CHAPTER ONE

A Man in His Time

To read Weber's texts as an intellectual historian is to locate them in their context. Following Pierre Bourdieu, I want to describe Weber's cultural world as an *intellectual field.* In Bourdieu's account, the intellectual field at a given time and place is made up of agents taking up various intellectual positions. Yet the field is not an aggregate of isolated elements; it is a configuration or network of relationships. The elements in the field are not only related to each other in determinate ways; each also has a specific authority, so that the field is a distribution of symbolic power as well. The agents in the field compete for the right to define what shall count as intellectually established and culturally legitimate. But the main point of Bourdieu's definition lies in the positional or relational attributes of ideas. The views expressed in a given setting are so thoroughly interdefined that they can be adequately characterized only in their complementary or oppositional relationships to each other. The intellectual field is influenced by the concerns of the larger society; but its logic is its own.[1]

All sectors of an intellectual field or subfield are profoundly affected by the orthodoxies that are dominant within it. Even the most heterodox positions are partly shaped by their more or less deliberate orientations toward the orthodoxies they contest. At the same time, orthodoxies and heterodoxies alike are grounded in a cultural preconscious of tacit assumptions or "doxa" that are perpetuated by inherited practices and social relations. During periods of change and conflict, at least some of these doxic beliefs may become explicit—and thus subject to analysis and clarification. Under the impact of unusual experiences—or from sheer intellectual penetration, a creative minority of intel-

lectuals may critically reexamine their tradition. They will clarify important tenets, abandon others, and thus begin to transcend the limits of their world. I am convinced that original and coherent thought is always a kind of clarification, a gaining of analytical distance from the unexamined assumptions of a culture. I find this model of clarification less mystifying than the unreconstructed idealist's notion of a new idea as an uncaused cause. Max Weber is one of the greatest clarifying thinkers of our age. Even while sharing some of the doxa of his time and place, he reexamined, restated—and partly transcended—the dominant assumptions of his intellectual field. That is why his work is of interest to us even today—and why we must begin by trying to chart his intellectual field.

WEBER'S INTELLECTUAL FIELD

The German academic tradition that Max Weber both continued and transformed originated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Sometime around 1800, an educational revolution took place in the German states; it occurred much earlier there than it did in England or France, and it did so long before the Industrial Revolution reached Germany. One element in this transformation was the emergence of the research imperative, the expectation that university faculty would do original research and prepare their students to do the same. The other component in the revolution was the establishment of formal examinations and credentials for future secondary teachers, and the ultimate introduction of similar qualifications for other learned professions as well. In all modern European societies, advanced education eventually became almost as important a source of middle-class self-images as wealth and economic power, and this was especially true in Germany, where the educational revolution took place earliest, and the industrial revolution followed relatively late.

The radical renovation of the universities in Prussia and in other German states during the decades around 1800 assigned an especially important place to the faculties of "philosophy," as against the professional faculties. The reform movement was inspired by the new German Idealist philosophy, but also by a neo-humanist enthusiasm for classical Greece, and by the ideal of *Bildung*, meaning education in the sense of self-cultivation. According to this ideal, the learner's interpretive or "hermeneutic" interaction with venerated texts, chiefly those of classical antiquity, enhanced his whole personality. This view informed the ideology of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the German educated upper middle class. I have elsewhere used the term *mandarins* to characterize

an elite that owed its social standing primarily to its educational qualifications, rather than to aristocratic birth or to wealth and economic power. This mandarin elite consisted of high officials and teachers, clergymen, and members of the liberal and learned professions; the university professors were its natural spokesmen. In a precapitalist or early capitalist environment, only *Bildung* could compete with noble birth as a source of self-esteem and social honor. Similar visions of advanced education emerged in other cultures. But in Germany, the ethos of *Bildung* took on an almost metaphysical pathos. In the language of the German Idealists, the world exists so that, in coming to know it, the human mind may realize its potential.

If most German academics were more or less consciously committed to the concept of *Bildung* from the late eighteenth century on, then much is explained that would otherwise seem disconnected. Thus the German research university of the nineteenth century drew much of its vitality from a neo-humanist enthusiasm that was initially focused more upon Greece than upon Rome. The birth of the research seminar and the subsequent expansion of the philosophical faculties were linked to the emergence of the interpretive, philological, and historical disciplines. It was these disciplines, not the natural sciences, which initially defined the norms of rigorous scholarship. The word *Wissenschaft* broadly encompassed all systematic disciplines, including the interpretive ones, of course. There was a common belief that productive involvement in research usually would, and certainly should, have the effect of *Bildung*. The original scholar was meant to emerge from his activity enriched in mind *and person*. From the late nineteenth century on, this expectation was also expressed in the proposition that scholarship or science (*Wissenschaft*) should engender a "worldview" (*Weltanschauung*), a comprehensive and partly evaluative view of the world. The pursuit of truth was to lead to something like integral insight and moral certainty, or personal knowledge, or wisdom. In any case, the yen to derive *Bildung* and a "worldview" from learning or science was almost universal at German universities during Weber's time. Weber himself, however, stood against this pervasive assumption. He challenged the belief that the German universities could offer their students anything more than specialized training, and he insisted upon a rigorous separation of learning from value judgment.

As problematic as the expectation that *Wissenschaft* would produce "cultivation" was a traditional insulation of *Wissenschaft* from practical concerns. Although mathematics had a place in German classical secondary schooling, hermeneutic studies clearly ranked as the primary source of *Bildung*. To the extent that *Wissenschaft* was linked to the objective of *Bildung*, therefore,

"practical" and experimental knowledge was undervalued—and difficult to conceptualize. Laboratory science depends upon controlled intervention in the environment. Yet German treatises on *Bildung* and *Wissenschaft* rarely included positive references to practical activity. On the contrary, they usually inveighed against instrumental or "utilitarian" conceptions of knowledge, and they tended almost automatically to identify "pure" *Wissenschaft* as impractical. A symbolic hierarchy extended downward from abstract theory to experimental and causal analysis, and on to merely "technical" or "applied" studies. Thus the German research universities of the nineteenth century were generally firmer in their repudiation of "utilitarian" infringements upon the "purity" of *Wissenschaft* than in their defense of heterodoxy and intellectual diversity. Weber was painfully aware of this bias.

The modern German universities were funded by the territorial states. Princely governments needed trained officials and sought to supervise the education and certification of clergy, secondary and university teachers, and liberal professionals as well. In theory, the statutory rights of university faculties guaranteed their academic freedom, along with their independent role in the appointment and promotion of their colleagues. In practice, the state ministries of education managed to assert considerable influence in these matters, and the de facto control of the bureaucratic monarchy found increasing acceptance among most German academics. More ominously, the abstract purity of *Wissenschaft* was eventually taken to prohibit openly "partisan" social and political views. On the other hand, university faculty typically thought it their duty to champion the "national cause" and the "good of the whole" against the "egotism" of openly "interested" parties. The mandarin doctrine of the "cultural state" (*Kulturstaat*) could be read to imply that government derives its legitimacy not from pursuing the interests of the governed, but from supporting the intellectual life of the nation. The result of these converging attitudes was a tendentious but supposedly apolitical politics of national "idealism." Weber himself was a fervent nationalist. But he exposed the misuse of "national" phrases to protect the Prussian landowners and the bureaucratic monarchy. He also castigated the view that there was true academic freedom in Germany, as long as heterodox and radically critical views were not tolerated as a matter of principle.

I shall say little here about the emergence of *Bildung* as a new concept by around 1800. There was a certain unity in the several currents of thought that converged in Germany during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and the organizing principle behind this unity was a set of partly conscious beliefs about education, interpretation, and learning. Wilhelm von

Humboldt is considered the intellectual founder of the modern German university. But his theory of *Bildung* and of *Wissenschaft* was affected not only by the doctrines of German neo-humanism and Idealism, but also by the pedagogical debates of his day, and by the philological and interpretive *practices* that converted the neo-humanist impulse into a paradigm of systematic scholarship. Even in France and England, education was an important intellectual issue in the eighteenth century, along with economic individualism and political rationality. But in Germany, education became the primary concern of the new intellectual stratum, while economic individualism remained a comparatively minor theme.

My other historical point is that there was a change in the meaning of *Bildung* sometime between 1800 and 1900, a change best described as a shift from a forward-looking or "utopian" emphasis to a defensive or "ideological" one. Around 1800, the idea of self-enhancement through *Bildung* was a socially progressive and universalist challenge to permanent social distinctions based upon birth. Advanced education was not in fact available to everyone, but it seemed universally accessible in principle. The emerging educated middle class could in good conscience regard itself as an open, or merit, elite, a new aristocracy of intelligence and personal worth. To speak for education was in some sense to speak for all men against unjust and humanly irrelevant social barriers. By around 1900 or 1920, in sharp contrast, advanced education itself had taken on the character of a socially distinguishing privilege. With the institutionalization of secondary and higher education and of the credentials system, educational qualifications had become routine sources of social status. The educated upper middle class now sought to check the influx of new social groups into the universities and thus to reduce the competition for places in the academic professions.

As the concept of *Bildung* took on a socially confirmative character, some of its other implications changed as well. In some of Humboldt's early writings, he had insisted that human improvement could come only from the development of free individualities in interaction with each other. This was the cultural individualism that so impressed John Stuart Mill. Even in Humboldt's projects for the reorganization of Prussian higher education in 1909–1910, he saw the state as providing no more than a material environment for the autonomous life of learning. Yet he ultimately conceded opportunities for state intervention in university affairs. More important, to many university professors of later eras, this seemed less and less troublesome. Especially as they began to see themselves as a threatened minority, they tended to see the existing regime as an adequate embodiment of the *Kulturstaat*, the disinter-

ested supporter and representative of the national culture. Most of them displayed an ever-firmer commitment to the bureaucratic monarchy, which protected their social position and accepted their claim to speak for the nation as a whole.[2]

Bildung around 1800, it must be added, had been invested with a collective and even transcendent significance that was gradually dissipated in the century that followed. The early German neo-humanists had seriously looked to antiquity for universally and eternally valid cultural norms. The Protestant antecedents of German Idealism, too, had conferred a religious meaning upon the pursuit of *Bildung*. Although that meaning was affected by the individualist element in Protestantism, it still linked *Bildung* to a universal vision of human salvation. In the metaphysical language of German Idealism, the self-realization of Mind was the transcendent aim of human existence. As that spiritual connotation gradually faded, however, it became ever more damaging that neither Humboldt nor the great Idealists had taken a clear position on the social preconditions of individual *Bildung*, or on its this-worldly consequences for all members of the community. Left in a kind of spiritual and social vacuum, the cultivation of the isolated self ultimately became a gratuitous and strictly private enterprise, a higher form of selfishness. Weber understandably felt the need radically to redefine the role of higher education, of systematic knowledge, and of the intellectual in the modern world.[3]

From around 1890 on, German university professors in the humanities and social sciences expressed a sense of crisis that reached its greatest intensity during the interwar period. Among the causes of their concern, some were broad trends in the political and cultural life of their time; others were changes in the situation of the universities and of *Wissenschaft* itself. Included in the latter category were structural transformations in the educational system that were widely perceived as forms of modernization and democratization. Thus from the late 1870s to the turn of the century, public controversies took place over the accreditation of the so-called technical institutes (*technische Hochschulen*), and of the nonclassical or incompletely classical secondary schools that were collectively termed *Realschulen*. Rightly or not, contemporaries considered the growth of these practically oriented institutions a functional adjustment of the educational system to the requirements of a modern technological society. Even opponents of the nontraditional programs thought them necessary; what they denied, at least until 1900, is that they should be accredited equally with the classical *Gymnasium* or with the universities themselves. The prevailing sentiment in the university faculties of philosophy was against them. In this context, it proved remarkably easy to use

the language of *Bildung* in defense of the status quo. The inherited animus against "utilitarian" conceptions of learning virtually dictated a hierarchic ranking of educational institutions according to their more or less exclusively impractical character. The traditional defense of "pure" learning thus served to justify a social divide between the gratuitously cultivated and those schooled for useful employments.

During the late nineteenth century, and especially during the Weimar period, German academics also faced the questions raised by a substantial growth in secondary and university enrollments. While these increases probably did not substantially increase social mobility through education, contemporaries perceived them as forms of educational democratization or "massification." In these circumstances, the theory of *Bildung* was repeatedly brought forward to challenge the notion that school and university places should be distributed on the basis of tested academic aptitude. Since *Bildung* was thought to fulfill an individual's unique potential, statistical approaches to academic selection almost had to seem inappropriate. Thus in 1917, the pedagogue and philosopher Eduard Spranger saw "a connection between democracy and rationalism in the growth of technical methods by which the intellectual characteristics are to be measured." He objected that "individuality can only be grasped through vital intuition." In 1923, the psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers, Weber's friend and not usually a reactionary, conceded that certain specific aptitudes might be tested, but not "intelligence as such," "intellectuality" (*Geistigkeit*), and "creativity, genius." Jaspers reminded his readers that "the masses" had always been known to have a low intelligence. A student's receptivity to learning would be deficient, he thought, unless he came from a "cultured family."[4] These exclusionary views had little left in common with the universalist optimism of Wilhelm von Humboldt.

At a broader social and political level too, the mandarin intellectuals felt deeply threatened. Industrialization was under way well before 1870, but the pace of change increased dramatically during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Gigantic combines and producers' associations concentrated huge masses of capital, while exerting a growing influence in politics and in the press. The Free Trade Unions and the Social Democratic Party expanded sharply, to counterbalance the power of capital. In the pseudo-constitutional regime of the bureaucratic monarchy, the elected parties of the Reichstag were too weak to develop coherent policies of their own, but they were strong enough to bargain for petty concessions as Chancellors tried to construct governing majorities. Politics became less and less a matter of reasoned debate and more and more a conflict among competing quantities of

organized monetary and electoral weight. Even moderate academics viewed this transformation with a kind of moral horror. The Frankfurt Parliament of 1848 had been dominated by the educated elite, and by university professors in particular. But by the turn of the century, party secretaries, journalists, and representatives of producers' associations held an increasing share of seats in the Reichstag. The narrow interests of the political parties seemed to predominate over larger national and cultural objectives. Economically and socially, the high industrial class society seemed to overwhelm the traditional status system, in which the highly educated had held a place of honor.

The typical mandarin was by no means uncritical of capitalism, not to mention laissez-faire economic individualism. To be sure, the educated and the entrepreneurial upper middle classes merged to some degree from the late nineteenth century on. Still, the ordinary German academic ranked the German cultural heritage and the cause of the German nation above the uncontrolled rule of capital. The dominant tradition in German economics focused upon the institutional and cultural setting of economic activity. The idea of the economic agent as a rational profit-seeker was widely rejected on both empirical and moral grounds. Few academics believed in timeless and culture-free "laws" of economic behavior; even fewer were outright socialists. This left many of them committed to a paternalist "social policy" and to the protection of agriculture against the inroads of commercial capitalism. It was easy for them to see the monarchical state and bureaucracy as "standing above" the political parties, ensuring social harmony and defending the welfare of the nation as a whole.

In Germany as in other countries, the outbreak of war in 1914 was greeted with an outburst of enthusiasm that seems shocking in retrospect, given the massive slaughter that ensued. Almost unanimously, German university professors supported their nation's war effort, and that requires no more explanation than the similar reactions of intellectuals in other countries. What does call for comment is the German mandarins' interpretation of the war as a triumph over the social conflicts of the prewar years, and as the subordination of private and group interests to the cause of the nation. In their wartime speeches and proclamations, the German mandarins were able once again to assume their traditional role of cultural leadership. They wrote of a profound struggle between German "culture" and Western "civilization." They castigated Western commercialism, rationalism, and utilitarian individualism, as against the uniqueness of Germany's cultural traditions, political institutions, and sense of "community." Invoking the "ideas of 1914," they envisaged a German alternative to the opposition between unfettered capitalism and radical

socialism, a system in which both capital and labor were organized to serve the larger objectives of the nation. At the same time, the large majority of German professors called for extensive territorial annexations, even while resisting the political reforms that might have brought the Prusso-German polity closer to the English model of parliamentary government. It became painfully obvious during the war that the rhetoric of the national cause represented an exclusionary tactic, a right-wing attack upon liberal reformers and Social Democrats.

Of course there were differences of opinion among German university professors of this period. I have distinguished two major groups, the "orthodox" and the "modernists." The orthodox majority perpetuated the antidemocratic implications of their ideology without much reflection. They saw their time as one of shallow utilitarianism, social "dissolution," and moral corruption. They castigated the "interest politics" of the political parties and the "materialism" of the Social Democratic electorate. During the First World War, they celebrated the resurrection of the nation while opposing political reform and supporting the demands of the ultra-annexationists. They despised the Revolutions of 1918–19 and the Weimar Republic. The foreign and domestic enemies of Germany, they believed, had combined to impose an intolerable regime, an outgrowth of lower-class envy and partisan egotism. They responded with a rhetoric of cultural despair, an ostensibly "apolitical" repudiation of modernity in all its aspects. They called for an "intellectual revolution" and a renewal of "idealism." Some of them openly linked modernity with the Jews, as if anti-Semitism were an acceptable alternative to the despised politics of material interests. Among their students, they encouraged messianic expectations of a vague and violent character. Their ideological attacks materially weakened the Weimar Republic, along with the norms of reason and civility.

In both the Imperial and Weimar periods, to be sure, a substantial minority of German university faculty took less one-sided positions on the political issues of their time. They were more critical than their colleagues of the existing political and social system, and they resisted the annexationist hysteria that infected the German academic world during the First World War. After 1918, they supported the genuinely republican parties. They were guided less by enthusiasm for democracy, not to mention socialism, than by a sense of realism, and by the hope that the Republic might be encouraged to pursue moderate policies. Among the members of this relatively progressive minority, some were determined cultural individualists and therefore "liberals" in some sense of that term; others more closely resembled the type of the enlightened

conservative; only a handful directed truly radical criticisms at the political assumptions prevailing among their colleagues. Yet I have applied the term *modernists* to all the members of this group, because they held one definitive belief in common. This was that the German intellectual heritage had to be systematically reexamined in the light of modern conditions; socially indefensible accretions had to be stripped away, so that the vital core of the tradition could be transmitted to a wider audience in an inescapably more democratic age.

In pursuit of the modernist program, such scholars as Ernst Troeltsch, Georg Simmel, and Max Weber in fact became critical "translators" of German neo-humanism, Idealism, and Romanticism, as well as analysts of the interpretive or hermeneutic method. In almost every discipline, and especially in the social sciences, some of the more prominent innovators were modernists. This is not surprising, for the modernists were open to the creative experience of intellectual incongruity. While the orthodox almost unconsciously perpetuated the ideology of *Bildung* in its socially confirmative form, the modernists had to raise this ideology to critical consciousness. Thus my distinction between orthodoxy and modernism is meant to capture something more than a divide between the right and the left center in the political spectrum. It is also intended to point up the crucial difference between the unreflected transmission and the conscious clarification of an intellectual tradition. As a matter of fact, it is possible to locate the German academic modernists of the Weimar period on a scale of increasing critical distance from mandarin orthodoxy. Varying degrees of heterodoxy were not only individual responses to distancing experiences of all kinds; they were also immediate consequences of intellectual crisis. Once dislodged from the position of naive adherence, the critics of orthodoxy were precipitated into a chain of reversals that nonetheless reflected the tradition they challenged. Thus German Idealism ultimately provoked self-conscious anti-idealisms that are hard to imagine in any other intellectual field.

A final symptom of the German cultural crisis of the decades around 1900 was a widespread dissatisfaction with specialized research. German academics were troubled by the problem of disciplinary specialization or by a whole cluster of issues they associated with specialization. They faced a dilemma, since most of them were deeply involved in specialized work. They enjoyed the prosperity and renown of German science and scholarship. Yet they could not shake the sense that something vital to them was being lost, and that their practice was becoming incongruent with their ideals. The branching out of existing disciplines into autonomous subfields, and the decreasing breadth of

scientific and scholarly works: these seemed to portend an intellectual atomization, in which researchers lost sight of the interrelationships among their findings. Even beyond this cognitive disjunction, specialization was widely held to threaten the unity of knowledge, or the relationship between empirical *Wissenschaft* and fundamental philosophy. Interpreted in the light of the German tradition, incoherence in specialized science and scholarship stemmed from the loss of the integrative framework that had once been provided by German Idealist philosophy.

This helps to account for the almost automatic association of specialization with "positivism." The latter in turn was rarely described in detail. Disciples of Auguste Comte or self-confessed positivists were rare among German university faculty between 1890 and 1930. The label "positivist" was almost always used in a derogatory sense, and those accused of positivism were typically thought guilty of unacknowledged fallacies. Chief among the errors ascribed to positivists was the belief that the concepts of the natural sciences could be extended to the humanities and social studies, or that the search for law-like regularities was the main task of the interpretive and historical disciplines as well. Indeed, even unreflected research practices could be viewed as positivist, if they were guided by a naive objectivism (envisaging a theory-free adding up of facts) or by a strong causalist program. Obviously, all forms of determinism, "materialism," or doctrinaire Marxism were considered positivist in inspiration or tendency, as were mechanical, "atomistic," or otherwise reductive analyses of organic processes, cultural meanings, or social wholes.

By the 1920s, German academics wrote and spoke not only of a "crisis of culture," but of a "crisis of *Wissenschaft*" as well. In describing this crisis, they typically repeated the established view that excessive specialization had eroded the vital ties between research and morally significant insight. To deal with the resulting loss of meaning, they called for scholarly "synthesis." Moreover, the divide between the orthodox and the modernists, which had widened a great deal during the First World War, now affected methodological positions to an unprecedented degree. The demand for "synthesis," though initially expressed by modernists as well, became ever more clearly an orthodox device. Indeed, "synthesis" itself was more and more broadly conceived. While it initially meant no more than cognitive integration, it ultimately acquired extraordinarily broad connotations. In German academic addresses of the period, one senses a desperate groping for morally elevating "lessons." The revival of the humanistic disciplines (*Geisteswissenschaften*) since the 1880s, which we have yet to discuss, was thought to promise a more integral and spiritually profitable engagement with the values embod-

ied in great texts. References to "vital experience" (*Erlebnis*) suggested an intuitive identification with objects of interpretation, while "phenomenological" methods were taken to authorize a direct "viewing" (*schauen*) of "essential" meanings (*Wesensschau*). It was in this context that Weber insisted upon the inescapability of disciplinary specialization, denigrated academic "prophecy," and warned students against placing their hopes in intuition and vital experience. People who want to "view," he grumbled, should go to the cinema.[5]

THE GERMAN HISTORICAL TRADITION

Max Weber developed much of his methodological position in a critique of the German historical tradition, which was decisively shaped by the ideology of *Bildung*. Thus a persistent model of *Bildung* implied that the self-cultivating reader could reproduce or "relive" (*Erleben*) the experiences or "values" embodied in his texts, or that he could intuitively identify with the authors.[6] What may be called the *principle of empathy* long remained a temptation within the German interpretive and historical disciplines. It dictated, for example, that historians must "put themselves in the place of" the historical agents they seek to understand. Indeed, there is nothing wrong with this injunction, as long as it is understood in a loose and metaphorical sense. Taken literally, however, it implies a process of empathetic reproduction that cannot be communicated, validated, or falsified. Successful historians become geniuses with mysterious powers. The more they succeed in identifying with agents in cultures other than their own, moreover, the more they raise what came to be called the "problem of *Historismus*": Knowing only historically specific worldviews, we have no reason to exempt our own values and beliefs from the contingent flow of historicity.

The other element in the concept of *Bildung* that helped to shape the German historical tradition may be called the *principle of individuality*. The self-cultivating individual was consistently portrayed as absolutely unique, imbued with a distinctive potential for personal fulfillment. German theories of advanced education thus diverged sharply from a recurrent French emphasis upon the "socialization" of the younger generation in the light of inherited norms. Nor was *Bildung* conceived as the enhancement of a universal capacity for rationality; it was the development of an incomparable individual. This radical cultural individualism could acquire a utopian significance. It encouraged a positive view of both individual and cultural diversity; this is the implication that attracted John Stuart Mill to the thought of Wilhelm von Humboldt, and it certainly appealed to Max Weber as well. Yet the principle of individuality could also make a mystery of the relationship between the incomparable individual and his group or culture. The principle of individuality excluded additive views of aggregates, including political groupings. Moreover, the commitment to individuality in the study of history raised serious difficulties about the issue of change. Since "mechanical" causal processes were excluded, change could only be a teleological unfolding of preexistent potentialities, or an "emanation" of intellectual or spiritual forces.

Leopold von Ranke was commonly regarded as the dean of nineteenth-century German historians. He attained that status because he rigorously applied the source-critical methods transmitted by the philologists to an unprecedented range of historical sources. He was a great practitioner of the historian's craft. What he mainly recommended in his theoretical and methodological writings was a past-mindedness that recalled the *principle of empathy*. He wrote of "placing oneself back into [a given] time, into the mind of a contemporary." In line with the concept of the "cultural state," moreover, he saw states as the outward embodiment of "intellectual forces," "moral energies" that could be understood only by means of "empathy."[7]

At the same time, Ranke persistently championed the *principle of individuality*. He not only believed that great statesmen and thinkers truly stood for their nations, and thus legitimately led them; he also saw states themselves as "individualities," with their own distinctive "tendencies." Indeed, he repeatedly insisted upon the discontinuity between "the general" and "the particular." "From the particular," he wrote, "you may ascend to the general; but from general theory there is no way back to the intuitive understanding of the particular." What the historian must start from, therefore, is "the unique intellectual and spiritual character of the individual state, its principle."[8] As a profoundly religious thinker, Ranke was able to accept each culture and epoch as utterly distinctive and yet find meaning in world history as a divinely instituted plenitude of cultural individualities.

Among nineteenth-century German theorists of history, only Johann Gustav Droysen equaled Ranke in authority. His reflections on history rested upon a sharp contrast between explanation and interpretive understanding (*Verstehen*). Droysen associated the latter with intuitive insight, but also with the recovery of past human actions and beliefs from the "traces" they have left in the present. Like Wilhelm Dilthey after him, Droysen distinguished processes "internal" to the human agent from their outward "expressions." He also insisted that "the state is not the sum of the individuals it encompasses; nor does it arise from their wills or exist for the sake of their wills." Following

the theory of *Bildung*, he described the course of history as "humanity's coming to consciousness." Droysen developed some of his views in opposition to H. T. Buckle's two-volume *History of Civilization in England* (1858–1861), which sought to transform history in the image of the natural sciences. In response, Droysen reemphasized the divide between the scientist's search for regularities and the historian's predominant concern with the interpretive understanding of the unique and particular.[9]

Max Weber did not comment directly upon the writings of Ranke or Droysen, but he did review a book closer to his own early research specialization in economic history. This was a famous 1853 opus by Karl Knies, a cofounder of what came to be called the "older" German historical school of economics. Along with a handful of precursors, including Wilhelm Roscher, Knies launched a tradition in political economy that was distinctly German in its emphasis upon the historicity of economic institutions and ideas. Knies's point of departure was the rejection of English classical economics. He utterly repudiated the notion that economic analysis can be based upon axioms that are independent of time and place. For Knies, there could be no exclusively economic field of study, for economic activity cannot be separated from its political and cultural settings, which are products of history. The idea that permanent "laws" of economic behavior can be based upon the universality of "private egotism" struck Knies as a "fiction" to be rejected on ethical as well as methodological grounds.[10]

Insisting upon the relevance of spiritual forces in history and upon the integration of the economy into the surrounding culture, Knies had recourse to such entities as the "spirit" of a nation. The individual economic agent was influenced not only by changing political and social arrangements, but also by his national culture. Knies sometimes wrote of the "causal" interconnections between economic life and the other elements of a national culture. Yet he was clearly uncomfortable with ordinary causal formulations. His problem was that he equated causal connection with "natural necessity." To him and to other German historians, causal explanation was inherently nomological (*naturgesetzlich*): It was explanation in terms of laws like those of the natural sciences. While excluding such regularities from the domain of historical economics, Knies hit upon two fairly plausible substitutes. First, he argued that in his field the action of causes was not universal but modified by specific cultural conditions. This accounted for the centrality of "the individual and the concrete" in history. Second, he claimed that "analogies" might be discovered where strict laws could not be found. Incomplete regularities might be detected, not only within the several subsections of a culture and in the way these subsections

affected each other, but also in the stages that followed each other in the historical development of nations. Finally, Knies was deeply concerned with the "freedom" of both individuals and nations to depart from pre-established patterns. Although he saw the individual as a product of his culture, he insisted upon the "personal element" in history. It was his commitment to "freedom" that mainly motivated his objection to nomological "causality."[11]

Knies' works in economic history were still used in Weber's time, including by Weber himself. The leadership of the "younger" historical school of economics, however, had by then passed to Gustav Schmoller, who also dominated the famous Social Policy Association (Verein für Sozialpolitik). This was an academic and semipublic forum for the study and advocacy of moderate social reform. The social policies championed by the association under Schmoller's influence came to strike Weber and a few of his colleagues as problematic. They seemed excessively paternalistic and bureaucratic in tendency, and they reflected ad hoc policy compromises, rather than fully reflected—and debated—objectives. This eventually provoked a controversy about value judgments in scholarship, in which Weber played a leading part. But even before that debate was launched, Schmoller's brand of historical economics was challenged by the Austrian neo-classical economist Carl Menger, one of the initiators of the marginal utility theory that has become a fundament of modern economic analysis. In 1883, Menger published a programmatic tract that set off a protracted "methods controversy" and that clearly impressed Weber. Menger's central thesis was that economic theory should not be confused with historical accounts of economic practices, or with the practical policy studies that Menger termed "political economy."[12]

In specifying his conception of *theoretical* economics, Menger raised crucial issues, not only for the historical school of economics, but also for the German historical tradition as a whole. He began by distinguishing two divergent perspectives upon empirical phenomena: "Our cognitive interest is directed either at the concrete phenomena in their position in space and time . . . or . . . at the recurrent patterns in which they appear. The former research direction aims at knowledge of the concrete or . . . individual, the latter at knowledge of the general." While insisting upon the divide between theoretical and historical economics, Menger further stipulated that "typical relations" or "laws" observable in the empirical world are not equally strict or invariant in their application to individual cases. He concluded that the theorist cannot hope to know the typical relations of particular phenomena in their "totality and their whole complexity." Rather, theoretical economics must be further subdivided into a "realistic-empirical" and an "exact" branch. The

realistic-empirical direction may seek to discern "real types" and "empirical laws"; but these will inevitably be imprecise and subject to exceptions. The exact direction, on the other hand, must analyze complex phenomena into more elementary constituents and relationships that *can* be represented in strictly invariant laws; but these will rarely be applicable to the empirical world. Thus exact economics may theorize about the behavior of fully informed and rational economic agents, knowing full well that few such agents are to be found in real life. In the natural sciences too, as Menger pointed out, empirically observed regularities are usually not exact, while rigorous and universal laws are products of analysis and abstraction.[13]

For German historians, the issue of "positivism" became particularly acute during the controversy over the publication of the first volume of Karl Lamprecht's *German History* in 1891. Rejecting the predominant emphasis upon the state and upon great individuals in the German tradition, Lamprecht proposed a "cultural history" that gave attention to everything from economic conditions to popular culture and also drew heavily upon the history of the arts. In a 1905 collection of lectures, Lamprecht urged the replacement of narratives organized around "heroes" with comparative analyses of changing "conditions." His early interest in economic history may have earned him the reproach of "materialism," but his mature program for "modern" scientific history was based upon a theory of "psychic differentiation." He saw the individual progressing from total integration into the clan, via looser ties to the family and social group, toward increasing differentiation and autonomy. In a sequence of distinctive "cultural epochs," humanity thus moved from the "symbolic" age, through the "typical" and "conventional" periods, to the modern era of "individualism" and "subjectivism."[14]

Lamprecht explicitly drew upon the psychology of Wilhelm Wundt. He characterized history as "applied psychology," especially social psychology. While "psychic differentiation" was presumably a singular trend, Lamprecht observed regularities in the "psychic mechanisms" of cultural epochs. As one epoch gave way to its successor—or an earlier to a later phase of "subjectivism," older modes of thought and feeling underwent "dissociation," while new stimuli intruding from the environment gradually converged in a new psychic "dominant" or "synthesis." Thus the subjectivist era at first entailed an "increase in the activity of the nervous system" and a new "susceptibility to stimuli" (*Reizbarkeit*). Once fully developed, however, the standpoint of the self-conscious subject permitted the organization of chaotic sensations into formed experience.

In tracing the second phase of the subjectivist epoch to the stimuli pro-

vided by urbanization and technological change, Lamprecht evoked the psychological pressures of modernity. This allowed him to move on with remarkable ease to the "search for a new dominant," the "yearning of the age" for a new *Weltanschauung* or religion, the displacement of artistic naturalism by a new "idealism," and the new primacy of the humanistic disciplines. Reading Lamprecht's lectures today, one is struck by the looseness of his descriptions, in which virtually anything could be integrated into a broader "psychological" dynamic—and thus "explained" at will. In any case, Lamprecht's program struck most of his colleagues as subversive, not only in its methodology, but in its social and political implications as well. He was deservedly criticized for his slovenly scholarship, and he was suspected of "economic materialism." Indeed, it proved so easy to repudiate Lamprecht as a dilettante and a "positivist" that he probably retarded the opening to the social sciences that was beginning to transform historical studies in France by the turn of the century.[15]

In 1902, Eduard Meyer, a respected historian of antiquity, wrote a methodological essay that was affected by the Lamprecht controversy and that later drew a critical response from Max Weber. Meyer scoffed at the "modern" direction in historiography, which insisted on imitating the natural sciences. He was particularly offended at the equation of history with "applied psychology," the emphasis upon mass phenomena rather than the individual. What the new historians ignored, according to Meyer, was the "free will" of the human agent, the role of ideas and of chance in history. Like Knies before him, Meyer believed that causal relationships between events could only be based upon deterministic laws. Yet he found it hard to escape the conviction that "accidents" and deliberate actions can shape historical outcomes. Like Knies, he sought to escape this dilemma by means of ad hoc adjustments. Perhaps laws are replaced in history by "analogies" that may be altered by human agency or chance. Meyer also believed that the whole antithesis between necessity and contingency could be restated as the difference between a completed and an ongoing sequence of occurrences. Once events have taken place, we must accept them as necessary effects of their antecedents. While matters are still in flux, however, we may consider particular developmental paths as more or less probable, while also acknowledging that outcomes may be altered by intervening accidents or human actions.[16]

In 1883, just as Menger launched his critique of German historical economics, Wilhelm Dilthey published his *Introduction to the Humanistic Disciplines* [*Geisteswissenschaften*], which launched a whole chain of reflections upon the German interpretive and historical disciplines. Dilthey's purpose was to codify the concepts and methods of these disciplines, particularly as

they contrast with those of the natural sciences. While human beings as biological entities are part of nature, Dilthey held, practitioners of the interpretive disciplines deal essentially with the human mind (*Geist*) as it has expressed itself in the historical world. They do not seek regularities but direct their attention to the unique and to freely chosen action. Human agency can only be understood "from the inside," in terms of intentions and beliefs. Thus the *Geisteswissenschaften* must be grounded in a "descriptive and analytical psychology" that does not rely on psychophysical laws or on other reductive tactics.[17]

The project Dilthey thus initiated in 1883 did not mature until 1907, with his *Construction of the Historical World in the Humanistic Disciplines* [*Geisteswissenschaften*], which was further elaborated in later years. In a classic statement of the interpretive position, Dilthey here worked with a threefold scheme of "immediate experience" (*Erlebnis*), "expression" (*Ausdruck*), and "interpretive understanding" (*Verstehen*). He was particularly emphatic about the primacy of immediate awareness. Our lived experience, he argued, is an initially unanalyzed complex of sensations, memories, desires, and value orientations. The fullness of this totality provides the raw material for any observations we may transform into organized experience (*Erfahrung*), or integrate into the cognitive frameworks of the disciplines. This part of Dilthey's thought inspired what came to be called "philosophy of life" (*Lebensphilosophie*). It also affected Dilthey's own further reflections in important ways. Above all, Dilthey always believed that *Nacherleben,* the empathetic reproduction of immediate experience, played a role in the genesis of interpretive understanding. Primitive forms of *Verstehen,* he suggested, might be virtually unconscious—though culturally conditioned—insights into the meaning of gestures, facial expressions, and simple actions.[18]

Yet even while retaining this subjectivist view of empathetic understanding, the mature Dilthey also developed a more complex account of *Verstehen.* To capture the sense of reconstructing human meanings from their manifestations, he loosely adapted the Hegelian terminology of "objectification." Texts, artifacts, and institutions can be considered externalized, or "objectified," traces of "mind"; the interpreter's task is to reconstruct the historical world from such objectively available traces. Among the objects of interpretation, Dilthey distinguished the expression of an immediate experience, a purposive human action, and a purely intellectual judgment. Even with respect to immediate experience, he suggested, we seek the distanced articulation of objective knowledge (*Erfahrung*). The most interesting aspect of Dilthey's late work, however, was his attempt to explicate the interpretation (*Verstehen, Auslegung*) of intellectual "structures" or "patterns of thought." His point was that we can understand such products of mind as legal codes and mathematical theorems by retracing the reasoning on which they are based. The way in which the parts of a text are related to form a coherent whole, too, may be rationally reconstructed with some degree of reliability. As an objectification of mind, Dilthey noted, a text becomes independent of the author's psyche; it is integrated into a set of texts that jointly form an intellectual tradition. The relationship among texts is one of mutual adaptation and influence (*Wirkungszusammenhang*), which extends over time, right to our own day; for we live in a historical world of inherited meanings.

While fascinating in their scope, Dilthey's formulations never became fully clear. Perhaps his difficulty stemmed from his overriding commitment to the separation of the humanistic studies from the natural sciences. He contrasted the "freedom" of the human mind with the lawfulness of nature. Indeed, he identified causal relationships with "nomological" (*naturwissenschaftlich*) laws and with necessity, which made him all the more anxious to dissociate intellectual influence from causal connection. History is "immanently teleological," he wrote; human purposes and values are realized in the meanings that make up the historical world. *Verstehen* provides access to the "inner" connections within that world, which further distinguishes the humanities from the natural sciences. The historian is not interested in regularities, but in individualities, including distinctive cultures and epochs. Finally, Dilthey never lost his conviction that empathy is an element in interpretation. *Verstehen,* he wrote, always contains "something irrational."

Some of the positions Dilthey thus fully articulated after the turn of the century were actually anticipated by the sociologist and philosopher Georg Simmel as early as 1892. This is important because Simmel ultimately influenced Weber more than Dilthey did. Simmel's short treatise on *Problems in the Philosophy of History* was completed in 1892, then revised and extended in 1905. Like Dilthey, Simmel focused upon the relationship between inner "movements" of the "soul" and their outward expressions. In all human interactions, he noted, we presuppose mental states in others; we infer their thoughts and feelings from their actions and gestures, reasoning from visible "effects" to inner "causes." Asking how historians achieve their understanding of past human behaviors and beliefs, Simmel assigned a special place to the "theoretical contents of thought," which can be reconstructed independently of the intentions of their originators. Obviously, much greater difficulties arise in the understanding of subjective states. Interpreters may never fully grasp emotions too far beyond their own prior experience, Simmel believed;

but some degree of insight is possible even with respect to partly unfamiliar feelings. While insisting that we can know human history in a way that we cannot know nature, Simmel firmly rejected the notion of understanding as a kind of telepathic reproduction. The historian's ability to identify with others, he argued, is not a fact but a heuristic assumption, one that allows us to begin the process of interpretation at all.[19]

In a particularly interesting chapter, Simmel addressed the issue of "laws in history." Following Hume, he defined a law as the assertion that the occurrence of a set of facts is invariably followed by the occurrence of certain other facts. But in the world we know, he wrote, the states of the world that succeed each other are infinitely complex. We cannot judge whether they are lawfully linked, unless we first analyze them into their elements—but that is impossible. Thus a fully lawful connection between two historical events as totalities can never be established. Simmel's clear purpose was to undermine the vision of history as a sum of regularities. He saw scientific laws as "ideal" and thus different in logic from descriptions of particular events. History, he wrote, is not a *Gesetzeswissenschaft,* a nomological science, but a *Wirklichkeitswissenschaft,* a discipline concerned with concrete realities. The borderline between these two forms of inquiry did not seem to him unbridgeable; but he insisted that historical knowledge is of great human interest independently of the search for universal regularities.[20]

Having effectively excluded invariant laws in history, Simmel was prepared to recommend more loosely conceived "laws." By way of example, he cited such statistical regularities as suicide rates in given societies. He observed that we can arrive at rough generalities about such phenomena without knowing much about the particulars they aggregate. He also mentioned the "law of differentiation," which asserts a generally increasing specialization of functions and traits among human beings through the ages. Imperfect laws, he argued, should be expected to conflict on occasion, but they are nonetheless useful in the organization of data, in the identification of "typical" developments, and as preliminary steps toward more exact knowledge. One is reminded of Menger's distinction between abstract-but-exact and empirical-but-inexact regularities. Yet Simmel drew an even sharper line between all empirical approaches to history and inquiries into its "meaning." Whether historical change adds up to "progress," for example, can only be decided on the basis of extrahistorical value judgments. Nevertheless, historical studies must be guided by concerns about the human significance of the issues taken up, for the complex realities of the past cannot simply be enumerated. Historians must have questions to put to their data.[21]

Weber owed a great deal to Simmel; but he also benefited from a line of analysis that began with Wilhelm Windelband's 1894 address entitled "History and the Natural Sciences." Windelband criticized the division of the empirical studies into the natural sciences and the humanistic disciplines. He observed that this divide was based upon the "substantive" difference between "nature" and "mind," but he cited psychology to show that this distinction was hard to maintain. In its place, he proposed a "formal," or methodological, divide. The empirical disciplines usually identified as humanistic, he argued, seek "exhaustively" to describe particular events. Their "cognitive purpose" is to "reproduce and understand" a "form of human life" in its "unique actuality." Methodologically, the empirical disciplines fall into two groups: The *Gesetzeswissenschaften* pursue "nomothetic" knowledge of the general in the form of invariant "laws"; the *Ereigniswissenschaften* strive for "idiographic" knowledge of singular events or patterns. Windelband held that the same set of phenomena can be studied in both the nomothetic and the idiographic modes, and that the borderline between the two approaches is not absolute.[22]

As a theoretician of the German historical tradition, Windelband shifted the focus from the *principle of empathy* to the *principle of individuality.* He virtually ignored not only "nomothetic" psychology but Dilthey's reflections upon the humanistic disciplines as well. In this and other respects, Heinrich Rickert continued Windelband's perspective in his 1902 *Limits of Scientific Conceptualization.* According to Rickert, the world is an infinitely extensive set of objects, each of which is infinitely subdivisible, so that we confront an "extensively" and "intensively" infinite "manifold" of particulars. Obviously, our knowledge cannot be a reproduction of reality; indeed, we cannot know an object or event in all of its aspects. To comprehend reality is conceptually to simplify and to transform it in the light of a cognitive strategy. The strategy of the natural sciences is to analyze objects into their simpler components, trying to arrive at elementary constituents, while also subsuming selected aspects of reality under universal generalizations or laws that hold independently of time and place. The "limitation" of scientific conceptualization, in Rickert's view, is that it leaves behind the intuitive immediacy (*Anschaulichkeit*) of ordinary experience, so as to achieve the coherence embodied in its hierarchy of laws. For Rickert, it followed that the infinite manifold of reality may also be approached with a cognitive strategy other than that of the natural sciences.[23]

Like Windelband before him, Rickert found fault with the traditional division of the academic specialties into the natural sciences and the humanistic disciplines. Traditionally, these disciplines were held to deal interpretively with the world of "mind." Rickert did not object to this usage, which he ex-

pected to endure in practice. What he opposed, however, was a substantive or ontological divide between the realm of physical nature and that of the mental or psychic (*Geist, Psyche*). Instead, expanding Windelband's antithesis between "nomothetic" and "idiographic" knowledge, he recommended a logical distinction between the disciplines searching for nomological laws and those interested in the "individual," or singular. As the main alternative to the nomological disciplines, "history" is concerned with what occurred at specific times and places, with the distinctive, with personal and collective "individuals." "All empirical reality . . . becomes nature when we consider it with regard to the general; it becomes history when we consider it with regard to the particular. Every discipline has its point of departure in immediately experienced reality." The last sentence is important, for it reaffirms that reality itself cannot be reproduced. To illustrate the point, Rickert commented upon the widely held view that the great individuals resist generalization. According to Rickert, this is true simply because they are real. For all of reality is "irrational" in the sense that it cannot be encompassed by our concepts. Nevertheless, Rickert clearly believed that history comes closer than the natural sciences to conveying the fullness of ordinary experience. In that sense, history is what Simmel said it was: a discipline dealing with reality (*Wirklichkeitswissenschaft*) (250, 255, 258–60).

Of course, as Rickert conceded, the methodological divide between the natural sciences and the historical disciplines is not absolute. Elements of history—and singular developments—can be found in biology, in evolutionary theory, in geology, and in astronomy. Conversely, historians often use limited generalizations, or what Rickert called "relatively historical" concepts (309–10). Moreover, the historical "individual" too is a construct, not a concrete person or collectivity, although its description is meant to point up its distinctive qualities, not those of its traits that lend themselves to generalization. "Historical individuals" are conceptually isolated and defined in the light of their *cultural significance.* Historians of modern Germany are interested in the fact that Frederick William IV refused the crown offered by the Frankfurt Parliament; they do not care who made his coats (325–26). Most of the objects of historical study encompass mental events, which partly justify the term *Geisteswissenschaften.* Yet the central role played by cultural values and culturally significant "historical individuals" suggests that the real alternative to the natural sciences is the "historical study of culture" (*historische Kulturwissenschaft*) (339).

While mainly concerned with the particular, the historian must also search for causes, since the world is an infinitely complex network of singular causal

connections. Having said that, however, Rickert sharply distinguished the interrelationships among historical individuals from the necessary connections implied by deterministic laws. On occasion, he actually equated "causal explanation" with nomological (*naturwissenschaftlich*) explanation. But his main point was that the mutual influences among historical individualities are not deducible from invariant laws (128–29, 307–8). Like earlier theoreticians of the German historical tradition, he fled the specter of determinism, leaving himself the problem of articulating an alternate model of singular causal analysis. He did offer a cogent distinction between "primary" and "secondary" historical individuals. "Primary historical individuals" derive their significance from their relationship to cultural values, whereas "secondary historical individuals" are *causally* relevant to "primary historical individuals" or "intellectual centers" (409–14, 475–80).

Rickert's overriding interest was in the problem of values. To begin with, he distinguished value judgments from judgments of "value relatedness." Without making value judgments in their own behalf, he argued, historians may judge certain "individuals" to be culturally relevant or value related. Thus two scholars may differ in their values and yet agree that some singular object or issue is culturally relevant (389–90). At any rate, as Rickert argued, the values involved in the historian's judgments must be *general* in some sense. But values are evolved by human beings living in communities; they are *cultural* values. Thus values may be empirically general in two ways: They may be commonly accepted as valid in the historians' own cultures or in the cultures they choose to investigate. Finally, Rickert suggested that values may be considered normatively general if they *ought* to be recognized as such by all educated persons within a culture (560–88).

Some of Rickert's formulations do not stand up to close examination. Thus his judgments of "value relatedness" do not remove the need for underlying value judgments. Moreover, the distinction between values held in the historians' own cultures and those held in the cultures they study is problematic, because it fails to specify how the commitments of past "intellectual centers" are known to historians. Rickert here either tacitly accepted the view that the past can be directly understood "in its own terms," or he forgot that his "intellectual centers" must first be selected—or constructed—as significant in the light of the historians' own values (641–42). Even more damaging, finally, is Rickert's tendency to confound values that are shared in reality with values that *ought* to be respected by educated members of a cultural group. The grounds for such obligatory commitments could lie only in the *absolute* validity of the values involved. This raises problems, because Rickert equated

the *objectivity* of historical accounts with the *general validity of the values* that guide them. Historians attain the highest possible degree of "objectivity," he argued, if their judgments of significance are informed by values that are empirically valid in their culture. What remains in doubt is only their *universal* validity, the counterpart in the historical disciplines of *universal* truths in the sciences. While acknowledging that the absolute validity of cultural norms cannot currently be demonstrated, Rickert suggested that on a "supra-empirical plane," they can be posited as orienting ideals in the individualizing disciplines. Thus historical accounts will change, along with the empirical values of the historians' cultures; but they may nevertheless converge, along with the universal history of human culture, toward a single set of absolute values. The standpoint from which Rickert advanced these speculative claims was that of a transcendental subjectivism, in which the supra-individual subject was a valuing as well as a knowing one. He repeatedly emphasized that truth itself has to be posited as an unconditional value in the realm of science and learning (660–94).

Like Windelband, finally, Rickert virtually ignored the problem of interpretation. He apparently failed to consider Simmel's early suggestions on this subject, while the mature work of Dilthey was not yet available to him. When he wrote about interpretation at all, he restated the most crudely subjectivist account of "understanding" as an empathetic identification. As a theorist of "individuality," he used the term *Individuum* to designate not only persons, but also particular objects and events (10–14, 18–22). At the same time, he considered every such "individuality" unique and indivisible. Extending the metaphor of individuality, Rickert urged that historical development be conceived as a movement through unique stages that is value related not only in its elements, but also as a whole. Historical ages and groups too are unique and "teleologically" significant constellations of particulars. Rickert contrasted this holistic approach with the "atomizing individualism" of the Enlightenment, in which society seems a mere aggregate—and thus ultimately a "mass phenomenon." The historical whole, he argued, is more than the sum of its parts; it is their "essence" (*Inbegriff*) (360–61). Max Weber was influenced by aspects of Rickert's work, but he never accepted Rickert's holism or his "philosophy of values."

THE RISE OF GERMAN CLASSICAL SOCIOLOGY

With respect to the German historical tradition, Max Weber's posture was that of a heterodox critic; politically as well, he dissented from the orthodox

mandarin views current among the large majority of historians. One has to know something about the historians to understand what Weber *opposed*, both methodologically and politically. The opposite is true, however, of the tiny handful of individuals who launched the fledgling discipline of sociology in late nineteenth-century Germany. Ferdinand Tönnies and Georg Simmel, the two most prominent early sociologists, stood fairly close to Weber, not only personally and politically, but also intellectually. Weber respected their works and was influenced by them. To know something about them is to understand a line of thought and analysis that Weber judged in positive terms and that he actively extended.

Indeed, German classical sociology was a true child of mandarin modernism. It dealt with the impact of commerce, bureaucracy, and capitalism upon traditional social relations. It echoed concerns that had first been expressed by the Romantic conservatives of the early nineteenth century, and it drew on Marx's analysis as well. Tönnies, Simmel, and Weber did not share the revolutionary hope of the Marxists; but they knew that there was no returning to the past, no escape from modernity. So they proposed to accept some facets of modern life, while seeking to understand and perhaps to moderate its most problematic aspects. Unlike their orthodox colleagues, they controlled their emotional response to their new environment, rejecting reactionary illusions and upholding a heroic ideal of rational clarification. This spirit, along with the German tradition of interpretive individualism, shaped the new discipline in Germany. Interpersonal relations, the network of social *interactions* or "bonds" among members of a group had to be conceptually isolated so that modern social problems could be studied in abstraction from both Marxism and Romantic holism.

Ferdinand Tönnies's *Community and Society* appeared in 1887, and went through six more editions between 1912 and 1926. For Tönnies, two contrary conceptions of law, two types of association, and two divergent styles of thought arose from a fundamental dichotomy between two forms of the will: *Wesenwille* and *Kürwille*. The German word *Wesen* refers to the "essence" or "nature" of something, so that the compound *Wesenwille* may be translated as the "essential" or "natural will." One must imagine a situation in which an individual's will with respect to some issue is determined by her "nature" or by her primary concerns. Thus a mother's devotion to her child or a nun's religious beliefs might be part of her "essence." There was always some suggestion of the primitive, unreflected drive in Tönnies "natural will," and yet he included habits and intellectual commitments among its sources. By contrast, the verb *küren* means "to choose," and the compound *Willkür*, which Tön-

nies used at times in place of *Kürwille*, suggests an arbitrary willfulness. More specifically, Tönnies associated *Kürwille* with what Max Weber later called "purposively rational" behavior, meaning action that is rational with respect to a given end. An act of *Kürwille*, in Tönnies' scheme, is very much a calculated act. It presupposes a distinction between means and ends, and a series of mental operations in which possible choices are located in a chain of means-ends relations. In describing a specific act of rational will, one refers to a particular place in such a chain; one does not have to characterize the individual chooser. Rational will proceeds upon emotionally and morally neutral modes of analysis, whereas natural will links thought to the whole personality and to its primary goals.[24]

All human relationships and groups, according to Tönnies, may be classified with respect to the quality of the will that creates them and holds them together. The members of a "community" are united in and through their "natural will"; the partners of a "society" come together to pursue objects of "rational will." The adjectives "communal" and "societal," when applied to a given "social entity," describe the character of the associative bond that is involved. Among social entities of a communal type, Tönnies included family and clan relationships, along with friendships, villages, guilds, and religious groups. On the other hand, the temporary agreement between the partners in an exchange, along with most modern business associations and interest groups, fell into the category of societal entities. Tönnies often used organic analogies to describe communities, while he tended to picture societal relationships in mechanical or contractual terms. In his view, the Romantic and the rationalist modes of social analysis each legitimately expressed one side of the permanent antithesis between the two forms of the will and of association, and he extended this argument to the field of political and legal theory as well. The fictions of the social contract and of natural law, it seemed to him, were excellent typical descriptions of societal legality, whereas communal law was a product of organic evolution, of custom and tradition.

In Tönnies' descriptions of communal relationships, customs and inherited practices fostered common expectations and obligations. A tacit consensus engendered communal actions, which might be rational but not explicitly rationalized. In the father of a family, the guildsman, and the small-town mayor, the person and the role were not clearly separated; gradations of power were experienced as degrees of "dignity," and there was unanimity or harmony of views (*Eintracht*) on major issues confronting the group. This pattern was threatened when interregional commerce led to a specification of exchange values, when state officials codified and articulated rights and

obligations, and when capitalism created "free" labor and the wage contract. The destruction of community was a kind of rational articulation, in which explicit contracts and calculated equivalences replaced traditional expectations. Tönnies envisaged an inescapable long-term shift from communal to societal relationships. Drawing upon a distinction initially suggested by Immanuel Kant, he further associated this shift with the decline of inner "culture" and the rise of external "civilization." He did not hide his revulsion against developments that nonetheless seemed to him inevitable. Agriculture, the small-town guild, communal customs, and even the family itself had to be sacrificed, so that there could be worldwide markets, rational patterns of social organization, mass production, and an army of uprooted workers to be exploited in the factories. Of this he had no doubt, and he could not abide "idealistic" phrases designed to disguise these realities.[25]

Not surprisingly, Tönnies' *Community and Society* was ultimately simplified and appropriated by the orthodox critics of modernity. Especially during the First World War and during the interwar period, his work was used to lament the decline of "culture," to attack technological and liberal "civilization," and to preach the revival of a Germanic "community." But Tönnies himself explicitly repudiated the reactionary conclusions that others derived from his theories. He simply did not believe that the language of mandarin orthodoxy could restore the realities of community. He repeatedly warned against the illusion that "a dead ethic or religion can be brought back to life through any sort of compulsion or instruction." In a short autobiographical sketch and elsewhere, he made every effort to explain his position and to separate himself from his reactionary interpreters. He did not believe in social revolution, but he was actively interested in producers' and consumers' cooperatives, and especially in labor unions. He regarded these associations as the most promising exemplars of community in modern social life. His long-term pessimism did not prevent him from advocating radical measures in the field of social policy. He acquired the reputation of being a "socialist," which plainly hurt his academic career. In letters to his friend Friedrich Paulsen, Tönnies expressed his contempt for the class politics of the National Liberals, the self-serving "patriotism" of the Conservatives, and the servility of the German academic community. Very much an outsider, he finally became an associate professor at the age of fifty-four, and he did not receive an official teaching assignment in sociology itself until he was sixty-five, in 1920.[26]

Tönnies most abiding commitment was to the ideal of rational clarification. He included modern *Wissenschaft* among the products of the "rational will," but this did not prevent him from identifying with "the rigorously scien-

tific manner of thinking, which rejects all belief in spirits and spooks." During the 1920s, in the face of widespread attacks on liberalism, he announced his "full personal sympathy" with "the freeing of thought from the bonds of superstition and delusion," and with "all movements of liberation against feudalism and serfdom." He admitted that many of the Romantic and conservative ideals that he now opposed had originally been rooted in community. The difficulty was that they had long since become "empty," "fundamentally untrue and hypocritical," so that "a vital individualism and the [forms of] society" were the only real alternatives to "force and tyranny." While remaining pessimistic about the course of modern life, he sought to block the escape into obscurantist illusion. In 1909, when Max Weber and others founded the German Society for Sociology, they chose Ferdinand Tönnies as its first president.

Georg Simmel ranks as the second founder of sociology in Germany. Among his many works, three proved particularly important for the emerging discipline. The essay "On Social Differentiation" (1890) and the more systematic *Sociology* (1900), explicate Simmel's vision of sociology as a discipline; his *Philosophy of Money* (1908) is the most suggestive application of his method. Some of the essays he wrote develop particular themes in his foundational works, so that they have become classics in their own right. Simmel's loose use of analogies and his infrequent reference to specifically relevant empirical data can be frustrating. Yet he is extraordinarily rich in insights and suggestions. Thus if his sociological works are added to his extended essays in the philosophy of history, he must be considered among Max Weber's most important precursors.

In the German tradition of interpretive individualism, Simmel defined "sociation" (*Vergesellschaftung*) as the sum of "interactions" (*Wechselwirkungen*) among individuals. Such interactions, he believed, can create patterns that attain a degree of autonomy in relation to the particular individuals and behaviors involved. Thus, on the one hand, the "social" must not be conceived holistically as existing apart from the interactions that constitute it. On the other hand, there is a borderline between the exclusively individual and the social, "where the interaction among persons does not consist only in their subjective states and actions, but engenders an objective formation (*Gebilde*), which has a certain independence from the participating personalities." Thus sociology deals with the patterns of interactions in so far as these are not purely subjective or ephemeral.[27]

In his systematic *Sociology* of 1908, Simmel distinguished between the "forms" and the "contents" of social interactions. Under the heading of

"forms," he cited such recurrent relationships as superordination and subordination, and such groupings as voluntary associations. The "content" of these social forms might vary over the range of human concerns, from the economic and political to the cultural and personal. Thus hierarchies of superiors and subordinates may occur in a shoe factory as well as in a political party, and voluntary associations may be founded to pursue or oppose all kinds of objectives. As Simmel stressed, the forms and the contents of sociation are always conjoined. By separating the forms alone for analysis, therefore, sociology, like other disciplines, abstracts from reality. It conceptually isolates particular aspects of sociation for special attention. The generalizations of the sociologist, like the "laws" of the historian, according to Simmel, are not invariant. They do not deal with microscopic and law-like regularities, but with macroscopic generalizations that may be altered by unexpected circumstances. Moreover, they often one-sidedly "exaggerate" typical traits of the "forms" they analyze, thus positing hypothetical relationships that may not have full counterparts in reality. Simmel's vision of "formal" sociology anticipated some of what Max Weber was to say more clearly about the "ideal type."[28]

Unlike Tönnies, Simmel took a positive view of conflict and competition. He believed that the limits and norms of conflict were gradually defined in the process of conflictual interactions—and were thus important elements in sociation. Like the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, moreover, Simmel valued dissensus, within limits, as a source of social change and vitality. Also like Durkheim, he saw modern societies evolving toward a degree of internal differentiation in proportion to their quantitative expansion. He considered this one of the imperfectly invariant laws that formal sociology could detect. Members of small groups, Simmel thought, would engage in relatively similar means of sustaining themselves and their families. With growth in the size of the group, increased competition was likely to lead to a degree of occupational specialization. While the reasons for this drift were at least partly economic, Simmel also suggested a propensity of human beings to distinguish themselves from their fellows: "As the circle expands in which we act and to which our interests are directed, so there is more scope for the development of our individuality." Thus the individual emerged with the quantitative growth of modern populations.[29]

Simmel detected a long-term evolution from small, uniform, and highly integrated social groups to larger and internally more differentiated social systems. Complex modern societies, Simmel argued, are composed of many loosely integrated "social circles," from occupational and status groups to vol-

untary associations of all kinds. They also provide a setting for the development of distinctive personalities. At first constrained by the norms and practices of a small group, the individual is later more loosely affiliated with a larger number of less binding "social circles." Indeed, modern individuals can be described as the "intersections" of many social circles, and therein lies their opportunity for individuation. This conclusion of "formal sociology" may be considered a more complex—and less pessimistic—restatement of Tönnies's vision of the progression from "community" to "society."[30]

In his fascinating *Philosophy of Money,* Simmel used the term *philosophy* to designate lines of analysis that lie either below or above the level of abstraction of an ordinary discipline like economics. Thus, looking into the foundations of economics, Simmel proposed to "construct a floor beneath historical materialism." He accepted the neo-classical economics of marginal utility and marginal cost, and proceeded to ground it in a set of "philosophical" considerations. He posited a dialectical tension, in which a desiring self confronts a desired object that is not automatically available, but stands at a "distance" from the self. This distance must be overcome through effort, or through the sacrifice of other potential objects of enjoyment. Even solitary individuals can compare the "distances"—or levels of sacrifice—that lie between them and various goods. More typically, it is the sum of social interactions of exchange that jointly define the relative value of goods. Rejecting the labor theory of value, in sum, Simmel saw prices as intersubjective effects of exchange relationships. In its origins, Simmel suggested, money was a particularly valued good, something scarce, perhaps decorative, and ideally subdivisible. Then, over time, its substantive qualities lost significance, and it ultimately came to play the purely symbolic role of measuring the value relationships involved in economic interactions.[31]

The presence of money in modern social systems, Simmel argued, facilitates the long-term process of social differentiation and individuation. Money encourages the emergence of an extensive network of social interactions that are less intense than the few binding interpersonal relationships characteristic of small groups. When I make a cash contribution to a voluntary association, I do not commit much of myself to the group I thus join. When I buy a commodity produced in a distant country, I do not have to see the producers and merchants with whom I interact. The immense system of exchanges in a modern money economy makes possible the complexity and variety of the social circles in which the individual participates, most often at a relatively modest level of engagement. Without money, the modern territorial state could not exist; for it needs salaried administrators to function at all. Eventually, it becomes the guarantor of a purely symbolic currency. Technological innovation can reach unprecedented rates in the presence of money; for money can concentrate resources, much as scientific concepts concentrate our knowledge. The abstractions involved in the establishment of quantitative relationships among qualitatively dissimilar objects requires complex calculations that foster the "intellectuality" of modern culture.[32]

Like Tönnies, Simmel saw the beginnings of interregional trade as a crucial step in the emergence of the modern money economy. The traders who entered economically self-sufficient regions to buy goods highly valued in distant markets were typically strangers to the local community. Very often, they were excluded from other local activities, which helped to channel their energies toward trade and monetary exchange. Simmel particularly emphasized the role of the Jews in that connection. Unhampered by Christian restrictions upon usury, they performed economic functions that others neglected. They were easily exploited by territorial princes, who collected taxes from them in exchange for "protection." Given their "pariah status," Simmel argued (before Weber), the Jews were suited to the role of the "stranger"; their exclusion from alternate occupations and their geographic dispersion made them ideal agents of interregional trade, currency exchange, and the lending of money.[33]

Toward the end of his *Philosophy of Money,* Simmel turned to the impact of money upon the modern "style of life." Anticipating Weber, he grounded this part of his exposition in a theory of action. He insisted that mere "intentions," images of actions in terms of their outcomes, could not be considered the causes of actions. Instead, there had to be a kind of energy that was directed at the imagined outcome, but that existed separately from it and served as its "cause." He also sharply distinguished actions aimed at an immediate end from actions in pursuit of *means* to an end. In modern life, many of our actions aim at intermediate links in ever-lengthening chains of means-ends relationships. Money, of course, may serve as a means to a large variety of ends; it becomes a kind of universal tool—and it may easily be misperceived as an end in itself. Simmel occasionally sounded a pessimistic note, not only about the predominance of means over ends, but also about human estrangement in a world of increasingly impersonal relationships. Yet he also recognized the benefits to be derived from the replacement of intensely personal obligations by a network of economically or rationally mediated relationships. Money and social complexity can engender "freedom" as well as isolation. Young American women prefer factory work under contractually regulated conditions to the personal dependence associated with domestic service in traditional European households. Superiority and subordination cannot be elimi-

nated from organized social action. But in a complex environment, a superior with respect to some field of activity may find himself a subordinate in another realm. Above all, there is a marked difference between delimited, objective social relations and outright personal dependence.[34]

Simmel's most striking occasional essays were generally extensions of his foundational works, and several of them deal with modern individuation. He distinguished between an Enlightenment and a post-Romantic idea of individual freedom. The Enlightenment was guided by the vision of a universal human essence that only had to be freed from the distorting forces of prejudice for the autonomous individual to emerge. "Freedom" in that context meant freedom from the bonds of tradition. But this universalist project of enlightened Reason was transformed during the Romantic era by a new emphasis upon the distinctive character of the ideal individual. "Freedom" now came to mean room for the development of each individual's unique potentialities. The diversity of human individuals—and of distinctive cultures—thus moved to the center of the stage. The change of emphasis was attuned to the individuation possible in large and complex modern societies. In a lecture on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, Simmel argued that the lengthening of means-ends chains stimulated a countervailing quest among modern individuals for ultimate ends or values. Inherited from Christianity, the need to locate an ultimate purpose of life led, in Friedrich Nietzsche, to a paradoxical reversal—an apotheosis of life itself. Simmel saw Nietzsche as the champion of such life-affirming qualities of extraordinary human individuals as strength, beauty, and, above all, *dignity* (*Vornehmheit*). Suspicious of the typical roots of beneficence and of humility, Nietzsche spoke for the perfection of rare individuals, rather than the comfort of the mediocre majority. For Simmel, at any rate, Nietzsche was the radical prophet of individuation.[35]

In a cluster of essays on "cultivation" and on "culture," finally, Simmel offered another striking analysis of his world. He began with a definition of "cultivation" (*Kultiviertheit*) that fully articulates the idea of *Bildung* current in his intellectual field.

> Every kind of learning, virtuosity, refinement in a man cannot cause us to attribute true cultivation to him if these things function . . . only as super-additions that come to his personality from a normative realm external to it . . . In such a case, a man may have cultivated attributes, but he is not cultivated; cultivation comes about only if the contents absorbed out of the supra-personal realm (of objectified cultural values) seem, as through a secret harmony, to unfold only that in the soul which exists within it as its own instinctual tendency and as the inner prefiguration of its subjective perfection.

The terminology of the neo-Idealist revival of the *Geisteswissenschaften* is here used to specify (1) that cultivation entails the absorption of values from "the supra-personal realm," (2) that it can only "unfold" the "pre-figuration" of the individual's "perfection," and (3) that the cultivated individual is a unique totality, not a mere aggregate of "cultivated attributes." The formulation explicates the principles of empathy and of individuality. It also reveals both the utopian and the socially confirmative uses of "cultivation." The utopian thrust emerges if one focuses upon the *obstacles* to perfection encountered by most contemporaries. The confirmative or ideological implication comes to the fore if one assumes that a minority has actually achieved full cultivation. The formulation then suggests that these few, unlike the many, have *become* what they always *were*, in their *essence*.[36]

Enlarging upon his model of learning as "cultivation," Simmel characterized the development of human culture as a dialectical interaction between "objective mind" (*Geist*) and "subjective mind" or "soul." In Simmel's adaptation of a common idiom, "personal culture" was identical with "cultivation"; "subjective mind" or "soul" stood for the thought of the individual knower and, by extension, of humanity in general. "Objective mind" or "culture" encompassed the external expressions of subjective mind, the social and material forms in which it is fixed and transmitted. Simmel emphasized that subjective and objective mind can only develop in dialectical interaction; an exclusively subjective life can never attain any degree of complexity or coherence. On the other hand, the inescapable need for objectification leads to consequences that have a tragic aspect. The fullness and pliability of subjective culture gives rise to the diversity and fixity of objective mind. As the latter grows more extensive, there is an increasing "incommensurability between the subjective and the objective poles in the dialectic of cultural development and of individual *Bildung*." Alienation occurs as well; for the reified elements of the objective culture acquire a life of their own. Man is constrained by the artifacts, institutions, and theories he has invented; they do not seem to him malleable; he does not recognize them as his creatures. The division of labor and scholarly specialization are the two great exemplars of the disjunction between subjective and objective mind. The subjective mind of the producer is drained into machines and commodities that enslave him. Subjective mind cannot intellectually encompass its former creations, and harmonious individual cultivation becomes ever more difficult.