

A black and white portrait of Robert Musil, looking slightly to the right. He is wearing a dark suit jacket, a white shirt, and a dark tie. His hands are clasped in front of him. A large, stylized teal signature, which appears to be 'Robert Musil', is overlaid across the lower half of the image, partially covering his hands and the bottom of his face.

Robert Musil
with Klaus Amann

**LITERATURE
AND POLITICS
SELECTED
WRITINGS**

Translated by Genese Grill
Edited & with an Appendix by Philip Payne

For Burton Pike (1930-2022), Translator, Teacher, Scholar



Palú del Fersina, 1914. Museo storico della guerra di Roveretto.

**LITERATURE
AND POLITICS
SELECTED
WRITINGS**

*Frederic
Munz.*

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AND POLITICS
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Robert Musil

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Abbreviations of Works Frequently Cited

- BI** *Robert Musil: Briefe [Letters] 1901–1942*. Ed. Adolf Frisé, with help from Murray G. Hall. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981.
- BII** *Robert Musil: Briefe 1901–1942*. Commentary, index. Ed. Adolf Frisé, with help from Murray G. Hall. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1981.
- D** *Diaries: 1899–1941*. Tr. Philip Payne, ed. Mark Mirsky. New York: Basic Books, 1998.
- GW** *Gesammelte Werke*, Vols I–II. Ed. by Adolf Frisé. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1978 [Volumes 1–5 of the paperback version of this edition reproduce the pagination of Vol. 1 of the hardback; vols 6–9 of the paperback edition have the same pagination as Vol. 2 of the hardback.]
- KA** *Klagenfurter Ausgabe* (Klagenfurt Edition): Annotated Digital Edition of the Collected Works, Letters, and Literary and Biographical Remains, with Transcriptions and Facsimiles of All Manuscripts. Eds Walter Fanta, Klaus Amann, and Karl Corino. Klagenfurt, Austria: Robert Musil-Institut, Alpen-Adria Universität, 2009.
- LP** *Literature and Politics* (this volume itself).

- MoE** *Der Mann ohne Eigenschaften*. Ed. Adolf Frisé. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1970.
- MwQ** *The Man Without Qualities*, Vols I-II. Tr. Burton Pike and Sophie Wilkins. New York: Knopf, 1995.
- P** *Precision and Soul: Essays and Addresses*. Ed. and tr. Burton Pike and David S. Luft. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1990.
- TI** *Robert Musil: Tagebücher* [Diaries]. Ed. Adolf Frisé. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976.
- TII** *Robert Musil: Tagebücher*. Notes, Appendix, Index. Ed. Adolf Frisé. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1976.
- TBAER** *Tagebücher, Aufsätze, Essays und Reden*. Ed. Adolf Frisé. Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1955.

Table of Contents

- 0–XIX **Translator’s Introduction: Genese Grill**
- o **Introduction to Musil’s Texts: Klaus Amann**
 - 1. The Summer Experience of 1914 and its Consequences o
 - 2. Musil’s Political Discontent 16
 - 3. Writing Stance 36
 - 4. Berlin 1933. “Ruminations of a Slow Man” 62
 - 5. The Culture of Cultural Politics 86
 - 6. Vienna 1934. “The Creative Writer In Our Time”:
Lecture in Honor of Twenty Years of the “Schutzverband Deutscher Schriftsteller in Österreich”
(Association for The Protection of German Writers in Austria) 118
 - 7. Paris 1935. Spoilsport at the International Writers’
Congress for the Defense of Culture 138
 - 8. Literary Self-Assertion. The Writer Speaks 171

 - 208 **Selected Political Texts from the *Nachlaß***
Robert Musil

 - 210 **Essays and Aphorisms**
 - 212 Ruminations of a Slow Man
 - Two Preliminary Considerations, Annotations, and
an Attempt at Classification 216
 - First Version: Ruminations of a Slow Man 223

- Sketch for Continuation 229
- Notes for a New Version: Material for Aphorisms 235
- 252 Preface to a Contemporary Aesthetics
- 256 Aphorisms
- The “Germany” Aphorisms 256
- The “Germany” Portfolio 262
- 300 I Summarize
- 310 Notes on the Culture of Political Culture
- 312 **Speeches**
- 314 “The Creative Writer In Our Time”
- Notes and Preliminary Sketches: Society for the Protection
 of German Writers I 336
- Society for the Protection of German Writers II 339
- Society for the Protection of German Writers III 348
- Basel Introduction: Introduction to “The Creative Writer
 in Our Time” Presented in Basel 357
- 362 Speech at the “International Writers’ Congress for
the Defense of Culture in Paris”
- First Version 368
- Notes and Preliminary Ideas: Sketch C. Paris Lecture 378
- Sketch A 381
- Sketch B. Shorter 385
- Sketch D. 388
- Correction of a Report (Musil’s Response to Critiques
 of this Speech): Draft I 396
- Notes Appended to Draft I 397

Annotations	398
Draft II	400
Notes in Relation to Draft II	402
Approach III	403
Zurich Prologue	408
From the Proceedings of the German Library of Freedom: On the Theme of the Defense of Culture	411

414 **Appendix**

416 Philip Payne: Introduction to “On Stupidity”

435 “On Stupidity” by Robert Musil, translated by Philip Payne

474 **Endnotes**

Translator's Introduction

Recent events have impelled perhaps even the least reflective among us to question the significance of our activities and to reconsider whether what we spend our time and energy on is meaningful, or valuable for ourselves and the world. In times of trouble, when we consider our personal mortality or the possible end of civilization as we know it, in crises wherein our own or others' suffering can no longer be denied or ignored, it is only natural to ask what our role in perpetrating, condoning, or ameliorating wrongs might be. At such moments, artists and writers whose work is not explicitly political in nature are often called upon to justify their work as "relevant." If they do not comment on the concerns of "the now," but look at the world from the "perspective of eternity," or perhaps just from their own local or personal microcosms, they may be deemed self-indulgent, privileged, escapist.

Amid the unrest, the daily dread, the call to act or to weigh in with just the right tone of voice on social issues, some might question the significance of a book of the writings of what some may reductively view as yet another dead, white, European male. But that tension, between contemplation and action, aesthetics and ethics, and also, ethical thinking and moral conscription to ideology, is very much what this book is about. These two impulses, the "ethical" and the "moral" – despite Musil's occasional practice of using the terms interchangeably –

are distinct for him. While Morality is a realm of pre-determined and unexamined strictures, anathema to creative thought, Ethics is the realm of individual agency and responsibility, ever-shifting depending on new circumstances – a realm distinctly linked to aesthetics. Robert Musil himself struggled to create in times of intense turmoil and horror, and nevertheless persistently affirmed – explicitly and in the example of his commitment to his work – the vital ethical importance of non-conscripted, irreducible aesthetic activity for society. Art, in other words – in Musil’s words, in my own translation and paraphrase – is essential to our human experience, not just as pleasure (certainly not, in Musil’s moral universe, as *diversion*), but as a realm of open-ended exploration and experimentation, a realm that may teach us complexity and compassion and that strengthens our imagination for the subtle yet sometimes revolutionary consequences of even the smallest shift in the dynamic relationships of forms, words, sounds, nuances, acts. Looked at from Musil’s perspective, our work as artists and writers (and translators) does have value. Especially now.

Way back in 2009, when I first began work on translating this book, I read an essay called “Speaking in Tongues,” by the popular British novelist Zadie Smith. Smith discussed the tendency of the American public to expect politics to be black and white, uncritically patriotic, simplistically partisan, and blandly, carefully politically correct. She wondered if the newly elected President Obama, who had been maligned by some throughout his campaign as

Janus-faced and many-voiced, might in fact represent a positive new turn in American politics, where the openness and multiplicity prized in literature and philosophy might become possible in the public realm of statesmanship. Smith invoked Keats' idea of "Negative Capability": Shakespeare, as the Romantic poet wrote, was "capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." What Smith termed "speaking in tongues" is also related to the art of Nietzschean perspectivism practiced by Musil, whose great, unfinished novel explores the nature of possibility against the backdrop of a collapsing empire of sureties. The state of being "without qualities" referred to in its title, far from a negative nihilistic characteristic, was for Musil a state of radical open-ended possibility, the challenging but honest condition of modern uncertainty.

Back in 2009, our president's tendency to "speak in tongues," an art usually seen as antithetical to the narrow realm of practical and political life, seemed – for one utopian moment – to signal a fruitful confluence between the open-ended realm of ethics and aesthetics and the more practical science of politics. Unfortunately, Smith's high hopes for a general cultural turn toward openness and freethinking were not fulfilled. Instead, we are now – in 2022, still in the wake of the age of president Trump and his outraged opponents – even more polarized as a nation, and bound, even more rigidly, to partisan positions and increasing narrowness of thought. Contemporary limitations on discourse ("No free speech for fascists";

“hate speech”) float in the same ethers as Orwellian “thought crime,” as deviations from orthodox, socially-controlled beliefs and accepted terminology are swiftly censored without consideration. Musil – living the dystopia which Orwell saw playing itself out in Europe and the Soviet Union – explicated a related term coined by the Nazi regime: “Gleichschaltung,” – a word, he writes, that is “another measure of the strangeness of what is happening today with the German spirit.”¹ He devotes two long aphorisms to an attempt to define this dangerous neologism, both of which utilize his characteristic analogic awareness to illustrate the threat posed by politics to “Geist” (i.e., spirit, intellect, cultural life). The explication in the second aphorism suggests that to preserve intellectual integrity in the face of such forces is an essential political act:

Gleichschaltung

1) The word

It marks the strangeness (it will be difficult for foreigners to understand it) of what is happening today in Germany, that this word *Gleichschaltung*, which plays such a large role in it, cannot be directly translated into other languages. This word was suddenly there one day out of nowhere for the not-yet-National Socialist Germans. Lamps, machines, are *gleichgeschaltet* [switched into con-

1. *Literature and Politics*, 301. Henceforth abbreviated as *LP*.

Introduction to Musil's Texts

Klaus Amann

1. The Summer Experience of 1914 and Its Consequences

In one of the work notebooks that Musil kept between 1937 and the end of 1941, shortly before his death in exile in Switzerland, he gathered together material for an autobiography. Therein we find the statement: "In 1914 I was in a crisis [...]. The war came over me like a sickness, or rather like the accompanying fever" (*D* 470).¹ Musil defines this fever elsewhere in the same notebook as the "atavistically mystical experience of mob[ilization] in 1914" (*D* 464) and thus lends it the dimension of a collective psychosis. Twenty years earlier, in his essay "Die Nation als Ideal und Wirklichkeit" (The Nation as Ideal and as Reality), written shortly after World War I, Musil emphasized the social, rather than the pathological, dimension of the mass enthusiasm at the time of the August 1914 mobilization, calling it "a strange, somewhat religious experience" (*P* 102), the desire for merger with the masses; indeed, for dissolution in heroic death for the nation:

Contained in this perception too was the intoxicating feeling of having, for the first time, something in common with every German. One suddenly

became a tiny particle humbly dissolved in a suprapersonal event and, enclosed by the nation, sensed the nation in an absolutely physical way. It was as if mystical primal qualities that had slept through the centuries imprisoned in a word had suddenly awakened to become as real as factories and offices in the morning. One would have to have a short memory, or an elastic conscience, to bury this insight under later reflection. [...] Are we now to believe that it was nothing when millions of people, who had formerly lived only for their own self-interest and repressed their fear of dying, suddenly, for the sake of the nation, ran with jubilation into the arms of death? [...] And even if millions of people should simply have sacrificed themselves, their existence, their goals in life, their neighbors, and everything they possessed in the way of heroism to a mere phantom: can we then simply come to our senses again, stand up and walk away as if after a binge, calling the whole thing just an intoxication, a psychosis, a mass hypnosis, a delusion of capitalism, nationalism, or whatever? We certainly cannot [...] (*P* 103)

The importance of these remarks about the “Summer experience of 1914,” the so-called “upbeat to a Great Age” (*P* 102), can be measured by the fact that Musil’s literary work after the First World War was, in the broadest sense, devoted to the pre-history and the analysis of this experience, or, as he called it later in exile, this “sickness.”

Indeed, *The Man Without Qualities*,² with the outbreak of war as its planned ending, proposes as its goal the “depiction of the time leading up to the war [...] that led to catastrophe”³ – including the attempts and experiments of some of his characters to resist its attraction.⁴ The experience of war brings Musil to the “central idea” of depicting the prewar period in *MwQ* from the perspective of its dissolution, depicting the “war during peacetime.”⁵ Up until his sudden death on April 15, 1942 in exile in Geneva, a considerable part of his literary efforts remain concentrated on interpreting the causes and consequences of this war, a war that would be followed in only two decades by another. As Musil attempted in his novel to come to grips, both in literary and compositional terms, with the spiritual physiognomy of the war-bound monarchy, his perception, even his whole existence, was ensnared and threatened by political processes and circumstances that were moving with sinister drama toward a new war and a catastrophe of quite another kind. In January of 1940, in the middle of the “second great war,” he wrote, looking back on his life: “We lived then on top of a volcano” (*TI* 1005). This refraction and simultaneous doubling of perspective on war benefited the novel in various and multifaceted ways, although work on the novel was not made easier because of it. It is even possible that, gradually, the fateful overlapping of the time planes in everyday life and in the author’s mind became the main reason for his not being able to finish the novel project. In this regard, Musil’s war experiences are touchstones of a double trauma. And they point to the center of his literary work.

Musil not only acquired his main literary theme through the intensive struggle with the First World War, possibly his most important and deeply ambivalent personal experience; he also developed analytical categories and theoretical concepts that allowed him, in contrast to many of his contemporaries, to resist the collective pressure toward a declaration of affiliation with either the Right or the Left that afflicted the literary public in the twenties and thirties in unprecedented ways, separating it into two enemy camps. Musil had already declared at the beginning of the twenties, in his aforementioned essay on the nation, that the drunkenness, psychosis, and delusion he had observed and experienced in 1914 among the participating peoples – “irrational, foolish, but awesome” – was not a one-time occurrence or something limited to the past. It was not, to his mind, “taken care of” (*P* 102).⁶ A repetition seemed to him, especially considering the psychological conditions and dispositions, altogether possible. Particularly since in 1918 what Musil characterized as a temporary “Easter mood around the world,” the prospects for “a new age for humanity” – just like the expectations in 1914 – would reveal themselves to be an illusion. “We had, then, two great, opposing illusions and we experienced the collapse of both more painfully than other nations. Is it so astonishing that this broke us down spiritually?” (*P* 104) Musil compared the collapse of all attempts for a revolutionary renewal at the war’s end with the experience of the outbreak of war.

Both were, in the end, only “an intoxication, a psychosis, a mass hypnosis, a delusion (*P* 104).⁷ Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points of January 1918, upon which many hopes for a just and democratic new order of Europe were based, owing to conflicting political demands, divergent interests, and an atavistic desire for revenge among the victorious powers, could only be realized to a fragmentary and inconsequential degree in the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain. They were a “Trojan horse,” a “deception” of the Germans (*D* 333), who were subjected to “the solidarity of being deprived of our rights, exploited, and dragged off into slavery” (*P* 112).⁸ In April of 1921 Musil wrote to Arne Laurin, the editor in chief of the *Prager Presse* (his former subordinate colleague from the Vienna War Press Department):⁹

For us the peace treaties are even less forgivable than the declarations of war were. For the war was the catastrophe of an old world, the peace treaties are the obstacles to the birth of a new one. [...]

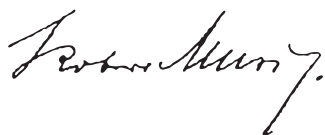
An unbearable injustice has been inflicted upon us Germans. It is unavoidable that we strive for a re-organization of Europe. [...] Instead of a configuration of Europe into rival bestial states, a form of union must be found among the already fundamentally unified peoples, supra-national and, if possible, altogether without nations. (*BI* 227–228)

Musil had volunteered for service, had been highly decorated, and since January 1919 was a demobilized *Landsturm* captain of the Imperial and Royal Austrian-Hungarian army. As staff member of the press service of the Austrian Bureau for Foreign Affairs, he had supported the joining of Austria to Germany (in complete accordance with the spirit of Wilson's right to self-determination).¹⁰ In his critical appraisal of the peace treaties of Versailles and St. Germain, which soon came to be called "peace dictates" in contemporary publications, he was in agreement with the majority of Germans and Austrians at that time. The conclusions that he drew from this criticism were, however, quite different. The people, so Musil maintained, suffered within a "spiritual vacuum" from "those illusions and their dissolution"; the individual, despite the immensity of what he had experienced, remained the same: "He simply showed himself capable of anything, and allowed it all to happen. In the complete illusion of his own free will, he followed without exercising his will. We did it, they did it; that is, no one did it, just 'it' did it" (*P* 104–105).

Four-fifths of the "Nation" essay, which appeared in December 1921 in the *Neue Rundschau*, whose editor Musil had enthused about the war at the time of its 1914 outbreak and had called for "Fidelity, Courage, Subordination, Doing One's Duty,"¹¹ deal with the question of what this "it" amounted to and represented, this "it" which everywhere began to fill the vacuum that had been created. Musil's answer: it is misunderstood idealism, which inflates and mystifies the state, the nation, race, society. Explaining his

**Selected Political Texts
from the Nachlaß**

Robert Musil

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Robert Musil." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a prominent initial 'R' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'l'.

Essays and Aphorisms

Ruminations of a Slow Man

[1933, *Early Spring through the Fall*]

The revolutionary “renewal of the German spirit,” to which we are witnesses and in which we are participants, allows for the differentiation of two directions in its continuation and leadership. One, after seizing power, would like to persuade the intellectual to help with the initial development of the new movement and promises him a Golden Age if he joins up; indeed, this direction even offers the intellectual the prospect of a certain right to participate in the decisions leading up to its formation. The other direction, on the contrary, attests its mistrust of the intellectual by declaring that the revolutionary process is still indefinitely under construction, but will certainly be needing him — in just a little while; or it assures the intellectual that he is not needed at all because a new spirit has already arrived, and that the old one has no better option than to throw itself into the fire, where it will either burn to ashes or transform itself into a purified elemental essence. Everything that has happened, leading up to these words being written, leaves no doubt that it is the second direction that is on the march, while the first is only its accompanying parade music. Nor can it be otherwise than that a movement that has manifested itself so forcefully demands from everyone that they completely assimilate and subordinate themselves to its authority. But then again,

this is something that the intellectual cannot possibly do, without renouncing himself. Naturally, there has to be some sort of boundary here, since nothing is not relative. And thus, it is a good test for the intellectual that in every situation today he is imposed upon by a sort of court of exceptions — the kind that, instead of judging him by his own laws, judges him according to those of the movement itself.

Within the last few weeks, Germany has relinquished researchers and scholars, in unprecedented acts of sacrifice, thinkers among whom there are many who are irreplaceable, if they are evaluated by the criteria that have guided intellectual life for centuries. And no discussion of the requirements of this same intellectual life can blithely ignore these circumstances. There is no choice. Either one says that the German Jews have an honorable role in German intellectual life, or one must say: this very intellectual life is so rotten to the core that it can no longer even be evaluated. For if those among us who have long participated in intellectual life were to examine our own experience, it tells us that there have been people of every origin in comparable numbers on both sides of the battle between intellect and anti-intellect, and we are not able to suddenly deny our experience. What has happened seems unjust to us; but even if we were to ascribe justice to it, we would still find barbaric the way in which this justice is being enforced; for this manner of enforcing justice unfortunately corresponds most precisely with a general neglect of ethical standards, a neglect of the humanitarian.

Humanitarianism today is a value, just like internationalism, freedom, and objectivity, that renders anyone who possesses it suspicious. Indeed, anyone who defends one of these ideas is suspected of believing in the others, too, because he reveals that he has not fully grasped the indivisibility of the conversion. This conversion sets one totality in place of another, and even as it has furnished the final argument against every single objection, it is itself the essence of what is called, lock, stock, and barrel, the “corrupt system.” Its proffered argument may not be correct; it may lead to all sorts of consequences; it is not even logical in its form; but none of this matters, because it feels itself to be a “transvaluation of all values.”

And this feeling is no delusion. Obscurely, but still visibly, it contains something that might be expressed more or less like this: the whole is the master of its parts; it not only precedes them but somehow leads them; it is not only their master, but is actually what gives them meaning in the first place. That was always one biological view, and, for many kinds of reasons, this notion that every whole is more than the sum of its parts, or, put differently, that it is a sort of non-differentiated collectivity of parts, yes, that the world constructs itself as much out of whole substances as out of singularities, has found vast reception and application in contemporary philosophy. But this emerging and far from conclusive awareness has only begun to be associated with political events as a result of Democracy’s failure, during difficult moments, to draw, either in reality or suggestively, the ring of wholeness

around the increasingly incalculable struggle of everyone against everyone else. This incapacity, to be sure, has not yet been conclusively demonstrated, since the stronger democracies still stand; nonetheless, Collectivism, the anti-individualistic and anti-atomistic disposition of the totality, has spread today, in various forms and strength, over half the world. That is also the real agenda of this German movement, which does everything in its power to avoid the possibility that its new nationalism might be mistaken for a reactionary movement based on the model of its older relations.

What if we perform the thought experiment of trying to imagine National Socialism politically replaced by something else? A feeling, independent of desires and fears – a feeling, indeed, that often even runs counter to them – a feeling, nevertheless, generally answers that such a replacement, returning, say, to an older or to some still earlier condition, can no longer be achieved. The only way to construe this feeling is doubtless that National Socialism is experiencing its mission and its hour, that it is not just a momentary brouhaha, but a stage of history. In our time, a great many people have engaged in this thought experiment, people that earlier thought differently about it. But one notices something else as well: isn't it true that something quite remarkable has happened *morally*, in the last few weeks? The basic rights of the ethically responsible person, freedom of speech and expression, the entire edifice of inalienable convictions: millions who were accustomed to believe passionately in these things saw them abolished at a stroke, and they did not even lift one

single finger in their defense. They had sworn to lay down their lives for their principles, and they hardly lifted a finger! They felt that they were being robbed of their souls, but realized suddenly that their bodies were more important to them. During the days when this was going on, Germany offered a picture, half of storming conquerors, half of a people cowed and helpless. One may as well go right ahead and say, of cowards, but the problem is precisely that earlier, during the War, a large number of these cowards had disregarded every danger in order to prove themselves heroes. Which leads to the conclusion that the sanctities that they now seemed to be losing were no longer sacred to them, but also that contemporary man is less independent than he thinks, and only becomes tough when he is part of a group. Both conclusions are in harmony with the ethos of National Socialism. But let us not allow any false mythos here: it was not "yesterday" that capitulated like a coward to be pushed aside; it is people who have thus capitulated, people who now go on living, now posing for the new spirit the same problem that the old one failed to overcome.

Two Preliminary Considerations, Annotations, and an Attempt at Classification

Exchange of Roles. Is a renewal of the nation possible without poets, without philosophers, without scholars? Shall a new spirit create itself without its most important parts?

For it cannot be concealed that almost all of those who, up until yesterday, had upheld the dignities and burdens of culture, approach today's ethos partially with hostility, partially with mistrust, and partially with caution.

The exceptions are of no consequence, especially if one takes into consideration the allurements and threats to which the intellectual is currently subject. Do they not understand their time, or does their time not understand them? On the whole, a hush reigns over intellectual Germany, while the political and economic factions (not only) vigorously assure us that they will renew culture (but really rather, that they have already renewed it enormously, even before the new edifice of state rose beyond its foundations). Moreover, many intellectuals are on the lookout for a political transformation that could come to their aid once again. A remarkable change of roles has occurred, and this revolution will truly find its historical place, not only in political, but also in cultural history.

In a deluge, everyone strives to bring his little sheep to a dry place: I am a bit reluctant to do so.

The Dependency of Intellect. (Correction: An idea conquers. One can imagine this exponentially, so to speak.) In the leadership of the movement, two spiritual tendencies differentiate themselves, even if they are bound up together into one unity: one of them is conservative, the other revolutionary; the first one, once it has seized power, would like to convince the intellectual to participate. The second one says to the intellectual: if you don't want to join us on your own, you have already declined! And

The “Germany” Aphorisms ²⁴⁸

[End of 1933 until the end of 1935]

Notebook 34

Germ. Tit for tat retorts are part of the attitude. For example, if they are accused of a perversion of justice. Retort: justice has never had such a haven before as it has with us. Then come the appropriations, for example the Hitler salute, *dopo lavoro*. By the way, of note: art, entertainment, etc. are supposed to be made available to the workers.

Germ. Weltanschauung. ... “Methods for the regulation of work requirements will shortly be created that will allocate to the leader and management of a company the position that is decreed by the National Socialist *Weltanschauung*...” Dr. Ley in an exhortation to all working Germans. Leader of the Workers’ Front. Similar things are seen often these days. Probable source: opposition to Marxist *Weltanschauung*. There is also a liberal one. Instead of calling it by the designation of its intent, “*Weltanschauung*,” it would be more correct to call it by the designation of its origin, “group opinion.”

Germ. Approach it as it were algebraically! As in: under what conditions could it come to this or to that in a country? When does a person blindly spit out lies? (In the heat of passion) etc.

Germ. Approach it so that it would apply to Bolshevism too. As transitional forms. Post-political. Only discuss those things that have that sort of interest. For example, Collectivism or political arrogance?

Germ. Nationalism and Socialism must rise to the top; Socialism didn't do it in Russia though, just with MacDonal and his sort.²⁴⁹

Couldn't Antisemitism be brushed aside and away with a few words. Then describe the officer and partially justify him. As a type, which is directed against the times. Then the rights that must be granted to the spirit? As in: don't talk too much; but if you must, say something of substance. In other words, entirely in opposition to the democratic era.

Originally fools. The strongest "defensive position" is the military's. Then the church's.

Genius and Collectivity, On: while Schuschnigg speaks of culture, Pernter says with complete openness that this culture will be clerical-Catholic, and the practice (compulsory lecture in ecclesiastic philosophy, repression of everything to do with the free spirit, most recently: filling the Chair of Anatomy at the University of Vienna with a very young man who has written a work on Alpine phrenology or something like that, and literally nothing else!!) fits this description.

It would be in opposition to the development of the German spirit to present: 1) the role of the man of genius. His rarity and importance; 2) the role of genius itself

(not-fully-developed and passive genius); 3) spiritual freedom is separate from both of these. It is only partially important, but to that extent indispensable; 4) (the reason why I note this down): is that history provides an example of how a bad man spreads putrefaction, because he, like Pernter, appoints nonentities in all positions. The elevated bad man is the greatest danger of all political movements. (Which doesn't leave much to be said for Schussnigg.)

Notebook 31

According to the leading cultural theories in Germany today, it is supposed to be impossible to make the best of one's own achievements comprehensible to people of another nation. It seems to be one of the points which the German revolution has got right up until now. Nevertheless, I will try....

Germany: You have attempted to yoke the average person permanently to “high goals,” to ideals. In this context, almost every person is an average person; ‘private person’ means, in most cases, average. Do you have any concept what they have been attempting with this? As if it had ever succeeded! As if quite different people had not failed to bring this about.

The Living Unknown Soldier – Hitler. The idea originally an almost inimitable French gesture – imitated by everyone – finally even by ourselves – that was when the War

was really lost in moral terms. And now we have a living one. Now, for the first time, we have him. We have an original and strong gesture: many Germans feel this, and they say: the unknown German soldier of the World War [:] Hitler.

The Creative Writer: The world has no idea how dangerous the writer is. Put simply, he is a product of putrefaction. Maybe some people will begin to understand when I say that Mussolini, Clémenceau, K.G. ...

Germ: According to the *Stunde*, Blomberg, Minister of the German Armed Forces [the Reichswehr], said, on the occasion of the reintegration of the Saarland, in an appeal to the Reichswehr: "We soldiers want to celebrate the victory and look to the tenacity of the people of the Saarland as an example to us. The spiritual powers that enabled the peaceful struggle over the Saarland to come to such a fortunate conclusion are the same as those that we soldiers need to maintain during the ordeal of actual battle": Subdivision of a people into officers, NCOs (National Socialists), and soldiers.

Germ: According to the same source, all the papers that demanded the resignation of Furtwängler after his article in favor of Hindemith are now expressing overflowing joy and satisfaction at his imminent return as conductor of the Philharmonic now that he has declared that his criticism was leveled only from a musical standpoint without any consideration of the cultural-political ramifications.²⁵⁰

The Creative Writer In Our Time

Lecture in Honor of Twenty Years of the Association for The Protection of German Writers in Austria

[16 December 1934]

Honored Audience!

I.

To my regret, I must, before I begin – like the conductor who apologizes for the singer – come before you and report my indisposition, because it not only impairs my speaking, but has also prohibited me from preparing this lecture in keeping with the importance of the subject and your presence.²⁸⁹ Nevertheless, I hope to be able to at least communicate the stimulus for a few thoughts that are worthy of being considered today.

II.

And since I am to speak about the creative writer and about today, my beginning is easy, for I can calmly assert that we do not know what either are.

Perhaps I may first demonstrate this with the creative writer. A few years ago, I published a small absurdity, wherein I described what a grand, moral, but also economic, significance obtained, if one were to assume that there was,

somewhere, a creative writer. Publishing houses; printer-ies, binderies, and paper factories; proofreaders; the feuilleton sections of newspapers; theater and film; offices that transmit manuscripts; the state inspection and management boards; the employment of grammar-school and university instructors; cartels, clubs, libraries with their staffs; not least, the existence of a lucrative realm of entertainment-writing. This huge, limitless edifice, raised above and beyond reading and writing, which provides so many people with an adequate or abundant living, rests fully upon the maintenance of a feeling that one is serving a grand cause; for without this feeling, so many people would not — no, not by a long shot — be able to read the bad books they prefer with such easy consciences, believing that they are contributing to making reading a valuable part of national life. At the same time, if one elevates the term so that it corresponds to this conception, there is no one who really knows who is a creative writer, or what a creative writer is. Perhaps, among the living, there are a dozen of these caryatids, who support a gigantic economic apparatus upon their shoulders; the exact number does not matter; but it is certain that, for the most part, they suffer under their task.

They are only known by a relatively small circle of cognoscenti; their income is, in a few well-known cases, that of beggars; and the most contradictory part of all this is that everyone who lives off them seems content to kill them off as soon as possible. Because of these hosts, parasitical writers receive prizes they do not deserve; because

of them, radio shows air celebrations for others; and, one lady, who spreads culture through hosting public events, expressed this most clearly when she was asked why she refrained from sponsoring a writer who should be such an obvious choice: "What shall I tell you?" she answered, "I am so sensitive. He distresses me!"

Is this depiction exaggerated? It expresses a truth that is so naked that, if not for other reasons, it should at least be banned on account of a nudity law!

III.

One knows just as little about "today." In part, this is as obvious as ever, since one is too close to the present; but one can also say quite rightly, that when it comes to the present case, finding ourselves in a today into which we fell almost two decades ago, we are particularly deep in. Nevertheless, I would like to attempt to excavate a few main characteristics of this condition. Whether or not the age in which we live is an extraordinary one, I would like to humbly leave unanswered; an extraordinarily violent one it is, with certainty. It began, somewhat surprisingly, in the summer of 1914. All of a sudden, the violence was there and has not left mankind again since; and it has grown to be endemic to mankind to an extent that, before that summer, would have been deemed un-European. And already at that time, its first appearance was indisputably accompanied by two remarkable feelings: at first, a crippling feeling of catastrophe. What one had called European culture had suddenly been ripped apart, had been reduced

to the plunder of peacetime. Secondly, at the same time, there appeared an even more astonishing feeling of a new closeness and sense of belonging together inside the narrower borders of the nation. And this feeling came with the strength and unimpeachability of a forgotten, lost, mythic feeling, as if it had risen up from out of the *ur*-depths. I spoke out about it at the time, warned against taking this feeling lightly after the defeat; and other impartial observers understood its first appearance in the same way that I did.

The affective force of drives in many people is not difficult to recognize in both of these feelings — a phenomenon that has taken on great significance since then.

And I would like to call this post-war development, one that simultaneously includes a new sense of belonging, combined with doubt about one's pre-war feelings, "Collectivist," in order to highlight that which has the greatest bearing on the "free spirit." Mussolini is supposed to have been the first to use this word to describe the total state. But Collectivism has not only appeared as a claim of the state, but also of the nation, and of a class, and, depending upon the historical circumstances, has taken on different forms in Italy, Russia, Germany; indeed, even forms that are in the most extreme opposition to each other. Common to all of them, however, is the predominance of collective, common interests over those of the individual, and the more or less ruthless enforcement of these collective interests in our times.

The claim as such is not new, only its varieties and strength and a certain one-sidedness of its arguments

are new. Because man is, by nature, just as much a collective as an individual creature; yes, precisely because scholarly and scientific thought, regardless of the significance of the personal, is perhaps the most collective realm there is, the idea of collectivity had naturally already been developed in the field of ethics a long time ago, before it attained its current form. Lessing, for example, called for an education of the human race, wherein mankind as a whole shall be educated, in the infinity of their beings, toward a final condition of completion. Kant simply saw the possibility, in the infinite development of mankind, for a fulfillment of the moral law. And according to Schiller, the great man was representative of his species.

In the face of dicta such as these, one can hardly avoid noting that Collectivism has, since then, inched considerably closer than its former position in infinity! And it also cannot be denied that during the time of our Classicism, it had relied on "humanity" and "personality," while today it appears as anti-individualistic and anti-atomistic, and is not exactly an admirer of humanism.

We will have to return to this later —.

IV.

But first, as a refreshment, let us cast a small side glance at our own immediate circle, that of literature.

Therein we see one trait of the depicted development. In narration, namely in novels, for a long time now, individual fates have not been depicted to be as important as they used to be. Let us think, in comparison, of Dickens or Meredith as examples.

Admittedly, the narrator's comfortable conscience has been debased, ever since the progress of the intellectual totality moved on from the concrete to abstract questions of law, statistics, and the like. But surely the main cause of this is still that social progress no longer deems the individual as important as he was in the Biedermeier or the Classical age. The individual knows that he is economically and professionally woven into the whole. The idea that things do not – somehow – revolve around him so much anymore can already be found inside of him, and ever since the war it has been drilled into him ever more emphatically.

V.

A second side glance: this is also expressed as a weakness of character. I would like to provide a few very lively examples of this:

Let us call to mind the war hero, as created by our times. On the whole, he has demonstrated the most prodigious willingness for self-sacrifice and resoluteness, but his bravery was – if one, as is commonly done, ignores the exceptions – not individualistic. The mass formation of war was a great bravery that could also be thoroughly cowardly. One runs away today, as far away as possible! And tomorrow attacks again, courageously. Perhaps one could call it Homeric (for the Homeric hero could cry out in fear, but obeyed nevertheless his heroic moral law). In any case, whether one can make such comparisons or not: what we experienced in the war was our lack of self-sufficiency

and our dependence upon a mass that we were torn away from and pulled back into, a mass with whom we obeyed orders we did not understand, whose authority we nevertheless fully recognized.

This is made clear through the spectacle presented by the last revolution in Germany. In those days, a great and brave nation revealed itself as half blustering vanquishers and half as intimidated clueless people. One must say: even as cowards; for precisely therein lies the problem, that such cowards were heroes and can be heroes again. The contemporary man proves himself to be even less self-sufficient than even he himself thinks, and only becomes strong in a group.

The "toppling" of the spirit is also, finally, a part of this — the remarkable contemporary phenomenon of a lack of "civil courage." What have people not readily or reluctantly renounced or surrendered in these years that formerly would have belonged to their inalienable convictions and deepest principles! There is no principle of humanism, of ethics, of law, of truth, of national commonality, of respect for others and their achievements, that could not be found among these sacrifices. One awaited the "Göttinger Seven" of 1837, but they did not come.²⁹⁰ The human being, the "personality," the spirit behaved the way the body behaves under artillery fire; he ducked down. It seemed pointless to spring up and raise one's arms up to the heavens. And it probably would really have been pointless. But what a difference has emerged since the classical days of the German spirit!

Significantly, the single substantial insistence on self-sufficiency did not come from the “free spirit,” but from religious organizations; thus, only if one ignores the particular spirit of religiosity in organized groups, which once again points to the lack of self-sufficiency, to the need for a *Führer*, to the human being’s external and subsequently internal state of dependence.

VI

Those were, I’m afraid, a bit long for side glances; and, despite their length, we only bring back something from them which, while it may allow us to speak of a dawning realization about the inevitable lack of character of contemporary people, has not even said anything yet about the extent of its legitimacy.

Still, some general observations might here be suggested as well. At one time – before the advent of the bourgeois political movement or just when it first began – I wrote down a chain of thoughts, that went more or less like this: the expansion of the number of a group of people within a collective sphere of influence and the expansion of the powers and mechanisms associated with them must keep up with each other, if a collapse is not to gradually ensue. It is possible that one cannot leave this to work itself out on its own. The hardship of the war and of the period following the war has made this palpable and has produced this development; but even without it, a reaction against the “liberal” handling of human affairs would have had to appear. In this sense,

Speech at the “International Writers’ Congress for the Defense of Culture in Paris”

[22 June 1935]

The question of how culture is to be protected and what culture is to be protected from is inexhaustible. For it is a matter of the Being and Becoming of culture and also of the dangers, from friend and from foe, to which it is subject. What I want to say about it, here and now, is unpolitical.

My whole life, I have kept my distance from politics, because I do not believe I have a talent for it. I do not understand the argument that it has a claim on everyone because it is something that effects everyone. Hygiene, too, effects everyone, but I have never publicly made a proclamation about it, because I believe I have as little talent for being a hygienist as I have for being an economist or a geologist.

With this in mind, I am positing, as I advance on the boundary between politics and culture, the existence of an unproblematic subservient sort of person. But even such a person – I am thinking of the creative writer in the German tongue as the nearest example – finds himself in a not unproblematic position when it comes to the political powers of his nation. As is well known, today, the nation’s chief political powers even demand of him that complete subservience – to use a word which apparently had no claim on our German grandparents – that is called

“total.” This subservience, however, is not only understandably forbidden him if he happens to belong to another state than the German *Reich*, but in this case, a particular kind of *cultural* subservience will be demanded of him as well. Thus, for example, does my Austrian homeland more or less expect that its writers be Austrian homeland writers, and cultural history designers materialize, who prove to us that an Austrian writer has always been something different than a German one.

In other lands, the same sort of thing is brewing and the claims of the most disparate fatherlands and their political and social aims put themselves above the concept of culture itself.

This poses a question that has various forms, but which is basically one and the same: does one derive the concept of culture (and, at the same time, of that “which is left over”) by stripping away from national, bourgeois, Fascistic, proletariat culture that which is national, bourgeois, and so on? Or is culture a self-sufficient concept that can be manifested in many different ways?

I believe that an unbiased consideration of a broad spectrum of reasons must decide in favor of the second conception.

The history of our times has been moving in the direction of an intensified Collectivism. I need not say how much these varied Collectivisms differ in form, nor how differently one will probably judge their value in the future. Politicians are in the habit of regarding magnificent cultures as the natural spoils of their politics, just as,

in the old days, women became the slaves of the victors. I suggest that the preservation of this magnificence depends very much upon the practice, on the side of culture, of the noble art of female self-defense.

One could further explicate the nature of these many-branched historic developments of the differing Collectivist directions; but sometimes the simpler and more immediate apprehension, that the whole thing is nothing but the over-reach and encroachment of politics, thrusts itself to the surface. Everyone today feels threatened and mobilizes all means.

Culture, too, is one of the draftees.

And it is not only that the state, the class, the nation, the race and Christianity requisition us, but that these claimants themselves have gone among the artists and scholars.

Politics today does not derive its goals from culture, but carries culture along with it; and doles it out. It dictates to us the sole manner in which we are to write, paint, and philosophize.

Naturally, we also recognize the right of the whole and the duty of the individual to integrate. The recognition of limits is, thus, all the more important. A conception of what belongs to culture and what does not is thus easier if one has a specific culture in mind, and more difficult if one is imagining what culture can still be or what would be capable of engendering culture.

Culture is not bound to any political form. Each form provides culture with its own particular sorts of patronage

and obstacles. There are no cultural axioms (and, markedly, no axioms of feeling) that could not be replaced by other ones, so that a new culture would be possible on the new basis. The decisive thing is the whole, just as one can also not know from a person's isolated principles or actions whether he is a fool or a genius or a born criminal. I particularly call attention to Nietzsche's remark in his posthumous fragments: "The victory of a moral ideal is achieved with the same immoral means as every other victory: violence, lies, calumny, injustice."

We contravene this observation not only every time we are not appalled by the brutality and perversity of the new, but also whenever we mistake our personal outrage for the law of the Creation story. The assumption that whatever we are accustomed to is what is necessary is close at hand.

One aspect of the aversion to strong authoritarian forms of government, i.e., Bolshevism and Fascism, can be simply explained by our habituation to parliamentary democratic forms. These arouse the same attachment as a suit that is perhaps a little worn, but has become comfortable.

They vouchsafe culture a great deal of freedom. But they also vouchsafe the same amount of freedom to cultural parasites. There is no need to equate culture, for better or for worse, with parliamentary-democratic forms. Even enlightened despotism is good, provided that the absolute despot is enlightened.

If, then, one cannot begin with a traditional culture ideal, and if one even supposes that culture is subject to

strong transformational forces, and if one also does not know what culture is – because, for we creators, culture is something inherited, something experienced, something that may not be sympathetic in all its aspects, but that is more like a will that lives in us and lives beyond us than a conception that can be defined – then how shall we orient ourselves?

I don't believe that everything should, thus, be left to its own discretion.

Culture presupposes a continuity and also a respect, even in the face of that which one is fighting. This alone cannot easily be left out of the picture.

It also must be asserted that culture has always been supra-national. The history of the arts and sciences is one long example of this. Even primitive culture exhibits this phenomenon. Particularly in its highest spheres, culture is dependent upon international associations, and genius, too, is as broadly distributed as the appearance of other rarities.

And even if culture were not supra-national, at least it would be something supra-temporal within a single people, something that often leaps over long stretches of declivity and reconnects on the other side with things left far behind in the distance. From this we may conclude that it is forbidden for those who serve culture to utterly identify themselves with a momentary stage of their national culture.

And culture is not a transmission that can simply be passed down from hand to hand, as the traditionalists have it; instead, a remarkable process is at play: it is not so

much that the creative people inherit what comes from other times and places, but rather that it is born inside them anew.

We know further, that the bearers of this process are individual people. The community participates in a most important way, but the individual is, at any rate, the self-activating instrument. Therewith, however, we open up a discussion of the large and well-known circle of requirements for the emergence of a culture, including, especially, all of those to which personal creation are subject. Although I don't want to explore this further here, I must note that many politically misused, worn-out, and then disposed of concepts recur, which, purified of their historical context, are indispensable prerequisites. For example: freedom, openness, courage, incorruptibility, responsibility, and criticism — criticism more of that which seduces us than of that which repels us. And a love of truth must also be included; and I mention this especially, because that which we call culture is not really immediately answerable to truth; but no great culture can rest upon a lopsided relationship with truth.

Unless such characteristics are fostered by a political regime, in all people, they will not emerge as special talents in extraordinary ones.

To work toward the recognition of these social requirements may be the only thing that can be achieved in culture's self-defense with unpolitical means. To do so is, in any case, the most important requirement for an assessment of political forms and their cultural prospects.

First Version

Particular circumstances have not afforded me the opportunity to refresh my studies of one of the many questions that were so thoughtfully compiled by the leaders of the Congress – most of these questions have already been on my mind – and thus to furnish a well-considered and carefully tested contribution.

I console myself with the thought that it is in itself a great virtue of this Congress even to have brought together writers and poets for the first time to speak about this topic, threatened as culture is by collapse – to have brought together people for whom literature, and, further, this rather uncertain encompassing ‘something,’ this thing we call ‘culture,’ is an enduring problem and yet also an object of the most intimate experience. It seems to me, that, when attempting something like this, one can at first hardly get beyond mutual consideration of the multiplicity and variety of opinions on all sides, so that in any case, it is more a question of the how this contribution is conceived and structured than of a “final version.”

The conception and structure of that which I found to say (as I proceeded, while considering the demands of a major discussion, to limit myself at the same time to, as it were, an extremely limited space), is essentially unpolitical. I say this in advance as an apology. On the one hand, because politics has inflicted indescribable harm and undeserved disgrace; on the other hand, because there are people who say that one is not allowed to avoid the demands of politics.

My whole life, I have kept a distance from politics, because I do not believe I have a talent for it. I cannot understand the argument that it has a claim on everyone because it is something that effects everyone. Hygiene, too, effects everyone, but I have never publicly made a proclamation about it, because I believe I have as little talent for being a hygienist as I have for being an economist or a geologist.

I am therefore positing, as I now advance on the boundary between politics and culture, and on the situation of the culture bearer, i.e., that of the writer, the existence of a willing subservient sort of person. But even such a person — I am thinking of the German writer as the nearest example — finds himself in a not unproblematic position when it comes to the political powers of his nation. As is well known, today, the nation's chief political powers still demand of him that complete subservience, the kind — to use a word which apparently had no claim on his German grandparents — that is called “total.”

This subservience, however, is not only understandably forbidden him if he happens to belong to another state than the German *Reich*, but in this case, a particular kind of *cultural* subservience, or a conformism, will be demanded of him as well. Thus, for example, does my Austrian homeland more or less expect that its writers be Austrian writers; not writers and Austrians, but writers with a particular good smell, and cultural history designers materialize who prove to us that an Austrian writer has always been something different than a German one.

In other lands, the same sort of thing is brewing and the claims of the most disparate fatherlands and their

political and social aims put themselves above the concept of culture itself.

This poses a question that comes in various forms. When limited to the national and to the writer, it has more or less this form: does one derive the concept of writer (and, at the same time, of that "which is left over") by stripping away from the Russian, German, English, etc., writer, that which is Russian, German, and so on? Or is the concept of the writer a superordinate concept, one that has developed along other paths, which has merely specialized at the national level? I believe that there is, for a number of reasons, only one choice, and that few people will hesitate, after disinterested reflection, to decide in favor of the latter.

But then one must be allowed, without a doubt, to replace the word "writer" everywhere with the word "culture" and the national designations with political ones: proletarian, bourgeois, Fascist, etc.

I am afraid that this would not result in the same consensus. But it is an answer dictated by methodical thought, and thus can only be of use and cannot harm anyone.

That the answer has lost its impartiality comes from two causes:

The broader of the two comes from the history of our time having developed in the direction of an intensified Collectivism. I certainly need not say how much these Collectivisms differ in form nor how different their historical hour has been here or there, nor how differently one will probably judge their value in the future. The angel of

destruction, who hovers more closely than ever over all the territories of the earth, allows for no foresight.

If one ignores incalculable factors, however, it seems very probable that the development toward Collectivism, progressing in various forms, will determine what the face of the world looks like. The growing population argues for this; this means – even if only the level of cohesion in place to date is to be maintained – tighter ties.

These ties will naturally also include the realm of culture, as they already do today. Will this embrace destroy or fertilize it? Politicians are in the habit of regarding magnificent cultures as the natural booty of their politics, just as, in the old days, women became the slaves of the victors. I suggest that this magnificence depends very much upon the practice, on the side of culture, of the noble art of female self-defense.

Sometimes everything in me strains against the honor of being an object that is flattened by a great historical juggernaut. Then sometimes the simpler and more immediate apprehension, that the whole thing is nothing but the overreach and encroachment of politics, thrusts itself to the surface. Imperialistic battle to decide the outcome, battle to the death on the part of the bourgeoisie, austere youthful phase of the proletarian form of power: it doesn't matter what it is, everyone feels threatened and mobilizes all means.

Culture, too, is one of the draftees.

And it is not only that the state, the class, the nation, the race and Christianity requisition us, but that they

Endnotes

1. *TI*, 956. This entry comes from Musil's time in Geneva, where he had lived with his wife since the beginning of July 1939. Musil had hoped for a general upheaval and renewal from the war. In an untitled *Nachlaß* fragment, probably written shortly before the end of the war in 1918, he wrote: "If the war ends without a realization of a new idea, an unbearable pressure will continue to burden Europe" (*GW 8*, 1345). An example of one such new idea would have been the "dissolution of the nation into a European or world-community" (*GW 8*, 1341).
2. Henceforth abbreviated as *MwQ*.
3. *MoE*, 1340 f. *Nachlaß*, ch. 83, "Why Ulrich is Unpolitical. Studies."
4. *GW 5*, 1876, "Morality and War; Study": "U[lrich]-A[gathe] is really an attempt at anarchy in love. That ends negatively even there. That is the deep relationship between the love story and the war. (Also, its connection with the M[oosbrugger] problem)."
5. In a note about the continuation of the novel on 15 March 1932, we read: "*Central idea*: War. All lines lead to war" (*GW 5*, 1851). Emphases in quotes are always based on the original. See Walter Fanta, "Apokryphe Entstehung und Ende von Musils *Mann ohne Eigenschaften*" [Apocryphal Genesis and End of Musil's *Man Without Qualities*]. Phil. Diss. [typescript] (Klagenfurt, 1999) 400–401.
6. Musil, "Nation," *GW 8*, 1060; *P*, 102. Further citations in text.
7. See Musil's "Revolution Diary" for a more operatically narrated version of the events in Vienna with Egon Erwin Kirsch and Franz Werfel in leading roles. *TI*, 342–343.
8. See also John Maynard Keynes, *The Economic Consequences of Peace* (London, 1919). The British economist Keynes, member of the English delegation at the peace talks, saw, like Musil, a missed opportunity in the Treaty to create a new organization of Europe beyond militaristic, nationalistic, and revanchist conceptions. He characterized the behavior of the victorious powers as

flat-out betrayal and prophesied that the burden of reparations would ruin the German economy and lead to another European conflict. See also *T I*, 990–991, where we find Musil in 1941 still engaged in a thorough analysis of the events and the consequences of the peace talks in connection with his reading of Friedrich Grimm’s *Vom Sinn des Kriegs* [On the Meaning of the War] (Berlin/Leipzig, 1940).

9. The K. und K. (Imperial and Royal Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy) Kriegspressequartier [War Press Department] was founded in 1914 as a department of the Army’s High Command. Its duties were to coordinate press information and propaganda during the First World War. — Trans.
10. See Robert Musil, “Buridans Österreicher” [Buridan’s Austrian] in *Der Friede* (Vienna), 14 February 1919, *GW 8*, 1030–1032. Also, in *P*, 99–101; and “Der Anschluß an Deutschland” [Joining with Germany] in *Die Neue Rundschau* (March 1919) *GW 8*, 1033–1042. Also in *P*, 90–98. See also Karl Corino, *Robert Musil: Eine Biographie* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2003) 598–599. My narration on many points is indebted to Corino’s epoch-making biography.
11. Musil, “Europäertum, Krieg, Deutschtum” [Being European, On War, On Being German] (September 1914) in *GW 8*, 1020. This essay, which celebrates the outbreak of the war as an irrational experience, is lacking any of the critical or ironic distance that is usually a marker of Musil’s texts. In this regard, and through its “approximation of [the] propagandistic jargon” of the times, it represents an “exceptional case” in Musil’s essayistic work. See Paul Zöchbauer, *Der Krieg in den Essays und Tagebüchern Robert Musils* [The War in the Essays and Diaries of Robert Musil] (Stuttgart: Heinz, Stuttgarter Arbeiten zur Germanistik Bd. 316, 1996) 18.
12. See also Musil’s essayistic fragment “Nationalismus, Internationalismus” (1919/1920): “It occurs to me that ‘nation’ is an abstraction. We don’t even have a common language, for the majority of the nation understands my language no better than I understand English”; in *GW 8*, 1348.
13. See Friedrich Bringazi, *Robert Musil und die Mythen der Nation: Nationalismus als Ausdruck subjektiver Identitätsdefekte* [Robert Musil and the Myths of Nation. Nationalism as Expression of

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