," pp. 366-377.

⁹⁴ Max Brod, "Aktivismus und Rationalismus" in *Ziel* 2 (1918), pp. 56-65.

⁹⁵ Hiller, "Logokratie oder ein Weltbund des Geistes," p. 236.

[*Geistig* people] are not domineering by nature and, by conviction, they are the enemies of domination. To rule means to them not desire but burden. The duty to rule burdens them as a curse. Until now, they have evaded their fate; but now they must assume it, they must suffer through it. Otherwise, the world will not be redeemed.⁹⁶

Inevitably, Hiller derived his concept of "aristocratism" from Nietzsche, for whom the *Geistig* people rule "not because they want to, but because they are."⁹⁷ All the attributes of *Geist* are justified on Nietzschean grounds as well. The resort to weapons is the way of the slave; pacifism demonstrates genuine power.⁹⁸ Interesting in this respect is Hiller's references to the concept of sublimation. Walter Kaufmann has shown how this concept of sublimation, the key for Nietzsche to the control of the will, is almost entirely absent from the Nietzsche literature prior to the end of World War Two.⁹⁹

For Hiller, atavistic drives of aggression had to be replaced by "sublimated struggle: the sportful agon of bodies and the contentions and contests of *geistig* people."¹⁰⁰ Hiller most certainly took the concept from Nietzsche and the proof is not simply the mention of the Greek agon; Nietzsche was the first to use the word sublimation in the way Hiller used it and in which we use it today.¹⁰¹ In general, according to Hiller's interpretation of Nietzsche, the superiority of a powerful person is measured by his ability to refrain from abusing his power.¹⁰²

The point is not to show that Hiller's reading of Nietzsche is a particularly perceptive interpretation, but that it was a humanistic one. Hiller saw in Nietzsche's philosophy the material to work against the trends in German culture that were leading it to fascism even as those very trends were using Nietzsche for their own purposes as well. On the whole, Hiller's concerns were primarily liberal ones, though he became a socialist out of recognition of the shortcomings of liberalism. He wrote of liberalism prior to Bismarck:

...It [liberalism] was the will to the greatest possible freedom from the state, without the rejection of the state according to the fashion of the anarchists. It was the anarchism of the sensible [der Verständigen]. We know that it

⁹⁶ Hiller, "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus," p. 203.

⁹⁷ Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, 57.

⁹⁸ Hiller, "Anti-Kain" in *Ziel 3* (1919), pp. 24-32.

⁹⁹ Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (Princeton University Press, 1974), p. 218.

¹⁰⁰ Hiller, "Logokratie oder ein Weltbund des Geistes," p. 225; see also, "Überlegungen zur Eschatologie und Methodologie des Aktivismus," p. 201.

¹⁰¹ Kaufmann, *Nietzsche*, p. 219. Admittedly Freud used the term in his *Three Essays on Sexuality* (1905) but in connection with a sexual, not an aggressive drive.

¹⁰² See Hiller, *Leben gegen die Zeit*, p. 25.

allowed the pauperization of the poor, became Magna Carta of freely exploiting capital and engendered socialism...which hated its father but may never repudiate him. For every coming social order which is not anointed with plenty of drops of liberal oil will be unbearable. That means: the individual is protected from the clutch of the paws of the state (whether the tiger be called monarchy, republic or council republic) except when the real welfare of other individuals requires it.¹⁰³

All of Hiller's other ideas proceed from his liberal and rational predisposition. His *geistig* aristocratism was the rational, liberal, pacifistic, free-spirited minority in a culture that was authoritarian, illiberal, militaristic and conformist. His militant brand of vitalism, Expressionist vitalism in fact, was not the tendency towards the irrational and illiberal but a manifestation of a youthful determination to bring about the changes in German society which liberalism had promised but had failed to deliver.

Critics of Expressionism have argued that the irrational essence of vitalism paved the way for the Nazi abandonment of reason. This is not true. Vitalism, which like cultural criticism derived from Nietzsche's philosophy, became the property of the right only when the left abandoned it after the First World War. Hiller himself, a leader of a pacifist movement during Weimar Republic, distanced himself from his earlier militant vitalism in accordance with the trend of the post-Expressionist era, the New Objectivity. He later came to regret that, however. After the victory of National Socialism, he concluded that such a victory was itself made possible by the failure of the left to embrace the irrational in man. All youth and not just right-wing youth, he noted, need the excitement provided by an irrational commitment to an ideal, even the ideal of reason. The dry materialism of Marxism, which interprets ideals as the mere epiphenomena of economic life, drove German youth away from socialism and reason towards the intoxication of National Socialism.¹⁰⁴

Hiller rejected Marxist attempts to draw a narrow correlation between economics and the cultural life of the nation, to see Nietzsche as the philosopher of late capitalism or militarism as the mere by-product of a crisis in the German economy. There is a militarism of the left as well, which could have been used to make rational goals palatable to youth.

There is a militarism without weapons of murder, a militarism of spiritual actions...a disciplined and militant type of *geistig* advance to which only decadence, goallessness, and nihilism says no. The best youth yearn for

¹⁰³ Hiller, "Logokratie oder ein Weltbund des Geistes," pp. 231-232.

¹⁰⁴ Kurt Hiller, "Selbstkritik Links! oder über die Ursachen des Nationalsozialistischen Erfolges." This essay was written in 1932, after the *Reichstags* elections of July 31, and published in *Ratioaktive*, pp. 96-97.

that...The ratio may only realize itself when it embraces, in form, the irrational component.¹⁰⁵

The qualities of this militarism are simply those of the militant vitalism which Hiller initiated two decades earlier. He is wrong, however, to see this militant vitalism as a timeless requirement of youth; it was very much rooted in a rebellion of young people at the turn of the century against what appeared to them as a decadent and hypocritical culture. But Hiller is also right in rejecting later attempts to conclude an implicit link between that vitalism and the rise of National Socialism. His own persevering commitment to it, as well as to liberalism and reason, is surely proof of that.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., pp. 97-98.

Chapter Four

Nietzschean Communism: The Psychological Theories of Otto Gross

Those who want to mediate between resolute thinkers show that they are mediocre; they lack eyes for seeing what is unique. Seeing things as similar and making things the same is the sign of weak eyes.

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 228

The names Marx, Freud, and Nietzsche have towered over twentieth century movements and philosophy, and it is perhaps only a natural human desire for harmony that has led to the various attempts to synthesize their contradictory doctrines. The feat is formidable, even absurd, considering their very different basic aims. Marx's final goal was to harmonize society and individual; Freud hoped to reconcile them at the expense of individual drives;¹ Nietzsche observed the same inherent conflict between individual and society as Freud but came down firmly on the side of the individual.

Freud and Nietzsche are thus united on one matter, that endless conflict between society and individual is implicit in the human condition and all twentieth century attempts to reconcile either Freud or Nietzsche with Marx have had to obviate these conclusions by transferring the locus of conflict from the realm of human nature to the realm of society and history.² This was the route taken by Otto Gross, the subject of this chapter, who attempted to make Freud's and Nietzsche's psychological observations the foundation of a collectivist society.

Gross was not an artist, but his theories were influential on a number of Expressionists. Indeed, his theories and his biography are quintessentially

¹ Freud's reflections on the inevitable conflict between society and individual are most elaborately developed in his *Civilization and its Discontents*, first published in 1930 as *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (Vienna: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag).

² For attempts at reconciling Freud and Marx, see Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

Expressionist. Like the Expressionists, Gross placed the attack on authoritarianism at the center of the cultural critique he imbibed from Nietzsche. His attempt to reconcile Nietzsche and communism was simply Gross' own version of the Expressionist dilemma, the desire to reconcile libertarian notions and the rights of the individual with a growing need for community.

As with most of the Activists, the need for community eventually took precedence during the First World War. Like Hiller, Gross never abandoned Nietzsche's philosophy, but he did substantially revise his understanding of it. In the midst of war and his own development toward communism, Otto Gross reinterpreted Nietzsche's notion of the "will to power", the foundation of Nietzsche's libertarian philosophy, in order to reconcile it with new collectivist ideals.

The Early Years of Otto Gross

Otto Gross was born in 1877 in Gniebing in the Austrian Steiermark. His father Hans Gross, a professor of criminology and an important figure in local politics, had an inestimable impact on the young Gross' professional and personal development, if only in a negative way. He was an extremely conservative and strongly authoritarian figure and, as Gross' biographer Emanuel Hurwitz shows, many of Otto's later theories in the field of psychology espoused the direct opposite of what his father believed.³

Hans Gross was himself interested in psychology, although only in so far as it was useful to criminology. He investigated the social problems of homosexuality and prostitution, though only with the aim of finding the most efficient means of repressing them. Psychology was to be used to perfect the methods of pursuit and investigation; criminology was itself just a tool in the service of the centralized state.⁴

The young Gross initially studied botany and medicine, first in Graz in 1897 and then, in order to escape the purview of his father, in Munich and

³ The relationship between father and son is a primary theme of Emanuel Hurwitz's *Otto Gross: Paradies-Sucher zwischen Freud und Jung* (Zurich and Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1979). The following summary of Gross' early life and early psychological theories is highly indebted to this work. See also chapter 1 of Jennifer E. Michaels *Anarchy and Eros: Otto Gross' Impact on German Expressionist writers* (New York, Berne, Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 1983).

⁴ Hans Gross' views are detailed in Hurwitz, pp. 35-48; see also Michaels, pp. 11-12.

Strasbourg. Contemporaries described him as shy and introverted while even his father observed his son as being prone to severe bouts of depression.⁵ To combat this, Gross began to take morphine and cocaine to which he became severely addicted and for which he would spend much of his life undergoing cures. In 1899 Gross finished his medical training at Graz and traveled to South America to continue his studies in botany. He returned in 1901 to assume a post at the psychiatric clinics in Munich and Graz. In 1903 he married Frieda Schloffer, daughter of an indigent Graz official.

With the assumption of his post at a psychiatric clinic, Gross' work in the field of psychiatric theory began. His first articles disclose his initial adherence to the primary assumptions of pre-Freudian theory, that disordered behavior was organically caused. Prior to the acceptance of Freud's discovery that neurosis originated in unconscious conflict, psychology was simply a branch of experimental physiology, that is, the measurement of reaction and the effect of stimuli under given conditions.⁶ It was to this science that Hans Gross adhered and which, for him, was a tool of criminal investigation. Yet, even in this early period, Otto Gross began to diverge from his father's course by going beyond the mere practical applications of psychology and introducing ethical questions. Gross questioned the justice of punishing a person for a crime he committed, not because of a motive, but as a result of a pathological condition.⁷

Gross' approach to Freudian psychoanalytic theory began with his reading of Carl Wernike's *Grundriß der Psychiatrie* (1900). Wernike, a neurologist, had gone beyond traditional organic explanations of pathological behavior by theorizing that certain disorders resulted from the disturbance of normal paths of association between the brain and the affects engendered through the perception of external stimuli. Gross adopted Wernike's theory for his own notion of the cerebral secondary function, which he elaborated in a work of 1902. In *Die cerebrale Sekundärfunktion*, Gross distinguished between the primary function of the brain, the cognitive process, and a secondary recovery function during which the mind assimilated the affects produced as a result of

⁵ Josef Dvorak, "Kokain und Mutterrecht: Die Wiederentdeckung von Otto Gross, 1877-1920" in *Neues Forum*, Vienna. July/August, 1978, p. 54. See also the account of Gross' later friend Franz Jung in "Von geschlechtlicher Not zur sozialen Katastrophe" which has been published as an appendix to Jennifer Michaels' *Anarchy and Eros*, p. 195.

⁶ On the early history of psychoanalysis, see Reuben Fine, *A History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), chapters 1 & 2, and Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), chapters 2-6.

⁷ Hurwitz, p. 65.

the primary cognitive process and the perception of external stimuli. The duration and intensity of the secondary function depended on the expenditure of energy during the primary process. This variable duration and intensity had important consequences for the psychic health of the individual.

An extremely long and intense secondary function meant that the numerous affects produced during this period would cluster around fewer ideas generated during less frequent recurrences of the primary function. The result was what Wernicke called "sejunction," the tendency on the part of the individual toward obsession with an overvalued idea. An extremely short secondary function had the opposite effect. The primary function operated more frequently while the affects of the secondary function, condensed into shorter periods, would have less opportunity to develop. A rapid succession of ideas were thus enriched by fewer, less developed affects, resulting in what Gross, again borrowing from Wernicke, called "a leveling of ideas." In both cases the consequence was a loss of affective critical abilities.⁸

While most of this work focused on the implications of the secondary function for the analysis of psychiatric illness, Gross devoted the last chapter of *Die cerebrale Sekundärfunktion* to what he called "individual psychology." Thus, based on the duration and intensity of the secondary function within a normal spectrum, Gross posited two types of people. An individual with a short secondary function has a shallow extensive (*verflacht-verbreiterte*) consciousness; his counterpart with a long secondary function, a narrow intensive (*verengt-verfliefte*) one. The former is a superficial type, quick to grasp facts and use them but lacking all emotional depth. The latter, while not adept in practical matters, is sensitive, emotional, and capable of understanding abstract ideas. He is likely to turn away from the social world and seek refuge in the aesthetic life. From the most highly developed among this latter type come society's "cultural geniuses," while the "geniuses of civilization" (*zivilisatorische Genies*), or practical achievers, stem from those with shallow extensive personalities.⁹ The psychologist Carl Jung later developed Gross' theory into his own typology of the extrovert and the introvert.¹⁰

Despite the importance of the secondary function in Gross' theoretical development, he had not yet crossed the bridge from neurologic psychiatry to Freudian psychoanalysis. This step came in his later article "Die Affektlage

⁸ Gross, *Die cerebrale Sekundärfunktion* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1902), pp. 33-34.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

¹⁰ C. G. Jung, *Psychological Types* in *The Collected Works of C.G. Jung*, ed., Herman Read et al., trans., R.F.C. Hull (London, Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971); vol. 6, pp. 273-86.

der Ablehnung" (1902), where Gross explained apathy and aggression as neurotic symptoms occurring in individuals suffering from sejunction. The inability to process external stimuli results in a cathexis, i.e., the concentration of emotional energy on a particular object or idea. Any attempt to engage the victim leads only to a rapid increase of external and internal stimuli which cannot be assimilated. The victim responds with "brusque rejection" or "desperate aggression."¹¹

It was, however, only in his book *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment und seine Bedeutung im manisch-depressiven Irresein-Kraepelins* (1907) that Gross credited Freud with founding a new science to explain the psychological repercussions of sejunction. Freud's notion of "repression and its expression through a symbol," Gross argued, provided the means for explaining disordered behavior patterns which appeared in addition to; and because of, mental illnesses of physiological origins. Psychoanalysis, then, was the consummation of a systematic explanation of mental illness begun by Wernicke.¹²

Gross had thus become an advocate of Freudian psychoanalytic theory, though he interpreted it in a way which far exceeded Freud's own hopes for the new science. In *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment*, he explained that affects, as physiological responses to external stimuli, are actually regulatory functions of the body which serve for the adaptation to new situations. Psychological disturbances come about when the individual is prevented from adapting to a new situation, that is from living out his affects to the end. The obstacle which prevents this process is society.

For us it follows that every affect, as a biological regulation process, lives necessarily to [its] end, that is, to the creation of a new thriving automatism. But at the same time we know that our entire adaptation to our circumstances of life is only partially completed. We find ourselves, in the great social organization in which we live, in the same relationship as...an individual cell in an entire natural organism: The demands of the whole fulfill themselves at the expense of individual regulation. Social confinements do not permit the individual, under certain circumstances, his own biological regulation, that is, to live an affect to [its] end. That is the moment of pathogenic conflict. If an affect, that is, if the development of a new purposeful adaptation is interrupted, a purposeless intervention is imposed in the form of a lasting new acquisition. In place of a purposeful automatism with which the affect, as a process of inner selection, comes to its biological end, a purposeless

¹¹ Otto Gross, "Die Affektlage der Ablehnung," *Monatsschrift für Psychiatrie und Neurologie*, 12 (1902), pp. 359-370 (362).

¹² Otto Gross, *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment und seine Bedeutung im manisch-depressiven Irresein Kraepelins* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1907), p. 3.

automatism steps in as a lasting new acquisition. And such a lasting purposeless automatism, removed from the continuity of consciousness, consistently stands behind the content of a defined pathological phenomenon: the overvalued idea, the compulsory impulse.¹³

As Hurwitz concluded in his biography of Gross, this position put Gross in opposition to the Freudian emphasis on the exclusively sexual basis of neurosis.¹⁴ For Gross, it was societal repression of natural instincts which was responsible for neurosis and psychoanalysis must, for that reason, occupy itself with social questions. *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment* is important for another reason as well. It is the first of Gross' works to demonstrate the influence of Nietzsche.

[For] pleasure is the accompanying feeling in the achievement of a new adaptation, which is continuously automatic, that is, without cathexis of the emotions. And this means that pleasure can be experienced only through ever new adaptations to ever new situations, that is through ever new mastery of ever new spheres. The best coinage for this biological principal is Nietzsche's formula: will to power.¹⁵

This passage out of *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment* demonstrates a perceptive understanding of Nietzsche's principle. Nietzsche was more likely to use the word "overcoming" (*Überwindung*) where Gross used "adaptation" (*Anpassung*). Nevertheless, the attempt to relate all actions to one drive to master new spheres was very much in accord with Nietzsche's own conception. Upon this principle, Gross followed Nietzsche in developing a strongly libertarian philosophy, though he would orient it towards sexuality, a reflection of Freud's influence. From this point on, Gross became an advocate of the abolition of outworn moral codes and the unbridled reign of free love as a means to self-development.

Gross and the Psychoanalytic Movement

According to Ernest Jones, Freud's biographer, Gross and Freud first met in 1904. Franz Jung, Gross' best friend during the Expressionist years, put the meeting earlier and added that it was on Freud's advice that Gross moved to Munich in 1906 to do his habilitation in the university clinic of Professor Kraepelin.¹⁶ In contrast, Hurwitz speculated that the actual reason for the

¹³ Otto Gross, *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment*, pp.14-15.

¹⁴ Hurwitz, p. 77.

¹⁵ Gross, *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment*, p. 14.

¹⁶ Franz Jung, "Von geschlechtlicher Not," p. 195.

move to Munich was that Gross was attempting to escape his father who had recently returned from abroad to accept a position at the University of Graz.¹⁷

Despite this confusion regarding the circumstances of their initial meeting, it is certain that Freud at first had great respect for Gross, writing in a letter to Carl Jung that both he and Gross were the only two of his followers capable of making original contributions to psychoanalysis.¹⁸ Freud and Jung's correspondence about Gross began over their mixed reception of *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment*.¹⁹ Jung later wrote Freud about Gross' vigorous defense of Freudian theory at the Amsterdam Congress of Psychoanalysts in 1907.²⁰

Nevertheless, it was not long before both Freud and Carl Jung began to object to Gross' missionary zeal and the social task with which he charged psychoanalysis. In a letter of September 25, 1907, Jung noted Gross' opposition to transference, Freud's theory that analysis of a patient is furthered by the development of an intense relationship with the therapist.

Dr. Gross tells me he puts a quick stop to the transference by turning people into sexual immoralists. He says the transference to the analyst and its persistent fixation are mere monogamy symbols and as such symptomatic of repression. The truly healthy state for the neurotic is sexual immorality. Hence he associates you with Nietzsche.²¹

Jung, in contrast, thought "that sexual repression is a very important and indispensable civilizing factor." Matters came to a head between Freud and Gross at the 1908 Congress of Psychoanalysts where Gross held a lecture, "The Cultural Perspective of Science," setting forth the socially activist role he envisioned for psychoanalysis. Freud's curt reply was that "we are doctors and want to remain doctors."²²

Despite his growing reservations toward Gross, it was nevertheless Freud who sent the latter in May 1908 to the Burghölzli mental hospital in Zurich to undergo treatment for cocaine addiction and analysis by Carl Jung. The

¹⁷ Hurwitz, p. 70.

¹⁸ Letter from Freud to Jung, February 28, 1908, in William McGuire, ed. *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C.G. Jung*, trans. by Ralph Mannheim and R.F.C. Hull, Bollingen Series XCIV (Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 126; see also Jones, p. 33.

¹⁹ See Jung's letter to Freud, June 28, 1907 and Freud to Jung, July 1, 1907 in *Ibid.*, pp. 67 & 69.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, September 11, 1907, p. 85.

²¹ *Ibid.*, Jung's letter of September 25, 1907, p. 90.

²² Hurwitz, p. 85. Hurwitz points out that both Freud and Jung went beyond their roles of doctors and turned to problems of culture with their respective publications *Civilizations and its Discontents* and *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*.

analysis was actually more profitable for Jung, providing him the theoretical material for two important works.²³ Gross apparently did not find the therapy as rewarding as Jung since on June 8 he jumped the perimeter wall of the hospital and escaped, the next day sending Jung a request for money to pay his hotel bill. Jung later diagnosed Gross to be a schizophrenic, an opinion Freud disputed and, as Hurwitz concluded, owed more to Jung's attempt to justify his failure than Gross' actual condition.²⁴

From Zurich, Gross returned to Munich where he propagated his theories among a more receptive audience than the leaders of the psychoanalytic movement: the bohemian intelligentsia. He had affairs with Else and Frieda von Richthofen. Else was the wife of Edgar Jaffe, who would become the finance minister of the revolutionary government of Munich under Kurt Eisner. During her affair with Gross, Else wrote in her diary that she had "discovered her true nature."²⁵ Frieda was convinced by Gross to leave her *bürgerlich* husband Ernest Weekly. She later became involved with D.H. Lawrence, to whom she brought Gross' theories which were incorporated into Lawrence's novels.²⁶

Through the Jaffes, Gross met Max Weber, submitting an article to Weber's *Archiv für Sozialwissenschaft* in 1907. Weber rejected Gross' article, calling him a follower, "not of the lasting in Nietzsche, his noble morality, but rather of the weakest part of Nietzsche, the biological trimmings which he piled around the center of his thoroughly moral doctrine."²⁷ Nevertheless, as Weber's biographer Arthur Mitzman points out, Gross' doctrine was at least partially responsible for Weber's reconsideration of his own commitment to asceticism.²⁸

²³ Hurwitz, 181-91; Michaels, p. 63. Jung's *Die Bedeutung des Vaters für das Schicksal des Einzelnen* (1909) incorporated insights Gross had related about his own experiences with his father. *Psychologische Typen* (1921) developed Gross' notion of two types of people into his own conception of the introverted and extroverted character. In a letter to Freud Gross accused Jung of plagiarism even though the original edition of *Die Bedeutung des Vaters* did acknowledge Gross' contribution in a note. Jung gave Gross extensive credit in *Psychologische Typen*. See Jung's *Collected Works*, vol. 6, pp. 273-286.

²⁴ See Jung's letter to Freud, June 19, 1908 and Freud to Jung, June 21, 1908 in McGuire, ed., *The Freud/Jung Letters*, pp. 155 & 157-160; Hurwitz, pp. 159-162.

²⁵ Cited in Hurwitz, p. 117.

²⁶ For Gross' indirect influence on D.H. Lawrence, see Martin Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters: The Triumphant and the Tragic Modes of Love* (New York: Basic Books, 1974).

²⁷ Max Weber, Letter to Edgar Jaffe, September 13, 1907. Cited in Eduard Baumgarten, *Max Weber: Werk und Person* (Tübingen: Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1964), pp. 644-648 (648). See also Arthur Mitzman's *The Iron Cage: An Historical Interpretation of Max Weber* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1970), pp. 281-282.

²⁸ Mitzman, *The Iron Cage*, pp. 277-296.

Indeed, as Weber conceded, Gross was an incredibly charismatic figure. An itinerant missionary of free love as a means to self discovery, his message was persuasive to a generation of European intellectuals attempting to distance themselves from the strict moral codes of the preceding Victorian era. His influence on the Expressionists was inestimable and is testified to in numerous autobiographies and autobiographical novels where Gross appears as a central figure.²⁹

Otto Gross, Nietzsche, and Expressionism

Otto Gross' first mention of Nietzsche in *Das Freud'sche Ideogenitätsmoment* occurred one year after his initial move to Munich in 1906. Indeed, it is likely that he first became aware of the philosopher through the contacts he developed in Schwabing, the bohemian artists' quarter of Munich. Here he met such notable Nietzsche adherents as Stefan George, Ludwig Klages, as well as the Expressionists Leonhard Frank, Johannes Becher, and Erich Mühsam. It was undoubtedly from his acquaintance with Mühsam that Gross 'received' the most encouragement for his goal of founding a socially active psychology.

Mühsam met Gross in the circle around the Countess Franziska zu Reventlow, a renowned figure among Munich's bohemian community. In his *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*, Mühsam recalled Gross as "the most significant student of Sigmund Freud whom it is well to thank that psychoanalysis found its way out of a one-sided view of life from the sexual perspective to a recognition of the social conditioning of psychical experience."³⁰ In 1909 Mühsam organized the anarchist *Tat* group, a local branch of Gustav Landauer's *Sozialistischer Bund*. *Tat* was the perfect environment to encourage Gross' inclination toward social activism since Nietzsche's philosophy was already a primary source of *Tat's* anarchistic doctrine. Oskar Maria Graf's autobiographical novel *Wir sind Gefangene* recalls how *Tat's* political doctrine came together with Nietzsche's critique of morality.

In the *Tat* group I got to know Schorsch....We read Stirner, Nietzsche, and Kropotkin, and Schorsch explained it all....He explained what is was to be an individualist. It meant denying everything--the state, society, the law and

²⁹ For example, Gross appears as Dr. Hoch in Johannes Becher's *Abschied* and as Dr. Otto Kreuz in Leonard Frank's *Links wo das Herz ist*. For a full study of Gross' influence on the Expressionists, see Michaels, *Anarchy and Eros*.

³⁰ Erich Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen in Ausgewählte Werke*, vol. 2, ed. Christlieb Hirte (Berlin: Verlag Volk und Welt, 1978), p. 568.

the family--and disregarding morality and everything that the *Bürger* had invented. For these dogs had spent centuries devising the whole system with the utmost skill, and adopted it to their own use simply in order that they might sit on their possessions and that the foolish proletariat might work for them and make them still more wealthy.³¹

Stirner is certainly as much of a source for *Tat*'s critique of morality as Nietzsche. Yet, the point is the way this critique was given political application. For Nietzsche it was primarily the Christian who, out of weakness, adhered to a moral value system which he could exploit to his own advantage. This slave morality applied as well to capitalism or any value system from which an individual could draw prestige and power as a substitute for his own personal development.³² Yet the members of *Tat* politicized Nietzsche's morality critique in a way the philosopher hardly could have condoned. Here the morality critique is directed, not against those of weak spirit or will, but against those with strong social positions. The *Tat* circle stood Nietzsche on his head, so to speak, making his critique of morality sound more like Marx's critique of ideology.

Mühsam's support for Gross' attacks on the patriarchal family led him to quarrel with his mentor Gustav Landauer who saw the voluntary alliance of marriage and the family as the basis of his own anarchist doctrine of free association. Mühsam, agreeing with Gross, saw marriage and the family as authoritarian institutions reinforcing a "slave morality which served reactionary interests."³³ Landauer eventually published an attack on Gross and psychoanalysis in *Der Sozialist*; he feared psychoanalysis might lead to homosexuality.³⁴ Gross attempted a reply but Landauer, with the agreement of his editorial adviser Martin Buber, declined to publish it.

Gross' reply eventually was published, not in *Der Sozialist*, but in *Die Aktion*. The article found its way to that periodical with the help of a member of the *Tat* group and Gross' most devoted adherent in the years to come,

³¹ Oskar Maria Graf, *Wir sind Gefangene: Ein Bekenntnis aus diesem Jahrzehnt*, translated by Margaret Green as *Prisoners All* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1928). I have slightly emended her translation of this passage on pp. 66-7. Schorsch is actually Georg Schrimpf, a graphic artist who would later become a member of Franz Jung's *Freie Straße* circle.

³² For Nietzsche's attitudes towards the pursuit of wealth see *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality* 204 and particularly 206. Significantly Nietzsche also called anarchism an example of slave morality. See *Twilight of the Idols*, "Skirmishes of an Untimely Man," 34.

³³ Mühsam, *Unpolitische Erinnerungen*, pp. 666-667.

³⁴ Gustav Landauer, "Ausrufe," *Der Sozialist*, (July 1, 1911). Landauer's comment about psychoanalysis leading to homosexuality was expressed in a conversation with Emil Szittyä; See Szittyä's *Das Kuriositäten-Kabinett: Begegnungen mit seltsamen Begebenheiten, Landstreichern, Verbrechern* (Nendeln: Kraus, 1973), p. 150.

Franz Jung. Jung had first come to Munich in 1911 to continue his studies in economics at the Ludwig-Maximilian University. While he joined the *Tar* group in that same year, Gross had already moved to the anarchist commune Ascona in Switzerland and the two met only during one of Gross' frequent visits to Munich.³⁵ Jung became a dedicated disciple of Gross' theories, seeing in psychoanalysis the basis of a revolutionary movement "which Freud himself closed the door on with his statement 'we are doctors and want to remain doctors.'"³⁶ In 1913 Jung joined the general migration of Expressionists to Berlin and with some difficulty established contacts with the circle around *Die Aktion*. Gross subsequently followed Jung and it was through the mediation of the latter that Gross first published, in April 1913, in an Expressionist periodical.

"Zur Überwindung der kulturellen Krise" introduces the psychology of the unconscious as "the philosophy of revolution" by which the individuality of each person is freed from his unconscious. So there is no mistaking the source of this psychology, we learn immediately thereafter that this "incomparable revaluation of all values, which will be fulfilled in the coming time, begins in the present with the thoughts of Nietzsche on the background of the soul and with the discovery of the so-called psychoanalytic technique by S. Freud."³⁷ It is Freud's technique which was to open the unconscious to achieve a very Nietzschean goal: self-knowledge. Out of this self-discovery, a new ethic was to be born.

According to Gross' article, self-knowledge has been inhibited throughout history by an unending conflict which takes place within each individual from childhood on. The cause of conflict is not sexuality per se, as in Freudian theory, but rather an externally imposed sexual morality. Crisis occurs, however, only in stronger individuals who cannot adapt to societal pressure while weaker individuals are spared through their own surrender to conformity. Gross thus agreed with Nietzsche that the violator of moral codes on the one hand, and the neurotically sick on the other, represent a higher type of person. "One will understand that today there exists the demand to

³⁵ Franz Jung, *Der Weg nach Unten* (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1961), pp. 68-71.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Otto Gross, "Zur Überwindung der kulturellen Krise," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 384. Gross' major articles of the Expressionist years have been republished in *Von geschlechtlicher Not zur sozialen Katastrophe*, edited by Kurt Kreier (Frankfurt/M: Robinson, 1980). This should not be confused with Franz Jung's biographical essay on Gross by the same name. The current quotation is on p. 13; all following citations will refer to this collection.

approve of these people as the healthy, the strugglers, the progressives, and to learn from them."³⁸

The problem with all previous revolutions, Gross noted, was that revolutionaries themselves became authoritarians, quickly ending the revolution with a call for normalcy and order. The reason for this is that the basic cause of authoritarianism lies in the patriarchal family structure. The coming revolution, with the help of psychology, will replace the patriarchal family with free relationships between the sexes, emancipating the woman from male domination and both sexes from the idea of hereditary sin. "The coming revolution is the revolution for matriarchy (*Mutterrecht*). It is a matter of indifference under which outward form or with what means it is executed."³⁹

We shall return to the conception of matriarchal society when we examine a later article of Gross which discusses the subject more in depth. For now it is important to note that the reaction within Expressionism to Gross' psychology was not overwhelmingly positive. On May 7, 1913 Ludwig Rubiner attacked Gross' attempt to derive values from a science which deals with "facts, things, causes and statistical expressions: the question is no longer psychology but rather our new mythology."⁴⁰ Rubiner also noted that psychology was not directed on "creative lawgiving people," whom he later defined as those capable of "framing, in a secure conception, the humane ideas regarding the content and condition of our time,"⁴¹ but "rather on those in whose life nature can immediately make inroads: on impressionist artists, on persons who love the sea, and on women. On the other hand, it [psychoanalysis] remains quite without sense for those people directed by the free spirit."⁴²

In a reply to Rubiner, Gross separated himself from Freud's circumscribed use of psychoanalysis for medical purposes; he insisted on its value-creating function through its ability to help people know themselves, to understand others and thereby to overcome their isolation. Moreover, Gross objected to Rubiner's comment about women and noted that any real revolution must include the woman, freedom, and *Geist* in one. The lawgiving *Geist*, Gross believed, can no longer be creative but only coercive since "only the idea which is beyond isolation, that is contained in love, is free and creative and

³⁸ Ibid., p. 15.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

⁴⁰ Ludwig Rubiner, "Psychoanalyse," *Die Aktion*, 3 (1913), 483.

⁴¹ Ludwig Rubiner, "Uff...die Psychoanalyse," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 565.

⁴² Rubiner, "Psychoanalyse," 483.

thus a free spirit. The free spirit, which is not [contained] in free love will always be conservative or destructive, God or devil, but never a free spirit."⁴³

The exchange between Rubiner and Gross continued through a number of issues of *Die Aktion*, never really getting beyond a repetition of the claims made in the initial articles.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, their opposing views demonstrate how two of Nietzsche's congruent ideas were abstracted from his philosophy by Expressionists and taken in contradictory directions. Rubiner defined the free spirit as antinature, while according to Gross' interpretation of Nietzsche man should live in closer conformity with his natural drives. Both Rubiner and Gross are correct in part. Nietzsche did want men to become more natural. Yet, this naturalism was balanced by the aristocratic component of his doctrine according to which one was in control and not controlled by one's natural drives. Thus, for Nietzsche, instinct and the pursuit of self-interest are justifiable modes of behavior simply because they are natural and therefore inevitable. As an aristocrat of the spirit, though, he objected to instincts that spring from weakness and reactive feelings, and to those interests which are won, not through bold self-assertion, but connivingly through obedience to conventional values.

Rubiner's objection to psychoanalysis was based also on his misunderstanding of the new science. Pre-Freudian psychiatry assumed the organic origins of emotional disturbances as well as the hopelessness of melioration through therapy. Psychology of the nineteenth century, as we noted earlier, was merely a positivistic science measuring reaction to stimuli under controlled conditions. In his objections to Gross' articles, Rubiner was actually criticizing these positivistic sciences. The principles of early psychiatry and psychology had been popularized in literary naturalism, where the fate of the protagonist was often physiologically determined by his own nature. Since Expressionism was in part a reaction against naturalist determinism, it was logical that Rubiner would have responded as he did.

While it was only in the 1920s that Freud completely broke with physiological causation, he nevertheless established a new science with the publication of *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1900. Freud's major breakthrough was to hold unconscious mental activity, not physiology, as the cause of neurosis, thus making neurosis treatable through therapy. With the founding of the International Psychoanalytic Association in 1910 and the

⁴³ Otto Gross, "Ludwig Rubiners Psychoanalyse," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 506-507.

⁴⁴ For the continuation of the exchange, see Rubiner, "Uff...die Psychoanalyse" and "Erwähnung zur Psychoanalyse" in *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 565-568 and 607-608; Gross, "Die Psychoanalyse oder wir Kliniker," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 632-634.

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⁴³ Otto Gross, "Ludwig Rubiners Psychoanalyse," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 506-507.

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beginnings of international recognition, it was not long before Expressionists began to comprehend the revolutionary import of Freud's discovery. As early as 1910, Freud became the subject of discussion in the *Neopathetisches Cabaret*;⁴⁵ Franz Jung put Freudian psychoanalysis at the center of bohemian debate "over the general crisis of society."⁴⁶ It was not long either before Expressionists, with no connection to Gross, began to see similarities between Freudian psychology and the psychological observations of Nietzsche.

In an article in *Die Weißen Blätter* of 1915, E.v. Aster compared Freud's theory of neurosis, Nietzsche's *ressentiment* and Ibsen's teaching of the life-lie (*Lebenslüge*).

I speak...of a flight from the self into sickness, into the symptom of hysteria. This expression stems out of Freudian terminology. It says: obsessively maintained hypochondria is a shield which the afflicted holds forth -- a life-lie, by which he protects himself from a tortured and destructive spiritual condition. Think further, that also unmotivated attachments and aversions, love and hate are included in the circle of hysterical symptoms, and Nietzsche's notion of *ressentiment* comes to mind.⁴⁷

For Aster, Nietzsche's *Übermensch* is one who does not attempt to escape from life. He believes in truth which is the touchstone by which the value of life is appraised. "In Nietzsche's *Übermensch* love of life and love of truth are unified so that he can still affirm life after seeing it as it really is."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Richard Sheppard, ed., *Die Schriften des Neuen Clubs, 1908-1914* (Hildesheim:Gerstenberg, 1980), 1:180.

⁴⁶ Franz Jung, *Der Weg nach Unten*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ E.v. Aster, "Künstlerische und wissenschaftliche Psychologie," *Die Weißen Blätter* (1915), 10:1250.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1256-1257. Arnold Zweig, more than any other Expressionist, drew the connection between Nietzsche and psychoanalysis in a letter to Freud in 1930: "To me it seems that you have achieved everything that Nietzsche intuitively felt to be his task, without his being really able to achieve it with his poetic idealism and brilliant inspirations. He tried to explain the birth of tragedy; you have done it in *Totem and Taboo*. He longed for a world beyond Good and Evil; by means of analysis you have discovered a world to which this phrase actually applies. Analysis has reversed all values, it has conquered Christianity, disclosed the true Antichrist, and liberated the spirit of resurgent life from the ascetic ideal. Analysis has reduced the will to power to what lies at its basis....The purely logical intellect, which Nietzsche called the Socratic and rejected, you have assigned and confined much more precisely to the limited area of the conscious mind. And thanks to the fact that you are a scientist, and furthermore a psychologist who advances step by step, you have achieved what Nietzsche would so gladly have achieved himself: the scientific description and explanation of the human soul--and more than that, since you are a physician, you have taught and created the possibility of influencing and curing it." See Ernst L. Freud (ed.) *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig*, trans. Elaine and William Robson-Scott (New York: Harcourt Brace & World, 1970), pp. 23-24.

Aster's article not only shows how Nietzsche's philosophy was perceived as a harbinger of Freud's psychology of the unconscious, the comparison of Nietzsche and Ibsen also sheds additional light on the conflict between Rubiner and Gross. In their own respective spheres, both Nietzsche and Ibsen went beyond nineteenth-century psychology and literary naturalism through their notion of the heroic individual who lives above the base motivation of *ressentiment* and who determines his own life. Yet this notion of heroic individualism was not only elitist, it was libertarian as well since the overman or great individual could hardly be expected to conform to laws and social mores which emerged from the *ressentiment* of the majority.

On the one hand, Expressionism assumed Nietzsche's and Ibsen's notion of heroic individualism, as Rubiner's statements in his conflict with Gross indicate; on the other hand, the tendency of Expressionism was an attempt to give heroic individualism a collective meaning. That meant that the artist was not only an individualist, he was also a prophet of a new culture calling upon the members of a slothful society to shake off the torpid values of the past and become their own self-creators.

Nietzsche's own philosophy, in part, provided the basis for this mixture of collectivism and libertarianism, through his notion of culture in which each individual is both an autonomous entity and a member of a larger symphonic whole. Yet the very ambiguousness of his doctrine, and the overriding libertarianism of some of his later works, meant that Expressionists, insofar as they desired to give up the contempt which Rubiner expressed for mainstream society, were often left to their own inventions. Gross' own invention was the notion he introduced into the debate with Rubiner: the notion that self-discovery leads to understanding and love of others. This was certainly not one of the ideas he borrowed from Nietzsche and as we shall see it marks Gross' first attempt to give his largely libertarian psychology a significance for society as a whole.

Otto Gross' next article in *Die Aktion*, "Die Einwirkung der Allgemeinheit auf das Individuum" was originally published in 1909 as the third chapter of his *Über psychopathische Minderwertigkeiten*.⁴⁹ This article developed in depth Gross' assertion, in his previous article, that it was Nietzsche who discovered the pathogenic effect of society on the individual. Inverting Darwin in the same way that Nietzsche did, Gross argued that it is precisely the healthiest individuals with the strongest "expansionist tendencies" who are eliminated by

⁴⁹ Otto Gross, "Die Einwirkung der Allgemeinheit auf das Individuum," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913) 1091-1095; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 16-20; *Über psychopathische Minderwertigkeiten* (Vienna, Leipzig: Wilhelm Braumüller, 1907).

the repression directed at them by society (*die Allgemeinheit*). This in turn leads to a negative selection and consequently a decline of the race. This consequence of the repression of the individual was fully thought out by Nietzsche, according to Gross, and he credited him with being the founder of biological sociology.

Another possible consequence of societal repression, to which Nietzsche supplied an inexhaustible range of thoughts, is the direct damage to individuals through the trauma of psychic conflict. Only one further discovery was necessary to supplement Nietzsche's thoughts on the matter: the discovery of the pathogenic effect of repressed affects. Freud's research was thus, according to Gross, the continuation of the research of Nietzsche.

Gross noted, again in this article, that sexuality is the region where the inner conflict is most likely played out. But here he distinguished between the different sexes. The woman is more subject to sexual repression by society. She is thus more disposed to the pathological distortions of the personality associated with sexual repression: hysteria, cruelty (*Grausamkeit*), and masochism. The equivalent pathogenic conflict for men stems primarily, not from societal repression of their sexual instinct, but from the repression of their instinct for aggression, what Gross called "the specifically masculine basic instinct." The extent of pathogenic conflict in men is proportionally related to the extent of which aggressive behavior is repressed. Gross appealed to Nietzsche in noting that "the prevailing aspiration of contemporary society is a place and time where nothing more is feared," what Europe defines as progress.⁵⁰ This, Gross concluded, is a sign of the strong repression of aggressive tendencies and thus an explanation of the considerable presence of neurosis in contemporary society.

Gross' admission of an aggressive instinct, though, seems at odds with his notion, first asserted in his debate with Rubiner, that self-discovery leads to love of others. As it now stands in his doctrine, freedom from morality frees both our natural inclination toward aggression and toward love. It is likely that Gross recognized the seeming contradiction in his doctrine for he only returned to the notion of aggression much later, and then only to find a social cause for it. Gross' goal was to found a socially benign psychology and any admission that aggression was inherent to the human condition would have threatened the accomplishment of that goal. Thus his next two articles in *Die Aktion* ignored the issue completely, focusing only on sexuality.

In "Anmerkungen zu einer neuen Ethik" Gross attacked monogamy as well as the conventional family. The conventional family makes the woman

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 19-20.

dependent on the man and it deprives the child of natural relationships since contemporary pedagogical principles encourage the child's asexuality.⁵¹ In "Notiz über Beziehung," Gross advocated the replacement of monogamy with free relationships between equal partners, relationships which would thus further individualization. Monogamy is based on coercion and insecurity but is counter to natural instinct. "The free relationship is organic and a psychically suitable basis for a new form of life, belief, yearning, and full community of life in future times."⁵²

Bisexuality is an implicit part of the free relationship. The state may legislate against homosexuality out of its own instinct for self-protection but, according to Gross, Freud had demonstrated the bisexual disposition of all people during their first stages of life.⁵³ Gross distinguished, however, between natural bisexuality and an abnormal homosexuality which is one of the results of denying the child any sexuality at all. This type of homosexuality is as exploitative of the partner as monogamous heterosexuality since it establishes no true relationship but is only a relationship of power. Only free relationships, in which both partners are equal, are themselves free from jealousy and masochism.

On November 9, 1913, Otto Gross was arrested in Franz Jung's apartment at the request of his father and deported to Austria where he was committed to the sanatorium at Tulln. Hans Gross had persuaded Carl Jung to sign an affidavit describing his son as a dangerous psychopath. He had written the German authorities that his son had fallen in with a band of dangerous anarchists who would use Otto's writings to blackmail his father. Thus three of the four articles in *Die Aktion* actually appeared after Gross' internment.

The arrest caused a major uproar in Expressionist circles, and a number of Expressionist periodicals took up Gross' cause. The December 20 issue of *Die Aktion* included protests against the father's actions by Franz Pfemfert and Ludwig Rubiner, who only weeks before protested the psychology of Otto Gross. Franz Jung conscripted the Munich periodical *Die Revolution*, edited by Johannes Becher, to join the campaign to free Gross. A special issue of *Die Revolution* in Gross' honor contained a number of poems dedicated to him as well as protests by Jung and Rubiner. As Arthur Mitzman has observed, Rubiner's contribution highlighted the theme of generational conflict that

⁵¹ Otto Gross, "Anmerkungen zu einer neuen Ethik" in *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 1141-1143; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 22-24.

⁵² Otto Gross, "Notiz über Beziehung," *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 1180-81; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 21-22.

⁵³ Gross, "Anmerkung zu einer neuen Ethik," p. 22. Gross is referring to the first of Freud's *Three Essays on Sexuality*, originally published in 1905.

characterized not only Gross' relationship with his father, but which was a major feature of Expressionism itself.

The throttling of Dr. Gross by his father is typical. We will destroy this type...In the case of Dr. Gross, a significant son, we take up the cause of the many insignificant sons, who unnoticed, are destroyed in broad daylight. We intellectuals, we sub-proletarians are strong--the professor in Graz is only anxious....The madhouse keepers, administrators of property and state officials stick together. We, who have nothing to lose, stick together too. We are getting past them, annihilating their positions, burying their honor, destroying their wealth. Our pamphlets are more powerful than their connections.⁵⁴

The pressure increased on Hans Gross as a number of non-Expressionist newspapers also took up the issue.⁵⁵ The management of the sanatorium at Tulln began to fear a violent attempt to rescue Gross and the latter was moved to another sanatorium at Troppau. Eventually the pressure bore fruit and Hans Gross was forced to concede that it had all been a mistake, that his son had voluntarily entered the sanatorium and was free to leave whenever he wanted. When Franz Jung went to pick up his friend, he found that Gross was no longer a patient but an intern.⁵⁶

During the war Gross became a doctor for the Austrian army. He again lapsed into drug addiction, was again temporarily cured but released from the army as unfit for service. In 1917-18 he traveled throughout the Europe of the Central Powers, meeting Franz Kafka, Franz Werfel, and Max Brod in Prague. The four planned to edit a periodical together to be called *Blätter für Bekämpfung des Machtwillens*. When revolution broke out in 1918, Gross went to Vienna, where his theories and exploits are portrayed in Werfel's autobiographical novel *Barbara oder die Frömmigkeit*.⁵⁷

In October 1919 Gross returned to Berlin to support the German revolution as well. Although he was absent from Germany throughout the war years, Franz Jung, Gross' most devoted adherent, continued to advance his psychological theories. In an introduction to his first article in *Die Aktion*,

⁵⁴ Ludwig Rubiner in *Die Revolution* 5 (1913), 2; cited and translated in Arthur Mitzman, "Anarchism, Expressionism and Psychoanalysis," *New German Critique* 10 (1977), pp. 77-103.

⁵⁵ Articles appeared in the *Wilmsdorfer Tagblatt*, *Schaubühne*, and *Welt am Montag*. See Hurwitz, *Otto Gross*, pp. 32-33; Outside of Germany, the *Neue Wiener Journal* and *Prager Tagblatt* also took up the issue. See Michaels, *Anarchy and Eros*, p. 27.

⁵⁶ Franz Jung, *Der Weg nach Unten*, p. 91. See also Michaels, p. 31 and Mitzman, "Anarchism, Expressionism and Psychoanalysis," p. 88.

⁵⁷ Gross appears in a number of Werfel's writings and in *Das große Wagnis* of Max Brod. See Michaels, *Anarchy and Eros*, pp. 145-167.

Gross had promised a new periodical devoted to psychoanalysis to be edited by himself and Jung. That periodical never appeared, but in 1915 Jung initiated *Die Freie Straße* with the help of Franz Pfemfert and Jung's wife Claire, who did most of the editorial work.⁵⁸ The six issues of *Die Freie Straße* contain contributions by Jung, two other members of the Tat group Oskar Maria Graf and Georg Schrimpf, as well as more recent adherents of Gross from Berlin, Richard Ohring and Raoul Hausmann. The articles clearly proceeded from Gross' doctrine. In fact, Gross' "Vom Konflikt des Eigēnen und Fremden" appeared there in 1916, a condensed version of his "Über Destruktionssymbolik" which was published in the *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* in 1914.⁵⁹ The relationship of *Die Freie Straße* to Nietzsche will be discussed in a later chapter on Berlin Dada, for which *Die Freie Straße* played a seminal role. For now, it is enough to examine Gross' "Vom Konflikt des Eigēnen und Fremden" which signaled a dramatic shift in his own ideas.

It will be recalled that Gross had, as early as 1908, identified the will to power with the accompanying feeling one receives from the successful mastery of new spheres, that is, from self-development free of societal repression of one's instincts. In *Über psychopathische Minderwertigkeiten* and in his second article in *Die Aktion*, Gross had identified two instincts: the sexual instinct or instinct for physical and psychic contact and the aggressive instinct, which is peculiar to men. While Gross may have believed that the love and understanding which would emerge between people through unimpeded development would render even the aggressive instinct benign, it is nevertheless likely that he was troubled by this latter instinct since his other articles in *Die Aktion* focus only on the sexual drive. Gross' third article "Anmerkungen zu einer neuen Ethik" was actually a part of a larger work which disappeared during Gross' arrest and it is probably here that Gross was attempting to reevaluate the drive to aggression.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, that reevaluation was complete by the publication in 1914 of "Über Destruktionssymbolik," the earlier version of "Vom Konflikt des Eigēnen und Fremden."

Both of these articles note, as Gross' earlier articles, that inner conflict is a result of the repression of instinctual drives which begins in childhood. The child is given the choice by the parents of preserving his own individuality at the cost of his own isolation or seeking love and acceptance

⁵⁸ Franz Jung, *Der Weg nach Unten*, p. 109.

⁵⁹ Otto Gross, "Über Destruktionssymbolik," *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse und Psychotherapie* 4 (1914), pp. 525-534; "Vom Konflikt des Eigēnen und Fremden" in *Die Freie Straße* (1916), 4:3-5; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 27-31.

⁶⁰ Franz Pfemfert's introduction to the article informs us about the missing manuscript. See *Die Aktion* 3 (1913), 1141.

at the cost of conforming to parental values. Gross then concluded: "the anxiety of the child's loneliness is the only original and decisive compulsion for the transformation of the will to preservation of individuality into the will to power, of whose incalculable significance in the inner conflict Alfred Adler's research has convinced me."⁶¹

Gross reversed himself. The will to power was no longer a natural instinct or even the pleasure received by the unbridled reign of a natural instinct. It is now the distortion of a benign instinct to preserve individuality. This benign instinct, Gross clarified, has two harmonious components: the egoistic drive not to be violated and the altruistic drive not to violate. The distortion of the instinct to preserve the individuality brings these originally harmonious components into opposition resulting in their distortion into the will to power and the desire for self-destruction, which are continually in conflict.⁶²

The reference to Alfred Adler indicates that Gross had read *On the Nervous Character*, published in 1912. In this work Adler opposed Freud's conception of the libido as the driving force of behavior and replaced it with his own conception of "the enhancement of the feeling of personality, whose simplest formula is to be recognized in the exaggerated masculine protest."

This formula, "I want to be a whole male" is the guiding fiction in every neurosis...Around this guiding thought libido, sex drive, and inclination toward perversion also group themselves, wherever they may have come from. Nietzsche's "will to power" and "will to illusion" embrace many things in our view, which in turn has some points of contact with the views of [Charles] Féré and older authors.⁶³

Despite Adler's attempt to broaden the origins of his concept, the fact remains that his Individual Psychology was largely based on Nietzsche's principle, to which the repeated references in Adler's book testify.⁶⁴

Otto Gross did not, however, simply assume Adler's principle of personality enhancement or will to power as the basic male instinct and in his last work, *Drei Aufsätze über den inneren Konflikt*, he elaborated on his own position vis-à-vis both Freud and Adler. In the first essay, "Über Konflikt und Beziehung," he disagreed with Freud that perversions are a normal part of childhood sexuality and that the normal direction of sexuality consists in the

⁶¹ Gross, "Über Destruktionssymbolik," p.531; "Vom Konflikt des Eigenen und Fremden," p. 28.

⁶² Ibid for both articles.

⁶³ Alfred Adler, *Über den nervösen Charakter: Grundzüge einer vergleichenden Individualpsychologie und Psychotherapie* (Wiesbaden: J.F. Bergmann, 1912); cited in Walter Kaufmann, *Discovering the Mind*, vol. 3 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980), p. 260.

⁶⁴ For Nietzsche's influence on Adler, see Kaufmann's *Discovering the Mind* 3:258-274; Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, pp. 630-638.

gradual repression of these perversions. In contrast, he found much in common with Adler's teaching which he called a "psychological deepening of Nietzsche's idea of the will to power." Adler's great contribution, according to Gross, was to recognize that the basic instinct of the individual is to defend his ego from external repression. Thus a perversion is only a "symbolic expression of that revolutionary but also violating (*vergewaltigende*) tendency."⁶⁵

Adler's mistake, according to Gross, was not to distinguish adequately between the benign instinct to defend the ego and the distorted and hypertrophied form of this instinct which Gross now labeled the will to power. On the basis of this new understanding, Gross could synthesize the psychological systems of both Freud and Adler, finding a parallel in the work of each with the two basic instincts he had posited in 1913. The instinct for physical and emotional contact is nothing less than the sexual instinct in the sense of Freud. The instinct towards aggression is the distorted and hypertrophied form of Adler's ego defense instinct.⁶⁶

The two natural instincts are harmonious and it is only the distortion of either which brings about neurosis and perversion. The question is what causes the distortion? Once again Gross transferred the onus of neurosis from the instinctual to the social sphere. The child is denied the gratification of his instinct for physical and emotional contact as a result of the moral prejudices inherent in the contemporary family structure. Yet, not only is the instinct for contact crippled but the ego's defense drive is also called into play and not just to defend itself against foreign suggestion; it is also called upon to repress the sexual drive itself. In other words, in order for the child to maintain contact with the parents on their terms, the ego defense instinct represses the natural sexual instinct of the child.⁶⁷

Out of this process, Gross claimed to discover the causes of masochism and sadism. Masochism is the attempt of the child to win acceptance and contact through his own self-imposed subjugation. The masochistic adult unconsciously remembers the hope of the child to exchange submission for contact. Sadism is the result of a compromise between the sexual instinct and the distorted form of the ego defense instinct, the will to power. The isolation and powerlessness of the child is the breeding ground for the hate and desire

⁶⁵ Gross, "Über Konflikt und Beziehung," *Drei Aufsätze über den inneren Konflikt* (Bonn: A. Marcus & E. Webers Verlag, 1920); the first essay is reprinted in full in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 71-91. See p. 72-73 for quotation.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 73-76.

for revenge which distorts the originally benign drive. Sadism is thus the result of unifying sexuality with the will to power, a compromise between two instincts forged out of the anxiety of isolation.⁶⁸

Gross went on to trace the causes of lesbianism and male masochism to the unconscious attempt to balance out the distorted roles assigned to men and women by a family order which keeps the woman in a state of dependence. The very idea of masculinity and femininity is a product of repression standing in opposition to the natural bisexual condition. In addition, Gross traced the causes of numerous other perversions (anal eroticism, masochistic homosexuality, sadistic lesbianism, etc.), all based on various distortions of two originally harmonious drives. It is unnecessary to detail every combination. Nevertheless, two further observations need to be made.

First, Freud actually assumed a position on sadism and masochism in the late 1910s which resembled that of Gross. During the early years of psychoanalysis, Freud had derived sadism, masochism and all other perversions from one basic libidinal drive. Yet the carnage of war forced Freud to consider other explanations for masochism and sadism outside the realm of sexuality. Rueben Fine points out, in his *History of Psychoanalysis*, that by 1917 Freud "concluded that the true origins of the relationship of hate are derived from the ego's struggle to maintain and preserve itself, not from sex."⁶⁹ While Freud replaced this view in 1920 with the positing of a second instinct, Thanatos, from which he derived sadism and masochism, this death instinct has been overwhelming rejected by Freud's followers. In this instance, then, Gross was ahead of his time.

The second observation brings us back to the subject of this study, Gross' relation to Nietzsche. We have seen that Gross has eliminated aggression from the natural condition of mankind and relegated it to a distorted condition which he labeled with Nietzsche's term "will to power." But for Nietzsche the will to power was part of the natural condition of mankind and Gross' use of the term more easily compares with Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*. *Ressentiment* was the lowest form of the will to power, nourished by a feeling of powerlessness. Aggression and conflict, however, were for Nietzsche a fact of life. If Nietzsche's *Übermensch* escaped *ressentiment* and fought out that conflict with the weapons of ideas, and not guns and tanks, it was nevertheless the case that Gross had a difficult time in coming to terms with that idea as he tried to build a collectivist ideology from an emphatically libertarian philosophy.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 76-78.

⁶⁹ Rueben Fine, *A History of Psychoanalysis*, p. 58.

*Gross' Last Years:
Psychology in the Service of Communism*

Aside from his last work *Drei Aufsätze über den inneren Konflikt*, Gross' later articles were all published in 1919 in socialist periodicals. These six articles can be broken down into three broad themes: the replacement of patriarchal society by matriarchal communism; the role of the intellectual in creating such a society, and the task of educating the proletariat. All of these articles reflect Gross' new commitment to communism and his attempt to synthesize this commitment with his theories on psychology and the family.

Gross' ideas on matriarchy demonstrate the influence of Johann J. Bachofen, a Swiss cultural anthropologist who sparked considerable controversy in Germany in 1861 with the publication of his *Das Mutterrecht*.⁷⁰ In this work, Bachofen argued that civilization developed in three stages: the hetairic stage of sexual promiscuity and primitive communism, matriarchy, and patriarchy. Matriarchy coincided with a materialistic agricultural society in which descent was designated through the female line; women therefore enjoyed a much higher social status than they do in contemporary society. Bachofen placed the transition to patriarchy with the Greeks around the time of Aeschylus, the cause of which being a development of Greek religious ideas.

Gross had imbibed Bachofen's theories from his contacts in Schwabing and Ascona with Stefan George and a group called the Cosmic Circle (*die kosmische Runde*) around Ludwig Klages and the poet Karl Wolfskehl.⁷¹ Bachofen's anthropology likely appealed to Gross because of its similarity to Nietzsche's philosophy in its use of the symbols Dionysius and Apollo, a similarity which had likewise appealed to the Cosmic Circle. Apollo was, for Bachofen, the symbol of patriarchy, representing its spiritual superiority over matriarchy, its higher form of civilization. In the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy, Bachofen located the cult of Dionysus, the religious

⁷⁰ Selections from *Das Mutterrecht* have been translated by Ralph Mannheim in *Myth Religion and Mother Right: Selected Writings of J.J. Bachofen* (Princeton University Press, Bollingen Series, LXXXIV, 1967), pp. 69-207.

⁷¹ The Cosmic Circle actually disbanded in 1904 but Gross became acquainted with individual members. On Gross, the Cosmic Circle and Bachofen see Martin Green, *The von Richthofen Sisters*, pp. 76-90. See also Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious*, pp. 218-223.

representation of women's rebellion against patriarchy which was characterized by moral corruption and the dissolution of political organization.⁷²

Gross differed from Bachofen in two important ways. First of all, Bachofen, a romantic conservative, had maintained the superiority of patriarchy over matriarchy; Gross preferred the latter. Secondly, in contrast with Bachofen and in an attempt to make his theories more compatible with his new commitment to Marxism, he argued that the transition from matriarchy to patriarchy was not the result of the development of religious conceptions, but rather of changing economic and social relations. Thus Gross' theory resembles less Bachofen's *Das Mutterrecht* and more Friedrich Engels' *The Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*.⁷³

Gross had referred to the coming matriarchal society in a number of his earlier articles but elaborated on it most extensively in his "Die kommunistische Grundidee in der Paradiessymbolik." Demonstrating immediately the continued influence of Nietzsche, Gross noted that prehistoric matriarchal society had offered its members "the *übermenschliche* possibility of the self-unfolding of the *Geist*."⁷⁴ This possibility was foreclosed with the advent of the patriarchal era and the corresponding development of an authoritarian civilization with its impulse to rule over nature and material life. In other words, patriarchy meant "the sacrifice of *Geist* itself for power."⁷⁵ Under sexually promiscuous matriarchy, the sustenance of the woman and her children was socially guaranteed by society. With the advent of patriarchy, the woman was thrust into a situation of dependence on one man, thus transferring the onus of rights and responsibilities from the relationship between society and individual to a relationship existing strictly between individuals.

⁷² Although Nietzsche was personally acquainted with Bachofen, there is no reason to assume that he took over the symbols of Dionysus and Apollo from him. These symbols have a long tradition in German romantic philosophy. See Max L. Baumer, "Nietzsche and the Tradition of the Dionysian," trans. Timothy Sellner, *Studies in Nietzsche and the Classical Tradition*, ed. James C. O'Flaherty et al. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1979), pp. 165-189.

⁷³ Engels' own book was based primarily on the work of the American ethnologist Lewis Morgan, though he also pays tribute to Bachofen as "a pioneer of family history." Bachofen's problem, according to Engels, was his tendency to mystify his conclusions through his notion that "the relations between men and women had their origin in men's contemporary religious conceptions, not in their actual conditions of life." See *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: International Publishers, 1972), pp. 75-77 and 97.

⁷⁴ Gross, "Die kommunistische Grundidee in der Paradiessymbolik," *Sowjet* (1919), 2:12-27; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 41-54. See p. 41 for quotation.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

Gross noted two reasons for this "revaluation of values." On the one hand, he observed that contemporary research had traced the collapse of matriarchy to the capture of women in war and their possession as slaves. Yet this, he thought, was itself a result of the dissolution of matriarchal society already in progress.⁷⁶ The primary reason appeared to be the transition from a society based on group hunting and gathering to a society based on agriculture. This decentralization of the economy in an agricultural economy signaled the rise of economic individualism and the origins of property. This new period created the insecurity in which the woman, in her difficult situation of motherhood, sought the support of one man. The social guarantee of the woman's well-being was replaced by a system of contract and the duty of individuals towards each other.

The content of this new legal relationship is thus the self-selling of the woman in the form of prostitution and marriage and its first direct result, sexual shame. The next consequence is then the authoritarian family, the structural element of authority as an institution in general.⁷⁷

The loss of sexuality as an affair of the community and the new obligatory sex role, in which the woman found herself trapped, led to the situation where sex became an object of shame. It additionally became the focus of a power struggle between man and woman "through which the will to power develops ever more as a goal in itself."⁷⁸ Gross called for a "reverse revaluation of all values" to free society from the power principle. In another article, "Protest und Moral im Unbewußten," he explained how the conditions for such a revaluation were becoming ripe. Modern urban society has freed us from a dependence on the soil: Patriarchal society is already weakened, as demonstrated by the recent so-called moral decay. In reality, he noted, moral decay merely indicates that it is time to replace old norms with new ones. The revolution, which Gross participated in, must be a sexual and moral revolution as well, if it is to succeed. Communist society must free the woman from the man by guaranteeing her and her progeny their financial independence.⁷⁹

In "Orientierung der Geistigen," Gross attributed a special role in this revolution to the left-wing intellectual. It is only they who can withstand the external suggestions of society and stay the course towards the goal discovered

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 46.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 50.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

⁷⁹ Otto Gross, "Protest und Moral im Unbewußten," *Die Erde* (1919), 24:681-685; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 55-60. See pp. 58-60 as well as "Die kommunistische Grundidee," p. 52.

by holding fast to their own individuality and their boundless love of others.⁸⁰ The rejection of or surrender to assimilation is the decisive factor in determining whether an intellectual will develop into a revolutionary or a conservative. The true revolutionary does not assimilate to the inferior or submit to the power principle, to possession, custom, tradition, or morality. Alluding to the SPD, Gross condemned the "real-political socialism of the far too many," which has compromised the revolution through its cooperation with the old order, preparing the way for the assimilation of the proletariat to the bourgeois spirit of power and hegemony. "It is that democracy of the 'last men' which Nietzsche prophetically foresaw and from which the dictatorship of the proletariat should rescue the future of the human race."⁸¹

Nietzsche had used the image of the "last men" in Zarathustra to describe a society of mediocrity which establishes goals on the basis of utilitarian values and in which all are acclaimed to be equal.⁸² The image appears to stand in contradiction to Gross' following statement which defines the goal of communism to be a situation "in which no one can possess any type of hegemony of a political, social, economic or authoritarian nature over another." The contradiction is resolved by noting that Gross' nonauthoritarian society in no way implied a situation of equality. In addition to his psychological observations, Gross had assumed Nietzsche's elitism as well.

In an article explaining the failure of the revolution, Gross elaborated on his stand against democracy.⁸³ His primary objection was not that a minority might gain influence in a parliamentary government; he objected to majority rule per se since society must then wait for the majority to come to a decision about a change which an elite minority had already perceived as necessary. Revolutions are hardly required when the majority becomes convinced about the necessity of change. Ideas for which one leads revolutions are seen only by an elite few and are "suggestively transmissible to the great masses deprived of rights through spiritual overpowering (*geistige Überwältigung*) and out of the power of the will to community."⁸⁴

This "spiritual overpowering" is explained in two other articles as an educational system that would prepare the way for a real revolution in society

⁸⁰ Otto Gross, "Orientierung des Geistigen," *Sowjet* (1919) 2:12-27; reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 32-35.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸² Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, 1:5 and 3:27.

⁸³ Otto Gross, "Zum Problem: Parlamentarismus," *Die Erde* (1919), 22/23:639-642.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

by first bringing about the requisite inner revolution.⁸⁵ Gross paid tribute to experiments in Russia, especially Lunacharsky's technical schooling whose principle of on-the-job training has solved the problem of transmitting this type of knowledge. Yet, this was not enough. Revolutionary education also must include teaching the basic tenets of modern psychology from which the workers will gain their own emancipation through self-knowledge. Gross explained how self-knowledge had been concealed from the workers through their own conformity to *bürgerlich* values. This absence of self-knowledge is the underlying cause of self-destructive tendencies, submission to authority, suffering from life itself, what Nietzsche called *ressentiment*, and what Gross again called the will to power.

Gross additionally argued that revolutionary education will overcome the opposition between altruism and egoism.⁸⁶ Nietzsche too had argued that altruism and egoism, good and bad, all apparently opposite impulses spring from the same source. Yet for Nietzsche, this source was the will to power. For Otto Gross, the will to power was the result of a corruption of two naturally harmonious instincts: contact and ego defense, now presented in this article as the strivings to relationship and freedom. Nietzsche's will to power was not an invitation to barbarism, as the Nazis interpreted it; but it also was not a promise of harmony and it had no collectivist implications. It was the basis of a largely libertarian philosophy which became uncomfortable to the Expressionists as the events of war led them to an attempt to synthesize communitarian ideas with their originally libertarian dispositions.

Otto Gross' development thus compares with many of those Expressionists who abandoned Kurt Hiller's Activist movement in favor of communism. Gross never abandoned Nietzsche, though his premature death in 1920 probably means that we never really received his last word on the philosopher.⁸⁷ For in reality, Gross considerably distanced himself from

⁸⁵ "Zur neuerlichen Vorarbeit: Vom Unterricht" in *Das Forum* (1919), pp. 315-320 and "Zur funktionellen Geistesbildung des Revolutionärs" in *Räte-Zeitung*, Berlin I (1919), supplement pp. 3-20. Both articles are reprinted in *Von geschlechtlicher Not*, pp. 35-41 and 64-70 respectively. The first article is written in the sense of preparing for an impending revolution while the latter concerns an educational system to be instituted after the emancipation of the proletariat. In fact, the ideas presented in both articles are similar, although the following explanation follows the latter, more interesting article.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 70.

⁸⁷ In early 1920 Gross collapsed in a Berlin alley as a result of a depleted condition brought on by drug addiction and malnutrition. He was taken to a sanatorium where he died of pneumonia on February 13. Franz Jung informs us that after the death of Hans Gross in 1915, the young Gross completely went to pieces. All the constraints of convention disappeared when there was no one left to threaten Gross with force ("Von geschlechtlicher Not," p. 197).

Nietzsche's philosophy, perhaps without realizing it, when he redefined the notion of the will to power to suit the need for community which he, along with so many Expressionists, increasingly felt during the second decade of the century. His path, then, was actually quite similar to the one taken by many members of the left-wing intelligentsia in this period; it was the path which led from Nietzschean individualism to communism.

Chapter Five

The Rejection of Politics I: The Creative Indifference of Salomo Friedlaender

Kant's joke.-- Kant wanted to prove, in a way that would dumbfound the common man, that the common man was right: that was the secret joke of this soul. He wrote against the scholars in support of popular prejudice, but for scholars and not for people,

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 193

Salomo Friedlaender was an influential philosopher in Expressionist circles who has been largely neglected by scholars of Expressionism. He is perhaps better known for his grotesque tales which he published in a variety of Expressionist journals under the pseudonym Mynona, a reverse spelling of the German word for anonymous. Today, the grotesque is an accepted style of modern theatre and cabaret. Yet even in this area, fame has eluded Friedlaender in favor of other modern rediscoverers of the grotesque style such as Franz Kafka or Gottfried Benn.¹ Nevertheless, the present lack of scholarship on Friedlaender should not belie his important role in Expressionism. Not only his grotesque tales but also his philosophical articles were a ubiquitous feature of Expressionist periodicals. In fact, Franz Pfemfert dedicated the first issue of *Die Aktion* in 1913 to him. His two most important books of the Expressionist years, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (1911) and *Schöpferische Indifferenz* (1918), received wide praise among Expressionist circles.²

¹ The grotesque appears intermittently in the history of art. For the history of the grotesque style, see Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grottesque in Art and Literature* (Gloucester, Mass: Peter Smith, 1968).

² See, for example, Golo Gangi's (pseudonym for Erwin Loewenson) review of the Nietzsche biography in *Der Sturm* 2 (1911), p. 544 and Alfred Kubin's review of *Schöpferische Indifferenz* in *Das Ziel. Jahrbücher für geistige Politik* 4 (1920), pp. 118-121.

These two books, in fact, embody in a nutshell the relationship of Expressionism to Nietzsche, expressed philosophically. More than any other figure, Friedlaender shows how the Expressionists understood Nietzsche's vitalist philosophy, not as a break with the western rational tradition, but as its rectification. The biography of Nietzsche embraces his philosophy as the consummation of Kantian rationalism. Reason, which in the Kantian tradition held a position outside and set against human nature, is made, by Nietzsche, into an integral part of that nature.

It is true, though, that Friedlaender's embrace of Nietzsche is an ambivalent one. The biography is pervaded by the criticism that Nietzsche went too far in his critique of western tradition until he himself fell victim to his own nihilistic insights. By the end of the First World War and November Revolution, Friedlaender's ambivalence about Nietzsche would grow into a full-fledged repudiation. As in the case of Otto Gross and many of the Activists, the war played a crucial role in turning Friedlaender away from Nietzsche's philosophy.

We shall examine the precise reasons for Friedlaender's repudiation shortly. Of more immediate concern is his relation to Nietzsche prior to the end of the war. For like so many Expressionists, Salomo Friedlaender saw in Nietzsche's "natural man" the solution to the riddle of human misery, so long as that solution was tempered by his own adjustment of Nietzsche's philosophy. Friedlaender's adjustment was his own philosophy of Creative Indifference, to which he gave broad exposure in his numerous articles, his biography of Nietzsche, and most extensively his magnum opus *Schöpferische Indifferenz*. Indeed, if Otto Gross was Expressionism's psychoanalytical theorist and Kurt Hiller its political activist, then Friedlaender was its philosopher.

Salomo Friedlaender was born in 1871 in Posen, a Polish industrial city which between 1793 and 1919 belonged to Prussia. Friedlaender was thus much older than most Expressionists, and his thick silvery hair made him an anomalous figure at the *Café des Westens*, the Expressionist meeting place in Berlin. Contemporaries, however, remember Friedlaender more for his sarcastic wit and constant clowning. John Hörter recalled an incident at Herwarth Walden's table when the *Sturm* group was being introduced to the painter Oskar Kokoschka.

Mynona, unsociable and desperately nervous, suddenly feels uncomfortable; his hands shake, beads of perspiration break out on his forehead. Suddenly I see him take his old heir-loom of a time-piece out of his pocket, reach for a glass of water and then slowly slip the chronometer on the end of its chain into the cold water. "Ah," he sighs contentedly, conscious of my enquiring

glance, "that is refreshing." And then slips his watch back into his pocket as if nothing unusual had occurred.³

Friedlaender's antics may not have been necessary to close the generation gap which separated him from his companions. He essentially shared with them the background that engendered the Expressionist revolt and predisposed them to Nietzsche. The son of a liberal middle-class Jewish family, Friedlaender derisively described his own family background as "Biedermeier."⁴ He experienced considerable friction with his father who handled the problems of adolescence "patriarchally."⁵ And there were plenty of adolescent problems to be handled.

The sexual drive overtook me in perverse fury....I was the servant not the lord of my body, became crazed and a debauchee. I very soon lived as the prodigal son and behaved as one....The *Geist* did not strengthen the flesh, rather the flesh weakened the *Geist*. Moreover, I nibbled on Nietzsche who seemed to sanction the amoral....⁶

Yet Nietzsche represented more than moral license. He was the means by which youth began to question the traditional values which their elders deferentially obeyed.

No one knew anything about the good....One was decent, believing, polite, conventional, but without any real foundation. One held morality to be self-understood but did not discover this self-understood to be a problem about which one should wonder. This skeptical wondering was however my own. The youth breathed even then in the air of Nietzsche.⁷

It was Schopenhauer, however, not Nietzsche, who was the first major influence on Friedlaender's philosophic development. He read *The World as Will and Representation* in 1890 while attending the *Gymnasium* in Freiburg and remained an adherent of Schopenhauer for the rest of the decade. From

³ See the excerpt from John Hörter's *So lebten wir. 25 Jahre Berliner Bohème* in *The Era of Expressionism*, ed. Paul Raabe, trans. J.M. Ritchie (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1974) pp. 309-311. See also the recollections of Heinrich Eduard Jacob and Sylvia von Harden in this same collection, pp. 18 & 187.

⁴ Mynona, "Ich. Autobiographische Skizze (1871-1936)" in *Rosa die schöne Schutzmannfrau und andere Grotesken*, edited by Ellen Otto (Zurich: Verlag der Arche, 1965) p. 203. This published sketch contains about one quarter of a manuscript written by Friedlaender in 1936 and now located under the title "Autobiographische Skizze" in *Das Deutsche Literaturarchiv* in Marbach, West Germany (DLM). This manuscript will be cited, under Friedlaender and not Mynona, only when a reference does not appear in the abbreviated published version. In addition, Friedlaender wrote a brief untitled autobiographical sketch in 1920. This sketch will be referred to under its file name at DLM, "Verschiedenes Autobiographisches".

⁵ Mynona, "Ich. Autobiographische Skizze" in *Rosa die schöne Schutzmannfrau*, p. 210.

⁶ Friedlaender, "Autobiographische Skizze" (DLM), pp. 27 & 31.

⁷ Mynona, "Ich. Autobiographische Skizze" in *Rosa die schöne Schutzmannfrau*, p. 207.

1894 until 1902 he studied medicine and then speculative philosophy at Munich, Berlin, and Jena, receiving his doctorate with a dissertation on Schopenhauer's interpretation of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*.

After finishing his education, Friedlaender lived in Berlin as a journalist and writer, publishing a number of books on philosophy. During these years he transferred his affections from Schopenhaurian pessimism to Nietzsche "since I could do nothing other than affirm life....His criticism of the ascetic ideal had made me into a skeptical free spirit."⁸ Friedlaender also cultivated the relationship of Ernst Marcus, a Kantian philosopher from Essen whom Friedlaender had met in 1899. Through Marcus, Kant became a figure of importance to Friedlaender second only to Nietzsche. Under Marcus' prodding, Friedlaender would spend many years attempting to find a median position between Kant and Nietzsche, finally discovering, at the end of the First World War, that only Kantian philosophy contained the true criterion for all ethical behavior.

Not yet a Kantian, however, Friedlaender followed his inclination to "moral-skeptical free spiritedness" and joined the bohemian community of Berlin. Among his acquaintances of the first decade of the twentieth century were Paul Scheerbart, Martin Buber, Gustav Landauer, Erich Mühsam, Kurt Hiller and Ludwig Rubiner.⁹ It was probably the latter two who brought Friedlaender into the inner circles of both *Der Sturm* and *Die Aktion*.¹⁰ In any event, it was Rubiner who convinced Friedlaender to publish the grotesque tales he had been writing.¹¹ This he did under his pseudonym Mynona, between 1913 and 1935, achieving his first notoriety with a collection of *Grotesken* entitled *Rosa die schöne Schutzmannsfrau*, published by the *Die Weißen Bücher Verlag*.

Friedlaender wrote a number of articles explaining the grotesque style, but none so trenchant as "Grotesk," which appeared in 1922.¹² In this article he argued, along Expressionist lines, that the genuine life of the natural instincts has been distorted through the evolution of norms of behavior which are no longer perceived as a distortion.

⁸ Ibid., p. 224.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 227-229.

¹⁰ Alexandra Pfemfert places Friedlaender among the main staff of *Die Aktion* and John Höxter's memoirs has him seated at the table of Herwarth Walden's *Sturm* associates at the Café des Westens. See their recollections in *The Era of Expressionism*, ed. Paul Raabe, pp. 36 & 309-310.

¹¹ Mynona, "Ich: Autobiographische Skizze" in *Rosa die schöne Schutzmannsfrau*, p. 229.

¹² Mynona, "Grotesk" in *Querschnitt durch 1921*; reprinted in *Literaturrevolution, 1910-1925. Dokumente, Manifeste, Programme*, ed. Paul Pörtner (Darmstadt Neuwied am Rhein: Luchterhand, 1960), vol. 1, pp. 323-328.

The grotesque humorist especially has the will to renew the memory of the divine mysterious prototype of genuine life. To do this, he purposely exaggerates the distorted picture of this impenetrable paradise to the point of impossibility. He cures the effeminate [*verweichlichte*] disposition with hardness, the sentimental through cynicism, that staleness of custom through paradox. He angers and shocks the philistine in us, who out of forgetfulness feels good in the middle of a caricature of genuine life, by exaggerating the caricature to the point of being grotesque, until he succeeds in driving him [the philistine] out of the mentioned paradise of his customs, thus bringing the genuine closer, or at least the presentiment of it.¹³

The caricature of genuine life which Friedlaender hoped to expose is evident in his most famous grotesque tale "Rosa die schöne Schutzmannfrau." The Prussian *Schutzmann* or policeman is a symbol of power and terror, but also the object of Friedlaender's ridicule. In another tale published during the war, "Goethe spricht in den Phonographen," Friedlaender used the same technique to deride the attempt of Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche to have her brother's philosophy serve the cause of German militarism. The protagonist overhears Elizabeth's conversation, an incident quite unconnected with the main plot of the story.

Our Fritz consistently had a military attitude and, for all that, he was gentle. He was among others of genuine Christian tenderheartedness. How he would have rejoiced over this war and over the glorious, yes holy book by Max Scheler.¹⁴

There is one further observation to be made about Friedlaender's grotesque style. It may be partly derived from Nietzsche's own style. In a brief biographical sketch written shortly before his article "Grotesk," Friedlaender connected both his literary style and philosophy with Nietzsche. "In my book about Nietzsche, I represented Nietzsche's significance as the special case of Indifference.... Since one ignored this key to the experience of Nietzsche, as well as to self-experience, I opened up a laugh cabinet."¹⁵ He then went on to describe the grotesque style in terms closely following the passage quoted from his article "Grotesk." Hardness as a cure for lack of vigor, cynicism against sentimentality, and paradox against staleness of custom

¹³ Ibid., p. 327.

¹⁴ "Goethe spricht in den Phonographen" appeared in 1916 in a collection of grotesque tales entitled *Schwarz-Weiß-Rot*. It is reprinted in *Rosa die schöne Schutzmannfrau und andere Grotesquen*. The quotation is on p. 64. The book by Max Scheler is an obvious reference to *Der Genius des Krieges und der deutsche Krieg* (Leipzig: Verlag der Weißen Bücher, 1915).

¹⁵ Friedlaender, "Verschiedenes Autobiographisches," 1920 (DLM), p. 3.

make for an appropriate description of Nietzsche's style. Whether Friedlaender modeled his own grotesque tales on Nietzsche's style is not clear. He has, however, pointed to an interesting interpretation of Nietzsche's stridency, which has proven so controversial and open to misuse.

*Kant and Nietzsche:
The way to Creative Indifference*

One wishes that Friedlaender had devoted the same effort to explaining his philosophic style as he did to explaining his literary style. Filled with undefined neologisms and abstruse grammatical constructions, Friedlaender's "Creative Indifference" is part of that German philosophical tradition which has often mistaken opacity for depth. His articles and books are characterized by assertions which receive support only in another of his own articles, making a chronological explanation of his development impossible. But no chronological explanation is necessary. For the entire Expressionist decade, Friedlaender is possessed by only one cause: Creative Indifference, the answer to the riddle of history which Nietzsche almost reached in his own progression over Kant. This achievement is most comprehensively explained in Friedlaender's 1911 biography of Nietzsche, which is actually a perspicacious and fascinating interpretation of the philosopher. We will thus begin our investigation here, using Friedlaender's other writings to elaborate points where necessary.

In the introductory orientation to the intellectual biography, Friedlaender established the same task for Nietzsche and Kant with which he saw all philosophy charged. All philosophy is concerned with the connection between mankind and what Friedlaender termed "the infinite." No precise definition of the infinite follows; instead, we learn that the infinite is the secret of our own being. It is the relationship between our lives and Life itself, which cannot be acquired simply through an empirical experience of life. Kant attempted to establish the relationship between mankind and the infinite, which lies beyond experience, but his way was only an evasion of the problem, "a logical work of arabesques toward the dullest introduction to this idea of ideas [the infinite]."

In the miserable fact "Man," Kant illuminated this divine, free, eternally creative idea. Formally, heuristically, regulatively, merely efficaciously postulated, it [the idea of the infinite] transforms human beings into a type

of subdued [sordinierten], God....A true Jacob's ladder of logical gradation joined and separated God and man.¹⁶

Despite his own literary arabesques, Friedlaender is clearly referring to Kant's transcendental aesthetic, explained most comprehensively in his *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781). Writing during the Enlightenment, Kant attempted to preserve the autonomy of reason from the increasing authority of a deterministic science, according to which every seeming act of volition was interpreted as the inevitable consequence of a physical or psychological antecedent. In defense of reason and the freedom of the will, Kant argued that there are apriori attributes of reason which regulate sensory experience. Space, time, causality, etc., are not concepts acquired by reflecting on repeated experience but are apriori and universal ideas which regulate our experience of the phenomenal world, ideas which ensure the common experience of all human beings.

Kant thus ensured the superiority of man over nature by granting him access to ideas of a higher order than nature. Yet, in this superiority lies the very problem which Friedlaender referred to, the problem of entrapping man between the infinite (or God, if you will) and the phenomenal world. On the one hand, the regulatory ideas of reason ensure the common experience of all human beings; but they in no way ensure a knowledge of the empirical world as it really is, the famous "thing in itself." The world that is the object of our experience is only a world of appearances, existing only insofar as it is constructed by our regulative ideas. On the other hand, these apriori ideas of reason indicate our proximity to a realm beyond nature, to the infinite; but these ideas are only intuited and we have no real experience of this higher realm. Man's Janus-faced position became the basis of Kant's proof of God, of whom we can have no direct experience. He rejected all dogmatic and speculative proofs of God hitherto espoused and posited his own moral proof. Accordingly, man feels himself compelled to act in certain ways and, by these acts, he implies a moral designer of the universe. We can have no objective knowledge of God but can only infer his existence through our own practice.

It was Nietzsche's historical method, according to Friedlaender, which overcame the problems of Kant's Critical method as well as all pre- and post-Critical dogmatic metaphysics. This historical method is also divine, but not in the dogmatic sense which Kant's *Critique* did not altogether do away with. Nietzsche replaced Kant's intuited guarantees of man's special place in the

¹⁶ Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Eine intellektuelle Biographie* (Leipzig, G. J. Göschen, 1911), p. 7.

universe with the knowledge achieved only by the experiment of life.¹⁷ What this means, Friedlaender continued, was that Nietzsche reevaluated all values hitherto taken for granted in accordance with their benefit to life. The entire order of rank of values since Plato was overturned. No longer was a supernatural world, whether it be God, idea or the intuited ideas of reason, valued higher than this world. Supernatural powers, as well as teleological philosophy, became symptomatic of a sickness of values, a denial of life. God became secularized as Nietzsche's *amor fati* took the place of *amor dei*.

Yet Nietzsche did not do away with the principle of the infinite. Only the positivists, according to Friedlaender, attempted to secularize the world by brutally withdrawing from it any higher meaning. The principle of the infinite, however, not only rejects dogmatically established values, but also their skeptical dissolution. The infinite cannot be defined but only experienced. "It is vivacious, it equilibrates its definitions, balances its extremes, indifferentiates polar differences."¹⁸ This last quotation introduces the two other concepts, "Indifference" and "Polarity", which along with the infinite, form the basis of Friedlaender's own philosophy of Creative Indifference. Both of these concepts have many aspects which are explained in the Nietzsche biography, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, and Friedlaender's various articles in Expressionist periodicals. Before proceeding with Friedlaender's critique of Nietzsche, it is necessary to understand fully these two terms.

In general, according to Friedlaender's reading of Nietzsche, polarity is the natural relationship existing between two opposites. Good and evil, altruism and egoism, reason and the natural drives are not antipodes but each has a polar relationship to the other in that they both derive from the same basic instinct; the will to power. Friedlaender discovered in this instinct the metaphysical principle which connects all of humanity. Every individual may have his or her separate desires and passions but as mediums of the will to power pervading everyone, we are all, in reality, part of a much larger whole. The awareness and recognition of this whole signifies that one has achieved Creative Indifference.

Creative Indifference, Individuum--please not an immediate misunderstanding of this first word. No single individual [*Einzelner*] is meant, also not humanity existing as individual cases [*Einzelheiten*], nothing at all detached but rather the whole; yet subjectively, not objectively: a creative pathos, the will, resolution, freedom, the exemption of the "inner" from all isolation, from all dividuality [*Dividualität*]. Only this freedom [of Creative

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

Indifference] makes possible a creative vivacious identity for the guidance of all isolated members. Moreover, one can only give this [freedom] to himself; but one is only a self in an illusory way.¹⁹

Admittedly, this reveals little about the way in which Polarity and Indifference operate. In order to understand that, it is necessary to recognize that Friedlaender viewed the will to power, not merely as a psychological principle in the way of Otto Gross, but as a cosmological principle, that is, a metaphysical force pervading the universe. There is ample support for Friedlaender's interpretation in the later works of Nietzsche.²⁰ However, Friedlaender viewed Nietzsche through the lens of his understanding of the development of modern philosophy, in which Nietzsche consummated the philosophic quest attempted first by Kant and pursued further by Schopenhauer.

Friedlaender elaborated on the nature of that quest in a series of articles in *Der Sturm* entitled "Kants Vermächtnis." Here he also described Kant's apriori reason as a cosmological principle whose purpose was to resolve the problem that had plagued philosophy since Descartes: the achievement of certainty.²¹ Certainty appeared unachievable so long as the object of perception remained separated from the subject by the unbridgeable barrier implicit in that relationship. Kant had overcome that barrier by making the world of experience into a product of our apriori reason. Yet, while subject and object are thus united, this unity occurs by virtue of a force that stands above nature, that is by reason, to which we have but intuitive access.

Kant, according to Friedlaender, thus lamed the *Geist* in the very act of uplifting it. Since natural man only intuitively reasons, he stands at the border between the immanent and the transcendent, between nature and the higher plane of reason which still exist as separate spheres. It was Schopenhauer who discovered the will as the bridge between both spheres, as the force encompassing both.

There was something in this world, not only empirically real but incomparably more excellent than everything else; the phenomenon of phenomena, the deep innerness of Person, the heart of life-- the striving will.... Here Schopenhauer felt the pulse beat of the world.... Here was the core of nature; here nature recognized itself. The body was the shell of an inner will and the will was the interior of nature, the expansion of the body

¹⁹ S. Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, 2nd ed. (Munich: Ernst Reinhardt, 1926), pp. XIII-XIV.

²⁰ On this, see Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist*, 4th edition (Princeton University Press, 1974), pp. 189, 206, 235-246.

²¹ S. Friedlaender, "Kants Vermächtnis," *Der Sturm* 2 (1911), 419-420, 431-432, 438-439.

into the infinite. Not a physical, [but] a metaphysical connection is between shell and core. Nature renders itself in a double way: as the text of representation, as the interpretation of the will.²²

Schopenhauer had discovered the force which bound man and nature to the infinite; but his very discovery had driven him to pessimism. The will was uncontrollable. It was nature's connection to the diabolical as well as to the divine. It robbed man of the very autonomy which Kant had tried to protect. And Schopenhauer, who discovered the will, could only recommend its abnegation.

In a word, apriorism still lacked hand and foot, root and crown, beginning and end. Nietzsche, who is something of a doctor for Schopenhauer...aptly perceived...the solution of the riddle of the boundlessness [of the will] in the sense that it binds itself according to the world-law of compensation, of world-polarity indifferentiating itself.²³

Nietzsche's doctrine of polarity, or balance, was the final rivet in the bridge linking subject and object. No longer was man an object of a will that lay outside his control. Nietzsche returned to man control over the will by the discovery of its polar nature. He discovered that human reason is not antipodal to the will but an attribute of it, an attempt by the will to regulate itself. All of our seemingly opposite qualities and drives are actually related in a polar way, in that they are all attributes of the will. Friedlaender's Creative Indifference was precisely the neutral point of balance between seeming opposites.

When one speaks of will, power, value, one immediately sketches the scale: extreme, degree, Indifference-- and will always see as effective this law of the balancing middle. When one becomes a participant of his own experience of this balance, one makes the acquaintance of his own absolute Person as the equilibrist of his polar relative [extremes]: then one knows also that the balancing in itself contains a sufficient quantity of all relative [extremes]. Otherwise, without this middle (of polar extremes), without this absolute medial purity of difference, without this equal weighing of differentiated weights, the abyss between opposites opens....

Without reciprocity, the extremes (poles) lack all connection. All conflict concerns only the purest determination of the balance of this reciprocity. But the extremes do not fight against each other--what insanity! Dualism,

²² Ibid., p. 431.

²³ Ibid., p. 439.

correctly understood, becomes Polarism, Differentism, and only the indifferent person can powerfully relativize his absoluteness.²⁴

Friedlaender thus discovered in Nietzsche's philosophy the solution to the threatening aspects of the will to power that had eluded Otto Gross. Gross had correctly described the will to power as a monistic physiological drive to master ever new spheres. But when he recognized the aggressive aspects implicit in this conception, he quietly changed his description so that the will to power became only a distorted form of a benign instinct to defend the ego. Friedlaender, too, had recognized the aggressive aspects of the will; but he also discovered the possibility of their neutralization in this same monistic drive through the discipline of balance. In other words, if good and evil, altruism and egoism, rationality and irrationality are rooted in the same basic instinct, then each side of these apparent oppositions can be used to discipline the other.

Shallow monism misunderstands the *concordia* of simple things which manifests itself necessarily as *discors*, that is, in a polarity of everything, which the Dionysian, through the equilibrious association of them all, thus also of all moral extremes, encloses in an Apollonian way. He (the Dionysian) knows all discordance as oppositional harmony and sets each extreme against the other. The secret of this moderation is called creative personal balance; it does not consist in some halfway lessening of excesses.²⁵

By virtue of this concept of Polarity, implicit in Nietzsche's philosophy,²⁶ Friedlaender became the exponent of a new type of rationalism which we have seen espoused throughout Expressionism and the Activism of *Das Ziel*. The consequences of this new rationalism is particularly evident in an article in *Die Aktion* of 1911, "Das Geheimnis des Mutes."²⁷ Here, Friedlaender challenged the author of an article appearing in a non-Expressionist periodical who concluded, from his reading of Nietzsche, that man must have the courage to face a chaotic, godless and senseless world.²⁸ Friedlaender derided the author's interpretation of Nietzsche and paraphrased a passage from *Zarathustra* to

²⁴ Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, p. 28.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 158-159.

²⁶ While Friedlaender's interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy is certainly viable, Nietzsche himself, to my knowledge, only used the word "polarity" once, and then to describe the philosophy of Heraclitus. See his *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, p. 54. The concept of polarity is found in Schelling's philosophy which bears a number of other similarities with Friedlaender's. To my knowledge, however, Friedlaender does not mention Schelling. On Schelling's philosophy, see Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, vol., 7 (Garden City, New York: Image, 1986), pp. 94-148.

²⁷ S. Friedlaender, "Das Geheimnis des Mutes," *Die Aktion* 1 (1911), 652-655.

²⁸ The author was a Dr. Chrysolth. The article was "Das Zeitalter des Mutes" from the periodical *Zeitgeist*.

demonstrate the polar nature of courage itself: "Courage is not the fearless, rather one who knows fear but conquers fear."²⁹

According to Friedlaender, courage, as his opponent envisions it, is only the opposite of cowardice. Real courage, however, stands in a polar way on the border of the two extremes of courage and cowardice. Here courage is finally "freed from its blind dumb confidence, its senseless instigation, its militarism one would like to say...where it, peering into the abyss of its own cowardice, feels the most salutary shudder."³⁰ The practical difference between Friedlaender's conception of courage and his opponent's is that "you do not have enough courage to say: if the world is as it is -- my courage will nevertheless design (*architektonisieren*) it."³¹ Thus Georg Lukács' assertion in the *Destruction of Reason*, that Nietzsche's irrationalism led to despair over the absence of an objective world, may have rung true for Friedlaender's opponent. For Friedlaender, as for the Activists, it led to a new type of courage to fashion that world.

All examples of polarities thus far given were related by Friedlaender to the most comprehensive polarity, which itself goes under a number of names: the polar relationship between nature and spirit (the infinite), between the natural drives and reason, between what Kant called appearance and the thing in itself, and what Schopenhauer called representation and will. The polar relationship of these apparent oppositions was forgotten or unknown until Nietzsche and the attempt at its rediscovery was his purpose in writing his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. The pairing of Dionysus and Apollo in this work was but a restatement of this most basic polar relationship: Dionysus, as God of the wildest intoxication; Apollo, as the overcomer and binder of Dionysian drives, the force giving form which, in the case of individuals, provides the power to shape one's character. Tragedy, for Nietzsche, is this mutual relation; not a defeat but a triumph of the balance between the two forces. It is the knowledge of the two forces which, for Nietzsche, signifies culture. When Socrates destroyed the bond between Dionysus and Apollo, he paved the way for the modern good natured optimism which Nietzsche attacked in his next work, *Untimely Meditations*.³²

²⁹ The paraphrase refers to *Zarathustra* 4:4, "On the higher man": "Cold souls, mules, the blind and the drunken. I do not call brave. Brave is he who knows fear but conquers fear, who sees the abyss but with pride."

³⁰ Friedlaender, "Das Geheimnis des Mutes," p. 654.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 653.

³² Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p.26.

It is this attack on modern culture and the presentation of an alternative which Friedlaender saw as the unifying factor of the four essays comprising *The Untimely Meditations*. The positivist doctrine of the nineteenth century is not only hypocritical, as Nietzsche showed in the first essay dealing with Strauss;³³ it does not lead to culture. For Nietzsche, the real goal of scientific and philosophic knowledge was, according to Friedlaender, not to progress technically but rather to know how to live philosophically. This is the meaning of his conclusion in the second meditation that knowledge must serve life.

The task of every individual, if he wishes to become a representative of his culture, is to discover the genius within himself. The education "to become what one is" was lacking in the modern world because the pressures to conform developed at the cost of the individual. Nietzsche's third and fourth meditations on Schopenhauer and Wagner were meant as models of self-education to individuality. With obvious reference to Expressionism, Friedlaender noted that Nietzsche placed all hope for a new culture on youth.³⁴

In separate chapters on Nietzsche's *Human, all too Human*, (which was reprinted in *Der Sturm*³⁵), on *Daybreak*, and on *The Gay Science*, Friedlaender returned to a comparison of Kant and Nietzsche. Here the issue is morality and we learn how the doctrine of polarity applies to this important subject. According to Friedlaender, Kant's conception of proper moral behavior was similar to Nietzsche's, though expressed in a *kleinbürgerlich* way. Friedlaender has perceived an interesting similarity between Kant and Nietzsche. Like Nietzsche, Kant had rejected religious proscriptions, as well as utilitarian criteria, as a basis for morality. Every individual was his or her own lawgiver. Yet for Kant, individual laws were subject to one requirement: they must pass muster with the dictates of reason to which the individual has intuitive access. As a part of the intelligible world, man must obey laws that are contrary to his nature but in accordance with reason. He defers to reason because he recognizes it as the basis of the sensible world. One can act in accordance with one's nature, according to Kant, only insofar as that act conforms with the intelligible requirements of morality. Thus, according to Friedlaender, both Nietzsche and Kant advise human nature:

Act as you wish, but so logically as possible! But startled nature now listens attentively and asks why?-- Nietzsche answers: in order to be able to live correctly and love; in order to become your own cosmos out of the chaos of your lusts. Kant, in contrast, replies: in order gradually to denature yourself,

³³ see chapter 2 of this study.

³⁴ Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 26. Nietzsche places his hope on youth in the second essay, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," section 10.

³⁵ Friedlaender, "Menschliches Allzumenschliches," *Der Sturm* 1 (1910), pp. 299-301.

to disembody [*entleiben*] yourself and to be able to become the "pure" law itself, which in itself is unknown to us....Act as if you were not nature at all, rather pure logic.³⁶

Kant's mistake, according to Friedlaender, was that he did not recognize that logic was itself alive. His was "the logic of school but not yet that of life."³⁷ Nietzsche, in contrast, recognized that there is no cleft between ethics and physiology, between reason and nature. Man is more moral than any "thou shalt" from the heavens, the proscription itself an indication of human weakness. Yet, it was not simply nature to which Nietzsche entrusted morality, rather to cultivated nature. Man's goodness is to be ranked in accordance with the degree he can control a dangerous nature. Nietzsche's moral imperative "become what you are" means that a person's nature is measured by its ability to be equal to its drives, its ability for self-discipline. Man brings his own nature into balance and harmony by using one of his numerous conflicting drives to countermand another. This is the meaning, for Friedlaender, of Nietzsche's famous "immoralism": he is against the decay of man's nature and for its higher cultivation.

Nietzsche reestablished the connection between nature and reason, by his recognition of the polar character of the will, and thus showed humanity the way to the infinite. Zarathustra is an example of a life living in the immediacy of the infinite by his principle of the eternal recurrence. The eternal recurrence is, of course, Nietzsche's theory that every moment of history is condemned to recur repeatedly in an identical way throughout eternity. The concept actually has two aspects which have caused debate among scholars regarding the aspect to which Nietzsche gave the greatest weight. On the one hand, Nietzsche tried to prove the eternal recurrence as a scientific principle based on the assumption of a finite amount of energy and space but an infinite amount of time. The finite configurations of energy and space would of necessity recur, given an infinite amount of time. On the other hand, what seemed more important to Nietzsche were the consequences of the eternal recurrence for life, the fact that only the strongest of souls could go on living with the knowledge that all suffering and mistakes were to be repeated over and over again without hope of progress.³⁸

³⁶ Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 55-56.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

³⁸ For a review of the debate regarding the respective importance of the two aspects of the eternal recurrence, see Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), chapter 5. For an examination of the scientific validity of the eternal recurrence and the objections to it, see the appendix of R. J. Hollingdale, *Nietzsche: The Man and His Philosophy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Press, 1965).

It was this latter aspect which was more important to Friedlaender, and he brushed off Nietzsche's attempt to prove the eternal recurrence scientifically as a betrayal of the metaphysical importance of the doctrine. This importance derived from the contradiction implicit in the very notion of the eternal recurrence.

On the one side, should our life so recur as it is right up to smallest and most immaterial of details?-- On the other side, should that thought of recurrence so accentuate it (life), in such a manner, that each of its fleeting seconds obtains thereby an eternal significance?³⁹

The resolution of this contradiction is the *Übermensch* who chooses the latter alternative. With his knowledge of recurrence, he transfigures each of his actions in the light of eternity.

A monstrous danger is at hand...that life would become, in an ordinary sense, human all to human; that one would no longer esteem the solitary and unique happiness of being but instead favor the mass, the ordinary common happiness [*Gemeinsamkeitsglück*]. That man in every sense would become a fraction, atom, point, dust without perceiving that he is in the infinite.⁴⁰

It is the knowledge of the infinite repetition of life that makes us aware of the infinite itself.

Without this insight, all preoccupation with the infinite is without prospect; with it, one eternalizes life, yes eternalizes the body, in that one more powerfully develops one's differences, as Nietzsche wanted, in order to win back one's Indifference, which has almost been lost like a diamond in the purest water.⁴¹

According to Friedlaender's interpretation of Nietzsche, life itself becomes a religion where its own beauty and truth is worshipped at the expense of God. It is in this sense that he noted that the meaning "of Zarathustra is Christ freed from the cross."⁴² This point is further developed in an essay "Dionysisches Christentum" which appeared in *Die Weißen Blätter* and in his own *Schöpferische Indifferenz*.⁴³ In this essay, Friedlaender concluded that Nietzsche was not against Christianity per se, but only against the dogmatic trappings it had acquired since its inception and its displacement of the object of worship from this world to a beyond.

³⁹ Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p. 80.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 84.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 86.

⁴³ Friedlaender, "Dionysisches Christentum" in *Die Weißen Blätter* (1913-14), 4:317-327 and *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, pp. 151-161.

In fact, Friedlaender pointed out in this essay, the Christian and the Dionysian have both love and religious intensity in common. The difference is that the Dionysian directs his religious intensity toward life itself. His pathos is transcendent but not directed toward a transcendent object. But this religious intensity should not be confused with optimism, just as it should not be confused with Christian pessimism. The optimist denies the horrible side of life while the Christian pessimist rejects this world altogether. The Dionysian, in contrast, cultivates the horrible side of life. He is superior to it in a creative way in that he shapes it in accordance with the Apollonian power which he implicitly possesses. "Precisely the explosive, annihilating-creative requires the lawful ordering economy. Freedom, the most revolutionary idea can only be realized lawfully."⁴⁴ Thus, while the Christian rejects evil and affirms good, the Dionysian values both equally, recognizing the polar relationship between them. They are united, however, in their common belief that the unfolding of the world is in accordance with "a divine principle of superabundance" (*eines göttlich überschwänglichen Prinzips*).⁴⁵

The Dionysian uses the Christian soul with its undivided, undifferentiated, primitive elemental power...for its differences which flame out from within it (among which also belong the physiological). This soul serves him in a polar way as the innervating power of all psycho-physical differences. Of itself and in itself, it [the Christian soul] is unproductive when valued in a dionysian way. Its value lies only in the learning and shaping of its polar differences. The Dionysian does not forbid himself the Christian soul but obligates it unyieldingly to the world....

Only when religious, intimate, personal culture becomes entirely a polarizing inspiration for the profane, will we experience the Dionysian, the heaven on earth to which the first Christian may have been closer to than his followers....All transcending sentimentality is done away with: the dionysian yonder side [*Jenseits*] is only the personal Indifference of the this side [*Diesseits*], that is, its own polarization.⁴⁶

The Repudiation of Nietzsche

Friedlaender credited Nietzsche with the discovery of Polarity, but he questioned the extent to which Nietzsche understood his own discovery.

⁴⁴ Ibid., in *Die Weißen Blätter*, p. 321; in *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, p. 165.

⁴⁵ Ibid., in *Die Weißen Blätter*, p. 323; in *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, p. 157.

⁴⁶ Ibid., in *Die Weißen Blätter*, p. 326-327; in *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, pp. 160-161. I have translated this passage from *Schöpferische Indifferenz* which differs slightly from the text of *Die Weißen Blätter*. The differences are not substantial.

Throughout the biography, beginning with the chapter on *Daybreak* but becoming more explicit after *Zarathustra*, Friedlaender separated the poet Nietzsche, who discovered the infinite, from the thinker, who went too far in his skepticism. Skepticism also stands in a polar relationship with its antipode dogmatism. A weak person needs convictions to provide him with the support achieved by a sense of solidarity with others of like convictions. But the strong achieve the same solidarity by laughing at the convictions of the weak, by being without convictions. Friedlaender regretted that it never occurred to Nietzsche to see the dogmatic side of his own skepticism.

In his poetry and, implicit within his writings, according to Friedlaender, Nietzsche demonstrated his adherence to Creative Indifference. On the surface, however, Nietzsche destroyed all moral notions and had nothing to replace them with. He showed that all morality was based on interest, that man was nothing but an animal. His historical method discovered the beast in man but it could not discover the man in the beast. Friedlaender thus reproached Nietzsche for going to the opposite extreme of Kant: "How much of nature is lost to Kant; how much of logic to Nietzsche...[The body] is the neutralization of that double specter,...the real of both these ideals of which the one [Nietzsche] lies so bestially, the other [Kant] so angelically."⁴⁷

Yet, Friedlaender's criticisms are ambiguous. At times it is only the thinker Nietzsche who stumbles on his own skepticism into the abyss of nihilism. At other times Friedlaender credited Nietzsche with being the only philosopher to appreciate the principle of Polarity. With amazing insight into the complexities of Nietzsche's polemics, Friedlaender recognized that the ascetic ideal of Christianity, so berated by Nietzsche, was actually the "hollow mirror image of the Dionysian"; this was Nietzsche's "secret teaching." The point is important for on it rests the entire doctrine of polarity and balance. Kant and Socrates had feared the instincts and therefore made them subject to the power of reason. By them,

logic stood not in a Dionysian nimbus but in the cross-mark of asceticism. Nietzsche is precisely the counter-Plato who returned to nature the transfiguration which Plato had taken, under the influence of Socrates. His [Nietzsche's] problem is the ingraining [*Instinktivierung*] of consciousness, the incorporation of the ratio into the body.⁴⁸

It is for this reason that Friedlaender made much ado about a seemingly insignificant word in *Zarathustra*: center. "The center is everywhere. Bent is

⁴⁷ Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, p., 55.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

the path of eternity."⁴⁹ For Friedlaender, this center was not only the moment which is celebrated in the light of eternity, it is the point of indifference, the midpoint between opposing drives which is achieved by the disciplining of every extreme by another. Yet it was the poet Nietzsche who wrote this, not the thinker. As a thinker, an understanding of the center passed Nietzsche by if only "because he did not bring to the logic of his...instincts, a logic which differs from the dry scholastic as dionysian morality differs from the Christian.-- For that reason, he missed the last step to Indifferentism."⁵⁰

Considering the reservations that Friedlaender harbored toward Nietzsche in the 1911 biography of the philosopher, the foreword which he wrote for the second edition of *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, published in 1926, is not surprising.

The author admits an embarrassment: the second edition of this book became necessary before he had time to revise the first. In the intervening seven years, the author has arrived at the insight that Immanuel Kant alone had laid the foundation for genuine philosophy. The author owes this insight especially to the works of Ernst Marcus.⁵¹

Friedlaender went on to reaffirm the continuing validity of his own philosophy of Creative Indifference but now only Kantian philosophy was its legitimate predecessor. As for Nietzsche:

Kant undertakes the analytical self-critique of Intelligence, of the *Geist* of reason...which the un- or anti-Kantian... dogmatically or skeptically disposes of...instead of proving. So, for example, Friedrich Nietzsche belongs to the bad readers of Kant; here he is only a shallow philologist.⁵²

The reason and precise date of Friedlaender's turn away from Nietzsche to Kant is not detailed in this foreword and we are left to plumb his other writings for this information. An article in *Der Sturm* of 1919 entitled "Kant und die Freiheit nach Ernst Marcus" indicates that Friedlaender had already begun to reassess his position at this early date.⁵³ Yet, the difference between Friedlaender's autobiographical fragment of 1920, which emphasizes Nietzsche's influence, and the autobiographical sketch of 1936, which treats Nietzsche almost as a passing fancy, suggests that Friedlaender's complete

⁴⁹ Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, Third part, "The Convalescent," section 2.

⁵⁰ Friedlaender, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, pp. 143-144.

⁵¹ Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz* (2nd ed., 1926), p. IX. The foreword was written in 1925, which accounts for the seven years Friedlaender mentions between the second edition and the first, published in 1918.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Friedlaender, "Kant und die Freiheit nach Ernst Marcus," *Der Sturm* 9 (1919), pp. 144-146.

conversion occurred only after 1920.⁵⁴ In fact, in the unpublished part of this later biographical sketch, Friedlaender detailed his relationship to Marcus and the process by which the latter had converted the former to his own version of Kantianism.

Friedlaender had first met Marcus in 1899 when the former as a "free spirit" was still a resolute adherent of Nietzsche. The two formed an immediate close relationship and for the next two decades argued their opposing views both in letters and during Friedlaender's frequent visits to Marcus' home in Essen.⁵⁵ While insisting that he continued to reject what he later came to understand as truth, there can be little doubt that Marcus was responsible for Friedlaender's growing reservations toward Nietzsche which had already begun to appear by the time of the 1911 biography. It was, however, Marcus' reaction to the first edition of *Schöpferische Indifferenz* (1918) which precipitated Friedlaender's conversion.

Marcus had to reject it critically; I had overstepped the boundaries which Kant had established for knowledge. "What you wanted", he said to me, "was magic. Kant too had written about a magic of resolution (Vorsatz). I have a manuscript of a scientific theory of a natural, but critically disciplined, magic locked up in my closet." He didn't want to publish it because of fear it would be misused.⁵⁶

Friedlaender read the manuscript and was immediately overwhelmed. It was this manuscript which, according to him, led to the foreword of the second edition of *Schöpferische Indifferenz*.

In order to understand Marcus' conception of Kantian magic, it is best to skip the condensed and esoteric explanation in the autobiographical sketch and review Friedlaender's own didactic work on the subject, *Katechismus der Magie; nach Immanuel Kants "Von der Macht des Gemütes" und Ernst Marcus "Theorie der natürlichen Magie"* (1925).⁵⁷ Here we learn that Kant's magic is not the "hocus-pocus" associated with the Middle Ages, but reason itself. Reason is magical, according to Friedlaender, because like the magic of the Middle Ages, its purpose is the overcoming of nature. It will be remembered, though, that Friedlaender had hitherto rejected Kantian reason on the grounds that it established a coercive relationship between itself and nature,

⁵⁴ See note 4.

⁵⁵ Friedlaender, "Autobiographische Skizze," DLM, pp. 55-56.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 57-58. Friedlaender noted that he later convinced Marcus to publish the manuscript. He does not give the title of the work but it is probably *Theorie einer natürlicher Magie gegründet auf Kants Weltlehre* (Munich: E. Reinhardt, 1924).

⁵⁷ S. Friedlaender, *Katechismus der Magie; nach Immanuel Kants "Von der Macht des Gemütes" und Ernst Marcus "Theorie der natürlichen Magie"*, (Heidelberg: Merlin, 1925).

particularly the natural drives. Yet the concept of magic, which Marcus had shown Friedlaender to be implicit in Kant, did away with this coercive relationship and established the same polar relationship between reason and nature which Friedlaender had previously envisioned to be implicit in the various aspects of nature alone.

But this [magic] does not mean the negation or annulling, the ascetic mortification of nature. On the contrary, the enduring inner harmony between nature and reason is meant, the ever cautious nurturing, cultivation, yes the making-moral of the otherwise discordant raw blind nature (for example, of the body) is the purpose of all magical attempts and exercises. Neither pure reason nor pure nature are true goals, rather their ever more correct, more beautiful, better concordant reciprocity. . . Kant and Marcus explain more than clearly that we are not only nature, born of nature, a transitory ego, but rather also reason, nature free, an ego superior to time. Our will is not only a drive of nature, but also the lord of nature, so that we not only desire it (to act) reasonably, that is, not under the compulsion of nature, but rather also under the self-compulsion of our own reason, which should and thus can compel nature.⁵⁸

Here reason is a self-compelling force; in the Nietzsche biography, Friedlaender had reproached Kant for defining reason as external to man. Marcus had convinced Friedlaender that Kant did not simply strand man in a no-man's land between reason and nature, the divine and the base, but made him into an important link between them. According to the traditional interpretation of Kant, the ideas of reason structure our perception of nature while depriving us of any real knowledge of it. According to Marcus' interpretation, "nature is nothing else than the representation of our egos standing under its own law."⁵⁹ Thus while Friedlaender had rejected Kantian logic in the Nietzsche biography as being "the logic of school and not that of life," he reverses himself in this work on Marcus, observing that "Kant's science is no school [science] but a life and death wisdom."⁶⁰

Of course, it was morality with which Friedlaender was primarily concerned. His lifelong preoccupation with Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and Kant stemmed from his search for a new basis for ethics after his childhood rejection of conventional morality under the pressure of his own libidinous drives. At last he found that basis in an interpretation of Kant which urged the cultivation of these drives by reason and not their complete suppression.

⁵⁸ Ibid., pp. XII-XIII.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 5; see also p. 130 of this chapter for the earlier quotation.

The moral will perfects the body magically in that it does not sacrifice or mar our innate natures...rather in that it cultivates, ennobles and transfigures it artistically and energetically. Nature becomes noble through the law of the moral will or reason which is the correct application of the laws of ranking our natural feelings.⁶¹

Friedlaender's new doctrine, then, was essentially the same as his old doctrine. Reason and nature are still intimately linked; only now, nature is subsumed under reason whereas before reason was subsumed under nature. This latter alternative was where Friedlaender, according to Marcus, had "overstepped the boundaries which Kant established for knowledge"; the natural world is the creation of reason and not of itself, as Friedlaender had earlier believed. The entire argument seems a bit academic and trivial, even for two pedants like Friedlaender and Marcus, and we are obliged to ask whether there might not have been another reason for Friedlaender's conversion from the primacy of nature to the primacy of reason, that is, from Nietzsche to Kant.

The clue for another cause of this conversion comes almost as an aside about Nietzsche's skepticism in Friedlaender's autobiographical sketch. As far back as the 1911 biography, he had seen skepticism as both the merit and pitfall of Nietzsche's philosophy. In his autobiographical sketch, the doubt about skepticism reappeared; it is a blessing in the hands of unpolitical "higher men," but becomes dangerous to society when turned into a political ideology.

But in Nietzsche's skeptical [hands] the moral problem, that of genuine culture, quivered frightfully, only to find its outcome in the opportunistic brutal power-hammer raised to a higher level. And how dumb is this so falsely spiritually rich opportunism. It explodes...in a climax of opportunistic dumbness [*Macht-Dummheit*], in a world war which proves bloodily that at the heights of modern humanity, skeptical free spiritedness drives [forth], in the best case, its irrational essence in a socially opportunistic way and takes the ratio, which should rule, into its service.⁶²

The violence of war lay behind Friedlaender's philosophical metamorphosis after 1918. It had demonstrated to him what human nature was capable of when the instincts were given their full freedom. The magic of Ernst Marcus was a philosophical artifice, a way to put reason back in the saddle without rejecting his earlier assumptions regarding the propensity of human nature for ennoblement. In reality, however, Friedlaender reversed himself. The doctrine that he tirelessly reproached Nietzsche for forgetting,

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 25-26.

⁶² Friedlaender, "Autobiographische Skizze" (DLM), p. 92.

that nature was capable of its own self-regulation, Friedlaender ceased to believe in himself.

There is, nevertheless, another reason for Friedlaender's repudiation of Nietzsche which is intimately connected to this first one. Unlike Heinrich Mann who abandoned Nietzsche's philosophy because it was not political enough, Friedlaender abandoned it because it had become politicized. It was not simply the exploitation of Nietzsche's philosophy by the right which disturbed Friedlaender; he opposed any politicization of that philosophy, even by the left. This can be seen in his article of 1919, "Kant und die Freiheit nach Ernst Marcus," where Friedlaender offered his views of the November Revolution. While explaining the superiority of reason over nature in matters of the will, he noted the consequences of deriving the will from nature, what had actually been his philosophy until 1918.

Thus arises the horrible mistakes, namely in politics, when one would realize freedom sensually, immediately as nature, the dream of all radical revolutionaries, the practical counter-piece to the theoretical exchange of the comprehensiveness of our *Geist* with the essence of things in themselves. No, the eternal revolutionary idea of freedom has as its task the realm of nature, the realm of law, of human all to human conditions and necessity....Only the law [of reason] can give us freedom.⁶³

Long after most Expressionists felt compelled by war to embrace politics and the revolution, Friedlaender held fast to the conviction of early Expressionism: that any revolution must be foremost a revolution of *Geist* which stands above all political and social facts.

The most paradoxical of all revolutions: it is fully spiritual [*geisterhaft*]....Now begins the spiritual struggle for Person, in which the great nobody and everybody can triumph. Without this original greatness, this living balance, sociology, politics, and civilization are mere trifles.⁶⁴

The Politics of Creative Indifference

For a philosopher who prided himself on restoring the natural world to philosophy, Friedlaender had nevertheless little to say about that world or the social crises which enveloped it during the Expressionist decade. He did write a few articles about the war, but all in the light of Creative Indifference. The problem of chauvinism is treated -not surprisingly- from the polar perspective.

⁶³ Friedlaender, "Kant und die Freiheit nach Ernst Marcus," p. 145.

⁶⁴ Friedlaender, "Das Individuum und die Soziale Frage," *Die Aktion* 2 (1913) 1182-1186. See 1183 for quotation.

True patriotism avoids the pitfalls of both chauvinism and blind cosmopolitanism. Each individual participates in his or her own culture to work for eternal peace.⁶⁵ In another article, "Geist und Krieg," he explained that the cause of the war itself was rooted in the inability of peoples to regard their differences from the middle point of Creative Indifference.⁶⁶

Friedlaender is a classic example of Expressionism, the type which has frequently been criticized by historians of Expressionism for failing to consider the social causes of social antagonisms. Yet Expressionist doctrines like Creative Indifference were based, not on a sociological principle, but on a psychological principle which critics of Expressionism have often failed to take into account: Nietzsche's concept of *ressentiment*. The connection between Creative Indifference and the concept of *ressentiment* is most evident in the essay "Initiative," published in *Schöpferische Indifferenz*. Although Friedlaender does not use the word *ressentiment* in this essay (he does in other instances), the concept is an implicit aspect of his philosophy. In fact, when Creative Indifference is put into the context of social relationships, as it was in "Initiative," then the description of the indifferent person is very much the person who lacks *ressentiment* towards others.

Friedlaender's argument was that in order "to become what one is," one must develop what one already possesses. Everybody possesses genius in one way or another but a person only achieves his or her genius by developing his or her own differences minus the envy of the differences or qualities of another. This is Creative Indifference described, no longer as a cosmological principle, but now as a principle of psychological health. The simple craftsman, who enjoys his art and takes pleasure in life is happier than the millionaire who has achieved his millions from an unquenchable will to possess what others have. For Friedlaender, the achievement of Creative Indifference meant that one has crossed the border from servility to genius.

Only empty and free from all differences does one have the fullness in himself; one has reached the precondition for all mastery and has become a participant of the divine Indifferent which serves all extremes. And only when one knows himself elastically bound to this magical point, does one attempt the...game of differences. For it [this game] founds the difference between the common and the genius, whether one knows his own subject superior to all differences or submissive to them....In the first [case], is the subject anonymous, divine, genial, creative and playful; in the other, servile, grave,

⁶⁵ Friedlaender, "Der Allgemeingeist" in *Die Weißen Blätter* 2:2 (1915), pp. 252-253.

⁶⁶ Friedlaender, "Geist und Krieg," *Der Sturm* 5 (1915), p. 54.

human and dull; in the first is he clearly objective, otherwise, [preoccupied] by a biased, too great or too little interested view.⁶⁷

Friedlaender's revolution was thus spiritual, to be initiated by every individual alone. Any attempt to coercively transform other individuals or society was a betrayal of this spiritual revolution. It is for this reason that Friedlaender ceased to write for the increasingly radical *Aktion* in 1917 and made only two contributions to the more moderate *Sturm* after 1919. He even criticized Kurt Hiller's Activism for affirming an elitism that separated creators and followers;⁶⁸ each and every individual must be his or her own self-creator.

With Friedlaender against all forms of hierarchy, the question arises as to the type of government of which he would approve. To conclude from his antielitism that he was an anarchist is unfounded; he rejected the anarchist as the explosive Dionysian lacking the lawful ordering principle of Apollo.⁶⁹ The only instance in which he fully sets forth his ideas of government is in an undated and unpublished essay "Über die Form der Politik."⁷⁰ We do know that this essay was written after Friedlaender's emigration to Paris in 1933,⁷¹ thus long after his conversion from Nietzsche to Kant. Nevertheless, Friedlaender's philosophy of Creative Indifference survived this conversion. He had exchanged the primacy of nature for the authority of reason, but only to be able to continue to adhere to his belief in the responsible autonomy of man. It is therefore quite probable that the political ideas of this late essay hold as well for Friedlaender's Expressionist years.⁷²

In this essay, Friedlaender set himself against despotism and anarchy, the latter being only the despotism of the many. He expressed himself against the authority of the church in the field of education and for a federation of states to be based on the rights of nations. Reason recognized the right of property but it also recognized the necessity of its limitation in order to prevent the despotism of a plutocracy. In fact, all of Friedlaender's preferences are only, he noted, the dictates of reason. Despotism is the rule of caprice. Only a

⁶⁷ Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, pp. 272-273.

⁶⁸ Friedlaender, *Schöpferische Indifferenz*, p. 173.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 154-155.

⁷⁰ S. Friedlaender, "Über die Form der Politik," DLM.

⁷¹ Friedlaender left Berlin for Paris when the Nazis came to power in Germany. Already critically ill during the war, Friedlaender died in Paris in September 1946. See *Die Autoren und Bücher des literarischen Expressionismus*, ed., Paul Raabe (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1985).

⁷² Friedlaender expounded some of his political views in his 1922 book, published under the pseudonym Mynona, *Georg Grpsh* (Dresden: Rudolf Kammerer, 1922). The views are fully in agreement with the ideas of his later essay, although not as developed. It is therefore more advantageous to examine the later essay.

constitutional form of government is in accord with reason since it permits society "to ennoble itself to the ethical."⁷³ The form of this constitutional government is unimportant. The executive can be a monarch, a president, or a director since government itself is only an administration of the apriori laws of reason to which both the government and people are responsible.

In this late essay, Friedlaender rejected communism which puts the common good above all because it is actually reason which should be above all. Reason does not dictate altruism but only the harmonization of altruism and egoism. Likewise, Christian love is to be moderated as well as the philosophy of the anti-Christian Nietzsche who favors the strong ego. (Thus, in Friedlaender postrevolutionary interpretation of Nietzsche, even the poet Nietzsche no longer recognized the principle of balance.) The idea of the collective, according to Friedlaender, is only an abstraction. But here, Friedlaender was thinking, not just of communism, but of the causes of his own experience as a Jew in exile.

Moreover, this collective, to which the individual is sacrificed, so much as he belongs to it, is, in truth then, only a majority. But the [rational] law...values the single subject exactly as the others; it relinquishes the notion of the collective or herd to the sheep....If one does not hold to the *personal* and neutral law, rather deforms it to a herd principle, then one infects the law in an ethically racist way, i.e., immorally. One saves himself the trouble of the personal moral valuation in that one suddenly ennobles the masses and disposes of the human beings: example, Aryans privileged before Jews.⁷⁴

In spite of his own experience, though, Friedlaender still rejected the right of revolution. When reason succumbs to despotism, the only lawful recourse is the freedom of the pen. Revolution is an act of nature, not reason. It lowers the oppressed to the level of his oppressor. Even at this late date, Friedlaender rejected political action as a means to counter political oppression. His belief that the pen could win out against Hitler's sword reflected his continuing faith in mankind's potential nobility under the tutelage of reason. Writing in the most irrational hour of European history, Friedlaender unabashedly remained an advocate of Expressionism's rational new man.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 7.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 18.

Chapter Six

The Rejection of Politics II: Anselm Ruest and *Der Einzige*

Over the portal of our time stands not that
Apollonian "Know Yourself" but "Realize
Yourself!"

Max Stirner,
Der Einzige und sein Eigentum.

What does your conscience say? -- "You shall
become the person you are."

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 270.

There are a number of similarities between the philosophy of Salomo Friedlaender and the ideas of his cousin Anselm Ruest, presented in his journal *Der Einzige* between 1919 and 1925. Friedlaender, in fact, was co-editor of *Der Einzige* in 1919, the only year Germany's postwar inflation allowed the monthly to be published regularly. In his philosophy of Creative Indifference, Friedlaender occasionally employed his cousin's contrast between the *Einzige*, an individual securely in possession of his own personality, and the *Einzelne*, the dependent person lacking self-knowledge.

Ruest, an adherent of the philosophy of Max Stirner, borrowed the term from the latter's *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (*The Ego and his Own*), first published in 1845. Stirner was a significant influence on a number of Expressionists and it is for this reason that it is worthwhile to examine Ruest's philosophy in spite of its similarities with Friedlaender's. Many of the Expressionists saw Stirner as a predecessor of, if not the inspiration for, Nietzsche. This association provided an alternative basis for interpreting Nietzsche other than Julius Langbehn's influential *Rembrandt als Erzieher* which appropriated Nietzsche for the cause of nationalism and Germany's conservative revolution.

There is another reason for examining Ruest's philosophy as well. Far more willing to address political and social issues than his cousin Friedlaender, Ruest turns the individualist's perspective of early Expressionism

against the November Revolution and the political activities of the Expressionists themselves. Moreover, Ruest did not repudiate Nietzsche like Friedlaender. His critique of the November Revolution is based not on Kantian rationalism, but on a cultural critique imbibed from Nietzsche and Stirner.

From Stirner to Nietzsche

The starting point for understanding Ruest's perspective is a review of Max Stirner's *The Ego and his Own* (1845), a polemic against the utopian socialism of Moses Hess and Wilhelm Weitling and, more importantly, against the Young Hegelians to which Ludwig Feuerbach, Bruno Bauer, Karl Marx, and Stirner himself belonged. The Young Hegelians were students of the philosopher Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel who transformed the master's philosophy in a radical direction after his death in 1831.

Stirner went beyond mere radicalization of the Hegelian legacy: he rejected it completely. If Hegel had argued that ideals derived from reason had to adjust to the realities of the world and the Young Hegelians had argued that the world had to adjust to ideals, Stirner argued that ideals are altogether ridiculous. The humanist atheism of Feuerbach merely transformed religious precepts into moral ones. Bruno Bauer's liberal idealism concealed egoism under the banner of humanism and the rights of man. The idealist socialism of Moses Hess and the young Karl Marx only reproduced, according to Stirner, the eschatological attitude of Christianity in secular form.

The beautiful dream of a "social duty" still continues to be dreamed. People think again that society gives what we need, and we are under obligation to it on that account, owe it everything. They are still at the point of wanting to serve a "supreme giver of all good"....Society, from which we have everything, is a new master, a new spook, a new "supreme being," which "takes us into its service and allegiance."¹

In contrast to ideals, which have no basis in reality, Stirner opposed complete egoism.

Away, then, with every concern that is not altogether my concern! What's good, what's bad? Why, I myself am my concern, and I am neither good nor bad...My concern is neither the divine nor the human, not the true, good, just, free, etc., but solely what is mine, and it is not a general one, but is unique (einzig), as I am unique. Nothing is more to me than myself!²

¹ Max Stirner, *The Ego and his Own: The Case of the Individual against Authority*, ed. James Martin, trans. Steven T. Byington (New York: Libertarian Book Club, 1963), p. 122.

² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Denying validity to all political movements, *The Ego and his Own* fell into obscurity after 1848, and remained so during the years in which the Bismarckian state took form. Only towards the end of the nineteenth century did a Stirner renaissance take place, in part because of the growing fame of Nietzsche. Their philosophies were constantly compared and everywhere it was asked if Nietzsche had not perhaps read Stirner and withheld the information to protect his own claim to originality. Eduard von Hartmann, whose book *The Philosophy of the Unconscious* had been attacked by Nietzsche in the latter's second Untimely Meditation, claimed in 1891 that Nietzsche must have been aware of Stirner since Stirner was treated in the very book by Hartmann which Nietzsche had attacked.³ In 1904, a French scholar demonstrated that Nietzsche's favorite student at Basel, Adolf Baumgartner, had borrowed Stirner's *Der Einzige* from the university library, while in 1906 Nietzsche's closest friend Franz Overbeck was to recollect that Baumgartner had borrowed the book on Nietzsche's recommendation.⁴ Anselm Ruest also joined the fray in his own biography of Stirner, published in 1906.⁵ After reviewing the controversy, Ruest concluded that Nietzsche had read Stirner but withheld mention of him in his writings because he feared that while it was "a positive philosophy which yearned for life," it was apt to be "misused by many readers as a justification of petty crimes and cowardly misdeeds."⁶ Ruest's conclusion has much to do with the way he viewed the philosophies of Nietzsche and Stirner: they were different, but permitted synthesis. Both Nietzsche and Stirner had recognized that true freedom comes only by being true to oneself. Only Nietzsche, however, had suspected the danger in depriving most people of their gods and their universal truths. He therefore postponed true individualism by making it a condition achievable only by a future group of *Übermenschen*. Individualism was then, for Nietzsche, an ideal to be striven for. The consequence of this, according to Anselm Ruest, was that Nietzsche created his own new god even as he destroyed all others.

³ Eduard von Hartmann, *Ethische Studien* (Leipzig: H. Haacke, 1898), p. 61.

⁴ Albert Levy, *Stirner et Nietzsche*, (Paris: Société nouvelle de librairie et d'édition, 1904); Franz Overbeck, "Erinnerungen an Friedrich Nietzsche," *Die Neue Rundschau* 1 (1906), p. 227-228; see also Carl Bernoulli, *Franz Overbeck und Friedrich Nietzsche: Eine Freundschaft* (Jena: Diedrichs, 1908), 1:151-153. See also the documentation to the controversy in Curt Paul Janz, *Friedrich Nietzsche: Biographie in drei Bänden* (Munich, Vienna: Carl Hanser, 1978-79), vol. 3, pp. 212-213, 343-345. Janz, unfortunately, does not settle the issue.

⁵ Dr. Anselm Ruest, *Max Stirner: Leben, Weltanschauung, Vermächtnis* (Berlin, Leipzig: H. Seemann, 1906).

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 306.

By the same token, then, truth for Nietzsche is not simply a matter of being what one is, as for Stirner. Stirner is more the philosopher, Nietzsche more the artist. His *Übermensch* is the artist who shapes his truth, who "can hold it in abeyance -- that it may no longer have anything in it oppressive, painful, crude; that one must learn to dance, soar with the truth, in order to partake of that entirely heavenly taste of that deep eternity of joy, of which the bliss of art [is] always a foretaste."⁷

Based on this distinction, Ruest was a champion of Stirner's philosophy more than Nietzsche's. Stirner, also the cleverer psychologist, recognized that altruistic instincts were natural to man, even to one who deserts Christian culture in favor of his own self. Being autonomous for Stirner meant, according to Ruest, avoiding bondage to foreign truths as well as the rule of the senses and desires. Apparently disagreeing with his cousin Friedlaender's pre-1918 opinion on this point, Ruest believed that Nietzsche completely rejected altruism as devitalizing because of its seemingly implicit tie to the Christian epoch. Instead, Nietzsche created a new metaphysic for his overman, the eternal recurrence, by which one acts as if one's deeds had an eternal character. His maxim: "Become what you are" meant that one is sovereign only so long as one struggles with oneself in order to continually recreate oneself. One is never what one is, only continually on the way.

No survey of the Stirner renaissance at the end of the nineteenth century would be complete without the mention of John Henry Mackay. Mackay brought Stirner's doctrine solidly into the vocabulary of the anarchist movement in Germany with his novel *Die Anarchisten* (1891) and with the first biography of the philosopher, *Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (1898). Mackay was responsible for splitting the anarchist movement in Germany which had hitherto been a proletarian movement inclined to communism. According to Mackay, however, communism and anarchy were incompatible. As an alternative, he established the individualist anarchist movement which was characterized by its middle-class adherents, its rejection of violent revolution, and its insistence on the continued existence of private property. In a massive study on the influence of Stirner in Germany, *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft*, Hans Helms described Mackay's individual anarchism as the ideology of the *Mittelstand* (middle class), which would eventually reach its full expression in fascism.⁸

⁷ Ruest makes a comparison of Stirner and Nietzsche of this type in the biography, pp. 314-15. I have, however, drawn this quotation from an article by Ruest, "Stirner und Nietzsche," in *Der Einzige* 1 (1919), 1, p. 6, which treats the same theme.

⁸ Hans G. Helms, *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft* (Cologne: M. Du Mont Schauberg, 1966).

Helms is equally hard on Stirner and his entire heritage. Stirner was, accordingly, the first ideologist of the middle class and a precursor of fascism. His doctrine was suitable for liberals defending free trade or for the declining part of Germany's old middle class which, at the turn of the century, was defending its social and economic position against the demands of industrialization. No doubt Helms is correct and Stirner's philosophy was appropriated by these groups for their ends just as Nietzsche's was.⁹

Nevertheless, a fairer appraisal of Stirner's influence is made by Ulrich Linse in his *Organisierter Anarchismus im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871*. Linse agreed with Helms that in Mackay's individual anarchism, Stirner's philosophy became the ideology of petty bourgeois workers. Yet,

what Helms overlooks is the fact that precisely the bohemian intelligentsia, during the imperial period and the Weimar Republic, saw in Stirner their teacher and under the instigation of Mackay and prepared by the Nietzsche cult, read his writings, too difficult for the worker, in the original...So it follows, that the intelligentsia among the German anarchists contrasted sharply in their ideology from the remainder of the movement.¹⁰

Among the bohemian intelligentsia Linse counts not only Anselm Ruest and Salomo Friedlaender, but also Gustav Landauer, Erich Mühsam, Oskar Maria Graf and Georg Schrimpf among others. Their battle for human rights (*Menschenrechte*) irrespective of class, education, and against the prevailing morality and censorship regulations enforced by the state distinguished the bohemian ideology from the petty bourgeois attempt to protect an economic position.¹¹

On this issue, Anselm Ruest is perhaps his own best witness. In the conclusion of his biography of Stirner, he defined the goals of "the Stirner-Nietzsche movement of the 1890s as

⁹ The study is nevertheless a tendentious work which seriously misrepresents both Stirner's philosophy and those of his later adherents who attempted to develop an antiauthoritarian alternative to the political movements of the period prior to and succeeding the First World War. Helms ignored Stirner's critique of morality, his psychological insights, and his antiauthoritarianism which, like Nietzsche's, bore no trace of racism and was contemptuous of German nationalism. By the same token, Helm's treatment of the Stirner renaissance at the turn of the century places Anselm Ruest's *Der Einzige* in the same class as Mackay's individualist anarchism, failing to mention the fact that several articles in *Der Einzige* reject Mackay's interpretation of Stirner. See Anselm Ruest, "Gefährten brauch ich, und lebendige - nicht tote Gefährten und Leichname" and Gerhard Lehmann's "Anarchismus -- Individualismus" in *Der Einzige* 1 (1919), 23/24, pp. 266-267 and 1 (1919), 21/22, pp. 253-254 respectively.

¹⁰ Ulrich Linse, *Organisierter Anarchismus im deutschen Kaiserreich von 1871* (Berlin: Dunker & Humblot, 1969), pp. 106-107.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 84-105.

endeavors in the interest of the free unfolding and development of the personality; as a consequence of this: attacks against the archaic school system, against the millennium-long bondage of the woman, against the amalgamation of state and religion; and on the other side, propaganda for a -- be it scientific or be it artistic and aesthetic -- revaluation of notions of good and evil.¹²

Ruest warned that it was against the very meaning of Stirner's and Nietzsche's philosophies to turn them into social programs. Stirner would have rejected the anarchists' attempt to take his philosophy into their service just as he rejected Proudhon's anarchism and the liberal movement of his day. The unification of any group around an ideal belies the basic principle of Stirner and Nietzsche: to become one's individual self. As Nietzsche had written: "Companions I need, living ones -- not dead companions and corpses whom I carry with myself wherever I want to. Living companions I need, who follow me because they want to follow themselves -- wherever I want."¹³

The Early Years of Anselm Ruest

The name Anselm Ruest was actually an anagram of Ernst Samuel who was born in 1878 into a Jewish family of Culm in western Prussia. Unfortunately, little is known about his childhood years. Between 1897 and 1902 he studied theology and oriental languages, then philosophy and literature in Berlin, receiving his degree in Würzburg. Upon graduation, Ruest joined the bohemian literary circles of Berlin, establishing close friendships with Victor Hadwiger and Paul Scheerbart, two early Expressionists who died before the movement was fully underway.¹⁴

In 1911 Ruest was, along with Hiller, one of Pfemfert's closest friends and participated in the founding of *Die Aktion*. Like Hiller, he was to break with Pfemfert for ideological reasons, this time as early as 1912.¹⁵ While we have no information as to the particular grounds of this conflict, we can infer that Ruest objected to the increasing politicization of *Die Aktion*. Ruest's *Der*

¹² Anselm Ruest, *Max Stirner: Leben, Weltanschauung, Vermächtnis*, p. 331.

¹³ Ibid., p. 332; Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*, first part, Prologue, 9.

¹⁴ Victor Hadwiger died in 1911, Scheerbart in 1915. For Ruest's acquaintance with them, see Fritz Max Cahén, "The Alfred Richard Meyer Circle" in *The Era of Expressionism*, ed. Paul Raabe, trans. J. M. Ritchie (Woodstock, N.Y.: Overlook Press, 1974), p. 104 and Emil Szittyá, *Das Kuriositäten-Kabinett: Begegnungen mit seltsamen Begebenheiten, Landstreichern, Verbrechern* (Nendeln: Kraus, 1973), pp. 157-161.

¹⁵ See the letter from Ruest's widow, Frau Sacco Ruest, dated 1960 to Dr. Paul Raabe; The letter is in the personal possession of Dr. Raabe.

Einzige rejected the politicization of Expressionism as a whole and, in fact, his next move after *Die Aktion* was into the apolitical circle of Alfred Richard Meyer.

The Meyer circle, which existed until the First World War, championed Expressionism's literary revolution while avoiding the political side of the movement. Meyer's own publishing house was among the earliest to give support to a number of rising stars among the Expressionists, including Gottfried Benn, Iwan Goll, Georg Heym, Rudolf Leonhard, and Max Herrmann-Neisse. Anselm Ruest was an editor for one of the organs of the circle, *Die Bücherei Maiandros*, a bimonthly journal which first appeared in October 1912. The third book of this series contained a philosophic treatise on aesthetics by Ruest entitled "Apollodorus: Über Lyrik ein Dialog." This dialogue, as well as the work of the Meyer circle in general, has recently been studied by Roy Allen in his *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles*.¹⁶ Because of the relevance of the dialogue to the reception of Nietzsche by Ruest in particular and Expressionism in general, it would not be amiss to review briefly Allen's conclusions.

The dialogue takes place in the nether world between Kebes and Apollodorus, former pupils of Socrates. The references to the eternal recurrence and to Dionysus and Apollo indicates that this is Nietzsche's Socrates upon whom the conversation turns. Yet Socrates is not pictured here as the villain of history who established the predominance of reason at the expense of the passions, as Nazi interpreters of Nietzsche have done in order to sustain their view of him as the philosopher of irrationalism. Socrates is credited with establishing the appropriate mean between Dionysus and Apollo.

All of his [Socrates] efforts, as he often said, were directed at achieving the finest blend possible, the mean, the mathematical marriage of sensuality and reason. And is it not reported that on the day of his death he wanted to bear witness to the fact that he no longer conferred the role of guide through the obscure life upon the sober powers of reason and the conceptual faculty, but thought that possibly the words of poetry were alone capable of achieving the so remorselessly sought mean of life?¹⁷

This mixture, according to Apollodorus, is the criterion for good poetry which he credits only the Expressionists as having achieved. All previous poetry of the Christian era had been burdened with a morality that placed an

¹⁶ Roy Allen, *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983), pp. 153-172; Anselm Ruest, "Über Lyrik ein Dialog," *Die Bücherei Maiandros*, Book 3, (February 1, 1913), pp. 1-38.

¹⁷ Ruest, "Über Lyrik ein Dialog," p. 3; cited and translated by Allen in *Literary Life in German Expressionism*, pp. 165-166.

"incorporeal spirit above the flesh," declaring the latter profane and contemptible.

Slowly, slowly the more recent and younger poets are extricating themselves from a curse which for thousands of years has made their bodies seem disgusting to them. However, it is only the truly young and most recent generation that is completely free and untouched by any perverse, traditional notions of good and evil.¹⁸

As Allen concluded at the end of his summary of Ruest's dialogue, it "ties in with Expressionism in two, quite obvious respects."

Firstly and most obviously, it holds forth as exemplary, the work of poets from the Expressionist camp; and secondly, and more significantly, it agrees, in its espousal of a philosophy and an aesthetic involving the idea of a "synthesis" of intellect and emotion and the cheerful and forthright acceptance of all varieties of human experience with key features of the programmes (sic) of "*Der Neue Club*", the *Sturm* circle and with a large body of similar theoretical statements penned by writers associated with the same community.¹⁹

When we recognize the Nietzschean content and vocabulary of the dialogue, we recognize as well that Nietzsche became for this generation the source, not of the "destruction of reason," but for its recreation in a higher and bolder synthesis.

Little is known about Ruest's activities during the war. An unpublished letter to Erwin Loewenson of June 23, 1917 indicates that he served with the German armed forces at Cüstria, south of Dresden on the present Czechoslovakian border and that he was extremely desperate to find some pretext for a transfer to Berlin.²⁰ Where or how he experienced the November Revolution, we do not know. We only know that as of January 19, 1919, the date of the first issue of *Der Einzige*, Ruest was quite critical of both the war and the revolution. These two phenomena were intimately related for Ruest, though not in a causal way as one might expect.

Der Einzige

Der Einzige-- also the blond beast -- relies only on himself. He stands on hard individualist ground and struggles against every mass-suggestion and mass-psychosis. He is of the view that a rescue out of the bewildering present

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 37 and pp. 167-168 respectively.

¹⁹ Allen, *Literary Life in German Expressionism*, pp. 167-168.

²⁰ The letter is contained in the *Loewenson Nachlaß* at *Das Deutsche Literaturarchiv* in Marbach, Federal Republic of Germany.

into a clearer future is to be found again only in an appeal to the ego (*Das Ich*), by returning to individualists like Stirner and Nietzsche whose ideas he will, before all else, develop and further build upon.

Thus ran the advertisement for *Der Einzige*, a variant of which appeared in almost every issue. It was the failure of people to rely on their own individual selves that Ruest saw as the cause of the First World War, not the ambitions of Germany's ruling class for greater markets and access to natural resources.

According to Ruest, people seek their own importance not in their own qualities but in adherence to foreign ideologies as nationalism or socialism. The consequence is a war of ideologies, a battle to overcome the evil ones in order to permit the creation of paradise. The Germans fought for the special German way, for German philosophy from Kant to Hegel. The allies fought for justice, freedom, and equality. Ruest thought of both of these ideologies as disguised variants of Christianity. Like Christianity, both ideologies aim at the repression of the ego in favor of ideals. Both oppose their own morality to the morality of the other side as a justification of their armies of "self-defense." The human instinct for conquest is never confronted since it is concealed under the fear of a supposedly hypocritical and ruthless enemy.²¹

It is his association of German and English ideology with Christian morality that caused Ruest to express amazement at the allegations stemming from England that Nietzsche, the most anti-Christian and immoral philosopher, was in any way responsible for the war. On the contrary, Ruest believed that Nietzsche's philosophy held the key to end all wars and he referred to an aphorism from *Human all too Human* in support of this belief.

The means to real peace.— No government nowadays admits that it maintains an army so as to satisfy occasional thirsts for conquest; the army is supposed to be for defence. That morality which sanctions self-protection is called upon to be its advocate. But that means to reserve morality to oneself and to accuse one's neighbor of immorality, since he has to be thought of as ready for aggression and conquest if our own state is obliged to take thought of means of self-defence.... This is how all states now confront each other: they presuppose an evil disposition in their neighbor and a benevolent disposition in themselves. [Yet] perhaps there will come a great day on which a nation distinguished for wars and victories and for the highest development of military discipline and thinking, and accustomed to making the heaviest sacrifices on behalf of these things, will cry of its own free will: "we shall

²¹ These arguments are made in "Nietzsche zu dieser Zeit", "Rund um das Ich", and "Und es kommt vielleicht ein großer Tag" in *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 1, pp. 6-7; 3 (1921) 1, pp. 37-38; 3 (1921) 3, pp. 105-107.

shatter the sword"- and demolish its entire military machine down to its last foundations. *To disarm while being the best armed*, out of an *elevation* of sensibility- that is the means to *real* peace which must always rest on a disposition for peace....As is well known, our liberal representatives of the people lack the time to reflect on the nature of man: otherwise they would know that they labor in vain when they work for a "gradual" reduction of the military burden.²²

This aphorism from one of Nietzsche's early works indicates how Ruest and other Expressionists interpreted the doctrine of power which Nietzsche developed in his later writings. A greater power than that exercised over others was the power which one exercised over oneself. In the context of individualism, power meant the ability to resist ideologies which sanction actions undertaken out of fear or interest. The feeling of power one receives by adhering to causes was, by Ruest's reckoning, of a much lower order.

It was because of this conception of strength that Ruest scoffed at pacifist movements which emerged in Germany after the war. It was another ideology which attempted to convince England and France to break the sword after Germany had already been forced to do so. True pacifism can only be the attitude of the strong. Germany's postwar conversion occurred out of weakness.²³

Ruest was not, however, against action for a cause. Every *Einzige* must first establish his own cause and a coalition with other egos is possible only after that process is complete. The war was not the individual cause of any *Einzige*, as proven by the moral justifications and false collective feeling needed to foment support. The journalist wrote about "our brothers in the trenches"; the poet celebrated the sacrifices of mothers and soldiers. And Ruest saw no abatement in the postwar period where in the peace negotiations "the old *Herren*" spoke of their feelings for the dead and their hopes for the children and the grandchildren.²⁴ In actuality, the journalists, the poets and the diplomats deceive themselves as well as the people.

...The barbarous poet -- perhaps he admitted to you that he has, to his own amazement, never lost his appetite over the dreadful mass misery of which all the newspapers write; he has never personally known your anxiety....If he does not feel himself a brother, why does he say he is? Lies! And how! Could not the torrent of words, the lies, the phrases have brought all this

²² Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human*, part two, "The Wanderer and his Shadow," 284. Italics in the original.

²³ Ruest does not, unfortunately, indicate to which pacifist movements he refers. See "Und es kommt vielleicht ein großer Tag," *Der Einzige* pp. 106-107.

²⁴ See the articles "Aber lügt nicht zu sehr" and "Die Lüge am Friedentisch" in *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 5, pp. 49-52 and 13, pp. 145-148.

trouble into the world, since we have never at all tried to call things by their right names, to look them solidly in the eye, not to mention to find the cure for this real sickness? Is it then possible that a "world war" would have come to an end if one passionately and blissfully stood before the mere height and breadth of his words?²⁵

For Ruest, the adherence to a morality of the good constituted the greatest hypocrisy. It denied the evil side of man.

Why not instead be honest, true to experience: that human beings carry in themselves the "nucleus," the bud for every conceivable bestiality -- likewise, an incontestable yearning for the good.... So the exclusively valid and significant question becomes how exactly can the will to good alone be strengthened and made victorious.... By lies, however, this inherent drive of human beings is not strengthened. But have we then cause to assume that, on the contrary, one will be led to a realization of the good through the timely uncovering and exposing of truths, by tearing away all masks and specters from the basis of human nature, from the ego?²⁶

Man can break with his violent history only by recognizing the bestial side of his personality and by admitting that moral principles are only ideologies used to justify acts of conquest and tyranny. Yet, would not the destruction of morality itself provide for the free reign of our most violent drives. Ruest answered no.

The ego... consists fundamentally, not only of drives; it also has its steadfast regulator: reason. And it [reason] will be that which finds out for me the respective best by a continuous weighing and balancing out of all compulsions to action (a function of the destruction of lies and the finding of truths). Thus Stirner rightly claimed: it is not the actual, but the deluded egoism alone, that is, the deceived deceiver who consistently must take himself for something other than he is, who needs the lie (for example the "good men"); he certainly has brought most of the misfortune into the world.²⁷

Here we see that Ruest interpreted Stirner in the same way that the Expressionists in general interpreted Nietzsche. The destruction of morality was not an invitation to barbarism; nor was there any "destruction of reason" going on here. Morality itself was the destruction of reason in that it prescribed the values by which one should act, or rather justify one's actions, instead of permitting the autonomy by which every individual could make his or her choices, choices based on a combination of genuine desire and reason.

²⁵ Ruest, "Aber lügt nicht zu sehr," p. 50.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 51.

²⁷ Ibid.

In "Die letzte Revolution" Ruest applied these same objections against morality to criticize the November Revolution. Socialist leaders have set up a new god and a new banner around which their followers gather like sleepwalkers. There is no difference for him between marching against capitalism and marching into war. It is a self-deception to believe that the leaders of the socialist movement are any less self-interested than the leaders of Germany's war effort. They may be, Ruest noted, but why be dependent on a movement when one can depend on one's self.

Proletarians of all lands unite -- yes unite if you can; be nothing really but proles, created things, successors, empty existence.... But you are more, much more. Every individual among you is a vital, infinite source of power, wealth, ability, talent, striving.... And you trembling bourgeois, you wretched possessor of goods, dukes, barons who now, with teeth chattering, knowingly lament your property, your interest dividends, capital, cattle, pigs, houses and furniture: ugh, the devil -- are they really all your possessions? Then I advise you moreover: throw them away, the sooner the better; throw the garbage into the street.... Then you will be able to prove whether you actually don't possess more -- that is, to understand possession. "I have founded my affair on nothing" -- not only did Max Stirner write so, he thought and acted so and was thereby the first individual and fully consequential revolutionary in the world, the same who already criticized ad absurdum the teachings of Marx, who nevertheless... instigated the most premature victory, The last, greatest, truest revolution must first consummate itself in each one, in each *Einzige*; instead of that, we threaten again to get stuck half way. For that reason: on guard against every new idol, against bondage and enslavement.²⁸

The last few sentences of the above quotation indicate a point which is more clearly made in other articles. Ruest was not against socialism per se, but only against the belief that people can become socialists simply by adhering to socialist or Christian ideals instead of themselves.

Socialism you say is your issue -- but it is not an issue at all; it stands not at the beginning -- is perhaps the final end. As beginning, it means simple prematurity, a belief in the senses.... In contrast, the ego: each one prudently beginning, by himself, to question his inner being, not the senses.²⁹

Thus Ruest, like many Expressionists of the same individualist persuasion, is able to appeal to Tolstoy, whose socialism relied in "no way on others, on the Bible, on Christ, but rather on... egoism, precisely on the deepest self-possession (*Selbsteigenheit*) and self-recollection (*Selbstbesinnung*).³⁰

²⁸ Ruest, "Die letzte Revolution," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 1, p. 4.

²⁹ Ruest, "Getrennt marschieren -- vereint schlagen" in *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 8, p. 87.

³⁰ Ruest, "Diogenes und seine Laterne," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 10, p. 116.

The reservations Ruest held toward socialism were likewise applicable to the incipient Weimar democracy, which he contrasted with democracy as Walt Whitman meant it. Weimar democracy signified the rule of a majority at the expense of the individual. Walt Whitman meant by democracy "a people consisting of individuals embodying the essential, not the deceived ego, fleeing lies and glowing in truth..."³¹ In other words, Ruest's vision of both democracy and socialism was typically Expressionist. Libertarian features balanced, if not outweighed, notions of community. Society was to consist of autonomous individuals who together made up a symphonic whole.

Behind Ruest's reservations toward the November Revolution lay Nietzsche's judgement that the moral ideal implied the intolerance of weakness, of *ressentiment*, whereby the non-adherent is repressed in the name of that ideal.

Enough of "love thy enemy" -- unfortunately proclaimed (and consistently only proclaimed!), to those "wretched and burdened", who maintain in their breast the desire for revenge, their *ressentiment*, in order to brew the stifling air of a century which every moment unleashes explosions.³²

But Ruest's destruction of morality was no invitation to barbarism nor is there a trace of a petty bourgeois attempt to prevent his own slide into the proletariat. His diatribes against war and socialism were all part of an attempt to understand the difference between professed moral goals and the actual course of history. No Hobbesian state is foreshadowed by Ruest's egoism; rather

the deep untearable unity would reveal itself, which binds every human being with: the other, whom he superficially calls brother but has not considered him one since long ago....Not the human would be revealed to him, [but] the overhuman, namely that which towers over, watches over, reaches out over the single empirical humans beings. And so Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, admittedly hardly understood because of its bowdlerization by friend and enemy, has its deepest unity of essence with the Stirnerite ego.³³

As opposed to revolution against the ruling classes in Germany, Ruest suggested a peculiar type of civil disobedience. The powerful can simply be laughed into powerlessness.

A hundred years have forgotten to answer Napoleon's central word: power is never ridiculous. So one even today patronizes the dabbler in power instead of shaking him off in good time; perhaps so. Power is self-understood, not

³¹ Ruest, "Aber lügt nicht zu sehr," p. 52.

³² Ruest, "Diogenes und seine Laterne," p. 110.

³³ Ruest "Getrennt marschieren -- vereint schlagen," p. 88.

ridiculous so long as the rulers have at their disposal nothing but the impressive stupefying means to produce weary obedience for their commands, thus not harvesting a trace of laughter for them. But now, in spite of all this, where might the powerful at all get the crazy idea he might not be powerful, for once not obeyed, rather...would carry home mockery and ridicule.... Tower high walls and the thickest iron ramparts do not separate the seemingly least powerful from the lethal heart [*Herzstelle*] of the ruler; merely an air-thin partition prevents his unfailing absurdity from being torn down.... One may finally grasp that all power can be dissolved into nothing through a unique divine-egoistic, dionysian laugh...³⁴

The speciousness of this argument becomes obvious when it is directed to the working class. In "Die letzte Revolution," Ruest dismissed the coercive power of the ruling class and the state by the rather absurd claim that the *Einzig*e is superior to them.³⁵ The power of the ruling class is helpless before the worker who disregards the notion of class in favor of his own uniqueness. In another article Ruest does seem to concede the possibility of workers acting in unison to achieve their purpose, a view which concurred with Stirner's own.³⁶ The distinction for both Ruest and Stirner was between the *Einzelne* who adheres to a movement around a false ideal, in the hope of being emancipated by it, and the *Einzig*e who combines with others to take what he feels is due him. Nevertheless, the focus of "die letzte Revolution" and of Ruest's writing in general is that class solidarity, be it bourgeois or worker, represents an alliance of transient collective interests doomed to crumble before the *Einzig*e whose interests are genuinely his own.

"Die letzte Revolution" was subjected to a trenchant critique in an open letter to *Der Einzige* from a communist, Arthur Goldstein, who dared Ruest to print it. Goldstein argued that Stirner's individualism is itself a fixed ideal around which the so-called individualists rally. The workers, in contrast, seek their freedom neither through ideals nor at the behest of their leaders. They organize themselves to increase their power. They themselves are *Einzig*e who recognize the necessity of combination to overthrow the "great tyrant of history": capitalism. Moreover, the goals of communism cannot be refuted by Stirner since these goals are not ideals in the usual sense but are derived from

³⁴ From Anselm Ruest's unpublished essay "Napoleon Bonaparte und Paul Scheerbart," *Das Deutsche Literaturarchiv* in Marbach; cited in Harmut Geerken's *Nachwort* to the reprint of *Der Einzige* (Munich: Krause, 1980).

³⁵ Ruest, "Die letzte Revolution," p. 3.

³⁶ See Ruest, "Wo sind die Geistigen" in *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 2, p. 16 and Max Stirner, *The Ego and his Own*, p. 270-273.

Marx's analysis of the socioeconomic process.³⁷ Whether he recognized it or not, Goldstein made the valid point that Ruest's arguments against socialist ideals were based on Stirner's refutation of Marx prior to the *German Ideology*, when he was still the idealistic adherent of Feuerbach.

Ruest's reply offered nothing new save his argument that individualism cannot be a fixed ideal since its central thrust was to follow oneself and not an external idea. For the rest, he still insisted that neither capitalism nor the state could impinge on the individual who rejected such encroachment. Ruest's individualism may not have been a middle-class ideology designed to protect a declining status; it was, however, a middle-class ideology. For both the anti-*bürgerlich* bohemian and the German *Bürger* of the nineteenth century had this in common: they both sought refuge from conflict with an authoritarian regime in a philosophy of self-cultivation.

Ruest, however, viewed his own brand of individualism in stark contrast to the bourgeois individualism of the preceding centuries. This intellectual tradition has been based on a mendacious rationalism which effected an artificial separation between spirit (*Geist*) and matter. It began with Descartes who attempted to demonstrate his own existence through his own cognitive powers. The lie is implicit in this very methodology. For behind Descartes' rational proof of himself laid the implicit deference to a higher rational power, an attempt to find that bridge which links one empirical ego with all others. European rationalism sneaks God in through the back door in the disguise of reason or *Geist*.

As with Friedlaender prior to 1918, Ruest saw Kant as the most notorious example of this trend. In his philosophy, reason became a new spiritual beyond, replacing Christianity's heaven with *Geist* to which a material world can only slavishly aspire.

For what is it that one primarily fears? That an entire world newly enchanted out of the *Cogito* of Descartes...will fall asunder by the power of skepticism, a now simply fixed, prefixed thinking or reasonable world...could burst apart....Not the individual, only the "moral-reasonable" individual holds, according to Kant, this world together.³⁸

In Ruest's view, religion made man God's creation; Kant made man God's representative. Kant, and for that matter all of European rationalism, repeated the mistake of religion by not recognizing man for what he is: the creator.

³⁷ Arthur Goldstein, "Offener Brief: Der Einzige und der Sozialismus," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 3, pp. 4-5.

³⁸ Ruest, "Wo stehen wir? Oder genug des falschen Individualismus," *Der Einzige*, 3rd series, (1925), 1, p.306.

The division of the world into a spiritual and material realm, initiated by Christianity and perpetuated by European rationalism, must be stricken from philosophy and replaced by the courage to acknowledge that all we can really know is our own selves. The will replaces Cartesian rationalism as the starting point of cognition. Instead of rationalism's supernatural unity of all egos, the object of the will is to separate itself from everything that is not itself in order that the ego can become what it is.

Kant had already recognized the importance of the will, though he equated it with reason. In actuality, reason is just one part of the will, which is itself a unity of opposites and contradictions. The real revolution of philosophy began with Max Stirner who recognized our entire Christian epoch as "compulsory labor under the rule of eternal."³⁹ Nietzsche carried on this revolution with his proclamation of tragic culture to replace the Christian lie of a spiritual beyond superior to this world. Yet, this tragic culture implies no despair, rather it is "overflowingly cheerful out of the dionysian depth of life."

Here Christ -- here Dionysus, here Einzige; this is the last solution of the day: But the Einzige has first to take the ego out from under the Alp-heavy cathedrals of two millennium, has first to purify it from the filth of lies and defamation, must stand egoistically naked against all "disavowing" love-neighbor compassion. Then for the first time, his true nature is demonstrated, his purest divinity.

Despite Stirner and Nietzsche, however, the pernicious division between *Geist* and matter is perpetuated by an intelligentsia acting in Nietzsche's name. Here Ruest elaborated on the criticism of Kurt Hiller's Activist movement which his cousin Friedlaender initiated in passing. In an article "Wo sind die Geistigen", Ruest derided the Activists for fancying themselves the spiritual leaders of the workers.

Halt... We have discovered something in the great age of socialization and the brotherhood of men, what surely unites both our parties... I also call myself worker, "geistig worker," proletariat! I also call myself, yes -- geistig proletariat.⁴⁰

Out of opportunism and fear of the proletariat, Ruest charged, the Activists appointed themselves as the *geistig* leaders of men in blind revolt. In reality, Ruest claimed, there should be no separation between correct thinking and correct action, between *Geist* and matter. The true *Geist* becomes the lord of matter by acting in accordance with his true essence. His

³⁹ Ruest, "Das tragische Zeitalter," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 7, p. 74.

⁴⁰ Ruest, "Wo sind die Geistigen," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 2, p. 2.

knowledge of himself becomes automatically transposed into action. The perpetuation of the cleft between *Geist* and matter by Activism meant the continued existence of directors and directed, the failure of individual autonomy.

In support of individual autonomy, Ruest set forth his own philosophy of "Personalism" (*Personalismus*), which he at one point referred to as "true socialism within which people have ceased to be numbers or machines, much more they again become what they are: storehouses and sources of primary, mysterious, vital powers, mocking every calculation."⁴¹ The connection between Personalism on the one hand and Stirner's and Nietzsche's philosophy of self-realization should be obvious from all that has preceded.

Significantly though, Ruest refused to appeal directly to either Stirner or Nietzsche as a model for his own philosophy. Like so many other Expressionists, he felt compelled by the events of the war to distance himself from the original sources of Expressionism. One can be a too zealous Stirnerite, Ruest noted, observing how Christian moral teachings are distorted in the interest of the church, how the editor of Nietzsche's writings could recommend "to every good soldier and brave Christian a Zarathustra in the knapsack";⁴² Every philosophy is bound to be distorted and falsified in accordance with the interests of its adherents. Personalism meant that one is an adherent of no one but oneself. Other philosophers are to serve only as inspiration, a means to oneself, as Stirner was for Ruest.

"Not to possess the truth, but to be it."⁴³ This is the feature distinguishing Personalism from all preceding philosophies. Stirner and Nietzsche nevertheless served as precedents for Personalism in that they both fought against every systematization of philosophy, particularly the Hegelian. After thousands of years of attempts to create philosophic systems and to establish universal truths, it should have dawned on the philosophers that only personal, not universal, truths exist. But the absence of universal truth portends no irrationalism, is, in Anselm Ruest's words, "no advance (*Vorstoß*) against logic."⁴⁴ On the contrary, Ruest insisted that logic is the necessary prerequisite of all human life and human communication. But logic is just a tool that can be used to perpetuate a lie as well as a truth. The only real measure of the truth of an idea is to ask oneself whether that idea originates with, or enlightens me.

⁴¹ Ruest, "Über Personalismus," *Der Einzige* 3 (1921) 1st series, 1, p. 3.

⁴² Ruest, "Die Bilanz des I. europäischen Individualisten-Congresses," *Der Einzige* 3 (1919), 1, p. 5. The editor is of course Elizabeth Förster-Nietzsche.

⁴³ Ruest, "Prolegomena zum Personalismus," *Der Einzige* 2nd series, (1923/24), 1, p. 11.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

The Organization of Individualism

Thus far, we have reviewed Ruest's philosophy, as well as the philosophy he set himself against. Yet, *Der Einzige* additionally proposed concrete goals for the recreation of society. These were initially set forth by Arthur Kahane in the article most closely approaching a programmatic statement for the monthly, "Manifest eines Einzelnen." They are paraphrased below:

1. The autonomy of individuals which is to be limited only by the autonomy of others.
2. Unlimited freedom of speech, writing and thought.
3. Freedom of movement, valid today in all German speaking lands, tomorrow in the entire world; the elimination of the passport and all obligations to register one's whereabouts [*Meldezwang*].
4. Destruction of the military and the end of war in all forms. Not only should barracks and weapons disappear but also the militaristic heart and soul, the result of militaristic discipline and schooling.
5. Disappearance of the old political parties. The party system to be replaced by a working community (*Arbeitsgemeinschaft*). The state and bureaucratic police authority to be replaced by ruleless autonomy.

Despite Kahane's observation that it was against the instinct of the individual to participate in groups or parties, this is essentially what the contributors of *Der Einzige* did in their creation of the Society for Individual Culture (*Gesellschaft für individualistische Kultur*), otherwise known as the *Stirnerbund*. *Der Einzige* was the official periodical of the Society. Gerhart Lehmann was its director; he published a number of articles in *Der Einzige*, including one against the application, by Mackay's individual anarchists, of Stirner's philosophy for economic ends.⁴⁵

The first public gathering of the Society took place on May 19, 1919. Lehmann's concluding speech, reprinted in *Der Einzige*, is interesting because of its attempt to justify an organization of individualists. A society, he insisted, is not a contradiction of individualism since individualism in no way rejects the social character of the *Einzige*. The ego is capable of expression

⁴⁵ Gerhard Lehmann, "Anarchismus - Individualismus: Ein offenes Wort an die individualistischen Anarchisten zur Aufklärung," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) 21/22, pp.253-254. See also note 9 of this chapter.

only when there is an object. The human being "would go insane, he would negate himself if he wanted to tear love out of himself...Proprietor of oneself means not to separate oneself from humanity...Proprietor of oneself means much more, to use human beings, to draw advantage from them, to give in order to receive, to enrich oneself in friendship and love."⁴⁶

The reversal of Christian ethics is obvious and Lehmann went on to warn against believing the person "who, with the mask of a sheep spouts off pious phrases...(about) how good he is." Nonetheless community is still possible when it is based on common interests. "Here, our goal: we want to prove that the community of interests can make do without a form of belief, i.e. without a catechism of unity." Lehmann compared the "over-political" goals of the Society with the economic goals of syndicalism. Both want harmony without centralization.⁴⁷

The *Stirnerbund* collapsed in 1920 over a dispute between Ruest and Lehmann.⁴⁸ In its place, Ruest established a new group called *Der Einzige* and called for a Congress of European Individualists to be held in Berlin on November 25-28. At the Congress, Ruest was named director of the *Individualistenbund* (League of Individualists) which succeeded *Der Einzige* on a larger scale. This new league had offices in Berlin, Cologne, Hamburg, Leipzig, Königsberg, and Vienna. These branches were obligated to send delegates to an annual congress as well as to organize local orientation lectures and distribute the literature of the central organization.

A manifesto printed in *Der Einzige* described the goals of the league as cultural. It set its genuine individualism against the "petty bourgeois egoism which displaces the value of human beings to their earning capacity," an obvious reference to Mackay's individual anarchism. The manifesto likewise attacked socialism "which loves the abstraction: 'humanity', at the cost of real human beings."⁴⁹ The concrete goals of this manifesto differed little from those set forth in Kahane's previous manifesto, except perhaps for its emphasis on a new educational system.

The premise of this new educational system is developed most thoroughly in an earlier article by both Ruest and Salomo Friedlaender.⁵⁰ Its sources were

⁴⁶ Gerhard Lehmann, "Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für individualistische Kultur (Stirnerbund): Programmatische Schlußworte," *Der Einzige* 1 (1919), 18, p. 215.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ See Hans Helms, *Die Ideologie der anonymen Gesellschaft*, pp. 412-413; Helm's does not discuss the grounds of the dispute.

⁴⁹ "Was will der Individualistenbund," *Der Einzige* 3 (1921) 2, p. 101.

⁵⁰ "Und zum 4. Mal: Revolution - ein Schulprogramm 1 (1919) 11, pp. 121-126 & 12, pp. 136-139.

Schiller's essay "was heißt und zu welchem Ende studiert man Universalgeschichte," Stirner's "Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung,"⁵¹ and Nietzsche's "The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life." Based on these essays, Ruest and Friedlaender rejected the authoritarian rote system of learning immense quantities of useless detail in favor of a system of self-actualization. Specialization is done away with and the object of knowledge becomes the self-unfolding of the pupil. Through this self-unfolding process, passively acquired knowledge is transformed into will.

At the November Congress of Individualists a wide range of topics was discussed, from Ruest's *Personalismus* to the workers and economic question in the light of individualism. Ruest's report to the Congress, printed in *Der Einzige*, contains one of his few remarks on this latter subject. He regretted that, in the present form of the state, the workers question had come down to an issue of remuneration. For him, the real issue was a reduction in working hours. Mechanization must be augmented in every village in order to grant the worker the time necessary to educate himself since it is only through knowledge that a consciousness of oneself is acquired.⁵² Although he stated that he rejected the contemporary economic system, he proposed no alternative. It is thus a mark of his naivete on economic matters to propose increased mechanization; for with no alternative system, there is no reason to assume that employers would defer the profits of increased rationalization to their employees.

Ruest did note that Dr. Rolf Engert, a contributor of several articles to *Der Einzige*, had advocated at the Congress the economic teachings of Silvio Gesell. Gesell, who was finance minister during the Munich Soviet Republic, developed the doctrine of "free economy" (*Freiwirtschaftslehre*).⁵³ The plan called for the regulation of the money supply in accordance with demand and the nationalization of land along with the abolition of all mortgages. Capitalism was not to be eliminated but only modified by the curtailing of all non-labor incomes, such as interest and rent, so that each would receive the full benefit of his labor.

In the account of Hans G. Helms, Gesell's economic teaching was the final step preceding the conversion of the *Mittelstand* ideology into fascism.

⁵¹ "Das unwahre Prinzip unserer Erziehung" was published in *Die Rheinische Zeitung* in 1842; Ruest was familiar with it because of its inclusion in *Max Stirners kleinere Schriften*, ed. by John Henry Mackay (Berlin: Schuster & Loeffler, 1898). For Schiller's essay, see *Werke*, vol. 17, ed. by Karl-Heinz Hahn (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1970).

⁵² Ruest, "Die Bilanz des I. europäischen Individualisten-Congresses, pp. 17-21.

⁵³ Gesell's major work, *Die natürliche Wirtschaftsordnung* has been translated into English by Philip Pye as *The Natural Economic Order* (Berlin: Neo Verlag, 1929).

Other historians have been less critical.⁵⁴ It is not our intention to pronounce on the implications of Gesell's economic theory. Gesell's relationship to the *Individualistenbund* was limited to the advocacy of his theories by his champion Engert. More importantly, Ruest himself declined to declare himself on Gesell's system since he had not yet studied it and remained suspicious of systems in general. The point is that Ruest's remarks on the economic regulation of life were quite circumscribed throughout the entire life of *Der Einzige*, a fact which separated his philosophy from the interests of the *Mittelstand* even as it revealed his naivete about concrete economic frictions in society impeding his revolution of consciousness.

Yet neither Ruest's naivete on economic matters, nor his adherence to Stirner and Nietzsche, signify that his philosophy was in any way a forerunner of fascism. To insinuate so belies his own family's efforts against National Socialism⁵⁵ and ignores the most important aspect of his doctrine: it anti-authoritarianism. If a forerunner of anything, his principle of self-discovery suggests Existentialism which urges every individual to realize his or her own unique content. The time has come for historians to make an end of seeing predecessors of fascism in every philosophy which was exploited by the right. Indeed, despite the differences between the ideologies of Anselm Ruest and Gustav Landauer, the conclusion of Eugene Lunn's study of Landauer's *völkisch* romanticism applies equally as well to Ruest's own philosophy of individualism.

It has been my purpose to demonstrate that his importance for the intellectual historian of modern Germany was not so much the originality of his ideas, but, rather, the very fact of his synthesis of a pacifist, humanitarian and profoundly democratic version of anarchist socialism with the outlook of

⁵⁴ George Mosse mentions Gesell's "free-land and free-money theories" as having their place in "the *völkisch* search for a national economy that transcended both capitalism and Marxism". Allan Mitchell, in his history of the Munich revolution, is more sympathetic to Gesell while Eugene Lunn, in his biography of Gustav Landauer, noted the similarities between Landauer's and Gesell's attack on "the slavery of interest charges" which they shared with the *völkisch* ideology. See George Mosse, *Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1964), pp. 110-111; Allen Mitchell, *Revolution in Bavaria, 1918-1919: The Eisner Regime and the Soviet Republic* (Princeton University Press, 1965), p. 312; Eugene Lunn, *Prophet of Community: The Romantic Socialism of Gustav Landauer* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1973), p. 215.

⁵⁵ In 1933 Ruest emigrated with his wife and children to Paris where he cofounded the *Phoenix Bücher*. The forward to the first anthology of the series *Deutsche - Arier* (1935) was written by Ruest and broadcasted as anti-Nazi propaganda. (See the letter of Frau Sacco Ruest (dated 1960) to Dr. Paul Raabe.) Ruest's son Frank was shot by the Germans for his participation in the French resistance. Ruest himself was held in French internment camps between 1939-1940. He died of cancer in 1943.

völkisch romanticism....The domination of racist and imperialist interpretations of the ideology in the political arena should be treated as a development conditioned more by Germany's social and political growth than as a seemingly inevitable result of romanticism. If the administrative, judicial, academic, and military classes in Germany were largely oriented toward a right-wing version of the German idealist and romantic heritage, the intellectual historian need not concentrate only on their parallels among the literati.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Lunn, *Prophet of Community*, p. 343.

Chapter Seven

The End of Individualism: Nietzsche and Dada

Perhaps this is where we shall still discover
the realm of our invention,...as parodists of
world history and God's buffoons.

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, 223

Unlike Expressionism, which was primarily a movement of German-speaking lands, the Dada movement extended throughout Europe, even to New York, involving an international cast of artists and intellectuals. Yet, in its origins in Zurich and in its appearance in Berlin, Dada evolved as a movement against German culture and Expressionism. J.C. Middleton and Richard Sheppard have attempted to establish the relationship between Expressionism and Dada focusing on the latter's orientation towards communism and the disparagement of Kurt Hiller's metaphysical assumptions of a higher rationality known only to an elite.¹ Most importantly, as stressed in Sheppard's article, Dada gave up Expressionism's anthropocentric view and optimistic meliorism, only to replace it with an image of a chaotic and purposeless universe in which man must strive to maintain his balance.

Where early Expressionism sought to unify the personality through the expressive power of irrational *Geist*, the Dadaists did not believe that was possible, given the complex strands from which the personality was formed. For the Dadaists, it was a question of learning how to live amid the total resources of the personality within a fluctuating cosmos where there were no fixed signposts.²

While these articles represent important contributions to our understanding of the connection between Dada and Expressionism, they presume a unity among the Dadaists that simply was not there. Hugo Ball, the founder of

¹ J.C. Middleton, "Dada versus Expressionism or the Red King's Dream," *German Life and Letters* 15, Oct. 1961, pp. 37-52; Richard Sheppard, "Dada and Expressionism," *Publications of the English Goethe Society* 49 (1979), pp. 45-83.

² "Dada and Expressionism," p. 60.

Dada, was well disposed toward Hiller and likewise toward metaphysics and elitism. Moreover, the Dadaist objections to Hiller's Activism were themselves present in Expressionism as demonstrated by the seminal roles played in Dadaism by the philosophies of Otto Gross and Salomo Friedlaender.

The divisions between Dadaists and Expressionists, and among the Dadaists themselves, revolved around another apparent contradiction in Nietzsche's philosophy. On the one hand, Nietzsche credited artists with the creation of culture, that is the system of beliefs and values which made social life possible by giving meaning to an otherwise meaningless universe. On the other hand, Nietzsche disparaged the artist who like the priest propagates lies and stands in the way of the search for truth.³ This seeming contradiction is reconciled in Nietzsche's work as a whole by the introduction of those "philosophers of the future" who create temporal values, or goals as Hiller would have it, even as they destroy all previous transcendental beliefs.

Hugo Ball understood this reconciliation of themes in Nietzsche's philosophy as a whole, almost making the "philosopher of the future" into the backbone of the Dada movement. Yet the war-frightened Ball away from the irrational and destructive aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy and Dada, causing him to seek refuge in the Catholic faith of his childhood. In contrast, Berlin Dada incorporated many aspects of Nietzsche's skepticism and disparagement of art even as it increasingly turned against Nietzsche's elitism and individualism. The following study focuses on Hugo Ball and the Berlin Dadaists because in their writings we come to the end of the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany.

Hugo Ball and Nietzsche

Hugo Ball was born in 1886 into a large Catholic family in the Protestant town of Pirmasens in the Rhineland Palatinate. His upbringing was extremely pious; one sister eventually became a nun, and Ball himself had a picture of the Sistine Madonna above his bed which, as we are informed by his future wife Emmy Hennings, he kissed every night before going to sleep.⁴ The family was bound not just by religious devotion, but also by music. Each of the six

³ For an exploration of these two themes, see Hans Reiss, *The Writer's Task from Nietzsche to Brecht*, (London: MacMillan, 1978), chapter 1.

⁴ See Emmy Hennings' Foreword to the 1946 edition of Ball's diary *Flucht aus der Zeit*, translated as *Flight Out of Time* by Ann Raimos and edited by John Elderfield (New York: Viking Press, 1974), p. 1. This Foreword and Emmy Hennings-Ball's biography *Hugo Balls Weg zu Gott* (Munich, 1931) are the primary sources for information about Ball's childhood.

children played the piano well, and the relentless playing and singing that characterized home life was the source for Ball's lifelong fascination with music and poetry.

At age 15, Ball was forced by his parents to interrupt his education and work in a local leather factory. He continued his studies on his own, voraciously consuming the classics of literature and philosophy. As with many young people of this period, Ball's interests soon focused on the writings of Nietzsche which diverted him from his Catholic upbringing and established the issues with which he was to wrestle for the rest of his life. But the rigor of both work and study proved too much and after two years Ball suffered a nervous breakdown, recovering only when his parents conceded to allow him to continue his education at the university. Thus in 1906 Ball began his studies in a variety of disciplines in Heidelberg and Munich, preparing a dissertation on Nietzsche in 1910 which he was never to complete. The dissertation, *Nietzsche in Basel: Eine Streitschrift*, deserves careful scrutiny since it is a key to understanding Ball's later activities.⁵

The goal of Ball's dissertation is to refute contemporary conceptions of Nietzsche as an adherent of Schopenhauer or as an uncritical enthusiast for classical culture and to present him as what Nietzsche always thought himself to be: the first immoralist. Nietzsche admired Schopenhauer's pathos and sympathized with his disappointment in nineteenth-century culture. This disappointment centered on the over-rationalization and moral conventionality of this culture into which Nietzsche's philological studies of antiquity had given him special insight. When Nietzsche assumed his teaching post at Basel University in 1869, this cultural critique became the foundation of his friendship with Richard Wagner and the historian Jakob Burckhardt. It was under their influence that Nietzsche developed his notion of the philosopher as cultural reformer.

The third chapter of the dissertation presents the Basel ideal of culture. Here Ball concentrates on Nietzsche's writings leading up to and including his first published work, *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. In this work, Nietzsche made two contributions from which all his later writings flowed. His first contribution was the discovery of the Dionysian as that element of genius of Greek art and tragedy which became in Nietzsche's writings the foundation of his conception of an aesthetic culture in opposition

⁵ The dissertation was first published in *Hugo Ball Almanach*, 1978, pp. 1-61 and 1983, pp. 111-112, with notes and commentary by Richard Sheppard. It also appears in a collection of Ball's writings *Der Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit*, edited by Burkhard Schlichting (Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1984), pp. 61-101. All references are to this later edition.

to the moral culture of the nineteenth century. The second contribution was his understanding of Socratism as the appearance of decadence in Greek culture, as responsible for the suppression of the instincts or Dionysian. This appraisal of Socratism is the bridge to Nietzsche's insights into nineteenth-century culture, his recognition of its smug optimism, its scholastic science with no practical application for life, and its conventionality.

Immediately apparent from the foregoing is that Ball interpreted Nietzsche as an irrationalist far beyond the extent of other interpretations we have thus far considered. Whereas the starting point for Friedlaender's philosophy was Nietzsche's establishment of the polar relationship between reason and the irrational, between Dionysus and Apollo, Ball argued that "Socratism appears as hostility towards the instincts in connection with Nietzsche's partisanship for the Dionysian; instinct and Dionysianism become identified, Socratism rejected and combated...because the Socratic must be eliminated where the Dionysian must rule."⁶ Only a vague reference to the subjugation of the instincts appears in Ball's discussion of Wagnerian theatre, through which Nietzsche sought to build a new culture. "The ideal is: a new epoch of art unfolding out the elimination of all that stands in the way of this ideal; the emancipation of the passions, of the drives, of nature, including a correspondingly magnificent subjugation (*Bändigung*) through art."⁷

The fourth chapter of the dissertation, "Nietzsche als Immoralist," concerns Nietzsche's interest in theological questions which paralleled his interest in aesthetics. According to Ball, Nietzsche felt himself to be unsuccessful in negating the precepts of contemporary culture until his reading of Friedrich Albert Lange's *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart*.⁸ Materialism, as presented by Lange, became the foundation for Nietzsche's rejection of all teleological thinking. Socratism and Plato now appeared as the unscientific reaction to the godless and materialist interpretation of the world by the pre-Socratics, Christianity and idealism as the baseless assertion of a purpose or principle of reason operating immanently in history. Moreover, the materialist view became the basis of Nietzsche's later investigations of morality as "a half conscious, half

⁶ Ibid., p. 73.

⁷ Ibid., p. 79.

⁸ Friedrich Albert Lange, *Geschichte des Materialismus und Kritik seiner Bedeutung in der Gegenwart* (Iserlohn, 1866). Nietzsche read Lange's book in 1868. Its influence on Nietzsche is greatly exaggerated by Ball since some of the passages which he quotes or alludes to appear only in later expanded editions. See Ball, *Nietzsche in Basel*, editor's note 34.

unconscious will to power." These observations led Nietzsche to reject moral culture in favor of what he called æsthetic culture.

The quality of a culture for Nietzsche, according to Ball, is determined by its lack of fear and its ability to face up to the irrational content of nature. An æsthetic culture reverses the flight from nature into moral convention, a cowardly means for subjugating the passions. Æsthetic culture replaces morality with "the free play of nature in favor of art and the self-determination of the individual.... Another principle of value was erected: that of the creative heads instead of the obedient... that of taste instead of duty, that of personal freedom instead of personal dependency (ethical)."⁹ In Wagnerian theatre, Nietzsche, according to Ball, saw the means for the creation of a unified æsthetic national culture through the elimination of that conventional life which has obfuscated the inner content common to all German people.¹⁰

In the final chapter of the dissertation, Ball clarified the relationship between Nietzsche's Basel period and his later writings. In the later writings, the notion of a cultural reformer is transformed into the concept of the philosopher as destructive genius since the building of a new culture presupposes the destruction of the old. But, Ball quotes Nietzsche to suggest that these philosophers are not just destroyers but creators as well.

The creation of a (new) religion would entail that one awakens belief for a mythical structure filling the vacuum, i.e., that one fulfills an extraordinary need: It is improbable that this will ever happen again since the *Critique of Pure Reason*. In contrast, I can imagine a new type of philosopher-artist who puts in the void a piece of art which has æsthetic value.¹¹

One additional point needs to be noted in respect to Ball's interpretation of Nietzsche. Defenders of Nietzsche have attempted to soft-pedal seemingly anti-Semitic tendencies in Nietzsche's philosophy by noting his praise of the Old Testament and his unrelenting hostility to German anti-Semitism. By the same token, they emphasize that Nietzsche's doctrine of the Jewish slave revaluation of values, immediately preceding the Christian epoch, represented his attempt to show a continuity between Judaism and Christianity in opposition to contemporary anti-Semitic attempts to view them as separate phenomena. Ball, in contrast, emphasized that Nietzsche "sought to demonstrate how Christianity in its [original] bearing was antistatutory, anti-

⁹ Ibid., pp. 86 & 91.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 79.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 90. The quote comes from a fragment in Nietzsche's *Nachlaß* of 1872 entitled "Der letzte Philosoph." See his *Werke. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1967 ff.), vol. III/4, p. 19. The word "new" was added to the quotation by Ball.

moralistic."¹² Moreover, according to Ball's interpretation, the Judaicized Christianity that conquered Europe was foreign to the early German heathen culture which Nietzsche hoped to rejuvenate with Wagnerian art. The protean nature of Nietzsche's philosophy and his contradicting statements about Judaism ensure that the debate about Nietzsche's relationship to anti-Semitism will long continue. In respect to Ball's ideology, there are most certainly anti-Semitic strains which will become more prominent by the time of his reconversion to Catholicism.

Ball never finished his dissertation on Nietzsche. Encouraged by his friends Frank Wedekind and Herbert Eulenberg, Ball left Munich for Berlin in 1910, where he hoped to advance his ideas on cultural reform through the theatre. His articles prior to the First World War show Ball developing ideas of a non-representational theatre closely akin to the emerging Expressionist style, though he formally allied himself with Expressionism only in 1914.¹³ According to these ideas, the latest trends in the visual arts, drama, and music were to be integrated in an attempt to free men from their conventional lives and awaken them to a consciousness of their own creative powers.¹⁴

Ball's initial forays into the world of the avant-garde were, however, not entirely successful. He enrolled in the Max Reinhardt drama school but, finding himself unsuited to acting, later took a position as stage manager of the *Stadttheater* in Plauen. Disappointed by the conservative reaction of this provincial town to his innovative ideas on theatre, he returned to Munich to assume a position as playwright for the experimental theatre, the Munich *Kammerspiele*.

In Munich, Ball spent his evenings at the bohemian Café Stephanie and the Café Simplizissmus, the latter offering offbeat entertainment, frequently satirical of contemporary political affairs. At the Café Stephanie he met Richard Huelsenbeck who would later become Ball's closest friend and the person responsible for bringing the Dada movement from Zurich to Berlin. At the Café Simplizissmus in 1913, Ball met Emmy Hennings, a night-club performer who became his companion for life. That same year Ball also met the radical Hans Leybold. The two shared an enthusiasm for Nietzsche, and

¹² Ball, *Nietzsche in Basel*, p. 93.

¹³ For the date of Ball's adherence to Expressionism, see his "Totenrede" in *Die Weißen Blätter* 2 (April 1915), pp. 525-528; reprinted in *Die Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit*, pp. 25-28. All references are to the reprint.

¹⁴ On Ball's prewar ideas on the theatre, see his "Aphorismen," *Jugend*, Vol. XVIII, No. 13, (17 March 1913), p. 363; "Das Münchener Künstlertheater," *Phöbus*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (April 1914), pp. 68-74; "Wedekind als Schauspieler," *Phöbus*, Vol. 1, No. 3 (June 1914), pp. 105-108; "Das Psychologietheater," *Phöbus*, Vol. 1 (June 1914), pp. 139-40.

Leybold introduced his new friend to *Die Aktion* in which Ball soon began to publish. Yet the increasing political orientation of *Die Aktion* was at odds with the notion of aesthetic revolution which both Ball and Leybold imbibed from Nietzsche, and the two promptly founded their own periodical *Revolution*. This periodical was no less iconoclastic than *Die Aktion*. Indeed, the first issue, containing Ball's poem "Der Henker," was confiscated after the police judged the poem to be obscene. Ball later defended the unpolitical stance of *Revolution*.

Someone said in Berlin: "what kind of revolution are you making in Munich? There's not a word about politics in it." "Right," said Leybold; "not a word of politics. What can we do?" Five minutes later we were confiscated with number 1. "Wait a minute," I said to him. "There is not a word of socialism, no welfare for the elderly, no home for mothers, no red cross. And Rosa Luxemburg will not contribute, nor Frau Zetkin. But politics, confound you," we said in unison. "Is that anything but the teaching of means with which one makes an idea prevail. And if our idea- yes we say it- is *Geist*, is it not our politics to make *Geist* prevail." Under *Geist* we understand everything which is directed against the backside, against digestion, and against the finance heart. Every fanaticism in opposition to every dream and inner life. Every anarchy in opposition to every political favoritism.... Our goal was: *geistig* conspiracy for the purpose of making *geistig* values prevail.¹⁵

This apology of *Revolution* must be treated with a degree of suspicion, as Brian La Mont Harris has already pointed out.¹⁶ The notion of *Geist* seems at odds with the aesthetic revolution projected in Ball's dissertation and in *Revolution*, and indeed the apology was written in 1915, a year after Ball had distanced himself from Leybold and "went over to Expressionism."¹⁷ The notion of *Geist* in the writings of other Expressionists did not necessarily imply an adherence to metaphysical ideas of a transcendental spirit, which, in terms of Ball's dissertation, would be an unaesthetic flight from nature. In fact, the *Geist* in Expressionism frequently referred to the courageous person who could act in a world without any transcendent meaning. Yet Ball came to Expressionism not through Friedlaender or Ruest but through Wassily Kandinsky. An analysis of this relationship will reveal that Ball's conception of *Geist* marked the beginning of a dramatic turn from the aesthetic revolution he adhered to in his dissertation on Nietzsche.

¹⁵ Hugo Ball, "Totenrede," pp. 25-26.

¹⁶ See Brian La Mont Harris, *Hugo Ball's Critique of the German Mind: A Translation with Introduction and Notes to Hugo Ball's Zur Kritik der Deutschen Intelligenz* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Texas, Austin, May 1969), pp. 61-64.

¹⁷ Ball, "Totenrede," p. 27.

Ball met Kandinsky in 1912, though the latter's influence appears to become decisive only in 1914, after the waning of Ball's relationship with Leybold. The two planned to establish an international society of the arts and considered writing a book together to be called *Das neue Theater*. This new theatre incorporated Kandinsky's conception of monumental art, a theory particularly attractive to Ball since it involved a revision of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk* which had interested Nietzsche as the means to cultural regeneration. Kandinsky's revision, then, is an important indication of the extent to which Ball was revising his own ideas.

According to Kandinsky, Wagner's *Gesamtkunstwerk* was simply impressionist art, a product of the materialist doctrines of the nineteenth century. At best Wagner achieved a harmony of the separate arts by making the external movement of one art subordinate to the external movement of another; for example, dramatic movement in Wagnerian theatre becomes subordinate to the music. In Kandinsky's view, each artistic form contained in a total work of art should be subordinate, not to the external requirements of another form, but to its own inner necessity, thus creating an internal harmony of all arts despite a seemingly external anarchy.¹⁸

Kandinsky's notion of inner necessity and its importance as a means of combating the materialist ideologies of the nineteenth century are most thoroughly elaborated in his famous work of 1910, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*.¹⁹ In this treatise he describes his time as a period "when religion, science and morality (the latter by the strong hand of Nietzsche) are shaken and when the outer supports threaten to fall...."²⁰ Into this vacuum stepped "the nightmare of materialism" which has undermined the possibilities of believing in any spiritual values. Yet Kandinsky insisted that an objective basis existed for spiritual life despite the bankruptcy of contemporary values. The artist could recover that spiritual life by listening to the mystic inner resonance [innerer Klang] within his artistic object, his materials, the form of his representation and his own psyche. Inner necessity was the process of the artist listening to the movement of this objective spirit, his art, the way of communicating this movement to the public. In other words, artists were the new priests of new spiritual values which they divined in their own creative

¹⁸ Wassily Kandinsky, "On Stage Composition" in *The Blaue Reiter Almanac*, ed. Klaus Lankheit (New York: Viking Press, 1974), pp. 190-206. This is an English translation of *Der Blaue Reiter Almanach*, ed. Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc (Munich: R. Piper, 1912).

¹⁹ Translated and edited by Hilla Rebay as *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Solomon R. Guggenheim Foundation, 1946).

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

personalities and through their exclusive ability to detect the inner life of the spirit in the world around them.

In going over to Expressionism in 1914, Ball effected a kind of synthesis of Kandinsky and Nietzsche which continued to center on the irrationalism that would ignite individualism and a turn from the conventional life. In 1913, before his adherence to Expressionism, Ball advocated an art that aimed "to redeem the world through intoxication and fire."²¹ Likewise, in an article of 1914, "Das Psychologietheater," Ball declared his support for Expressionism "which with insane debauchery finds the individual personality again and whose dictatorship proclaims the most fundamental (*hintergründigster*) self-creation. Theatre as adventure, as high lyricism."²²

The continuity of Ball's thinking on this point, however, belies other important changes. The intent of "Das Psychologietheater" is to champion Expressionism over the psychological theatre which preceded it. Psychologism, Ball noted, peaked with Nietzsche, Dostoevsky, and Ibsen. It was the requirement of those who hoped to overcome the repressive enslavement of the body and soul by Christianity but by virtue of its determinism and ascetic principles, it only reproduced the same moral constraints it hoped to combat. It could analyze morality, but it could not overcome it.

As early as his dissertation, Ball had drawn a link between Nietzsche's psychological observations and his materialism; and it was a common position in Expressionism to reject both. This did not necessarily imply a rejection of Nietzsche, but rather a sympathy with his *Übermensch* who stood above psychological motivations, an ability which in the more egalitarian Expressionism became the potential of every person through an explosive release of vital energy.

Yet Ball's adherence to Kandinsky's brand of Expressionism suggests even a more radical turn from his earlier ideas of aesthetic revolution. Beyond the continued assertion of irrational intoxication as the means to self-creation, Ball's diary entry in November 1914 reveals his belief that "we must break with the system of reason, because a higher reason exists." Like Kandinsky, Ball now assumed a transcendent spirit; but whereas for Kandinsky the role of the artist was to detect and communicate that spirit to the public, Ball believed the spirit to be accessible by the artist's unleashing of man's irrational powers. The same diary entry continues further on: "It should be left

²¹ Ball, "Aphorismen," *Jugend*, p. 363.

²² Ball, "Das Psychologietheater," *Phöbus*, 1:3 (1914), p. 139-40; republished in *Die Künstler und die Zeitkrankheit*, pp. 19-20.

to the unconscious to prove to what extent a man might have had reason. Follow instinct more than intention."²³

It was only after the beginning of the war that a major revision of Ball's thinking took place, away from Nietzsche and in favor of Kandinsky. The war brought home a new meaning of the irrational, compelling Ball to recognize that the instincts were not the way to the spiritual but its very antithesis. As he wrote in November 1915: "...there is still the question of how the world of archetypal images can be defended and protected against the universal urge of the instincts."²⁴

This transformation of Ball's philosophy did not occur immediately upon the outbreak of the war. At first he volunteered for the army, only to be rejected for medical reasons, and he apparently believed the war to be that irrational catharsis of society he was seeking.²⁵ Yet, he began to change his views after an unauthorized visit to the Belgian front in November 1914. That experience, and the later fall in battle of his friend Leybold, converted Ball to pacifism, convincing him that the war was itself a product of the same mendacious and over-rationalized society he opposed.

In Dieuze I saw the first soldiers' graves. Fort Manonvillers had just been shelled, and in the rubble I found a tattered Rabelais.... You know, I would like to understand, to comprehend. It is the total mass of machinery and the devil himself that has broken loose now. Ideals are only labels that have been stuck on. Everything has been shaken to its foundations.²⁶

From the front, Ball went on to Berlin where, as with many Expressionists, political commitment began to overshadow art as the means of changing the world. His letters and diaries reveal his frequent contact with Franz Pfemfert who was instrumental in Ball's reassessment of war and in his rapid conversion to the anarcho-socialism of *Die Aktion*. He read Kropotkin and Bakunin, the latter becoming of particular importance to Ball who as early

²³ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 25. XI 1914, pp. 11-12. My analysis here is indebted to Richard Sheppard's article "Kandinsky's Early Aesthetic Theory: some Examples of Its Influence and some Implications for the Theory and Practice of Abstract Poetry," *Journal of European Studies* 5 (1975), pp. 19-40. My analysis disagrees on certain points with Sheppard's, which argues that Ball began to view art in spiritual terms only after the beginning of the war.

²⁴ Ball, *Flight out of Time*, 17. XI. 1915, pp 47.

²⁵ See his article "Neue Kriegsmappen im Goltzverlag," *Zeit im Bild* 13 (1915), pp. 95-96. This article appeared after Ball had already turned against the war. As Philip Mann points out, the article may have been written prior to his change of attitude. See Mann's "Ball and Nietzsche: A Study of the Influence of Nietzsche's philosophy on Hugo Ball," *Forum for Modern Language Studies* XVI, 4 (1980) p. 299.

²⁶ Ball, *Flight out of Time*, XI. 1914, p. 10-11.

as early as April 1915 contemplated writing a book about him.²⁷ Yet, despite his enthusiasm for anarchism and socialism, Ball's interest quickly centered, not on the economic triumph of the proletariat, but on a revolution of *Geist*. "For only in political ways can things be made to prevail which are more important than politics....My politics concern only the spiritual...(dem Geistigen)."²⁸

Ball's conception of *geistig* politics may have resulted in part from his contact in Berlin with Kurt Hiller. Indeed, when the conflict between Pfemfert and Hiller broke out in 1915, Ball immediately sided with the latter "because Hiller despite everything has *Geist*, but Pfemfert none."²⁹ It was his disappointment with *Die Aktion* and the impossibility of any *geistig* action in wartime Germany which prompted Ball's decision to leave for Switzerland.³⁰ In May, with forged papers, and in the company of Emmy Hennings, Ball travelled to Zurich where the two spent the next eight months living in abject poverty. The distress of indigence and life as an illegal alien led in October to what was probably a suicide attempt by Ball.³¹

Poverty and privation were not the only grounds for Ball's despair. If we can trust his diary, Ball experienced in Switzerland a profound psychological crisis as he reconsidered his irrationalistic philosophy in light of the war. In this self-analysis Ball frequently referred to both Nietzsche and Bakunin and there is a curious parallel in the way he treats them both. For Ball, Bakunin and Nietzsche were both anarchists, the former in the political sphere, the latter in the intellectual. Moreover, Ball was originally attracted to each because of their common notion that destruction is at the same time a creative act.³² Destruction without creation, whether it be in the form of cultural

²⁷ See Ball's letter of April 9, 1915 in "Hugo Ball an Käthe Brodnitz: Bisher unveröffentlichte Briefe und Kurzmitteilungen aus den Dada-Jahren," edited by Richard Sheppard, *Jahrbuch der deutschen Schiller Gesellschaft*, xvi (1972), 40.

²⁸ Letter to Maria Hildebrand-Ball, March 13, 1915 in Hugo Ball, *Briefe, 1911-27*, ed. Annemarie Schütt-Hennings (Einsiedeln, Zurich, Cologne, 1957), 40-41.

²⁹ Ball, letter to Käthe Brodnitz, April 9, 1915, p. 41.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ The attempted suicide is hinted at in Ball's diary, X.1915, p. 41. See also Elderfield's introduction to *Flight Out of Time*, p. xix.

³² Ball, it will be remembered, advocated the philosopher as destructive genius in his Nietzsche dissertation. As late as 1919, despite his increasing distance from Bakunin, Ball was still able to affirm Bakunin's statement from "The Reaction in Germany": Let us therefore trust the eternal spirit which destroys and annihilates only because it is the unfathomable and eternal source of all life. The passion for destruction is a creative passion, too." Ball quotes the statement in his 1919 *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz* (Bern: Der Freie Verlag, 1919), p. 131.

criticism or proletarian revolution, had become anathema to Ball, which is why in June he renounced pure anarchism of every sort.

I have examined myself carefully. I could never bid chaos welcome, throw bombs, blow up bridges and do away with ideas. I am not an anarchist. The longer and farther I am away from Germany, the less I am likely to be one.³³

Ball's original enthusiasm for Bakunin and Nietzsche was based on his own assumption of the natural goodness of man which had been subverted by Germany's overrationalized culture. His increasing distance from Nietzsche and Bakunin during the war years resulted from his growing doubts about that assumption.

About the natural goodness of man we can say that it is possible but it is certainly not a rule. This goodness feeds mostly on a more-or-less known store of religious education and tradition. Viewed without prejudice and sentimentality, nature has for a long time not been so totally benevolent and orderly as one might wish it to be.³⁴

Ball would continue to champion both Bakunin and Nietzsche during the war years but only in so far as to affirm their attacks on Germany's politics and culture. Indeed, in an article appearing in the Swiss communist periodical *Der Revoluzzer*, Ball praised Nietzsche and Bakunin as "the two responsible thinkers of the last five decades who rejected the German as a type."³⁵ The article is particularly important because it clearly shows what part of Nietzsche Ball could no longer accept.

When one reproaches the Germans that they haven't understood their Nietzsche (and his many-sided critique of morality, philosophy, religion, idealism), they quote "Zarathustra" (the most useless book ever written) and "The Will to Power", instead of "Ecce Homo", "Daybreak" and "The Case of Wagner...."³⁶

The three works which Ball affirms are those in which Nietzsche most vehemently attacks German culture. *Zarathustra* and *The Will to Power* are dismissed, the former a fundamental source of Expressionist irrationalism, the latter, Nietzsche's most nihilistic work. Ball was attempting to draw a line

³³ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 15.vi.1915, p. 19.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ball, "Die junge Literatur," *Der Revoluzzer* 1 (1915), No. 10, p. 3.

³⁶ Ibid.

between Nietzsche's criticisms of Germany's mendacious religion and idealism and his nihilist destruction of all morality and spiritual beliefs.³⁷

The entries in the diary prior to Dada show Ball attempting to salvage old values instead of destroying them. Bakunin and Nietzsche are both criticized for their atheism, which in the latter's case led to his creation of a destructive psychology on a purely biological or materialist foundation.³⁸ In contrast, Ball began favorably to consider religiously inspired anarchists of Russia, or Thomas Münzer, the leader of the sixteenth-century German peasant revolt in Germany. "They see Christ as a nihilist. As a son and a rebel, he had to set up antitheses."³⁹

Ball was not yet ready to return to Christianity. He recognized, in his diary, that priests and aristocrats have used religion to enslave the humble. "In the last resort all the complaints of the age are directed against the priests. One feels that freedom could emerge...well, if the church itself was not so entangled in the mechanism."⁴⁰ Nor was Ball completely ready to give up the critical and irrational aspects of Nietzsche's philosophy which were necessary for overthrowing the corrupt values of his day. He wrote at the end of 1915:

Before morality can be restored, there must perhaps be a restoration of nature in a fantastic sense. The question remains, how far what is usually called morality is subject to general growth and decay and is thus not morality at all.⁴¹

It was considerations like these which caused Ball to take one more gamble on Nietzsche's artist-philosopher, on Dada, for "perhaps it is necessary to have resolutely, forcibly produced chaos and thus a complete withdrawal of faith before an entirely new edifice can be built on a changed basis of belief."⁴²

³⁷ I am indebted to Philip Mann for pointing this article out to me but I am in partial disagreement with his analysis of the same quotation. Mann argues that Ball was dismissing Nietzsche's irrationalism while trying to preserve his critical works. Yet in his dissertation, Ball identifies *The Will to Power* as the notes to Nietzsche's main critical work (*Nietzsche in Basel*, p. 92). In this article he is against this work which is critical of all religion and for those which are specifically anti-German. Thus the next sentence of the article likewise reproaches Germans for appealing to Bakunin without being familiar with his "anti-German" *The Knouto-Germanic Empire*.

³⁸ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 4.xii.1914 and 16.x.1915, pp. 12-13 & 34.

³⁹ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 12.xii.14, p. 14. Ball had written an article on Münzer and considered writing a book on him. See "Der große Bauernkrieg 1525," *Zeit im Bild* 13, no. 5 (1915), 105-109; letter to Käthe Brodnitz, April 9, 1915, p. 40.

⁴⁰ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 8.vii.1915, p. 25.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 17.xi.1915, p. 47.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 8.iv.1916, p. 60.

The Origins of Dada in Zurich

Hugo Ball opened the Cabaret Voltaire on February 5, 1916 at the Holländische Meierei Café at Spiegelgasse 1 in the old quarter of Zurich.⁴³ The name itself is indicative of Ball's continuing adherence to the critical side of Nietzsche's philosophy. Voltaire, of course, was one of Nietzsche's own heroes and Ball noted in his later *Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz*, that it was Nietzsche who first "swung Voltaire's whip in Germany."⁴⁴ The cabaret, Ball wrote in his diary, "is our Candide against the times. People act as if nothing had happened. The slaughter increases, and they cling to the prestige of European glory."⁴⁵

Less can be said about the origins of the word Dada because of the competing claims of the various members of the movement to have discovered the word.⁴⁶ What can be said is that Ball did not intend to found a new art movement. The name Dada was not invented until at least April 1916. Ball's February press notice announcing the opening of the cabaret invited "young artists of Zurich, whatever their orientation...to come with suggestions and contributions of all kinds."⁴⁷

Among those who showed up that first evening were the Rumanian poet and painter Tristan Tzara and Mariel Janco and the German painter Hans Arp. Richard Huelsenbeck arrived on February 11 and together with Ball and Emmy Hennings the six comprised the core of the Dada troupe in this first stage.⁴⁸ Again, there was nothing particularly new about Dada as an art form. Ball's diary indicates that the initial performances were quite eclectic, consisting of readings from a wide selection of modern poetry. Even the *Cabaret Voltaire Almanach* which appeared in June contained selections from a wide range of modernists in addition to original works by the Dadaists themselves.

Ball himself described the Cabaret only as "an artists' nightclub in the style of Simplizissmus, but more artistic and with more purpose."⁴⁹ That

⁴³ The owner of the café apparently welcomed Ball's cabaret as a means of improving business. See John Elderfield's introduction to Ball's *Flight Out of Time*, pp. xxii-xxiii.

⁴⁴ Ball, *Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz*, p. 153.

⁴⁵ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 16.vi.1916, p. 67.

⁴⁶ The competing claims are most comprehensively set forth and analyzed in John Elderfield, "Dada: A code for Saints," *Art Forum* 12 (1974), pp. 42-47.

⁴⁷ See *Flight Out of Time*, 2.ii.1916, p. 50.

⁴⁸ Ball's diary, p. 51, dates Huelsenbeck's arrival on the 11, though the date is open to dispute. For the significance of the dispute and two varying views, see "Hugo Ball an Käthe Brodnitz," p. 50, note 53; Hans Georg Kemper, *Vom Expressionismus zum Dadaismus: Eine Einführung in die dadaistische Literatur* (Kronberg: Scriptor, 1974), p.17.

⁴⁹ Letter to Käthe Brodnitz, January 27, 1916, p. 50.

purpose was "to draw attention across the barriers of war and nationalism, to the few independent spirits who live for other ideals."⁵⁰ Such attention was drawn by outlandish performances intended to shock the audience into an awareness of the hypocrisy and conventionality of the bourgeois lifestyle. Arp described a typical performance.

Total pandemonium. The people around us are shouting, laughing, and gesticulating....Tzara is wiggling his behind like the belly of an Oriental dancer. Janco is playing an invisible violin and bowing and scraping. Madame Hennings, with a famous Madonna face, is doing the splits. Huelsenbeck is banging away nonstop on the great drum, with Ball accompanying him on the piano, pale as a chalky ghost.⁵¹

The absurdity was, as Ball noted in his diary, a protest against an age which has lost all respectability.

What could be respectable and impressive about it? Its cannons? Our big drum drowns them. Its idealism? That has been a laughing stock in its popular and its academic edition. The grandiose slaughters and cannibalistic exploits? Our spontaneous foolishness and our enthusiasm will destroy them.⁵²

Yet for all their attempts at provocation, Dada invented no new art form. Its principal poetic techniques, bruitism and simultaneity, had already been explored by Futurism.⁵³ Even Ball's sound poetry (*Lautgedichte*) had precedents in German poetry; yet Ball considered himself the inventor of a new genre of poetry, and his intentions signify a new phase in his turn from Nietzsche to Kandinsky. His description of the debut of his sound poem in June, at the last performance of the cabaret, is thus worthy of exploring in detail.

I have invented a new genre of poems, "poems without words" or sound poems, in which the balance of the vowels is weighed and distributed solely according to the values of the beginning sequence. I gave a reading of the

⁵⁰ Ball, Introduction to *Cabaret Voltaire*. Quoted in Hans Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, trans., David Britt (New York: Harry Abrams, 1965), p. 14.

⁵¹ Hans Arp, "Dadaland" in *Arp on Arp: Poems, Essays, Memories* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 234. Arp is actually describing Janco's 1917 oil painting *Cabaret Voltaire*. A reproduction of the painting appears in Hans Arp and Richard Huelsenbeck, *Dada in Zürich: Bildchronik und Erinnerungen der Gründer* (Zurich: Sanssouci, 1957), p. 20.

⁵² Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 14.iv.1916, p. 61.

⁵³ Bruitism introduced into poetry sounds of everyday life. The simultaneous poem was, in Ball's words, "a contrapuntal recitative in which three or more voices speak, sing, whistle, etc., at the same time in such a way that the elegiac, humorous or bizarre content of the piece is brought out by these combinations. See *Flight Out of Time*, 30.iii.1916, p. 57. Contemporary accounts vary when explaining what Dada hoped to achieve by the use of these techniques. For a scholarly appraisal as well as an analysis of the Nietzschean themes in Dada poetry, see Hans-Georg Kemper, *Vom Expressionismus zum Dadaismus*.

first one of these poems this evening. I had made myself a special costume for it. My legs were in cylinder of shiny blue cardboard, which came up to my hips so that I looked like an obelisk. Over it I wore a huge coat collar cut out of cardboard, scarlet inside and gold outside. It was fastened at the neck in such a way that I could give the impression of winglike movement by raising and lowering my elbows. I also wore a high, blue-and-white-striped witch doctor's hat....Everyone was curious. I could not walk inside the cylinder so I was carried onto the stage in the dark and began slowly and solemnly:

gadji beri bimba
glandridi lauli lonni cadori
gadjama bim beri glassala
glandridi glassala tuffm i zimbrabim
blassa galassasa tuffm i zimbrabim...

...Then I noticed that my voice had no choice but to take on the ancient cadence of priestly lamentation, that style of liturgical singing that wails in all the Catholic churches of East and West. I do not know what gave me the idea of this music but I began to chant my vowel sequences in a church style like a recitative, and tried not only to look serious but to force myself to be serious. For a moment it seemed as if there was a pale, bewildered face in my cubist mask, that half-frightened, half-curious face of a ten-year-old boy, trembling and hanging avidly on the priest's words in the requiems and high masses in his home parish. Then the lights went out, as I had ordered, and bathed in sweat, I was carried down off the stage like a magical bishop.⁵⁴

Ball's sound poetry was clearly his extension of Kandinsky's doctrine regarding the artistic recovery of spiritual values. In *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, Kandinsky distinguished between the representational function of the work and its "pure sound which we may hear unconsciously, when in harmony with the real, or abstract meaning of the object. In the latter case, this pure sound comes to the fore and directly influences the soul."⁵⁵ While Ball's poetry went beyond the limited abstraction that Kandinsky had recommended in his essay, it nevertheless attempted to awaken a higher spiritual dimension, uncorrupted by materialism and hypocrisy.

We tried to give the isolated vocables the fullness of an oath, the glow of a star. And curiously enough, the magically inspired vocables conceived and gave birth to a new sentence that was not limited and confined by any conventional meaning. Touching lightly on a hundred ideas at the same time without naming them, this sentence made it possible to hear the innately

⁵⁴ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 23.vi.1916, p. 70. For an analysis of this poem and other sound poetry see Kemper, *Vom Expressionismus zum Dadaismus*, pp. 149-204.

⁵⁵ Kandinsky, *Über das Geistige in der Kunst*, p. 28.

playful but hidden, irrational character of the listener; it wakened and strengthened the lowest strata of memory. Our experiments touched on areas of philosophy and of life that our environment -- so rational and precocious -- scarcely let us dream of.

Yet, it is significant that it was not Ball the artist or philosopher that emerged from his first public reading, but Ball the magical bishop. That statement is an important clue to understanding Ball's imminent withdrawal from Dada and his eventual conversion to Catholicism. There are a number of other clues as well, in Ball's diary entries and letters from this period, which indicate that Ball was reaching a decisive stage in his critique of his own irrationalistic philosophy.

In the first place, Ball was disturbed by the divisions within the core group of Dada, a movement which from the beginning had no unifying theme. In a diary entry of May, Ball noted the shifting constellations among the six main personalities whereby "Arp and Janco join forces against H[uelsenbeck], then H[uelsenbeck] and Tzara against Arp, etc."⁵⁶ Ball and Huelsenbeck, though, seem to have had their greatest problem with Tzara's attempt to turn Dada into a school. For the former two, "art is not an end in itself...but it is an opportunity for true perception and criticism of the times we live in..."⁵⁷ Yet, that objection concealed Ball's deeper ambivalence about Dada which emerged at the group's first public soiree in July, also Ball's last public appearance before his break with the group. Here he read his Dada manifesto which was, he confessed in his diary, "a thinly disguised break with friends."⁵⁸ For Ball, Dada was:

An international word. Just a word, and the word a movement. Very easy to understand. Quite terribly simple. To make of it an artistic tendency must mean that one is anticipating complications. Dada psychology, dada Germany cum indigestion and fog paroxysm, dada literature, dada bourgeoisie, and yourselves, honored poets, who are always writing books with words but never writing the word itself, who are always writing around the actual point. Dada world war without end, dada revolution without beginning, dada, you friends and also-poets, esteemed sirs, manufacturers, and evangelists. Dada Tzara, dada Huelsenbeck,, dada m'dada, dada m'dada dada mhm, dada dera dada, dada Hue, dada Tza.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ *Flight Out of Time*, 24.v.1916, p. 63.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.iv.1916, p. 68.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.viii.1916, p. 73.

⁵⁹ Ball, "Dada manifesto," July 14, 1916; printed in translation as an appendix to *Flight Out of Time*, p. 220.

The linking of Dada, psychology, German fog paroxysm, the bourgeoisie, and the world war all in one passage implies that Ball began to identify the nihilistic side of Dada as a German tendency that was itself responsible for the war. This is not a fantastic reading of an obscure Dada diatribe; it is confirmed by a number of sources. Hans Richter's personal account of the movement attests to the fact that Ball and Tzara were the two opposing poles of Dada, Tzara the nihilist destroying all values, Ball the religious idealist interested in destruction only in so far as it led to new higher values.⁶⁰ Ball's own sound poetry was the only aspect of Dada which recalled the collective memory of those higher values even as Tzara's nihilism destroyed the old ones.

Ball's letters after his withdrawal from Dada confirm this analysis more clearly than any reference to his manifestos or the obscure ramblings of his diary. He wrote Tzara from Ascona in September:

I have another system now. I want to do it differently....I declare hereby that Expressionism, Dadaism and other isms are the worse [type of] bourgeoisie. All are bourgeoisie, all bourgeoisie. Evil, evil, evil.⁶¹

Twelve days later, Ball wrote again to thank Tzara for a review of Dada by a French critic.

He is right. The Cabaret Voltaire is useless, bad, decadent, militaristic, what else I know [not]. I don't want to do it any more....No more "blasphemy", no "irony" (that is dirty, vulgar), no more satire (who has the right?), no more intelligentsia....But: to make salutary things against the great German pestilence. No more force, no more violence.⁶²

The French critique of Dada continued to disturb Ball, driving him to the conclusion that his own aesthetic philosophy, spawned in German philosophy, was just another type of German militarism. He wrote his friend August Hoffman in early October.

I have also quickly reeducated myself about Dada, which I founded myself....In this respect, the French and their critique of the "cabaret" were in large measure responsible. They said a German did it in order to make propaganda for his people. He is a blasphemer and that means he is a decadent and this decadence is the consequence of a pressing militarism. Thus I lost the desire. I prefer instead to investigate how far they are right. And to seek an antidote against the purported decadence.⁶³

⁶⁰ Richter, *Dada Art and Anti-Art*, pp. 35-44.

⁶¹ Ball, *Briefe*, September 15, 1916, pp. 62-63.

⁶² *Ibid.*, September 27, 1916, pp. 63-64.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, October 7, 1916, p. 66.

Apparently Ball's preliminary investigation cleared Dada for he returned to Zurich in late November and by January began to participate in the *Galerie Dada*, the latest Dada project. Yet, his diary entries just prior to his rejoining the movement suggest important shifts in his thinking. He was no longer willing to accept that art stood opposed to religion as Nietzsche had claimed.⁶⁴ In fact, he concluded, that one could "make moral out of aesthetic phenomena by taking art simply as the basis of judgments. Nowadays such a thing is happening within art itself: art is being changed into philosophy and religion in its principles and on its very own territory."⁶⁵

This idea is precisely the theme of Ball's lecture on Kandinsky which he delivered at the *Galerie Dada* on April 7, 1917. In this lecture, Ball upheld the spiritual role of the artist advocated by Kandinsky who is here praised for his origins in Russia, the land of Christian romanticism. That is not to say that Ball had completely given up Nietzsche. Indeed, the latter's influence is still extremely evident in the Kandinsky lecture, in Ball's analysis of the times.

God is dead. A world disintegrated. I am dynamite. World history splits into two parts. There is an epoch before me and an epoch after me. Religion, science, morality-- phenomena that originated in the states of dread known to primitive peoples. An epoch disintegrates. A thousand year old culture disintegrates....The transvaluation of values came to pass. Christianity was struck down. The principles of logic, of centrality, unity, and reason were unmasked as postulates of a power-craving theology. The meaning of the world disappeared....Chaos erupted.⁶⁶

It is unnecessary to point out the numerous paraphrases from Nietzsche's writings in this passage in order to conclude that Ball was still influenced by Nietzsche's analysis of the intrinsic tendency of modern culture toward nihilism and the consequences of his own philosophy. But unlike in Ball's early writings, the artist no longer promotes the apocalypse. Here the artists

are forerunners, prophets of a new era....They stand in opposition to society, as did the heretics in the Middle Ages. Their works are simultaneously philosophical, political, prophetic. They are forerunners of an entire epoch, a new total culture.⁶⁷

Ball had found a new basis for Dada in assigning the artist both a spiritual and a politically active role in society. He had, however, not resolved his disagreements with Tzara and it was not long before the two locked horns

⁶⁴ Ball, *Flight Out of Time*, 4.xii.1916, p. 94.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.ii.99.

⁶⁶ Ball, "Kandinsky," translated and published as an appendix to *Flight Out of Time*, pp. 222-234 (223).

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 225.

again. "The dissatisfaction", wrote Huelsenbeck, "ended in a battle between Tzara and Ball, a real bullfight among Dadaists, carried on, as such fights always are, with every resource of impertinence, falsification, and physical brutality."⁶⁸

Once again Ball withdrew from Dada, this time for good, and retreated into the countryside. Having given up his aesthetic philosophy, he now turned his attention completely to politics. In September 1919 he went to Bern where he joined the staff of *Die Freie Zeitung*, a radical newspaper consisting of contributions against German militarism, largely written by German emigres. In November, René Schickele, the editor of *Die Weißen Blätter* suggested that Ball write a book about German intellectuals. Ball jumped at the idea, finishing the manuscript in little more than a year.⁶⁹

Ball was able to finish *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz* so rapidly because the contents of the book were already to be found in seminal form in the diary entries he made throughout the war. It is a fascinating diatribe against the German state and the German intelligentsia which are held entirely responsible for the war. In addition, the book shows the continuities and discontinuities in Ball's thinking since the Nietzsche dissertation. Accordingly, the authoritarian state is itself a product of a German-Jewish conspiracy since the time of Luther. Luther, in his rebellion against the medieval papacy, handed power over to corrupt feudal princes by his reliance on the principles of Jewish despotism embedded in the Old Testament. The result was the disappearance of the humane content of Christianity, a "devaluation of values," which enabled the Prussian king to put God in the service of conquest and morality in the service of the state. This analysis is a politicized version of his Nietzsche dissertation. Only here, unlike in the dissertation, he condemns German heathenism as well, suggesting only that Luther's Old Testament despotism was foreign to the original Christian character of the Germans.⁷⁰

The rest of German history is a series of tragic concessions to authoritarianism. Kant was the next intellectual to sacrifice freedom on the alter of the Prussian state. His doctrine of intelligible freedom was the

⁶⁸ Richard Huelsenbeck, *En Avant Dada: Eine Geschichte des Dadaismus*. Originally published in 1920, all references will be to the English translation in *The Dada Painters and Poets*, edited by Robert Motherwell (New York: Wittenborn, 1951), pp. 21-44 (34).

⁶⁹ Schickele backed out of publishing the book after he had seen Ball's exposé. Ball established *Der Freie Verlag* in order to publish it himself. See *Flight Out of Time*, 9.XI. and 14.XI.1917, p. 143; 12.II.1919, p.159.

⁷⁰ Ball, *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz*, pp. 166-167.

cowardly surrender of real freedom, his doctrine of duty an enslavement of the citizen to the regime. Hegel sold his integrity for academic tenure by identifying his "World Soul" with Prussia. Even Marx benignly neglected the political and moral revolution for the economic one. His own authoritarian personality and doctrine of economic centralization did not serve to elevate mankind, but only to advance the Prussian-Jewish conception of the state.

While the rest of Europe laid the foundation for real freedom in the French Revolution and the Christian awakening of the nineteenth century, German philosophers conspired with their rulers against progress by bringing Germany more firmly under the hegemony of Prussia. Certainly some intellectuals resisted the trend. First and foremost was Thomas M nzer, the leader of the German peasant war who, in contrast to Luther's dogmatic reliance on biblical texts, stressed individual communication with God and fought to secure power for the people. In the nineteenth century, romanticism represented the heights of Christian militancy against the state even if it eventually declined into a flight from this world into a world of inner spirituality. The most noble romantic for Ball was Franz von Baader who "with deep ties to the orthodox spirit of Russia," taught that the "prince of peace" resides only "in the repentant, humble spirit, and broken hearts, but not in their brains, books, and universities."⁷¹

Ball's anti-Semitism is unfortunate, his Christian socialism indicative of certain reactionary tendencies. Nevertheless, we can not overlook the overall liberal thrust of the *Kritik*. The racial nationalism of Chamberlain and Treitschke is as much the butt of Ball's contempt as Jewish theology.⁷² Luther's infamy, he explicitly stated, was to prevent Germany from taking the lead in developing liberal civilization and thereby becoming a forerunner of revolutionary France.⁷³ And just as Ball here transformed the attack on Luther of the Nietzsche dissertation into political terms, so he revealed the political meaning of the Expressionist cultural critique which had long been concealed in aesthetic categories. The critique of language is now explicitly directed against hypocritical religious and political sophistry which has only served the interests of the state.⁷⁴ The attack on reason and morality is here aimed against that reason and morality, which in the hands of Hegelians and priests, became the tools of Prussia's ruling classes.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 140. Ball claimed to be quoting Baader though he was unable to account for the source of the quotation. See note 32.

⁷² Ibid., p. 16.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 36.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 125.

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp. 120-121.

These criticisms of German culture may be rooted in the cultural critique which Ball and Expressionism imbibed from Nietzsche, but the *Kritik* nevertheless demonstrates how far Ball had traveled from his old mentor. Whereas in the dissertation Ball approved of Nietzsche's contempt for Christianity, in the *Kritik* Ball attacked only corrupt Christianity and pointedly called for a "new good and evil."⁷⁶ While Ball once defined culture as self-creation within a harmonious whole, now culture is "intervention in behalf of the poorest and most humble, as if from them the highest and most heavenly is born."⁷⁷ The philosopher as destructive genius, championed in the dissertation, is replaced by a "*geistig* elite, those rare, few human beings who communicate their experiences and their results with a view to a higher reason."⁷⁸

In fact, Nietzsche received one of the harshest evaluations of the *Kritik* which disavows the unity Ball had earlier seen in the philosopher's development. He still praised the early Nietzsche, the follower of Schopenhauer, whose *The Birth of Tragedy* prophesied a tragic culture and the dissolution of individuality in dionysian intoxication. But the later Nietzsche extended his attacks against the Church to Christianity itself and against the human virtues of compassion and brotherly love. He made egoism and the pursuit of self-interest into a new morality and consequentially played into the hands of despotism.

He hoped to strike at the confusion of the instincts, the lack of a sense of distance, German servility, and preferred in his delusion to keep to the arrogance of Prussian codes of breeding and discipline rather than with the hierarchical order of rank of the Catholic Church and the spiritual discipline of the monks. He believed he shook the deathlike sleep of the world while depriving Teutonism of its last restraints of conscience and he unwillingly became the herald and the grave digger of those raging hyenas with bright blue eyes and sadistic creases around their twisted mouths who are now inciting and whipping up national passions for reasons of philosophy.⁷⁹

The debate continues today as to whether Nietzsche was a prophet of German militarism or an exponent of existential responsibility. Yet Ball's *Kritik* is hardly an objective contribution to that debate. His path from Nietzsche paralleled his path from Dada which, in his mind, had unwittingly

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 11.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 38.

⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 14.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 227.

become an agent of the German decadence it was designed to combat.⁸⁰ As with Salomo Friedlaender, Nietzsche's irrationalism and skepticism of moral values were for Ball the remedy against a hypocritical and servile society. But they both became convinced that same morality and reason were the only things preventing society's complete self-destruction. Whereas Friedlaender fled skepticism to reason, Ball ultimately took refuge in the Christian faith of his childhood.

After finishing the *Kritik*, Ball paid several visits to Germany, where his disappointment with the results of the revolution convinced him of the futility of any further political activity. In February 1920, he and Emmy Hennings were married and a few months later Ball converted to Catholicism. Emmy Hennings described her joy at receiving the sacraments at her husband's side for the first time. "...I think that this was the most precious moment of our life together. We had found the ground that held us."⁸¹

Richard Huelsenbeck and the Founding of Berlin Dada

With Ball's departure, Tzara consolidated his authority over Zurich Dada. "The Dada movement is launched" he wrote in his "Zurich Chronicle" for the date July 1917, thus conspicuously making the period under Ball's leadership into a mere prologue of the real movement.⁸² With his announcement in the *Dada Manifesto 1918* that "Dada means nothing" the movement completely took on the nihilistic perspective that so terrorized Ball.⁸³ After the arrival in Zurich of Francis Picabia, who brought with him a host of connections to other European avant garde groups, Tzara succeeded in turning Dada into a European movement, finally transferring the headquarters of Dada to Paris in 1920 where the movement continued until 1924 when it was superseded by Surrealism.

Under Tzara's leadership, Zurich Dada lost its original preoccupation with German affairs and therefore an investigation into Nietzsche's influence would go beyond the scope of this study. Instead, we shall follow Richard Huelsenbeck back to Berlin where Dada became a movement directed against German culture, this time including Expressionism among the perpetrators of

⁸⁰ Significantly, Ball quotes in his *Kritik* Italian views placing Nietzsche and Treitschke together as exponents of German Napoleonism, just as his views of Dada were influenced by French criticisms. *Ibid.*, p. 132.

⁸¹ Emmy Hennings-Ball, Foreword to *Flight out of Time*, p. 1V.

⁸² Tristan Tzara, "Zurich Chronicle" in *Dada Painters and Poets*, pp. 235-242.

⁸³ Tristan Tzara, *Dada Manifesto 1918*, in *Ibid.*, pp. 76-82.

cultural crimes. Huelsenbeck left Zurich during Ball's initial absence, writing the latter that he too was opposed to the type of art practiced in Zurich Dada, though he was unsure at the time what he thought Dada should be.⁸⁴ He arrived in Berlin in January 1917, having first stopped in Greifswald to take an examination completing his education in medicine, which he had studied in Zurich when not beating his drum at the cabaret. It was only in Berlin that Huelsenbeck's conception of Dada became clearer.

In January 1917 I returned to Germany, the face of which had undergone a fantastic change;...In Zurich the international profiteers sat in the restaurants with well-filled wallets and rosy cheeks, ate with their knives and smacked their lips in a merry hurrah for the countries that were bashing each other's skulls in. Berlin was a city of tightened stomachs, of mounting, thundering hunger, where hidden rage was transformed into boundless money lust, and men's minds were concentrating more and more on questions of naked existence. Here we would have to proceed with entirely different methods if we wanted to say something to the people....While Tzara was still writing: *Dada ne signifie rien* --in Germany Dada lost its art-for-art's-sake character, with the very first move.⁸⁵

Huelsenbeck's main objection to Tzara's Dada then, was not that it was nihilistic, but that it was unpolitical. In Berlin Huelsenbeck eventually found two groups which were receptive to his conception of Dada: the circles around the Herzfelde brothers' periodical *Neue Jugend* and Franz Jung's *Die Freie Straße*. We have previously encountered the latter periodical. Franz Jung was the disciple of Otto Gross, *Die Freie Straße* the organ which Jung founded for the propagation of Gross' theories. *Neue Jugend* was at the time a pacifist journal intent, as was customary among Expressionists, with overcoming German culture through art. Indeed, Helmut Herzfelde changed his name to John Heartfield as a sign of protest against that culture. Yet, in spite of the antipathy to German culture, the *Neue Jugend* had no solid political orientation. Contributors included Georg Grosz, Salomo Friedlaender, even Hans Blüher. Dada offered the members of both groups a way beyond Expressionism's cultural critique, which during the war increasingly seemed a futile gesture. Raoul Hausmann, a member of *Die Freie Straße* circle, wrote:

In June of that year [1917] it became clear to me, Franz Jung and Johannes Baader that the mute torpidity of the great masses had to be broken....In this moment Richard Huelsenbeck returned from Zurich. He carried with him a

⁸⁴ See the quotation from Huelsenbeck's letter in Ball's *Flight out of Time*, 6.x.1916, p. 83; Huelsenbeck, *En Avant Dada*, p. 27.

⁸⁵ Huelsenbeck, *En Avant Dada*, pp. 39 & 41.

magic word which seemed to us suited to serve as a mantle and pretext for our plans and purposes: DADA⁸⁶

The politicization of both groups under the mantle of Dada would carry the members in a variety of directions, some to an anarcho-communism already latent in *Die Freie Straße*, some to Marxism, and some, like Salomo Friedlaender, right out of Dada. The common denominator of the rapid transformation of each member was Dada's critique of Expressionism, which during the war achieved considerable notoriety becoming less an outsiders' movement against society and more society's official art. The Dadaist critique was primarily directed against Kurt Hiller's Activism while it maintained many facets of Expressionism's cultural critique. It was not Hiller's orientation toward politics to which the Dadaists objected, since Dada was itself political. It was that Activism had become guilty of the same transgressions as German culture; the antiphilistines had become philistines themselves. We shall examine this critique of Expression first, which was largely the work of Huelsenbeck, and then turn to Dada politics.

Huelsenbeck's critique of Expressionism begins with his first article in *Neue Jugend*, "Der neue Mensch." This article has caused considerable controversy among interpreters of Dada because of the seemingly Expressionist title of the essay and Huelsenbeck's temporary repudiation of it in 1920 as a continuation of Expressionism's "humanity swindle."⁸⁷ Yet,

⁸⁶ Raoul Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, edited by Karl Riha and Günter Kämpf (Steinbach/Gießen: Anabas, 1972), p. 55.

⁸⁷ Huelsenbeck, *Dada siegt: Eine Bilanz des Dadaismus* (Berlin: Der Malik Verlag, 1920), p. 29. Both Richard Sheppard and Roy Allen see "Der neue Mensch" as Huelsenbeck's regression into Expressionism. Reinhart Meyer calls the article "ein billiger Nietzsche-Abklatsch" which doesn't get beyond Expressionism's "washed-out humanism" and "cultural opposition". H.G. Kemper, like Meyer, sees the Nietzschean foundation of the new man but calls it characteristic of Huelsenbeck's Dadaism, of Dada simultaneity. The 'new man is simultaneous or contradictory because he lives in direct connection with his heart, the organ of the will and drives. He is the naive child which Nietzsche predicted would follow the period of great destruction. The child lives beyond society's norms and values, in immediacy to life.

While Kemper makes an important contribution, only Karin Füllner correctly focuses on the overriding theme of "Der neue Mensch", which is an attack on Expressionism, specifically Kurt Hiller. It is certainly Dadaist, although not just for that reason alone. The reason why Huelsenbeck temporarily repudiated it in 1920 will become clearer below. Richard Sheppard, "Dada and Politics", *Dada: Studies of a Movement* (Buckinghamshire: Alpha Academic, 1979) p. 56; Roy Allen *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles* (Ann Arbor: UMI), p. 239; Reinhart Meyer et al., *Dada in Zürich und Berlin, 1916-1920* (Kronberg: Scriptor, 1973), p. 101; Kemper, *Vom Expressionismus*, p. 109; Karin Füllner, *Richard Huelsenbeck: Texte und Aktionen eines Dadaisten* (Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1983), pp. 149-151.

Huelsenbeck's later recollections of the movement saw "Der neue Mensch" as the very epitome of Dada's "new humanism."⁸⁸ Indeed this "new man" is not the same as Expressionism's "new man." One might say that he was Dada's new "new man" who found his adversary in Expressionism.

The new man is not new because the times want it so, the new orientation, the fumbling like blind people and moles-- he is not the subterranean spring which awaits the ax of the barbarian to find his utilization-- he is not new because as they once did the Müller, now they do the Hiller (the dance of the Activists, of these libertines of the dry souls, is a noise before his hands)-- he is the god of the moment, the greatness of blessed affects, the phoenix out of the good contradiction, and he is always new, the *homo novus* of his own nobility because his heart holds ready in every minute the alternative: human or inhuman.⁸⁹

Huelsenbeck's new man thus admits to his own contradictory impulses. "Chaos is welcome to him because he carries order in his soul." He criticizes Hiller and the Activists for their metaphysical presumption of *Geist*, a concept originating in German culture which is therefore as philistine and politically dangerous as the cultural pretensions of any *Herr Müller*.

False is the thought that with the power of intellectuals (*der Geistigen*), an improvement of the world could be achieved. Ah, the opposite is true; for we know the little snobisms of these little spirits and converted literati who carry their dyspeptic tenors as a treasured swaddled baby through the boring halls of revues without ever having understood the wisdom of boredom.⁹⁰ Power is an attribute and the splendor of evil and for that reason worthy of striving after (even for the pious who only live because there is evil). Who, in your world, lacks the beautiful and cruel amusement to fight against fat devils? Improving? *O mon cheri*, improve that force *extraordinaire* of your soul and don't forget at the same time that it is your sexual force. Don't believe the scream of the castrated and weak-breasted who want to eliminate the tortures of the world; [instead] contemplate the memories of death houses. The new man does not believe in the phalanx of the *geistig*, since it carries in its heart all systems of slaughter.⁹¹

The desire for power is thus one side of every person who likewise can use it in struggle against the "fat devils," i.e., the philistines. The Activist

⁸⁸ Huelsenbeck, "Dada Heute", *Dada in Zürich: Bildchronik und Erinnerungen der Gründer*, ed. Peter Schifferli (Zürich: Peter Schifferli Verlags AG Die 'Arché', 1957), p. 75.

⁸⁹ Huelsenbeck, "Der neue Mensch" originally published in *Neue Jugend* 1 (1917); all references to the republication in *Dada: Eine literarische Dokumentation*, ed. Richard Huelsenbeck (Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1964), pp. 59-64 (60).

⁹⁰ An obvious reference to Hiller's *Die Weisheit der Langenweile*, the foundation of Activist doctrine.

⁹¹ Huelsenbeck, "Der neue Mensch," pp. 61-62.

Geist concept is the lie of the weak who want either an unnatural world where conflict no longer exists, or who cloak their will to power under the mask of benevolent intention. Ironically, Huelsenbeck used Nietzsche's critique of priestly morality to attack Hiller's notion of *Geist*, itself derived from Nietzsche.

At the beginning of 1918, the Club-Dada was founded by Huelsenbeck, Heartfield, Jüng, Hausmann, and Grosz. Wieland Herzfelde joined upon his release from military service and later, after the war, brought his friend Erwin Piscator into the group. Johannes Baader and Walter Mehring also joined while Carl Einstein, Salomo Friedlaender, and Anselm Ruest forged limited although, as we shall see, significant relationships with the group.⁹² Huelsenbeck wrote the group's first manifesto which was read at the Great Dada Soiree of Berlin in April 1918. This manifesto continued the attack on Expressionism's "abstract pathetic gestures which presuppose a comfortable life free from content or strife." As opposed to Expressionist "meliorism," Dadaist art offers simultaneous and brutalist poetry which portrays reality as it is, a brutal "muddle of conflicting noises, colors, and spiritual rhythms." Dada affirms life in all its chaos and disorder.

A fabric tears under your hand, you say yes to a life that strives upward by negation. Yes-saying, no-saying: the gigantic hocuspocus of existence fires the nerves of the true Dadaist-- there he is, reclining, hunting, cycling-- half Pantagruel, half St. Francis, laughing and laughing. Blast the bloodless abstraction of Expressionism! Blast the literary hollowheads and their theories for improving the world. For Dadaism in word and image, for all Dada things that go on in the world. To be against this manifesto is to be a Dadaist.⁹³

Two important points need to be made here. In the first place, this manifesto is directed implicitly against Zurich Dada as it is explicitly directed against Expressionism, in spite of the fact that Tzara was one of its twenty-one signatories. The reference to Expressionist abstraction recalls

⁹² An announcement of the club's founding in the *Vossische Zeitung*, 1/12/1918 listed Ruest as one of its members. The announcement is quoted in Füllner *Richard Huelsenbeck: Texte und Aktionen*, p. 160. Walter Mehring noted in his memoirs that Friedlaender "flirted passionately with Dada but without identifying with it. As the philosopher of polarity he depended on nothing solid." Walter Mehring, *Berlin Dada* (Zurich: Schifferli Verlags AG Die Arche, 1959), p. 42. Ruest's and Friedlaender's significance in the movement will be discussed below.

⁹³ "Dadaistisches Manifest" published in *Dada Almanach*, edited by Richard Huelsenbeck (Berlin: Erich Reiß, 1920), pp. 36-38. All references to English translation as "Collective Dada Manifesto" in *Dada Painters and Poets*, pp. 242-246 (246). I have made a minor change in this translation which also neglects to list Walter Mehring as one of the signatories.

Huelsenbeck's objections to Tzara's abstract art and indeed in *En Avant Dada* Huelsenbeck blames both Expressionism and Zurich Dada for not getting beyond the art-for-art's sake attitude to the political.⁹⁴ Indeed, that is a difficult claim to maintain against Hiller, the most political of all Expressionists and yet Huelsenbeck's main target. Yet, Huelsenbeck's point is precisely that Hiller's notion of *Geist* and his philosophy of meliorism are abstract metaphysical notions which are as much a retreat from the real world as art-for-art's sake abstraction.

The second point concerns Huelsenbeck's objection to the "aesthetic-ethical attitude" of Expressionism. The linking of the two terms implies that Huelsenbeck meant by aesthetic the very opposite of what Ball meant. Indeed, Huelsenbeck wrote that Berlin Dada "ceased to take an aesthetic attitude toward life...by tearing all the slogans of ethics, culture, and inwardness, which are merely cloaks for weak muscles, into their components."⁹⁵ The destruction of (German) ethics, culture and inwardness was of course the very foundation of the aesthetic culture to which Ball originally adhered in his dissertation on Nietzsche. In fact, an examination of all of Huelsenbeck's writings from this period yields the conclusion that he largely reestablished the philosophy from which Ball had begun to retreat as early as 1914.

Thus Huelsenbeck denounces the Expressionists as "weary men" who, through their mystical concept of *Geist*, have turned away from nature, thus repeating the mendacity of all of German culture.⁹⁶ The Dadaist not only affirms nature like the superior culture in Ball's dissertation on Nietzsche, he becomes in wartime Germany

a wicked materialist, with the abstruse characteristic of considering the care of his stomach and stock jobbing more honorable than philosophy....It is something startling new, since for the first time in history the consequence has been drawn from the question: What is German culture? (Answer: Shit) and this culture is attacked with all the instruments of satire, bluff, irony and finally violence.⁹⁷

Huelsenbeck thus accepts the materialism which Ball had already rejected in 1914 in favor of the spirit. Moreover, in accord with Ball's and Nietzsche's conception of the destructive philosopher, Huelsenbeck contrasts the Expressionist ethical man with the Dadaist "psychological man" who "has journeyed vainly through the infinite, has recognized the limits of his spiritual

⁹⁴ *En Avant Dada*, pp. 32 & 40.

⁹⁵ Richard Huelsenbeck, "Collective Dada Manifesto, 1918," p. 244.

⁹⁶ Huelsenbeck, "Was wollte der Expressionismus" in *Dada Almanach*, p. 35.

⁹⁷ *En Avant Dada*, p. 44.

possibilities, he know that every system is a seduction with all the consequences of seduction and every god an opportunity for financiers."⁹⁸

Certainly these concepts were imbibed from Ball, who continued to execute his theories during his initial Dada period even as he began to suspect them in his diary. Nevertheless, Huelsenbeck's writings from the Berlin Dada period demonstrate another source:

The Dadaist exploits the psychological possibilities inherent in his faculty for flinging out his own personality as one flings a lasso or lets a cloak flutter in the wind...He is entirely devoted to the movement of life, he accepts his angularity-- but he never loses his distance to phenomena, because he preserves his Creative Indifference, as Friedlaender-Mynona calls it.⁹⁹

It is because of his Creative Indifference that the Dadaist can affirm life as it is, instead of trying to radically transform it like Expressionism. Good and evil become "simultaneous" values and "this simultaneity applied to the economy of facts is communism, a communism, to be sure, which has abandoned the principle of making things better and above all sees its goal in the destruction of everything that has gone bourgeois."¹⁰⁰

Yet, Friedlaender's real contribution seems to have been to provide the way for Huelsenbeck to distinguish Berlin Dada from Tzara's Dada, and thus obviate the nihilism which had terrified Ball. Tzara had tried to make simultaneity into a school, thus making Dada relativism into an ideological system, a dogmatic nihilism which must eventually annihilate itself and, like all systems, be superseded by another. Berlin Dada is not a system but, like Creative Indifference, an approach to life. Like the "historical spirit" in Nietzsche's *Beyond Good and Evil*, the Dadaist survives all systems if only through his amused recognition of his own transience.

Dada is ephemeral, its death is the free action of its own will. Dada has discovered that realm of invention of which Friedrich Nietzsche...speaks; it has made itself into a parodist of world history and God's buffoon-- but it runs aground not of itself. Dada dies not on Dada. Its laughter has future.¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 42.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 43. Huelsenbeck also mentions Friedlaender in "Die dadaistische Bewegung: Eine Selbstbiographie," *Die neue Rundschau* 2 (1920), pp. 972-979 (974), and alludes to Creative Indifference in his introduction to the *Dada Almanach*, p. 4. Although all three of these essays were written in 1920, Huelsenbeck's 1917 "Der neue Mensch" evolves the same ideas and seems to allude to Friedlaender by noting that the new man "does not know the pain of polarity." See "Der neue Mensch," p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ "En Avant...", p. 42.

¹⁰¹ Introduction to *Dada Almanach*, pp. 6-8 (8). Huelsenbeck is paraphrasing *Beyond Good and Evil*, aphorism 223, which he additionally quotes at length.

Despite the denial of nihilism, it is difficult to ascertain what Huelsenbeck's Dada offered the world, short of joyful affirmation of its complete lack of meaning. Even the claim that Berlin Dada was political must be gauged against the fact that Huelsenbeck does not seem to have done much beyond writing manifestos and giving performances. Indeed, his later recollections of the movement tend to deny that Dada had any political content at all.¹⁰²

It is worthwhile to turn to these later recollections if only because of Huelsenbeck's frequent assertion that he never understood the full implications of Dada until much later.¹⁰³ During the twenties and early thirties he even frequently made light of Dada, beginning to appreciate it again only after his flight from Germany to New York in 1936.¹⁰⁴ Here he began to practice psychiatry under the pseudonym Charles Hulbeck and joined with Karen Horney in founding the Association for the Advancement of Psychology.¹⁰⁵ In a manifesto of 1936, Huelsenbeck commended Dada for its revolutionary pathos, important at a time when Germany was banning Dada writings and attempting to turn the clock back.¹⁰⁶

Yet Dada's ultimate significance became clear to Huelsenbeck only in the forties and fifties, during the rise of existentialist philosophy and through his own attempt to found an existentialist psychiatry. In his reflections during these years, the Dadaists are portrayed as protoexistentialists who, in the midst of World War I, were the first to experience the chaos (*das Nichts*) of which existentialism speaks.

It is the emptiness of which the existential philosophers speak which preceded the feeling of creativity; it is the knowledge (as Nietzsche had it) that the revaluation of values, the planning of all constructive, progressive ideas

¹⁰² See for example, "The Dada Drummer" in *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, edited by Hans Kleinschmidt (New York: Viking, 1974), p. 52. This work is a translation, by Joachim Neugroschel, of Huelsenbeck's autobiography *Mit Witz, Licht und Grütze* along with a selection of his articles over the years. All references will be to this translation.

¹⁰³ See for instance, "The Dada Drummer," p. 56 and "Dada and Existentialism" in *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁴ Huelsenbeck's ambivalence toward Dada during this period is analyzed in Karin Füllner, "The Meister Dada: The Image of Dada through the Eyes of Richard Huelsenbeck" in *New Studies in Dada*, ed. Richard Sheppard (Hutton, England: Hutton Press, 1981) pp. 16-34.

¹⁰⁵ For his relationship to Horney and their mutual influence on each other, see Richard Sheppard, "Richard Huelsenbeck (1892-1974): Dada and Psychoanalysis," *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* 26 (1976) pp. 271-306; Karin Füllner, "The Meister Dada," pp. 28-31 and Richard Huelsenbeck: *Texte und Aktionen*, 271-306.

¹⁰⁶ Huelsenbeck, "Dada Lives" in *Dada Painters and Poets*, pp. 279-281.

finally comes, after long struggle, after many years of desperation, where creative irrationality is ignited to new achievement.¹⁰⁷

Huelsenbeck is at pains to emphasize a positive and creative side of Dada which is not obvious in his writings during the Dada years. Thus he argues, in contrast to his earlier writings, that Dada was against the materialists and trying to preserve the spiritual, that Dada was for a new humanism.¹⁰⁸ This new humanism consisted in man's honest acceptance of both his destructive and creative capabilities which would afford him the opportunity of bringing about a balance between them, giving the creative a chance for victory. Yet such an acceptance presupposes the destruction of all conventional assumptions about morality and all ideologies that justify men's actions and impede their free choice.

This constructive, humanistic motif is not completely absent from Huelsenbeck's writings during the Dada years. The frequent swings between the destructive and constructive aspects of Dada only testifies to Huelsenbeck's own admission that he did not fully understand at the time the full meaning of Dada, why he could renounce "Der neue Mensch" in 1920 as a continuation of Expressionism's humanity swindle and reaffirm it in his later writings. That the destructive side of Dada increasingly took precedence during the years of war and revolution, only reflects the spontaneous reaction of an antimilitaristic youth in conflict with his own cultural heritage. Huelsenbeck explained in 1970:

Germans...we...were brought up with *die Kultur* to justify everything we did. Our moral backing was *die Kultur*, the same *Kultur* which led us into World War I. We revolted against that system, against its justification, its *Kultur*. Dada was a plea-revolt, a plea for a new humanism. We know that within every civilization there is an inherent system that justifies that civilization. We protested all systems in the name of freedom, in the name of the individual.¹⁰⁹

Certainly we should not completely accept Huelsenbeck's later attempt to impose a constructive, existential side on Dada's wartime negations. Moreover, while in several of the above quotations, Huelsenbeck seems to associate Nietzsche with both sides of Dada, there are other examples where

¹⁰⁷ Huelsenbeck, "Dada oder der Sinn im Chaos," *Dada: Eine literarische Dokumentation*, p. 15.

¹⁰⁸ See his "Dada heute" in *Dada in Zürich: Bildchronik und Erinnerungen der Gründer*, pp. 71-75.

¹⁰⁹ From a talk entitled "Dada oder der Sinn im Chaos," given by Huelsenbeck at the Goethe House in New York on November 18, 1970. Quoted in Hans J. Kleinschmidt's introduction to *Memoirs of a Dada Drummer*, p. xiv.

he associates Nietzsche only with Dada's destructive side. Yet, even if Nietzsche was a source only for Dada's negations, that itself is significant in the light of what follows. For Huelsenbeck's Dada is one last example of the Nietzsche vogue leading to a protest against developments in German culture which Nietzsche is usually credited with engendering.

Dada Politics: The Rejection of Nietzschean Individualism

Huelsenbeck's retrospective account of Dada as an antipolitical defense of the individual may help us in understanding why Nietzsche is frequently mentioned in his Dada writings while in the writings of the other Berlin Dadaists he almost never is. Huelsenbeck supported the November Revolution and the Spartacists against Weimar but out of no sympathy for the working class. Despite his comment that "Dada is German Bolshevism,"¹¹⁰ he never identified with Marxism, which in his later writings is identified with those systems to be resisted.¹¹¹ In fact, Huelsenbeck's notion of a politicized Berlin Dada, which he maintained during the war years, can be understood from one sentence in his later recollections of the movement.

The Dadaists allied themselves most closely with the world (as Berlin Dadaism demonstrated); they wanted to change the world; they wanted to destroy the collective, as it functioned then, with its torpid values....¹¹²

In other words, Huelsenbeck's notion of a politics simply meant that Dada's destructive tendency was removed from its home in the artist's cabaret for use in a more direct assault on German culture. He never embraced the working class as other members of Berlin Dada. His notion of politics always remained within the parameters of bohemian libertarianism, anti-authoritarianism, and antiphilistinism. His revolution was always against the "culture of mendacity" which sent its soldiers "with a volume of Goethe in the knapsack to spear their fellow humans with bayonets." He supported Liebknecht over Ebert and Scheidemann because the latter had suppressed the revolution for the sake of "calm and order; for the sake of *Angst* and fat...for the *Geist* of obtuseness in general."¹¹³ The other members of Dada went beyond these bohemian parameters in varying degrees. United with

¹¹⁰ *En Avant Dada*, p. 44.

¹¹¹ See "Dada heute," p. 73 and particularly Huelsenbeck's *Dada Manifesto*, 1949 (New York, 1951).

¹¹² Huelsenbeck, "Dada oder der Sinn im Chaos," *Dada: Eine literarische Dokumentation*, p. 10.

¹¹³ Huelsenbeck, *Deutschland muß untergehen* (Berlin: Malik Verlag, 1920), pp. 7-9.

Huelsenbeck in 1917 on the basis of a common enmity to German culture and Expressionism, the other Dadaists were radicalized by the November Revolution to a variety of political positions that would lead to the group's dissolution after the First International Dada Fair, held in Berlin in 1920.

Die Freie Straße, appearing in six issues between 1915 and 1917, was already the organ of an anarchist philosophy based on the theories of Otto Gross. Franz Jung, the editor of *Die Freie Straße* and Gross' most ardent disciple, did recognize the influence on Gross' technique of Nietzsche's "search for truth";¹¹⁴ his Spandauer dairy, which he kept while incarcerated for his role in an antiwar demonstration, reveals his thorough familiarity with Nietzsche whom he compared to Stirner.¹¹⁵ Yet, neither Nietzsche nor Stirner are mentioned in *Die Freie Straße* and the reason is, that like Gross, whose relationship to Nietzsche became increasingly ambiguous toward the end of the war, *Die Freie Straße* circle was attempting to give an originally libertarian psychology a communal meaning. Richard Sheppard has given us a concise description of the philosophy of *Die Freie Straße*.

Very simply, *Die Freie Straße* asserted that the moving stream of nature was fundamentally good and at work within the human personality whether men knew it or not. If this stream was allowed to flow freely, it had the power to free the individual completely from the repressive influence of authority-figures- the father, conventional morality, the state, God- and from the guilt feelings which they induce....The moment at which man was emancipated from external authority and felt free to take responsibility for himself was a death and also a resurrection into a new, vital life....Freed from authority, man was also freed from the fear of others and the need to assert himself against others and thus enabled to enter into a relationship of "*Gemeinschaft*" with others, of like mind.¹¹⁶

The notion of self-responsibility was what *Die Freie Straße* circle shared with Huelsenbeck in 1917 and what made his critique of Hiller's aristocratic *Geist* notion so attractive. Moreover it was the common ground between Berlin Dada, Anselm Ruest, and Salomo Friedlaender, who also attacked Hiller for the same reason. Yet, increasingly, in *Die Freie Straße*, the "*Gemeinschaft*" ideal takes precedence, not at the expense of individual responsibility per se, but at the expense of the cult of individualism which was pervasive among

¹¹⁴ Franz Jung, "Von geschlechtlicher Not zur sozialen Katastrophe". Written in 1922/23, this biography of Gross has been published as an appendix to Jennifer Michaels' *Anarchy and Eros: Otto Gross' Impact on German Expressionist Writers* (New York, Bern, Frankfurt/M.: Peter Lang, 1983), p. 186.

¹¹⁵ Franz Jung, *Spandauer Tagebuch, April-Juni 1915, Werke*, Vol. 2, supplement (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1984), pp. 26 & 34.

¹¹⁶ Richard Sheppard, "Dada and Politics" in *Dada: Studies of a Movement*, p. 53.

intellectuals and made their cooperation with the German people in a common struggle for emancipation impossible.¹¹⁷

The consequences of this growing resistance to individualism might have been negligible had it not been radicalized by the revolution. This radicalization exposed divisions within Dada which had hitherto been overshadowed by the common antipathy towards German culture and Expressionism. Raoul Hausmann's "Pamphlet gegen die Weimarische Lebensauffassung", appeared in an April 1919 issue of Ruest's *Der Einzige* and immediately became a bone of contention between author and editor. The article reproduced the Dada critique of Kurt Hiller's Activism and German culture, both of whose origins in German classicism contrasted poorly with Dada's advocacy of the free play of the instincts.

Dadaism is the single art form of the present which has struggled against Expressionism for the renewal of all means of expression and against the classical ideal of education of the order-loving *Bürger* and his latest lackeys. The Club Dada represented in war the internationality of the world; It is an international antibourgeois movement. The club Dada was the Fronde against the "geistig workers," against the "intellectuals." The Dadaist is against humanism, against historical education. He is like every *Einzige*: for individual experience.¹¹⁸

It was the three words "like every *Einzige*," that touched off the dispute between Hausmann and Ruest. Hausmann claimed he never wrote them. In an article of the May issue of the communist *Die Erde*, he accused Ruest of making changes in the pamphlet which "give the impression that I'm a Stirnerite, although my position as anarcho-communist is exactly known to Herr Dr. Ruest."¹¹⁹ Moreover, this article, "Der individualistische Anarchist und die Diktatur," denounced Ruest's individualistic anarchism for turning against political activity like a petit bourgeois. The individual anarchist rejects the dictatorship of the proletariat even though he knows that this is only a temporary measure and that the goal of communism is the full development of all individuals.

¹¹⁷ The clearest expression of an attack on individualism comes in Richard Oehring's "Zwang und Erleben," *Die Freie Straße* (1916), 5, p. 3-11 (3).

¹¹⁸ Raoul Hausmann, "Pamphlet gegen die Weimarische Lebensauffassung, *Der Einzige* 1 (1919) pp. 163-164. The word experience (*Erleben*) was a popular term in *Die Freie Straße* which the group took over from Otto Gross. Sheppard explains it as "a complex idea, referring both to the activity of the liberating life-force and to the liberated existence of the person and/or 'Gemeinschaft' in whom that force flows freely." See Sheppard, "Dada and Politics," p. 54.

¹¹⁹ Hausmann, "Der individualistische Anarchist und die Diktatur," *Die Erde* 1 (1919) 9, pp.276-279. All later reprints of the pamphlet leave out these words.

Individual anarchism, according to Hausmann, is not an opponent but a product of the same society that has given birth to "tragic culture." This tragic culture is but a mask for demoralization which finds limited security in a classically conditioned egoism. It is a solipsistic religion which never gets beyond the "inner freedom" of the Christian. Real freedom can only come by recognizing the communal ties which bind all men and in overthrowing the political order by an alliance with the masses.

If there is any doubt to whom the reference to tragic culture alludes, it is made abundantly clear in Hausmann's article "Schnitt durch die Zeit," appearing in the October issue of *Die Erde*. This article also clarifies Hausmann's position as an anarcho-communist and demonstrates his debt to Otto Gross and, surprisingly, Ruest's cousin, Salomo Friedlaender. According to Hausmann, the conflict between the individual and society has historically been won by the latter through the creation of repressive institutions of which patriarchy is the most insidious. The individual is forced to become either a transgressor of society's rules, or to repress his vital instincts which "unleashes *ressentiment* and causes a continuous, involuntary reaction, false purity in guilt." The way out of this morass is for each individual to be conscious of the psychological effects of society and for him to find his own center from which he can freely balance the demands of society, his own legitimate drives, and the affects of his already impaired psychological state.

Contemporary communism, according to Hausmann, makes the mistake of believing that only the economic institutions of society need to be overturned to lead mankind to self-responsible freedom. Instead, Hausmann demanded the complete overhaul of the "psycho-physical" culture as it is manifested in the family, the state, and law. Nevertheless, communism has had a revolutionary effect by causing the dissolution of the cult of individualism which pervades even the theoretically oppositional individual anarchism. In reality, individual anarchism is not at all revolutionary but just a petty bourgeois successor of the classical cosmopolitan bourgeois.

From his ultimate insight into male-determined individualism, Nietzsche, with his formula of the will to power, gave the highest expression to this classical bourgeois dependance.¹²⁰

Hausmann thus associates Nietzsche with German culture, the same culture which Ruest and Huelsenbeck combated on the basis of Nietzsche's philosophy. He goes further than that, as well.

¹²⁰ Hausmann, "Schnitt durch die Zeit," *Die Erde* 1 (1919, 18/19), p. 541.

The consciousness of the narrowness and perniciousness, yes stupidity of purely egoistic boundaries, of limitations, must give him [man] a new impulse, an instinctual revulsion against isolation, detachment, repression, in brief against the entire mendacity of the individualist ideal and its corollary tragic culture, of a wild politics and world economy--which therefore led to nationalism and exploitation and a nasty confusion of imperialism, democracy and anarchy.¹²¹

Regardless of whether he was influenced by the wartime exploitation of Nietzsche by the right, Hausmann now assumed a view similar to the one Lukács would make famous many years later: Nietzsche contributed to the imperialistic culture of Germany. Ironically, though, he blamed Nietzsche not for creating an irrational tradition which diverted Germany from its classical heritage, but for being too closely tied to that classical heritage which Lukács embraced. Even more amazing, the alternative he offers is derived from Gross and Friedlaender, whose own philosophies were heavily indebted to Nietzsche.

Hausmann and Huelsenbeck maintained a cordial relationship throughout the Dada period based on their common bohemian critique of German culture and their joint attempt to make a "monstrous mockery of all political and artistic tendencies."¹²² That was Hausmann's description of the Dada manifesto he published with Huelsenbeck in *Der Dada* in June 1919.¹²³ This manifesto had a serious set of demands which called for the international union of all intellectuals on the basis of a radical communism. A lighter set of demands of the "Dada Central Council" followed. They included the introduction of the simultaneous poem as a communist state prayer to be performed in all churches requisitioned for that purpose; a large scale Dada propaganda campaign with 150 circuses for the enlightenment of the proletariat; the immediate regulation of all sexual relations according to the views of international Dadaism through the establishment of a Dada sexual center; and "the most brutal struggle against the so-called *geistig* workers...against their concealed bourgeoisism, against Expressionism...."¹²⁴

If Hausmann found common ground with Huelsenbeck, Jung and Herzfelde increasingly did not. In their memoirs of the movement both minimized the influence of Huelsenbeck on Dada and, in fact, minimized the significance of

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 544-545.

¹²² Hausmann, *Am Anfang war Dada*, ed. by Karl Riha (Steinbach/Gießen: Anabas, 1972), p. 20.

¹²³ "Was ist der Dadaismus und was will er in Deutschland," *Der Dada* 1 (1919). The manifesto was signed by Huelsenbeck, Hausmann and Jefim Golyscheff, a Russian musician who was brought into the group by Hausmann. Huelsenbeck does not include him in his reprint of the manifesto in *En Avant Dada*, pp. 41-42.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

Dada for their own antiwar activities as well.¹²⁵ The reason for this is that Jung and Herzfelde were the leading figures of what became Dada's Marxist wing. This development is already presaged in the more aggressive tones of the last issues of *Neue Jugend*, in early 1917, when Franz Jung joined the staff.¹²⁶ Intensifying the trend towards radicalization were the endless problems the group had with the government censor which, in 1917, banned *Der Almanach der Neuen Jugend*. The group immediately applied for and received the right to establish the *Malik Verlag*, ostensibly for the sole purpose of publishing Else Lasker-Schüler's novel *Der Malik*. Although the novel was published only after the war and by another publisher, the new firm enabled the group to continue publishing *Neue Jugend* for a few more issues until the periodical was completely forbidden by the government.¹²⁷

While Huelsenbeck never escaped the boundaries of the bohemian culture critique, Herzfelde recalled his experience with *Neue Jugend* as that which led his circle beyond the "bohemian horizon" to proletarian revolution.

It was the way from Expressionism with its ego ecstasy or demoralization and multiple variations of the father-son conflict to a radical rejection of the politics and culture of the ruling [class].¹²⁸

Consequently, Herzfelde, Heartfield, Grosz, and Jung all joined the German Communist Party (KPD) upon its founding in late 1918.¹²⁹ The *Malik Verlag* became the source of a series of periodicals each of which more radically identifying with the cause of proletarian revolution.

Jedermann sein eigener Fußball appeared in February 1919 but was banned after one issue. The Dada club members were arrested after an advertising stunt for the periodical in which they sold all 7,600 copies while marching through Berlin behind a horse-drawn carriage mounted by an orchestra which they rented for that purpose. *Die Pleite* appeared in March 1919, was repeatedly banned, and finally completely forbidden in January 1920. In the spring of 1919, the *Malik Verlag* also took over *Der Gegner*, a communist journal edited by Karl Otten and Julian Gumperz.¹³⁰

¹²⁵ Franz Jung, *Der Weg nach Unten* (Neuwied am Rhein, Berlin-Spandau: Luchterhand, 1961), p. 110; Wieland Herzfelde, *Zur Sache*, pp. 347 & 450.

¹²⁶ Georg Grosz, *Ein kleines Ja und ein großes Nein: George Grosz: An Autobiography*, trans. Nora Hodges (New York: MacMillan, 1983), p. 190.

¹²⁷ On *Neue Jugend* and the *Malik Verlag*, see Roy Allen, *Literary Life in German Expressionism and the Berlin Circles* (Ann Arbor: UMI, 1983), pp. 229-250.

¹²⁸ Herzfelde, *Zur Sache*, pp. 350 & 436.

¹²⁹ Miklavz Prosenc, *Die Dadaisten in Zürich* (Bonn: 1967), p. 114; Sheppard, "Dada and Politics," pp. 51-2, 59.

¹³⁰ Allen, *Literary Life*, pp. 240-247.

Nietzsche is nowhere mentioned in these periodicals which advocate proletarian revolution, a topic for which Nietzsche clearly has limited application. In *Der Dada* published initially by Hausmann and then taken over by the *Malik Verlag* with the third and final issue, there is only a negative allusion to Nietzsche in a criticism aimed "against the free art [of Expressionism]!! Against the free spirit."¹³¹ The only direct reference to Nietzsche in a Dada periodical was also a negative one, in *Der Blutige Ernst*, which also became a Dadaist organ with the third issue. The title of this article by Carl Einstein, "Schulze," prepares the reader for the customary swipe against the bourgeois philistine so common amongst the literary intelligentsia. But here Nietzsche is portrayed not as the enemy of philistinism but as its highest example. Just as in Hausmann's reference to Nietzsche in *Die Erde*, Einstein concluded, though even more caustically, that Nietzsche saw through German culture but never escaped it.

Schulze's goal: to portray himself as not Schulze. To affirm himself as a somewhat Germanic type, robust and blond. Development becomes necessary when the ape recognizes himself, that is: becomes ashamed of himself. Nietzsche, the sophist conscious of his own worthlessness, a thoroughly optimistic striver. Shame becomes affirmed by Schulze in common arrogance. Schulze rejects himself in order to more boldly assert himself.¹³²

Despite the abstruseness of the passage, its implications for the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany are clear. Nietzsche saw through man's pretensions to be something other than what he is, either through his anthropocentrism or a divinely based morality. Yet Nietzsche found his redemption from such pretension in the reckless affirmation and utmost development of himself as is. He thus created only a more truthful variation of the philistine's optimistic striving. Yet, as in Hausmann's critique, Einstein concluded that Nietzsche's philosophical alternative had even more serious consequences. His notion of a *geistig* hierarchy, advanced by his followers among the literary intelligentsia, served only the bourgeois repression of the proletariat whose work was viewed as *geistless*. The narcissistic quest of self-development meant that everything becomes a means to self-expansion, a doctrine which sooner or later passes from the individual to the collective. And here, even more so than in Hausmann's article, we perceive the influence on Einstein of the right-wing's appropriation of Nietzsche.

The day before yesterday one isolated oneself as individual. Yesterday one fraternized as human being. Little creators busily deliver redemption to bad

¹³¹ *Der Dada* 1 (1919), no. 1, p. 3.

¹³² Carl Einstein, "Schulze," *Der Blutige Ernst* 1 (1919) no. 6, p. 2.

paying capitalists. Little creators: supple auxiliaries of the *Bürger*. Schulze rises high among the bourgeois. Lifts himself in the hierarchy; beyond the *Übermensch* and commissioned officers. One develops himself from parcel to parcel. My fatherland must be greater. The politics of parcels determines the mentality of self-proclaimed paper Aryans. Schulze has not only purposes, he is purpose. The greater the number of purposes, the more important the person. So Nietzsche.¹³³

Interestingly, Huelsenbeck was a contributor to both *Der Blutige Ernst* and *Der Dada* which, despite their rejection of Nietzsche, had not assumed the Marxist vocabulary of the periodicals initiated by the *Malik Verlag*. Huelsenbeck did not contribute to these periodicals and by the same token, *Der Dada Almanach*, edited by Huelsenbeck, contained contributions from Haussman, Baader, and Mehring but none from Grosz, Herzfelde, Heartfield, or Jung.

Berlin Dada was divided into Marxist and anarcho-communist wings, though the boundary between them was certainly not fixed. Jung always remained well disposed to Hausmann, whose political philosophy likewise originated in the psychological theories of Otto Gross.¹³⁴ Despite Jung's identification with the Marxist Dadaists, his position was actually closer to Hausmann's anarcho-communism. He was forced out of the KPD in October 1919 for his resistance to centralism, and he helped found the less centralized German Communist Workers Party (KAPD) in April 1920. In May of that year he hijacked a trawler to Russia where he futilely attempted to convince the Third International to accept the KAPD as an independent member.

Jung's articles in *Die Erde* during 1919-1920 and his programmatic *Die Technik des Glücks*, published in two parts by the *Malik Verlag* in 1921 and 1923, attempt to bring Gross's vitalist psychological theories into the service of proletarian revolution. Yet, as several commentators have already pointed out, Jung's proletariat is anyone who is oppressed, not the workers specifically.¹³⁵ Nietzsche is nowhere mentioned in these writings, though, there is the occasional rejection of individualism both as a means to successful revolution and as an alternative to true community.¹³⁶

¹³³ Ibid., 4.

¹³⁴ See his recollection of Hausmann in his *Der Weg nach Unten*, p. 111.

¹³⁵ Richard Sheppard, "Dada and Politics," p. 59; Walter Fähnders and Martin Rector, *Linksradikalismus und Literatur: Untersuchung zur Geschichte der sozialistischen Literatur in der Weimarer Republik* (Reinbek/Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1974), v. 1, p. 164.

¹³⁶ See, for example, "Zweck und Mittel im Klassenkampf," part 4 in *Die Erde* 1 (1919) 22/23, p. 672; both parts of *Die Technik des Glücks* have been republished as the sixth volume of Jung's *Werke* (Hamburg: Nautilus, 1987); see pp. 31-39 & 139-41.

Nietzsche was, however, not completely forgotten. In his recollections of the period, Erwin Piscator credited Nietzsche with having helped him escape his petty bourgeois background and Georg Grosz noted in his autobiography that "ever since Nietzsche I suspected morality."¹³⁷ Ironically, these comments indicate how Nietzsche prepared the way for the intelligentsia's adoption of Marxism. His critique of the bourgeoisie and of bourgeois art, while based on an entirely different epistemology than Marxism, provided the skeptical atmosphere which made the transition to Marxism possible. The point is nicely illustrated by comparing Huelsenbeck's attitudes on bourgeois art with those of *Der Gegner* circle.

Huelsenbeck never left the parameters of the culture critique. His attack on Expressionism and all bourgeois art in the politicized atmosphere of Berlin was the one he imbibed in Zurich. He wrote in 1920 of his Zurich period:

Beauty in the old sense remained a thousand times twisted, a thousand times a moral philistinism and we...gave art over, as an affair of weak nerves and muscles to those who deserved it, the artists, i.e., the prostitutes of a corrupt bourgeoisie. That sounds so comical. We had all read Nietzsche,...We learned with Nietzsche to appreciate the relativity of things and the value of unscrupulousness; we aspired, after the bluff, to a great beaming universality of the middle [between intellectualism and primitivism], which could express itself in life as well as in art.¹³⁸

The attitudes of the Marxist Dadaists can best be appraised by reviewing the "Kunstlump" debate of 1920. The debate erupted during the Kapp Putsch when a painting by Rubens was damaged in the Zwinger Gallery in Dresden by a stray bullet shot during an armed clash between workers and counter-revolutionaries. While fifty-nine people were killed as a result of the clash, the Expressionist Oskar Kokoschka issued a plea to the inhabitants of Dresden to settle their differences in places where works of culture would not be threatened.

Herzfelde and Grosz printed Kokoschka's appeal in *Der Gegner*, along with their "Kunstlump" (art scoundrel) manifesto directed against Kokoschka, who as an Expressionist participated in the cultural swindle of the bourgeoisie. The culture critique resounds throughout the manifesto, though it is mixed with observations on the commodity character of art and its function for the bourgeoisie as an object of speculation. The charge that art has been used by

¹³⁷ Erwin Piscator, *The Political Theatre: A History 1914-1929* (New York, 1978), p. 9; Georg Grosz, *Ein kleines Ja...*, p. 153.

¹³⁸ Huelsenbeck, *Dada siegt: Eine Bilanz des Dadaismus* (Berlin: Malik Verlag, 1920), pp. 12-13.

the bourgeoisie to pull the wool over the eyes of the proletariat is at once both Marxist and Nietzschean.

Workers! While one offers you the ideas of the Christian Church, one wants to disarm you in order to deliver you more conveniently to the murderous machine of the state.

Workers! While one represents something in paintings on which the bourgeoisie can still rivet itself...one sabotages your class consciousness, your will to power.¹³⁹

The lingering traces of Nietzsche and the culture critique are, however, overshadowed by the circle's real break with Expressionism. The Berlin Dadaists broke with Expressionism's "aesthetic formulas" in favor of a "new objectivity" that would serve the interests of the proletariat.¹⁴⁰ They disavowed Expressionist individualism, elitism, and the role of the bohemian outsider for a new vision of the artist as equal participant in a collective society. "A time will come," Grosz wrote, "when artists-- instead of being scrubby bohemian anarchists-- will be clean, healthy workers in a collectivistic community."¹⁴¹

Not everyone was pleased with the new vision, as can be seen from Salomo Friedlaender's 1922 critique of Grosz from the standpoint of (what else?) Indifference. Friedlaender agreed that the artist could lose his bohemian identity, however, not under communism but only in a constitutional state. Grosz's communism and communism in general was the *ressentiment* of those seeking revenge and their own privilege. The communist is like the conservative. Both preach morality as an insidious means of achieving their own wealth and power. Both base their power on the "plebs" to whom they promise bread and circuses. Quite out of step with the times, Friedlaender insisted that the only way to real community is through a healthy egoism.

The primary moral command for ripe human reason is: help yourself! Then the secondary: help others, the weaker, according to your own powers. Only on the ground of a moral egoism can moral altruism come to power....In such

¹³⁹ *Der Gegner* 1 (1919/20) no. 10/12, p. 51. Ironically, Gertrude Alexander of the KPD's *Die Rote Fahne* rejected the manifesto since a cultural heritage was necessary for the proletariat to build the culture of the future. For background on the "Kunstlump" debate, see Fährder's & Rector, *Linksradikalismus und Literatur*, v. 1, pp. 100-107; Beth Irwin Lewis, *George Grosz: Art and Politics in the Weimar Republic* (Madison, Milwaukee, London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1971), pp. 94-95.

¹⁴⁰ *Der Gegner* 2 (1920/21), no. 8/9, p. 300; see also Roul Hausmann's "Rückkehr zur Gegenständlichkeit in der Kunst," *Dada Almanach*, pp. 147-151. For the significance of the word *Gegenständlichkeit* as a forerunner of the new objectivity (*neue Sachlichkeit*), see John Willett, *Art & Politics in the Weimar Period: The New Sobriety, 1917-33* (New York: Pantheon, 1978), pp. 50-57, 83.

¹⁴¹ Grosz, "Zu meinen neuen Bildern," *Das Kunstblatt* 5, no. 1 (Jan. 1921). See the English translation in Miesel, ed., *The Voices of German Expressionism*, 185-88.

a constitutional state, art would take its throne as an ingenious symbolization of morality, whether it idealizes morals in a positive or negative way.¹⁴²

Friedlaender, though, was assiduously at work discovering that the origins of his liberal Indifference lay after all with Kant and not Nietzsche. Moreover he, along with Ruest and Hiller, would sink into relative obscurity during the Weimar Republic. Huelsenbeck embarked in 1924 aboard a freighter as ship's surgeon and returned to Germany only periodically. Otto Gross was dead and so for that matter was the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany. Herzfelde, Heartfield, Piscator, and Grosz would be among the leading figures of Weimar's intelligentsia.

The reason for this is not simply that the Berlin Dadaists led the trend against Expressionist individualism in favor of collectivism, against Nietzsche in favor of Marx. There is an age factor as well which also helps to explain the proportions of the sudden aversion to Nietzsche among the Berlin Dadaists. Kurt Hiller was born in 1885. Most of the Berlin Dadaists were born in the 1890s. They reached maturity during the war, when Nietzsche was a hero of the right and no longer just the libertarian, antiauthoritarian figure of prewar Expressionism.

Yet, there is a more fundamental reason for the repudiation of Nietzsche and Expressionism which is indicated in the writings of the Dadaists. Both Nietzsche and Expressionism may have stood against German culture but they were both intimately linked to it as well through their individualism and notion of self-development. The Dadaists rejected not Nietzsche per se, but rather the notion of the great individual, the Faustian man who strives for power, which Nietzsche and Expressionism shared with German classicism, naturalism, and finally with Germany's war propagandists, the Schelers and Sombarts, who brought that tradition into disrepute when they made it serve Germany's war aims. The Dadaists did not conclude that Nietzsche himself was a militarist, but rather that he was the highpoint of a tradition that must inevitably lead to militarism. Erwin Piscator may have remembered Nietzsche as "the scourge of the middle classes," but his final word was to reject him, along with an entire intellectual heritage.

And so it seemed incomprehensible to me at the age of twenty, that a whole generation that had conducted a prolonged discussion about intellectual

¹⁴² Mynona, *Georg Grosz* (Dresden: Rudolf Kammerer, 1922), p. 35. See also Grosz's own earlier salvo against Friedlaender's Creative Indifference and all other individualist philosophies in his "Statt einer Biographie," August 16, 1920. The essay was excerpted in *Der Gegner* 2 (1920/21), no. 3, pp. 68-69. It has been reprinted in full and translated by Hans Hess in *George Grosz, 1893-1959* (Arts Council Exhibition Catalogue: York, London, Bristol, 1963), p. 11.

freedom and the development of the personality should suddenly, without the slightest resistance, capitulate to the general mass hysteria, that with few exceptions the entire intellectual elite of Europe rose as one man in the defense of their "cherished heritage" which they had till then viewed with some skepticism....They rose against their "enemies" like Tolstoy and Dostoevsky and Pushkin and Zola and Balzac and Anatole France and Shaw and Shakespeare, and went to war with Goethe and Nietzsche in their knapsacks. And so this generation set the seal on its own spiritual bankruptcy. Whatever they may have thought and whatever they may have done it became evident on August fourth that all they had thought and done was as nothing.¹⁴³

It is significant that Herzfelde and Grosz also use the famous Expression of Goethe and Nietzsche in the knapsacks while when Huelsenbeck looked, he found only Goethe there.¹⁴⁴ A profound transformation occurred during the war in the way the left-wing intelligentsia viewed Nietzsche. The great adversary of German culture had now become its defender.

¹⁴³ Piscator, *The Political Theatre*, p. 11.

¹⁴⁴ Georg Grosz and Wieland Herzfelde, "Die Kunst ist in Gefahr. Ein Orientierungsversuch." Originally published in 1925. Reprinted in *Zur-Sache*, pp. 106-124 (117). Huelsenbeck's version of the famous expression is quoted above.

Chapter Eight

The End of the Left-Wing Nietzsche Vogue in Germany

One repays a teacher badly if one remains
nothing but a pupil.

Zarathustra I, "On the 'Gift- Giving Virtue,'" 3.

The path toward Marxism followed by the Berlin Dadaists was typical of many members of the left-wing literary intelligentsia during the First World War. The turn to Marxism did not necessarily imply an end to the amazing hold of Nietzsche's philosophy. In many cases radicalization meant that Nietzsche's cultural criticisms only blended in with a Marxist analysis of society. Nevertheless, by the beginning of the 1920s, Nietzsche's philosophy had become more or less irrelevant to the left. Despite its lingering influence, the critique of culture was overshadowed by a Marxist analysis of society. And for those intellectuals who resisted the trend toward Marxism, their allegiance to Nietzsche was gradually undermined by the rapid spread and acceptance of a militaristic version of Nietzsche's philosophy. Few of Germany's left-wing intellectuals after the war would remain unabashed Nietzscheans like Kurt Hiller.

The Struggle for Nietzsche's Legacy

The eventual triumph of the right-wing version of Nietzsche does not mean that the left merely acquiesced to this interpretation. Indeed, throughout the First World War a smaller war raged in the journals of the literary intelligentsia over Nietzsche's intellectual legacy. If the Expressionists protested the creation of a nationalistic and militaristic Nietzsche, the right equally objected to the Activist interpretation of Nietzsche as a cosmopolitan political reformer. Thomas Mann was the most aggressive opponent of the Activist movement in which his brother Heinrich participated. In an article in *Die Neue Rundschau* of 1916, he attacked the Activists for their politicization

of both Germany and Nietzsche.¹ The Activists want to politicize Germany, to see her defeated in war in the name of progress, which meant, according to Mann, the absorption of all facets of life into the state in the name of democratization. In pursuit of their goal the Activists politicize art, "as if art was not simply a concern of the solitary soul, of Protestantism and God's immediacy."²

Mann later incorporated this article into his larger work, *Reflections of an Unpolitical Man* (1918) which is a classic interpretation of Nietzsche as a conservative partisan of Germany's special way.³ According to this view, Nietzsche had contempt for the French Enlightenment while he criticized Germany only out of love.⁴ He preferred the "honest but gloomy" nineteenth century to the eighteenth, which Mann described as embodying those same political and reformist principles as Activism.⁵ Finally, Nietzsche's true origins were in German romanticism. He was, as he called himself, "the last unpolitical German."⁶

Mann actually misquoted Nietzsche here, as Peter Bergmann has recently pointed out.⁷ Nietzsche called himself the last antipolitical (*antipolitisch*), not unpolitical (*unpolitisch*), German. The significant difference between the two terms was that while Nietzsche rejected politics in favor of culture, he was quite ready to take a political position against the state when the latter interfered in the cultural life of the nation.

Kurt Hiller made a similar point about both Nietzsche and the Activist movement in his counterattack against Mann's initial article. The Activists were not attempting to absorb the life of the nation into the state, as Mann

¹ Thomas Mann, "Der Taugenichts," *Die Neue Rundschau* 27 (1916), pp. 1478-1490. The article has been reprinted in *Expressionismus. Manifeste und Dokumente zur Deutschen Literatur*, edited by Thomas Anz and Michael Stark, (Stuttgart: Metzler 1982), pp. 273-84 from which all quotations are taken.

² Thomas Mann, "Der Taugenichts," p. 282.

³ *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen*, (Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1918). An English translation has been published under the title *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, translated by Walter D. Morris (New York: Friedrich Unger, 1983). Parts of Mann's original article appear in various sections of the larger work but largely in the chapter entitled "On Virtue."

⁴ *Reflections of a Non-Political Man*, p. 55.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11 & 14.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 101-02; Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, "Why I am so Wise," 3. Morris translates Mann's *unpolitisch* as nonpolitical. I have changed the translation to unpolitical.

⁷ Peter Bergmann, *Nietzsche, "The Last Antipolitical German"* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987), p. 4 & 189, note 15.

charged.⁸ For both Nietzsche and Activism, the goal is to free the human being from the power of the state to which he now stood in bondage. Hiller thus challenged the very basis of the conservative interpretation of Nietzsche represented in Mann's writings. Nietzsche may have preferred culture to politics, but only in a Germany where culture was really free from state control. As for Mann's conception of Nietzsche as a conservative partisan of a romantic unpolitical Germany, Hiller responded:

Thomas Mann quotes him. He called himself the "last unpolitical German"....But that politics which made Nietzsche nauseous was the business of party flatheads and editorialists; It was precisely the absence of *Geist* in "political" life which...tortured him, as much as the lack of *Geist* in contemporary philosophy unnerved him. Yet, his concept of *Geist* is the most political which can be imagined. Every struggle of the present against the seemingly legitimate separation of concept and form from the "actual", every struggle for the introduction of a goal into philosophy...every evaluating, obligating, and creative thinking, in short all Activism (even if it is first called active nihilism in *The Will to Power*) derives immediately, if not entirely consciously, from Nietzsche....And if he today had to choose between Thomas and Heinrich--my humble self guarantees it: he would not waver.⁹

Hiller was hardly the only Expressionist to defend Nietzsche. Articles attacking the conservative interpretation appeared in a number of Expressionist journals. In an article in *Die Aktion* from 1915, "Die Deutschsprache Friedrich Nietzsches," Franz Pfemfert challenged the new patriotic Nietzsche created by the philosopher's sister, the scholar Werner Sombart and a host of other academics.¹⁰ "This Germanized Nietzsche, this fabrication of a Nietzsche-German (as a complement to the Rembrandt-German), that friend is about the most incomprehensible thing."¹¹ To counter this patriotic version of Nietzsche, Pfemfert provided a list of quotations from *Ecce Homo* to illustrate Nietzsche's disdain for the Germans and his unqualified

⁸ Kurt Hiller, *Taugenichts-Tätiger Geist-Thomas Mann*, (Berlin, Verlag Dr. Basch & Co., 1917). A shortened version of the essay appeared in *Die Weißen Blätter* 4 (1917), pp. 88-94 and is reproduced in *Expressionismus: Manifeste und Dokumente zur deutschen Literatur*, ed. Thomas Anz and Michael Stark (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1979), pp. 284-88. All references are to the original.

⁹ Kurt Hiller, *Taugenichts-Tätiger Geist-Thomas Mann*, pp. 11-12.

¹⁰ Franz Pfemfert, "Die Deutschsprache Friedrich Nietzsches," *Die Aktion* 5 (1915), 320-323.

¹¹ Ibid., 321. Rembrandt als Erzieher: a reference to Julius Langbehn's book by that name, a classic of the conservative revolution. The title played on Nietzsche's essay *Schopenhauer as Educator*. See Fritz Stern, *Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1961), pp. 117-121, 175-176.

internationalism. He deliberately chose *Ecce Homo* as Nietzsche's "most valid and final work" since Sombart had excused anti-German statements from the earlier works as the "sins of youth."

While Hiller and Pfemfert sought to protect Nietzsche's legacy from Germany's cultural conservatives, René Schickele's *Die Weißen Blätter* reported on similar efforts abroad. An article in 1919 by Oscar Levy, the editor of the British edition of Nietzsche's works, disclosed how British public opinion held Nietzsche and his glorification of the *Übermensch* responsible for German militarism and, consequently, the attack on Belgium.¹² "The refrain Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardt roars at us out of the columns of all the papers and reviews, from the old dignified Tory weekly *Spectator* to the enlightened, liberal *Daily News*."¹³ Yet, Levy reported that friends of Nietzsche have stuck to their guns and have defended the philosopher in the press. Like Pfemfert, Levy was fascinated by how the German nationalists had made a hero from the most unqualified internationalist.

Levy, however, went further than that. He saw Nietzsche as the paragon of a *geistig* International that had demonstrated its superiority to all other Internationals, red or black, which had succumbed to the passions of 1914. Even the contemporary dream of a league of nations would not put an end to war, according to Levy.¹⁴ It would be just one more organization consisting of individual countries defending their separate interests. Only Nietzsche's *geistig* International of good Europeans is capable of creating a lasting peace.

Perhaps the most interesting of Nietzsche's defenders was Wilhelm Herzog, the editor of the socialist journal *Das Forum*. In an article of October 1919, "Nietzsche und die Deutschen," Herzog went further than Pfemfert's and Levy's defense of Nietzsche as "the good European" and attempted to place Nietzsche on the side of the Revolution of 1919.

Nietzsche was no defender of the Communist Manifesto, much more the sharpest antipode of the socialist viewpoint. But he was a revolutionary, more clever, principled, unsparing, knowledgeable and critical of *bürgerlich* society than many of the Social Democratic leaders. He dissolved this *bürgerlich* society, its culture, its values, its beliefs, its patriotism, its morality; he unmasked, he mocked its mendacity, its narrow intellect; its arrogance, its

¹² Oscar Levy, "Nietzsche im Krieg: Eine Erinnerung und eine Warnung," *Die Weißen Blätter* 6, 1919, pp. 277-284.

¹³ Ibid., p. 278. Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-96): historian and author of a monumental history of Germany in the nineteenth century which taught Germans to idealize their country and which considered the British and the Jews as obstacles to the rise of German power; Friedrich von Bernhardt is best known for his book *Deutschland und der nächste Krieg* (1913).

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 283.

hostility to *Geist*....He created the vision of the *Übermensch* while his time created the presupposition for the *Untermensch*, for the beast whose degeneracy and excesses we are now experiencing.¹⁵

Herzog explained Nietzsche's antidemocratic and antisocialist views as a result of the latter's abhorrence of the purely political preoccupations of individuals. "He hated the political frauds, their slogans, their lack of psychology, their modern ideas, their worship of the masses."¹⁶ These are strange words for a Bolshevik and in 1919 Herzog considered himself one. Yet for Herzog, as for a number of Expressionists, the road to Bolshevism in no way meant a repudiation of Nietzsche. Indeed, it is worthwhile to examine Herzog's development if only to demonstrate the peculiar, but not uncommon, phenomenon of an Expressionist coming to Marxism via Nietzsche's critique of culture.

In 1910, Herzog had been the coeditor of *Pan*, the journal in which Heinrich Mann had first published his "Geist und Tat" essay. The two men, in fact, were friends and Herzog had written of the latter that "after Friedrich Nietzsche the Germans have no European of such rank."¹⁷ *Das Forum*, which Herzog founded in April 1914, also represented the cosmopolitan principles which Herzog attributed to both Mann and Nietzsche. The opening article called upon "intellectuals of all lands to unite" and as "good Europeans" fight the chauvinism that was threatening Europe with war.¹⁸ War, however, did break out and Herzog expressed his increasing despondency in the issues of *Das Forum* at the failure of intellectuals to put an end to the national hatreds which, as Herzog observed following Goethe, came from the lowest levels of culture. Against this bankruptcy of culture, Herzog recommended silence:

As long as the sword speaks...we want to remain at our posts remembering the word of the often quoted Nietzsche, who in November 1870 spoke to his friend Baron von Gersdorff of his great apprehension regarding the existing situation of culture: "If only we do not have pay too dearly for this monstrous national success in that area where I at least cannot concede defeat. It is, among other things, very difficult but we must be philosophers enough to remain determined during this general intoxication so that the thief does not come and steal or diminish what for me cannot compare with the greatest

¹⁵ Wilhelm Herzog, "Friedrich Nietzsche und die Deutschen," *Das Forum* 4 (1919) 1-23. see p. 2 for quote.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁷ Wilhelm Herzog, *Menschen denen ich begegnete* (Bern and Munich: Francke Verlag, 1959), p. 243.

¹⁸ Wilhelm Herzog, "Tagebuch," *Das Forum* 1 (1914), 1-4.

military deed....For the coming period of culture the fighters are necessary. For this we must preserve ourselves."¹⁹

So far, we see that Herzog had identified Nietzsche's desire for a new culture with his own and resolved, as the philosopher did during the war of unification, to wait out the national passions in the hope that the result would be the awaited period of culture. Herzog did not, however, wait silently and throughout 1915 he continued to call upon intellectuals to refuse support for the war. His attitudes resulted in massive censorship of the *Das Forum* and, finally, its proscription by the government in the spring of 1915. Only after the November Revolution did *Das Forum* return, this time with its editor a self-proclaimed socialist. Herzog's first editorial "Der geistige Typus des Revolutionär" placed him in opposition to the Spartacist League. The latter doubted the sincerity of President Wilson while for Herzog "the question is not Wilson or Lenin but Wilson and Lenin."²⁰ More importantly, Herzog was disturbed by the Spartacist concentration on economic questions.

The economic presuppositions [of revolution] are the ABC of every people....Nevertheless, no revolution without a *geistig* preparation, without an ethical basis, can exist. For that reason, the first command is to enlighten the masses, to educate them in the *Geist* of a true revolution, to supply them with weapons in order to make them strong against the still mighty powers of a reactionary movement hostile to *Geist*.

Socialism for Herzog simply meant the achievement of the new culture, the new man, which Expressionism sought even before the war. The continuing relationship to Nietzsche is quite clear in Herzog's next, more pessimistic editorial on the revolution, "Besinnt euch," which is subtitled, after Nietzsche's famous theory, "Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen."²¹ The eternal recurrence to which Herzog alluded was the recurring violence in German history. Just as the German people chose war in 1914, in 1919 they likewise were choosing to kill each other on the streets of Berlin. He continued in the next editorial, "Der Kampf um die Macht":

One should not dare to speak of art and culture so long as humanity still finds itself in such a bestial condition. All the leaders have failed. We ourselves

¹⁹ Herzog, "Durch!--Bleibt die Losung," *Das Forum* 1 (1914), p. 326; Friedrich Nietzsche, *Briefwechsel*, edited by Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari (New York, Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971), vol. 2/1, pp. 155-6.

²⁰ Herzog, "Der geistige Typus des Revolutionärs," *Das Forum*, 3 (1918), p. 183.

²¹ Herzog, "Besinnt euch: Die ewige Wiederkehr des Gleichen," *Das Forum*, 3 (1918), p. 185-188. This was neither the first or last time Herzog would title his articles with famous quotations out of Nietzsche's works. See for example: "Der Triumph des Krieges: Der große Umwerter," *Das Forum*, 1 (1914), 257-260 or "Wie man wird, was man ist," 4 (1920) 241-254.

are guilty. A people which in the twentieth century is so unprepared, so undisciplined, which so aimlessly staggers between egoistic wishes and unclear ideas of freedom must first learn that power is not achieved through machine gun fire and hand grenades but through work on oneself, through power of the will, through the will to ennoble and spiritualize oneself. Every dictatorship, whether that of Scheidemann-Ebert or Liebknecht, can only be temporary, is disgraceful...because it is based on success and the worship of the power of the dull masses.²²

The events of the first few months of 1919 would lead Herzog to reverse himself, to move towards Bolshevism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. He was infuriated that the so-called democratic forces were branding him and other intellectuals of like mind as traitors for their insistence that the German government had to purge itself of all reactionary forces. By Herzog's estimate, the Social Democratic Party (SPD) had compromised the revolution by their compromise with the old order. First came the murder of Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht mendaciously committed in the name of preserving democracy. Then, by April, Herzog concluded that the SPD was not merely a dupe of the old order but a willing participant in an infamous deception which parades the word democracy before the people even as capitalism continues to profit at their expense.²³ In the same month, Herzog concluded in an editorial "Der Korridor," that a dictatorship of the proletariat was necessary as a transition to true democracy.²⁴

Yet again, this adoption of Bolshevism did not mean the abandonment of Herzog's earlier Nietzschean ideas. On the contrary, it was these ideas which led him to Bolshevism. The critique of the incipient Weimar democracy in his April editorial were the same ideas taken up in his June defense of Nietzsche. In the April critique he had noted how the capitalists used the illusion of democracy to mask their own profits and power just as the representatives of the old regime identified their interests with the will of God. Borrowing a phrase from Nietzsche, Herzog noted that democracy was "the new god of this godless petty bourgeoisie."²⁵ Herzog pursued this idea in his June defense of Nietzsche, whose name was now being invoked along with "democracy" in promotion of the interests of Germany's ruling class.

Whoever today uses the word democracy in a sense which is useful to them, whoever in the name of "democracy" defends the rights of the ruling class, whoever does not recognize the democracy of today as the most

²² Herzog, "Der Kampf um die Macht," *Das Forum* 3 (1919), 189-190.

²³ Herzog, "Im Namen der Demokratie," *Das Forum* 3 (1919), pp. 516-522.

²⁴ Herzog, "Korridor," *Das Forum*, 3 (1919), pp. 522-526.

²⁵ Herzog, "Im Namen der Demokratie", p. 518.

sanctimonious, most brutal, most ordinary dictatorship, but rather struggles for its preservation, is no longer mistaken, he lies. He is at best an idiot who wraps himself in mist or he lies like the priest of whom Nietzsche further said: "The priest too knows as well as anybody else that there is no longer any "God," any "sinner," any "Redeemer"--that "free will" and "moral world order" are lies: seriousness, the profound self-overcoming of the spirit, no longer permits anybody *not* to know about this....We know, today our *conscience* knows, what these uncanny inventions of the priests and the church are really worth, *what ends they served* in reducing mankind to such a state of self-violation that its sight can arouse nausea: the concepts "beyond," "Last Judgment," "immortality of the soul," and "soul" itself are instruments of torture, systems of cruelty by virtue of which the priest became master, remained master.²⁶

Herzog presents the clearest example of a phenomenon that was common in Expressionism: he has moved to Marx via Nietzsche. His understanding of religion's role in society comes from Nietzsche's *The Antichrist*, not from Marx's "On The Jewish Question." It is, in fact, impossible to decide with certainty whether Herzog's epistemological theory is now Historical Materialism or a continuation of the critique of culture which the Expressionists derived from Nietzsche. On the one hand, he stresses that the war had brought intellectuals closer "to the roots of social life through penetrating study of historical, economic, political, and social relations."²⁷ On the other hand he considered Bolshevism a possible redemption from "the decline of the entire European culture" which "worships raw ordinary success" and which "places the violent higher than the *geistig*, tender, noble."²⁸ In contrast to this declining culture, "revolutionary socialism is creative, affirms the *Geist* and creates new values."²⁹

The point is not to demonstrate that Herzog was more a Nietzschean than a Marxist in 1919, though that is certainly arguable. The point is that Herzog became a Marxist because Bolshevism, as he understood it, seemed to provide the way to create the *geistig* society which Herzog had all along identified with Nietzsche. Similar progressions were made by many other Expressionists. In 1910 it was impossible to be a Marxist because Marxism was everywhere identified as a soulless materialist philosophy which made men the product of their circumstances. The success of the October Revolution in Russia and the

²⁶ Herzog, "Friedrich Nietzsche und die Deutschen," pp. 5-6; Nietzsche, *Der Antichrist*, 38.

²⁷ Herzog, "Dem toten Kameraden Ludwig Rubiner," *Das Forum* 4 (1920), p. 477.

²⁸ Herzog, "Das Gespenst des Bolschewismus," *Das Forum*, 3 (1919), 526-527.

²⁹ Herzog, "Terror gegen Terror," *Das Forum* 3, (1919), p. 596.

November Revolution in Germany changed all that, restoring to Marxism the revolutionary impetus it lacked prior to the war.

Herwarth Walden, the editor of *Der Sturm*, travelled a road to Marxism that was similar to Herzog's. The precise date when Walden became committed to communism cannot be ascertained though his interest in politics first appeared in his opening article of *Der Sturm* in 1919.³⁰ Walden appears to have followed the general pattern of many Expressionists, becoming aroused to politics by the war and November Revolution and developing a commitment to communism through contact with Russian artists visiting Berlin, in this case Lunacharsky.³¹ It is likely that the latter was helpful to Walden in reconciling Marxism with the vitalist foundation of his art since Nietzsche had been a strong influence on Lunacharsky and a number of other Russian Marxists prior to the revolution.³²

Admittedly, articles about Nietzsche ceased to appear in *Der Sturm* after 1914. This was in part the result of the dissolution of the *Neue Club* in that year as well as the break by Hiller, Friedlaender, and Ruest, with Walden's inner circle. Yet even as politicization altered old alliances, there appears to be no wholesale repudiation of the philosopher. Indeed, as in the case of many Expressionists, we find *Der Sturm* repudiating Nietzsche's individualism but maintaining other aspects of his philosophy. In a 1920 critique of pre-Expressionist poetry, Walden repudiated the cult of the great personality of the previous century. Not just every great personality, he asserted, but every human being strives for freedom.³³ Clearly distancing himself from Nietzsche's individualism, Walden noted that real freedom comes only from the containment of the drives. Yet his argument was both Nietzschean and Freudian. He concluded that society exists only at the expense of individual drives and additionally, in agreement with the two psychologists, Walden asserted that art is the result of a contained drive.³⁴

Yet Walden did not view the containment of a drive as a sacrifice to the individual, as Nietzsche did, since the satisfaction of a drive requires

³⁰ Herwarth Walden, "Kunst und Leben," *Der Sturm*, 10 (1919), pp. 2-3.

³¹ According to Nell Walden, Walden had known Lunacharsky before 1917 when the latter became People's Commissar for Education in the Soviet Union. See Nell Walden, "Der Mensch Herwarth Walden" in *Herwarth Walden: Ein Lebensbild* (Berlin, Mainz: Florian Kupferberg, 1963), p. 32.

³² See George L. Kline's article "Nietzschean Marxism in Russia" in *Demythologizing Marxism*, ed. Friedrich J. Adelman, (Boston College, 1969), pp. 166-183.

³³ Herwarth Walden, "Kritik der vorexpressionistischen Dichtung," *Der Sturm*, 11 (1920), pp. 98-100, 122-125.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

community as well as its own free play.³⁵ Community (*Gemeinschaft*) is as necessary to the satisfaction of all drives as their containment is necessary for community. It is thus human nature to strive for community and any regulation of society which does not emerge from the wishes of the community is contrary to natural impulses. The regulation of society based on the natural drive toward community is called ethics which Walden took pains to distinguish from morality, the means by which the powerful control society. Morality varies from society to society depending on the needs of the powerful. Ethics are not relative since it arises out of the natural drive to community.³⁶

Based on these presuppositions Walden could reconfirm his commitment to a sort of egalitarian Nietzscheanism. He denounced all previous moral systems as means of exploitation and urged the working class to decide for themselves what their values should be.³⁷ His phrase "*Verwaltet selbst was euch Wert bedeutet*" brings to mind Nietzsche's famous dictum "Become who you are!"³⁸ This was, of course, the ethical theory which runs throughout Expressionism, that people should ignore moral systems imposed from without and obey their true selves. That Nietzsche was the source of the ethical theory in postrevolutionary *Der Sturm* becomes even clearer in William Wauer's article of 1923, "Über die Möglichkeit einer neuen Religion." Wauer, a contributor to *Der Sturm* from 1911 until 1924, quoted Nietzsche in his rejection of all traditional forms of religion. Self-realization and self-elevation are the only ways to a meaningful order of existence. "Become what you are...that alone is the truth; virtues without truth are lies and hypocrisy."³⁹

The same principle of ethics appeared in many of the theoretical writings of *Der Sturm* but is tied directly to Nietzsche in the independent writings of Kurt Liebmann, who was with Walden until 1932, the final year of the periodical. In 1925, Liebmann established the *Dion Verlag* to promote the work of the rising post-Expressionist generation "in which he saw, in the sense of Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*, a Dionysian moment."⁴⁰ According to Liebmann, a new Dionysian epoch was in the offing. As a result of Nietzsche's philosophy, humanity has gone beyond metaphysics and

³⁵ Ibid., p. 122.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 122.

³⁷ Herwarth Walden, "Befreiung," *Der Sturm* 14 (1923), 97-98.

³⁸ See *Zarathustra*, part 4, "The Honey Sacrifice" or *The Gay Science*, 270.

³⁹ William Wauer, "über die Möglichkeit einer neuen Religion," *Der Sturm* 14 (1923), pp. 123-128, 140-144. See p. 144 for quotation.

⁴⁰ Kurt Liebmann and Alexander Mette, "Zur Geschichte des Dion-Verlags," *Marginalien* 5 (1970), pp. 65-70.

teleological philosophy and now faced life strictly on the basis of its own vitality.⁴¹ This new vitality meant that people will live in accordance with their true natures. Hypocrisy will disappear as people will say what they mean without disguising their intentions with moral platitudes. Yet not just nature rules. For the true Dionysian epoch is the unity of Dionysus and Apollo, the synthesis of Expressionist pathos with the intellectualism of the New Objectivity.⁴²

The End of a Left-Wing Nietzsche Vogue in Germany

While Nietzsche's philosophy still echoed in postrevolutionary Expressionism, the trend was no doubt away from Nietzschean individualism toward a vision of a communal society based on Marxism. As we have already seen, Expressionists such as Rudolf Leonard, Walter Rilla, and Ludwig Rubiner all deserted Kurt Hiller's Activist movement after the November Revolution, only to become committed to Marxism. Of course an alliance with the working class, or a critique of society based on class and not culture, could only come at the expense of the Nietzsche cult.

Ludwig Rubiner is a classic example of how the road to Marx led away from Nietzsche. His 1912 article "Der Dichter greift an die Politik" was typical of the early Expressionist tendency to ignore social processes. The solution of social ills required cultural renewal, the strengthening of the individual in terms derived from Nietzsche and Max Stirner.⁴³ Yet Rubiner, who spent the war in Switzerland, rapidly changed his views. By 1917 love has taken the place of individualism in his doctrine. His new model was Tolstoy, Nietzsche being emphatically renounced:

Nietzsche's *Ecce Homo* was the last word of thinking in an epoch which strived for the release of the individual from his environment.... The problem of the entire past intellectual domain, between about 1800 and 1900, was the individual ego. The individual ruled *geistig*... The "You" of the environment was not placed in a fully *geistig* viewpoint, rather only observed from the economic standpoint, thus purely according to utility.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Liebmann, *Dionysos-Apollo: Die Idee und Rechtfertigung der jungen Generation* (Dessau: Dion Verlag, 1927), p. 14.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 21-26.

⁴³ See Rubiner's article "Brief an einen Aufrührer," *Die Aktion*, 3 (1913) 302-07, where Rubiner calls the "free spirit" the most powerful word of our language and Max Stirner the greatest German.

⁴⁴ This excerpt from Rubiner's introduction to Tolstoy's *Diary*, which Rubiner edited, was printed in *Die Aktion* 8 (1918), 1-7 under the title "Aus der Einleitung zu Tolstois Tagebuch, 1895-1899."

According to Rubiner both Nietzsche's philosophy and the socialism of the SPD developed out of the materialistic science of the nineteenth century which freed intellectuals from dogmas and institutions, like the church, which were actually in the service of the state. Since the church claimed to represent the spiritual, socialism rejected that spirituality and built itself upon a materialist doctrine of utility. Nietzsche, on the other hand, invented the cult of the artist to preserve the greatest autonomy for the individual who, however, stood above a society ruled by a mechanical process. Thus, the spiritual concept of community was represented by the church, though it was empty of all real content. It was Tolstoy who, for Rubiner, broke down the wall of individualistic materialism which surrounded the artist and made it possible to again be an artist in the service of human community.

Rubiner's repudiation of Nietzsche in this essay bears a striking resemblance to the path Heinrich Mann took away from the philosopher. Neither Rubiner nor Mann saw Nietzsche on the side of militarism and reaction. It is simply that both were unable to see beyond the aestheticist side of Nietzsche's philosophy, to find, as Hiller did, the political activist fighting for a new community. Both Rubiner and Mann repudiated Nietzsche's cult of the great individual who creates himself high above an offensive society. For Rubiner it was Tolstoy who pointed the way from individualism, which no longer seemed defensible after a world war, toward a socialist commitment to change society. Rubiner's socialism would remain ethically motivated right up to his premature death in 1920.⁴⁵ Yet, as demonstrated by the essay collection *Die Gemeinschaft*, which Rubiner edited in 1919, Lenin replaced Tolstoy as Rubiner's great man while *Proletkult* and solidarity with the proletariat became the tactics of the artist.⁴⁶

In certain cases the trade-off between Nietzsche and Lenin was even more distinct. Johannes Becher, who strongly identified himself with Nietzsche during the war, paralleled Rubiner's way to Communism, joining the Spartacus League in 1918 and the German Communist Party (KPD) in 1919.⁴⁷ At this time he too identified with Tolstoy, and it was only in the early 1920s that Becher came to Marxism through the influence of Lenin. It was also

⁴⁵ Rubiner died at the age of 39 from an inflammation of the lungs.

⁴⁶ See Rubiner's essay "Erneuerung" and his introduction to Lunacharski's essay "Proletarische Kultur" in *Die Gemeinschaft: Dokumente der geistigen Weltwende*, ed. Ludwig Rubiner (Potsdam: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1920).

⁴⁷ For Becher's *geistig* development see Friedrich Albrecht, *Deutsche Schriftsteller in die Entscheidung: Weg zur Arbeiterklasse, 1918-1933*, (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau, 1970), pp. 162-236, particularly note 48.

Lenin whom Becher later thanked for helping him to "free himself from the provocations of Nietzsche."⁴⁸

In turning from Marx to Nietzsche, Rubiner and Becher gave up cultural revolution for social revolution. It worked the other way as well. Where Expressionists resisted the principle of class struggle and maintained the call for a revolution of *Geist*, not social relations, Nietzsche's philosophy retained its appeal. In a series of articles appearing in *Die Weißen Blätter* in 1918 and 1919, René Schickele evaluated the progress of the November revolution, increasingly falling into despair in the face of communist violence. He warned against imitating the Russian example in distinctly Nietzschean terms:

See socialism not as the invention of a zealous rabbi, nor a swarm of red cutthroats, nor the *ressentiment* of a class. See it as the single humanly dignified order of society.⁴⁹

It is the word *ressentiment* which shows that Nietzsche is at the bottom of Schickele's analysis. Schickele sympathized with Rubiner who "in despair of the laziness of his contemporaries, developed a preference for the whip,"⁵⁰ but he nevertheless insisted that Bolshevism arose not from a true revolution of culture but only in the age-old desire to rule, to humble others, "to walk like a Herr." The Bolsheviks, Schickele concluded, are like their predecessors the militarists. He reached this conclusion through an examination of Lenin speeches, noting the constant repetition of words like "crushing," "extermination," "annihilation" (*Unterdrückung, Ausrottung, Vernichtung*).

The Bolsheviks are haters...cossacks of socialism....For me socialism means the opposite of class rule, namely the final dissolution of the classes in that community of unfathomable depth which Nietzsche pointed to with his words about the "Greeks as dreaming Homers and Homer as a dreaming Greek," where the worker has ceased to be a proletariat and is himself a living piece of work.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Johannes Becher, "Vom Geheimnis unseres Jahrhunderts oder Dank an ein Buch" in *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 17 (Berlin, Weimar: Aufbau, 1979), p.336. Becher, who remained a communist and became an important cultural figure in the DDR, would adhere to Lukács' view regarding Nietzsche's place in German history. See *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 16, pp. 424-430.

⁴⁹ René Schickele, "Revolution, Bolschewismus und Ideal," *Die Weißen Blätter* 5:6 (1918), 105. This essay along with several others from the periodical were reprinted as *Der Neunte November* in the series *Tribüne der Kunst und Zeit*, edited by Kasimir Edschmid (Berlin: Erich Reiß Verlag, 1919).

⁵⁰ Schickele, "Revolution, Bolschewismus und Ideal," p. 107.

⁵¹ Ibid. pp. 122-123, 124. The quote from Nietzsche is from *The Birth of Tragedy out of Spirit of Music*, section 2.

Instead of Bolshevism, Schickele aligned himself with the incipient *Clarté* movement led by Henri Barbusse of France. Started in response to the war, the original aim of *Clarté* "was to rally the intellectual elite of all countries in support of an internationalist ideology with vague overtones of social regeneration."⁵² The movement fragmented shortly after the war over the question of adherence to the Third International. Schickele became the spokesman for *Clarté* in Germany and although there is no reason to believe that Nietzsche had any direct influence on this organization, it is worthwhile noting that *Clarté's* internationalism and notions of social regeneration dovetail nicely with the way the Expressionists had been interpreting the philosopher. It is no coincidence that on the international steering committee of *Clarté* we find Georg Brandes and Stefan Zweig.

Yet Schickele's resistance to Marxism was more the exception than the rule among Expressionists. It is this fact which perhaps spelled the end of Expressionism itself. Nietzsche's critique of culture had lost its audience in the bohemian cafes of Berlin and the reason was not simply the vociferousness of the Nietzschean right. The war and then the November Revolution demonstrated the failings of bohemian elitism and the cultural critique as the left-wing intelligentsia hurried, in their powerlessness, to embrace their old adversaries, the working-class philistines. Nothing demonstrates this more emphatically than the development of *Die Aktion*, the leading journal of the politically engaged side of Expressionism.

Throughout the war years, *Die Aktion* became increasingly committed to political action. In 1915, Pfemfert and his supporters secretly established a political party called the *Antinationale Sozialistische Partei* (ASP) which distributed illegal antiwar material.⁵³ The first issue of *Die Aktion* after the end of the war contained only manifestos in support of the revolution, including a manifesto of the ASP.⁵⁴ The second issue closed with a declaration in support of the Spartacist League of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, with whom Pfemfert had become friends.⁵⁵ Still, it does not appear that Pfemfert had changed his mind about Nietzsche despite his increasing commitment to the working class. Heinrich Shaefer, who was a regular

⁵² Nicole Racine, "The Clarté Movement in France, 1919-21," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 2 (1967) p. 195.

⁵³ Lothar Peter, *Literarische Intelligenz und Klassenkampf: Die Aktion, 1911-1932* (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein, 1972), pp. 55-61. Peter provides the most extensive information on the ASP.

⁵⁴ "Aufruf der Antinationalen Sozialistischen Partei Gruppe Deutschland," *Die Aktion* 8 (1918), 583-586.

⁵⁵ Pfemfert, "Erklärung," *Die Aktion* 8 (1918), 637-8.

contributor to *Die Aktion* between 1914 and 1919 and who signed the ASP manifesto, wrote, as late as May 1917, an article praising Nietzsche's attempt at a revaluation of all values and lamenting that this attempt had been misconstrued.⁵⁶

Indeed, as in the case of many other Expressionists, political commitment and cultural critique seemed to go hand in hand in *Die Aktion* in the immediate aftermath of the Revolution. In a series of articles, the first of which Pfemfert introduced with approval, Carl Sternheim called the Revolution the first *geistig* deed committed by Germans because it represented a break with the *bürgerlich* culture which had prevailed in Germany since unification in 1871.⁵⁷ He encouraged the workers to accept responsibility for the war, as all Germans should, since they had hitherto supported imperialism. In "Das Arbeiter-ABC" Sternheim emphasized that the workers "must free themselves from their envy for bourgeois culture and goods, which the French call *ressentiment* and for which the German language has no word as it has no word for anything essential." In order for a proletarian steering of humanity to begin, the workers must create their own "table" of values, or in another phrase borrowed from Nietzsche, the workers must develop "their own style."⁵⁸

Interestingly, Sternheim distinctly equated *bürgerlich* culture with the culture of imperialism demonstrating the increasing socioeconomic emphasis of the cultural critique in its final days of its influence. Yet Sternheim's charge that the worker had adhered to that culture demonstrates why, for the Expressionists, the term *bürgerlich* lacked the class content which critics of Expressionism have argued it should have. For the Expressionists, one was *bürgerlich* not because one was economically and socially a bourgeois but because one adhered to the values which, along with the bourgeoisie, had become predominant in Germany since 1871. Capitalism was just one aspect of a culture, which along with materialism, militarism, and a hypocritical morality, led to an imperialistic war. Sternheim's articles show that the Expressionist critique of culture was not yet exchanged for a Marxist analysis of society in the pages of *Die Aktion*, rather the two had come together.

⁵⁶ Heinrich Schaefer, "Bemerkung zu Nietzsches Umwertung," *Die Aktion* 7 (1917), 238-239.

⁵⁷ Carl Sternheim, "Die Deutsche Revolution," *Die Aktion* 8 (1918), 613-26; "Revolutionsgewinnler," *Die Aktion* 8 (1918), 639-41; "Das Arbeiter-ABC," 12 (1922), 205-207, 289-91, 401-403, 463-465. Both articles are reprinted in Carl Sternheim, *Gesamtwerk*, edited by Wilhelm Emrich (Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1966), 6:71-86, 240-255.

⁵⁸ Sternheim, "Das Arbeiter-ABC," *Gesamtwerk*, p.253; Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 270: "One thing is needful.--To 'give style' to one's character....For one thing is needful: that a human being should attain satisfaction with himself....Whoever is dissatisfied with himself is continually ready for revenge, and we the others will be his victims, if only by having to endure his ugly sight."

In the years after the Revolution, however, Sternheim and Pfemfert would grow more distant until, by 1925, Sternheim ceased to write for *Die Aktion*. Yet their divergent paths represent the two diverging directions taken by Expressionists in general after the war, and consequently the two possible fates of the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany. Sternheim would never leave the realm of the cultural criticism and, while many of his criticisms of materialism and nineteenth-century culture were drawn from the ideas of the neo-Kantian philosopher Heinrich Rickert, his ideas on establishing new values followed Nietzsche and Stirner.⁵⁹ In his novel *Europa* (1920), Sternheim developed, through his protagonist Carl Wundt, the idea of natural socialism which is consonant with the general interpretation of Nietzsche by Expressionists. People are to act in accordance with their inner nature. Party socialism was rejected since it espoused a fixed morality imposed universally from without. Like other Expressionists, Sternheim believed that instinctual freedom would, in itself, result in community. Conflict occurred when people adhered to prejudices and conventions or reacted in accordance with their *ressentiment*.

Yet in *Europa*, Sternheim was only a critical adherent of Nietzsche. The protagonist Carl Wundt appeals to "the will to life" and yet calls for an "abandonment of the will to power."⁶⁰ Clearly Sternheim rejected Nietzsche as he was understood in 1920 in favor of Nietzsche as the Expressionists understood him before the war.⁶¹ In his critical essays *Berlin oder Juste milieu* (1920) and *Tasso oder Kunst des Juste milieu* (1921), Sternheim praised Nietzsche as one of the few free Germans who offered the *geistiges Gelände* for reversing the unfavorable direction the German spirit had taken since 1871.⁶² Yet with the spread of the right-wing version of Nietzsche's philosophy, Sternheim's misgivings about Nietzsche's grew. In his 1936 autobiography he wrote that humanity, during the war period, "suffered...from

⁵⁹ For Nietzsche's influence on Sternheim see Herbert Reichert, "Nietzsche und Carl Sternheim" in *Nietzsche und die deutsche Literatur* vol. 2, edited by Bruno Hillebrand (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1978), pp. 11-35; Rhys W. Williams, *Carl Sternheim: A Critical Study* (Bern and Frankfurt/M: Peter Lang, 1982); and especially Wolfgang Wendler: *Carl Sternheim: Weltvorstellung und Kunstprinzipien* (Frankfurt/M, Bonn: Athenäum Verlag, 1966).

⁶⁰ Sternheim, *Europa* in *Gesamtwerk*, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1966), vol. 5, p. 470.

⁶¹ Wolfgang Wendler is skeptical as to whether it was really the wartime cult of power which led to Sternheim's repudiation of Nietzsche. In Wendler's view, it is more likely that Sternheim affirmed Nietzsche where the latter fought mendacity and moral prejudice and rejected him where Nietzsche propagated the Will to Power. See Wendler, *Carl Sternheim*, p. 52.

⁶² *Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 125 & 199.

Nietzsche's *Will to Power*; his *Beyond Good and Evil*, his *Übermensch* caprice took over the leadership of the world."⁶³

In this same passage, though, Sternheim also excoriated the natural sciences, which made man into a "cross between animal and slave," and Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hauptmann, whose writings led to the "unchaining" of "the human beast." Ibsen, not Treitschke or Bernhardt, was the figure most often paired with Nietzsche when members of the literary left rejected him. If we read heroic individualism in place of Ibsen and the other naturalist writers, and materialism instead of the natural sciences, then Sternheim's repudiation of Nietzsche demonstrates the significance, as well as the unity, of all Expressionist repudiations of the philosopher.

Materialism and individualism were the legacies of the nineteenth century and even Expressionists acknowledged Nietzsche's debt to both. Expressionism itself had an ambiguous relationship to both materialism and individualism. Early Expressionism undoubtedly adhered to the notion that the mediocre in society were determined by materialist forces above which the great individual stood. By the end of the war, however, both materialism and individualism had become a burden to Germany's left-wing intellectuals as they sought a more collective ideology. This evolution occurred at the same time the German right began to appeal to both Nietzsche and all of German culture as the pillars of German militarism. The result was that individualism and materialism were rejected, along with both Nietzsche and Expressionism, as products of Germany's nineteenth-century culture, the same culture that led to a continental war. Ironically, the creator of the culture critique came to be associated with the very culture he criticized.

Franz Pfemfert took another route away from Nietzsche's philosophy. He never openly repudiated Nietzsche. He never had to since the ideas of Nietzsche's cultural revolution became increasingly irrelevant to *Die Aktion*. In the years after the war, *Die Aktion* advocated a decentralized form of communism based on the idea of the workers councils that sprang up during the November Revolution. When the Communist Party split in April 1920, Pfemfert supported the more radical Communist Workers Party (KAPD) which the seceding members formed. He later broke with this group too over its decision to adhere to the Third International.

Yet, in spite of the antiauthoritarian nature of Pfemfert's socialism, Nietzsche's name no longer appeared in the columns of *Die Aktion* during the 1920's. He had become irrelevant as *Die Aktion* became increasingly committed to egalitarian politics. The readership changed from artist to worker

⁶³ Ibid, vol. 10/1, pp. 258-259.

as literature took an increasingly smaller share of space in *Die Aktion*.⁶⁴ Pfemfert's development is representative of what happened to a large section of the left-wing intelligentsia during the war and it explains the reason for Expressionism's decline. Pfemfert's opposition to the middle class was no longer cultural; it had become entirely political.

⁶⁴ Paul Raabe, Introduction to *Ich schneide die Zeit aus: Expressionismus und Politik in Franz Pfemferts Aktion, 1911-1918*, ed. Paul Raabe (Munich, 1964), p. 14.

Conclusion.

You say you believe in Zarathustra? But what matters Zarathustra? You are my believers--but what matters all believers? You had not yet sought yourselves: and you found me....Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only then when you have all denied me will I return to you.

Zarathustra I,
"On the Gift-Giving Virtue," 3.

The end of the left-wing Nietzsche vogue in Germany signaled the end of Expressionism. True, Expressionist art forms continued into the 1920s, but the political movement collapsed with the failure to transform society on the basis of the philosophy to which Expressionism was most indebted. This study highlights that failure by focusing on those Expressionists for whom Nietzsche's influence was paramount, not in their literary works, but in their writings on politics and philosophy. The individual case studies represent those Expressionists who wrestled with Nietzsche's doctrine in the journals of Expressionism. Together they show a movement torn between two opposing poles of Nietzsche's philosophy.

Expressionism was born on a philosophical fence tottering between Nietzsche's elitist individualism, on the one hand, and his political activism and notions of cultural renewal, on the other. None of the Expressionists were ever able to reconcile these two opposing poles of Nietzsche's philosophy. It was the First World War which made them choose between them.

Otto Gross chose political activism. Yet his own theories were too steeped in Nietzsche's philosophy simply to give Nietzsche up. Instead, he unconsciously altered his own understanding of Nietzsche's philosophy, stripping it of the libertarian aspects which inhibited his way toward politics. He introduced love as the consequence of Nietzsche's destruction of morality, and he transformed the libertarian will to power into a distorted version of a benign instinct to preserve individuality. It was Gross' followers among the Berlin Dadaists who consummated his move away from Nietzsche when they completely rejected Nietzschean individualism in favor of Marxism.

Kurt Hiller more than any other figure represented the Expressionist dilemma. He never succeeded in reconciling the opposing Expressionist ideals of community and elite individualism, as he put it, in synthesizing Nietzsche and Marx. His ambition to lead the masses toward pacifism and socialism was undermined by his own contempt for them. Instead of leading the masses, he led himself into obscurity as his contemporaries deserted his Activist movement for Marxism.

Hiller's most vehement critic, Richard Huelsenbeck, was ironically the figure most comparable to him. Neither could decide between individualism or collectivism. Yet, whereas Hiller remained firmly implanted on his own synthesis of the two, Huelsenbeck wavered back and forth. In one article Dada meant communism, in another, a defense of the individual. At first Dada was nihilistic, later the foundation of a new humanism. Only years later, Huelsenbeck finally concluded that Dada was actually a humanistic defense of the individual.

If most Expressionists eventually moved forward toward politics, Salomo Friedlaender and Anselm Ruest retreated backward toward a more fervent defense of individualism and the complete rejection of politics. Yet their position was no defense of petty bourgeois interests as critics have charged. It was the position of early Expressionism, that the way to a better society begins not with a revolution of social conditions but with a spiritual revolution of the individual. Material interests may lead to the creation of ideology, but it is only the weak personality motivated by *ressentiment* who accepts that ideology. It was a credible argument in early Expressionism, but it became increasingly hollow after the beginning of the war. While other Expressionists abandoned individualism in favor of an alliance with the working class, Friedlaender and Ruest obstinately continued to reject politics. The result was that the only weapons they could muster against war and reaction were individual reason and a dionysian laugh.

It was the politicization of Nietzsche's philosophy in war and revolution that ultimately led to Friedlaender's repudiation of Nietzsche. His rejection of vitalism in favor of Kantian rationalism was only the result of that politicization. In Friedlaender's philosophy, vitalism meant the individual's cultivation of his own nature. Politics, what Friedlaender equated with war and violent revolution, freed nature from the constraints of its own self-cultivation. Limited in his alternatives by his own unpolitical philosophy, Friedlaender saved humanity in the realm of philosophy by once more putting nature under the tutelage of reason.

Hugo Ball's repudiation of Nietzschean vitalism closely paralleled Friedlaender's, though their understandings of Nietzsche's philosophy were

quite different. Whereas Friedlaender called for the cultivation of nature, Ball demanded its free reign. That demand rested on Ball's belief in the benignity of human nature, and the assumption, common among Expressionists, that reason and conventional morality were the real obstacles to community. The war quickly changed his mind about the benignity of human nature and Ball turned from irrationalism to the Catholic faith of his childhood. Like Friedlaender, he took refuge in the tradition from which he spent most of his life distancing himself.

Ball and Friedlaender's repudiation of vitalism was in many ways the equivalent of the abandonment of individualism by Expressionists in general. In early Expressionism, vitalism was, itself an ideology of community. Beyond Nietzsche's destruction of reason and all contemporary moral values stood Nietzsche's natural man who, for the Expressionists, was ultimately moral, guided by reason, and, most importantly, ready for a new type of community far superior to the old. For Friedlaender, Nietzsche's "eternal recurrence" was the new metaphysic of this community in which individuals would guide themselves by reason without forfeiting the instinctual drives sacrificed in Wilhelminian society. Ball saw in Nietzsche's irrationalism the foundation of a new German culture which would eliminate the conventional morality that had hitherto concealed the innate spirit common to all German people.

The war played a critical role in undermining the collective content of Nietzsche's vitalistic philosophy. The successful propagation of a right-wing version of Nietzsche's philosophy turned the Expressionists' antiauthoritarian vital man into the obedient German soldier. The will to power, which the Expressionists measured in terms of creativity and self-mastery, was now measured by Germany's territorial gains. Yet, it was not merely the militaristic version of Nietzsche's philosophy which frightened Expressionists away from vitalism. The war itself seemed to demonstrate that beyond the destruction of reason and morality stood, not a new moral man, but a beast.

The left-wing intelligentsia abandoned Nietzsche's individualism, as we have seen, because it was too closely tied to the German cultural tradition. Paradoxically, Nietzsche's irrationalistic philosophy was abandoned because it was too closely tied to Germany's rational tradition, as the climax of a scientific materialism which gradually reduced man to the level of a beast. Even before the war, Ball and most other Expressionists began to distance themselves from Nietzsche's materialism which reduced at least the mediocre in society to mere products of biological and social forces. As early as his 1911 biography of Nietzsche, Friedlaender feared that Nietzsche's "skepticism" went too far in reducing morality to interest.

The Expressionists repudiated precisely this rational side of Nietzsche's irrationalism during the war. They never repudiated the collective content they found hidden within that irrationalistic philosophy. In his postwar *Zur Kritik der deutschen Intelligenz*, Ball continued to laud the young Nietzsche, the pupil of Schopenhauer's irrationalistic philosophy, who preached the dissolution of individualism in dionysian ecstasy. Friedlaender, so it seems, did repudiate irrationalism for Kantian rationalism. Yet, remarkably, he converted to Kantian rationalism because he was persuaded of its irrational basis, its magic to use his term, which for him guaranteed the unity of all men in spite of their independent wills. Indeed, if one examines the postwar ideology of any Expressionist who repudiated Nietzsche, the conclusion is inevitable that each abandoned Nietzsche's philosophy in favor of a metaphysical doctrine which assured mankind of its collective harmony. Nietzsche's irrationalism was too--well--too rational, since it was the climax of a skeptical Enlightenment tradition which had eroded the metaphysical bonds uniting human beings in a community superior to nature.

Nietzsche, of course, did contribute to what he felt to be man's inevitable fall from his special place above nature. Yet he rescued man as well through his own doctrine of self-transfiguration. This doctrine, which played an important role in early Expressionism, was forgotten during the war, when the right ascribed an entirely different meaning to the *Übermensch*. Yet, even the cultivated, morally tolerant, pacifistic *Übermensch* of early Expressionism had become a liability during the war. He was too much the social pariah, too much the heroic individualist, to have any real influence on society. When the bohemian intelligentsia sought to escape their pariah status once and for all, Nietzschean individualism had to go.

The Expressionists may have abandoned Nietzsche's philosophy, but their original understanding of it puts to rest the view, fostered by many German cultural historians, that Nietzsche's single role in German history was to justify the cultural developments in Germany that eventually led to fascism. The Expressionist cultural critique was no rejection of modernity. Nietzschean vitalism, as it originally was understood by the Expressionists, did not constitute the complete rejection of a western rational and liberal tradition. For them, vitalism meant the free development of the individual, the legacy of Germany's early liberal movement before it had compromised itself in the period after unification.

This study of Expressionism, however, goes beyond a mere reevaluation of Nietzsche's role in German history; it confutes the argument of those historians who, writing in the decades after World War II, sought the origins of National Socialism in the irrationalistic trends which took root in Germany

at the beginning of the twentieth century. Ironically the Expressionists, like these historians, held German culture responsible for German authoritarianism and militarism. Yet for them irrationalism was a movement against German culture and the authoritarianism it engendered. It was a weapon against a society which had sacrificed the ethical value of reason to technological progress, and individual freedom to the authoritarian state.

In one respect, the Expressionists seem closer to more recent historians who have sought the origins of German fascism in the discrepancy between Germany's economic development, on the one hand, and its political and social development on the other. In their view, German militarism, if not the Nazi seizure of power itself, can be traced to the continuing dominance of preindustrial elites in an industrial society, and the failure of bourgeois liberalism in Germany. The Expressionists postulated that view long before it became popular among historians. Their laments over German culture were always tied to the recognition of the continuing power of the German aristocracy and the obsequiousness of the German bourgeoisie before that power.

In spite of these similarities, the Expressionist critique of culture is based on an entirely different premise than the views of both Germany's cultural historians and those preferring a sociological explanation. Both of these schools distinguish German development (either cultural or social) from the development of other western countries, and they have sought the origins of fascism precisely in those distinctions. The Expressionist critique of culture rejected the notion of Germany's "special way" vis-a-vis the west. They attacked German culture not because it was unique, but because it was the most pernicious example of the west's authoritarian and militaristic civilization.

Hardly the forerunner of any historical school, and certainly not the precursor of German fascism, Expressionism anticipated a variety of modern and postmodern philosophic trends which have found in Nietzsche's scrutiny of reason and morality a cache of insight into western history, if not the human condition.

Long before Michel Foucault developed his own "archeology of knowledge" based on Nietzsche's genealogical method, the Expressionists concluded that reason and morality served as weapons of domination.¹ Gilles

¹ For Nietzsche's influence on Foucault, see Michel Foucault, "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History" in *Language, Counter Memory, Practice*, trans., Donald Bouchard and Sherry Simon (New York: Cornell University Press, 1977); also Alan Sheridan, *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth* (London, New York: Tavistock, 1980).

Deleuze's distinction between active and reactive consciousness finds its original exposition in the Expressionist distinction between the autonomous, responsible human being and the person motivated by *ressentiment*.²

Walter Kaufmann's accomplishment in recognizing Nietzsche's psychological observations as an anticipation of Freud is overshadowed by the fact that the Expressionists recognized this years earlier.³ They recognized similarities between Nietzsche's and Freud's analysis of forgetting, of hypochondria, and of the origins of masochism and sadism. They celebrated Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as one who overcomes these symptoms, not one who gives into them.

Indeed, self-overcoming is the key to Expressionism's Nietzsche and it is this aspect of the movement which makes it most comparable with existentialism. Writing after the Second World War, Albert Camus observed that Nietzsche's nihilistic rejection of God and morality was just the preface to his notion that men are responsible for their own actions.⁴ Individual responsibility is the core of Expressionism. It played a central role in the philosophies of Hiller, Ball, Friedlaender, and Ruest. Its lineage from existentialism back to Nietzsche was recognized by Huelsenbeck.

This existentialist Nietzsche, however, disappeared with the fragmentation of the Expressionist movement after the First World War, and the success of a militarized version of Nietzsche's philosophy as an instrument of the German right. This latter interpretation of Nietzsche's philosophy was later canonized by the Nazis, and by Marxist critics who took over wholesale the Nazi distortions and outright falsifications of Nietzsche's writings.

The Nietzsche renaissance after the Second World War stripped away the myths surrounding Nietzsche's own philosophy but it never challenged the myth surrounding Nietzsche's role in German history. That myth was simply that Nietzsche was unequivocally the philosopher of the German right. The reality was quite different. Long before the German right appropriated Nietzsche's philosophy in defense of German culture, the Expressionist left used that same philosophy to try and change German culture. The so-called "new Nietzsche,"⁵ who has emerged since the end of World War II, was very

² Gilles Deleuze, *Nietzsche and Philosophy*, trans., Hugh Tomlinson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

³ Walter Kaufmann, *Discovering the Mind*, vol. 3 (New York: McGraw Hill, 1980). See also, Henri Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970).

⁴ Albert Camus, "Nietzsche and Nihilism," in *The Rebel* (New York: Viking, 1956) pp. 65-80.

⁵ A reference to an anthology of recent interpretations of Nietzsche entitled *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, edited by David B. Allison (New York: Dell, 1977).

much alive and well in the old Germany, as the wellspring of a movement directed against the very militaristic and authoritarian culture he is usually credited with engendering.

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