

Introduction

Weimar Thought: Continuity and Crisis

Peter E. Gordon and John P. McCormick

This volume brings together a broad range of papers on diverse themes pertaining to the intellectual and cultural history of the Weimar Republic. It includes a great variety of contributions by scholars affiliated with manifold disciplines, including, but not limited to, history, political theory, philosophy, sociology, the history of science, film theory, art history, and literary criticism. Our aim has been to provide a critical companion for specialized research that, while adding to current scholarship, would nonetheless remain accessible to the more general reader. Few if any single-volume works have succeeded at offering a unified portrait of the rich developments of Weimar thought, and we believe the time is right to offer a guidebook to the German interwar era, a compendium focused primarily on the major intellectual trends of the time.

What was “Weimar thought”? To a remarkable degree, much of the literature we now regard as foundational for modern thought derives from a single historical moment: the astonishing cultural and intellectual ferment of interwar Germany circa 1919–33. The era of the Weimar Republic was arguably the foremost crucible of intellectual innovation in political theory and sociology, cultural criticism and film theory, psychology and legal theory, physics and biology, and modernism in all of its diverse forms. Its brief lifespan saw the emergence of intellectuals, scholars, and critics who rank amongst the foremost thinkers of the twentieth century. A representative list would no doubt include philosophical radicals such as Walter Benjamin, Martin Heidegger, and Max Scheler; theorists of political crisis such as Carl Schmitt, Ernst Jünger, Hannah Arendt, Hans Kelsen, and Oswald Spengler; innovators in theology such as Karl Barth, Franz Rosenzweig, Gershom Scholem, and Ernst Bloch; and exponents of aesthetic rebellion in literature, film, drama, music, and the fine arts, including Alfred Döblin and Siegfried Kracauer, Bertolt Brecht and Ernst Krenek, Hannah Höch and Kurt Schwitters. No doubt the list could well be expanded to far greater length.

Intellectual labors of the era were noteworthy, too, for the way in which they exemplified a boldness of inquiry that would, in current jargon, be characterized as “interdisciplinary.” Scholars, critics, and artists frequently cut across the customary boundaries separating philosophy, history, and artistic criticism, political theory and theology, not to mention science and metaphysics. In this respect it might be argued that the leading figures in Weimar thought not only antici-

pated, but actually helped to found and inspire the ongoing interdisciplinarity of our own day. This is especially obvious when one considers the contemporary actuality of these theorists, whose ideas, even today, continue to enrich academic and cultural discourse within and beyond the university. An intellectual-historical survey of Weimar thought in all its many facets is thus in no small measure a pre-history of our own intellectual present.

On some of these topics much has been written already. Yet the increased specialization of research has all-too-frequently been achieved at the expense of contextual and historical understanding. Scholars have often failed to recognize just how much the leading intellectuals of that time worked within a shared intellectual horizon. Especially in the past twenty years, we have witnessed a terrific burst of dehistoricized “theory,” a mode of inquiry that plundered the past for its insights but often neglected its historical character and effaced the salient (though by no means insurmountable) differences between past and present.

But the largely ahistorical character of modern theory is now fading, thanks in part to recent innovations in historical and philosophical method, and, perhaps most especially, to the renaissance of intellectual history, a discipline which only twenty years ago seemed in decline. The great efflorescence of intellectual history in the last two decades has helped to break down many of the previously-enforced boundary lines between the humanities and the social sciences. Under the auspices of a new generation of philosophers, political theorists, historians, and literary-cultural critics, scholars have begun to appreciate the fruitful tension between hermeneutic contextualism and transcendental claims to truth. The time is therefore ripe to bring these insights to bear on the theoretical heritage of the Weimar era. A major advantage of this interdisciplinary volume of essays is that it demonstrates both the unity and diversity of this inheritance, and it identifies anew those characteristics that helped to make Weimar a veritable birthplace of European intellectual modernity.

The Unity and Diversity of Weimar Thought

In his synthetic history of the Weimar Republic published over twenty years ago, the German historian Detlev Peukert observed that our present image of Weimar is marked by an irresolvable paradox: it combines “the hopeful picture of avant-garde cultural achievement” with “the bleak picture of political breakdown and social misery.”¹ For Peukert this paradox was not only resistant to resolution, it was in point of fact emblematic of “classical modernity” as such: The tensions of the age were taken to represent the conflicts and crises of the modern era itself. But the governing theme of a “classical” phase in modern history merely names without wholly explaining the paradox Peukert sought to diagnose. The historian’s impulse to unify divergent features of a political-cultural epoch is unlikely to prove genuinely satisfying since it derives from the naïve and ultimately *unhistorical* expectation that every age must somehow subscribe to a common theme. The paradoxical character of the Weimar Republic no lon-

ger strikes us as paradoxical once we abandon the retroactive search for a governing logic and open ourselves to the diversity and disunity of narratives within any given historical epoch.

Even the idea of a unique chronology can mislead. In political terms the definitive events that mark Weimar's beginning and end will remain open to debate: Did it begin with the sailors' mutiny at Kiel in October 1918, with the signing of the Versailles Treaty in June 1919, with the signing of the Weimar Constitution in August 1919, or perhaps only with the final stabilization of currency in 1924? In cultural and intellectual terms, the definitive events are even less certain. Many of the cultural movements associated with Weimar began well before the outbreak of the Great War: German Expressionism was born with the Dresden artistic circle of *die Brücke* in 1905; the literary careers of the Mann brothers, Thomas and Heinrich, antedate the Weimar Republic by many years and continued well after its collapse. The great founder of German sociology, Max Weber, died in June 1920, although his memory exerted a singular influence over the intellectual history of the twenties. Georg Simmel, that other and inimitable theorist of modernity, died in September 1918, several months before the official founding of the Republic. Both the political-legal theory developed by Carl Schmitt and the social philosophy associated with the leading thinkers of the Institute for Social Research (the so-called "Frankfurt School") continued to develop and transform well into the later 1930s, after the Republic had collapsed and even after the Second World War. Persistent interest in both theoretical traditions over the past half century is an encouraging sign that "Weimar thought" has not yet come to an end. But thinking always exceeds its moment of origin. Indeed, possibilities of continued inspiration and reappropriation may serve to remind us that the most consequential forces of cultural and intellectual history are not easily confined within given boundaries of chronological time.

One of the persistent difficulties that has confronted the intellectual history of the Weimar years is that of a political meta-narrative: It is all too easy to assume that culture must somehow track, reflect, or otherwise serve as an allegory for politics. This premise was arguably at work even in Peter Gay's masterpiece of cultural history, *Weimar Culture* (originally published in 1968): An exceptionally powerful work of interpretative synthesis, Gay's book sought to embrace the major cultural and intellectual movements of the time within what we might call a "psychoanalytic frame." The story of Weimar culture ultimately gained its intelligibility and unity only insofar as it could be narrated according to the larger psycho-political drama of the Republic itself: the failure of the one implied the failure of the other. Just as the birth of functional democracy in Germany was concomitant with cultural and political emancipation from the forces of paternal authority, so too the tragedy of Weimar culture was ascribed to a youth rebellion that, ironically, confirmed rather than undermined paternal authority: the rightward turn of the sons thus served the "revenge of the fathers." Weimar culture was in this sense essentially a tragedy of perverted Oedipal rebellion. Even today (more than forty years since its original publication) the tremendous appeal of Gay's narrative remains undiminished. But its dramatic unity is also

its chief liability: By projecting the psychodrama of Oedipal development upon an entire epoch, a narrative that was chiefly concerned with intellectual and cultural events risked obscuring the diversity of culture, its conflictual tempo, and the contested meanings that resist containment within a single politico-psychanalytic frame.

But a certain awareness of the political narrative cannot be avoided. It would be naïve to believe that one could write the intellectual and cultural history of the Weimar Republic without taking cognizance of the tragedy that followed its collapse. The continuities between culture and politics are too thick to permit such compartmentalization, and one can hardly deny the patterns of thought and cultural sensibility, long incubating during the 1920s, that prepared the way for, or otherwise nourished the ideological tendencies commonly associated with the Third Reich. All the same, even if most scholars have long ago abandoned the crude logic of linear causation that conflates continuity with teleology, it is worth repeating the methodological desideratum that preparation is not determination: Although National Socialism is surely traceable to patterns of intellectual and cultural history that long antedated the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, intellectual and cultural historians of the Weimar years have not always resisted the impulse to narrate the events of the 1920s with a single-minded anticipation of the Republic's political denouement. The political and social historian Hans Mommsen made this point quite well: "Just as it would be misleading to imagine National Socialism was a unique phenomenon that destroyed the foundations of the Weimar Republic from the outside, so it would be a mistake to interpret Weimar's external and internal development as a mere prelude to the history of the Third Reich."² Continuity is a permissible instrument of historical understanding; teleology is not.

The very diversity of disciplines and themes that characterized the Weimar years may also counsel against any imposition of strong narratives organized around the primacy of political experience. Once we recognize that politics cannot determine the tempo for all divergent modes of inquiry, we may better appreciate the way that each domain of intellectual and cultural life—in the arts, literature, poetry, and architecture, in natural sciences and religion, in philosophy and law as well as sociology—tends to follow principles that are properly its own. The historicist dogma of a unified time or *Zeitgeist* suits Weimar thought no better than it suits the spirit of any other age. In our current day, facile talk of interdisciplinarity may strike more cautious scholars as an invitation to mere eclecticism. But we should not lose sight of the multidisciplinary character of intellectual labor, especially in a milieu that exemplified its many strengths. It is more helpful to sustain even within the confines of a single volume a strong appreciation for the diversity and multiple temporalities of Weimar thought, and we should resist the thought that painting and literature, legal theory and sociology, architecture and cultural criticism all subscribe to or instantiate a singular rule: the very notion of "Weimar thought" or "Weimar culture" in this respect may invite skepticism. Yet even while we want to insist in a nominalist spirit that the intellectual history of the 1920s cannot be subsumed under a single narrative,

it is nevertheless striking how various thinkers in different domains identified their age as one of dissension and disorientation. Indeed, if there is one theme that seems to appear across the entire range of Weimar intellectual history it is the very awareness of anxiety signified by the prevalence of the term *crisis*.

Crisis was and can be defined in many ways. The term derives from the Greek word for separation—and in the 1920s and early '30s German intellectuals were seized by the question of historical discontinuity. Crisis should not be construed as indicating a fully-achieved separation from the past. Notwithstanding its much deserved reputation for novelty and innovation, Weimar thought was in some ways still quite traditional. Patterns of ideology and ideas inherited from the *Kaiserreich* would persist well after the Wilhelmine Empire's demise, but individuals and movements engaged in rapid and radical experimentation within traditional university or disciplinary forms. Crisis may serve as a unifying theme in most intellectual engagements with the Weimar Republic. But we should nonetheless keep in mind that "crisis" is only intelligible given the strength of preceding and persisting tradition.

Among political historians it is often claimed that excessive continuity with the *Kaiserreich* was a major weakness of the Weimar Republic. Theorists of a German *Sonderweg* once argued that Germany tracked a peculiar path to modernity and that the absence of a strong bourgeois revolution in the nineteenth century permitted traces of an unbourgeois socio-political past to survive well into the twentieth century: The presence of a national civil and military bureaucracy, trained and acculturated in the authoritarian atmosphere of the Wilhelmine *Reich*, exercised a tremendous counterforce against Germany's post-war experiment with democracy, and ultimately undermined the Weimar Republic from within. But the *Sonderweg* theory assumes without sufficient documentation that the professionals who came of age in the Reich were fundamentally disloyal to the Republic; on the contrary, prominent members of the bureaucracy and military openly expressed disillusionment with liberal democracy only rather late in the republic's history, when, arguably, successive crises had shaken the commitments to the status quo of many other social actors. Even the holdover conservative judges who comprised a majority of the Weimar judiciary consistently upheld the Republic's laws throughout the twenties and early thirties. More accurately, one might say that the legal-administrative bureaucracy reliably implemented the Republic's principles and policies and that the military rank and file (who, after all, had initiated the overthrow of the monarchy) were at best fully loyal to, or at worst merely wary supporters of the Republic for as long as the latter seemed a viable socio-political form.

Other lines of continuity between pre- and post-Great War Germany served not to impede but actually to advance patterns of democracy within the Republic. The statute positivism developed by public lawyers under the Wilhelmine regime thrived within the republic. Once the Kaiser was removed as the ultimate authority above the statutory system of legal norms and the German citizenry was established as the unassailable legitimating foundation below it, Weimar's social forces began to experiment with the idea of popular sovereignty through

law, facilitating unprecedented and ingenious efforts at democratic self-rule. Moreover, the radical innovations in art and literature associated with Weimar culture had deep roots within the *Kaiserreich*. Expressionism, Cubism, and abstractionism were already well-established movements before the war and laid the groundwork for extension and revision by both Dadaism and *Neue Sachlichkeit* in the twenties and early thirties.³

The German universities themselves exhibited both continuity and innovation. On the one hand the universities sustained throughout the Weimar years many of the forms and rituals that belonged to the nineteenth-century legacy. The high status of a full professorship (*Ordinarius*) still conferred upon its bearer the social prestige of inclusion in a quasi-archaic caste. To gain this membership was and remained the animating goal of most scholars. The low status and uncertain remuneration of the mere *Dozent* typically had to be endured for many years, and one's livelihood depended upon fees paid by the students who attended one's lectures. As Max Weber observed in his lecture, "Science as a Vocation," the typical *Dozent* in the German system taught and therefore earned much less than he wished. But the structure of the university remained plutocratic: to survive in this condition without external support (typically from one's family) was quite rare and the assistant's position was "often as precarious as . . . that of any quasi-proletarian existence." The process of professional advancement in the university remained vulnerable to prejudice and corruption. "I know of hardly any other career on earth," Weber observed, "where chance plays such a role."⁴ To fail or to find one's path obstructed because of inadequacies either real or perceived condemned the young scholar to an uncertain life at the margins of society. Many relished this marginal status: Walter Benjamin's "flâneur" and Karl Mannheim's "free-floating intelligentsia" were terms that captured the mobility and modernity of a new type of critic who wrote for newspapers and journals and did not feel the inhibitions of academic custom.

There were clear signs of innovation. With the founding of the Republic new institutions were born where those who had previously suffered delay and discrimination found new opportunities for professional recognition. The University of Hamburg, for example, was founded only in 1919 and served as a major site for new developments in the philosophy of culture spearheaded by Ernst Cassirer. Even more striking was the development in the 1920s of para-academic institutions, often privately funded, where talented outsiders and intellectual mavericks could gain a foothold. The Institute for Social Research (*Die Gesellschaft für Sozialforschung*) originated in Frankfurt in 1923 and grew into the creative center of Western Marxism. The Warburg Library (*Kulturwissenschaftliche Bibliothek Warburg*) was founded in 1921 by Aby Warburg with funds inherited from his father, the banker Moritz Warburg, and in the 1920s became a flourishing center for art history and comparative ethnography. But this was also the age of esoteric societies, amongst which the most celebrated was the *George-Kreis*, founded well before the war (in 1892 in association with the journal *Blätter für die Kunst*) by the charismatic poet Stefan George and later frequented by notables such as Friedrich Gundolf and Ludwig Klages. The constrained forms

and mores of university life were further broadened and enriched by intellectual discussion groups, for example, the famous “Sunday society” that convened at the Heidelberg home of Marianne and Max Weber.

It is therefore important that we discern in the history of Weimar thought a balance between innovation and tradition, between continuity and crisis. Although we recognize the substantial continuities between pre-war and Weimar culture, the enduring hegemony of Wilhelmine cultural and intellectual patterns within the Republic should not be exaggerated. For even while much of Weimar intellectual life remained indebted to the past it is nonetheless striking to note how intellectuals both progressive and conservative conceived of tradition itself in new ways. As Eric Weitz has observed, none of the great contributors to Weimar thought and culture advocated a facile retreat into the styles of the pre-1914 world. They were united by “the restless questioning of what it means to live in modern times, the search for new forms of expression suitable to the cacophony of modern life, and the belief in the possibilities of the future.”⁵

It may be helpful to recall that the diverse forms of intellectual and cultural crisis in the 1920s took shape in an era of unprecedented political unrest. The crises that erupted intermittently throughout Europe and North America throughout the interwar period were experienced more profoundly in Germany than in any contemporary industrial society. Abject material deprivation during the era of hyper-inflation, occupation by foreign forces, and psychological burdens associated with war guilt, all conspired to intensify the perception of a broad-scale crisis of culture and civilization. However, it would be incorrect to attribute the intensity of these crises more to indigenous rather than to extraneous factors. The strength of the Republic’s political right, for instance, was arguably fostered and certainly sustained by the war guilt and penalties imposed on Germany; and the depth of Germany’s economic crisis is largely traceable to the fact that the Republic was more financially dependent on the U.S. economy than was any other industrialized nation of the era. When the American stock market crashed in 1929, virtually all of Germany’s socio-economic institutions followed suit, something that was not true elsewhere in Europe.

But dramatic crises may also have afforded Germany’s political leaders a unique set of opportunities for improvisation and innovation. In the realm of international affairs, an astute statesman like Gustav Stresemann could pursue a new course for Germany. Had events not intervened so adversely, Stresemann’s strategy of rapprochement with France, increased economic and political ties with England and America, and unilateral conciliation with the Soviet Union contained the potential of strengthening Germany’s geo-political situation, placing the Republic in a more favorable position internationally than the Reich enjoyed before the war.

Moreover, the adverse circumstances that brought together disparate parties like the SPD, the Center, the DVP, and the DDP, into the Grand Coalition portended a chance for the social integration of constituencies like workers, Catholics, and progressive business groups into a long-term and workable political coalition. The success of the coalition structure during the Weimar Republic

represents a successful model that was arguably more progressive than that found in any other capitalist democracy before the onset of the Second World War. Indeed, it is a model that remains more appealing than a great many of those that survived into or emerged from the post-war world.

Even the use of emergency powers afforded the *Reichspräsident* by Article 48, commonly assumed to be the fatal flaw of the Weimar constitution—and directly associated with the demise of Weimar liberal democracy and the rise of authoritarian dictatorship—was first used in the Republic by Friedrich Ebert, with widespread popular support, to suppress far-left and far-right enemies of constitutionalism. The Weimar constitutions could have specified greater oversight by the Reichstag over the president's emergency powers, or encouraged greater cooperation between those two institutions during crises. But political history suggests that “crisis” did not always undermine the Republic but, in important moments and circumstances, may have actually helped to strengthen it.

Nevertheless it would be inappropriate to paint too rosy a picture of Weimar's socio-political predicament. As Heinrich August Winkler observed in his monumental history of the Weimar Republic, the collapse of Germany's first experiment with democracy is also the first chapter in the catastrophe of world history; no treatment of the period 1918–33 can entirely ignore our knowledge of its aftermath. Although the Weimar era should not be seen as a mere antechamber to the violent age that followed, the historical study of the Weimar era is itself, inevitably “a work of mourning.”⁶ We have tried in this book to recognize this tragic dimension even while we also want to resist the teleological impulse that would emphasize only those aspects of Weimar thought that seem to forecast the rise of National Socialism.

The essays included in this volume are presented in four parts.

The essays comprising Part I focus on law, politics, and society in the Weimar Republic, or, more specifically, on intellectual engagements with these topics during the interwar era. David Kettler and Colin Loader examine the status of the fledgling but burgeoning field of sociology from the waning days of the *Kaiserreich* through the last moments of the Republic. Two intellectual giants who did not live very long into the Republic's founding, Max Weber and Georg Simmel, set the agenda for the study of society in Weimar. Indeed, as Kettler and Loader suggest, it was the early demise of Weber and Simmel that permitted their heirs, most prominently Karl Mannheim, to render their writings canonical and to pursue the questions of modernity, rationalization, capitalism and the relationship of ideas and ideology to those phenomena with something like a common language—if not a language that facilitated intellectual consensus on any of these themes. Mitchell Ash describes the indeterminate place of professional psychology between the natural sciences and the humanities in the epoch, and the manner in which members of the discipline, especially the *Gestalt* theorists of the “Berlin School,” revealed a preoccupation with “holism” and the “im-

mediately given” characteristic of other fields of thought in the contemporary moment of crisis.

The fraught but not necessarily hopeless relationship of law and the *Sozialstaat* is the focus of John P. McCormick’s piece on Weimar jurisprudence. McCormick traces the way in which liberal and social democratic lawyers like Richard Thoma and Hermann Heller attempted to constitutionally legitimize novel efforts at political regulation, economic redistribution and social integration while avoiding the intellectual either/or’s insisted upon by the dominant legal theorists of the epoch, Hans Kelsen and Carl Schmitt. Confronting still too frequently leveled charges of intellectual and even political excess directed at the later writings of Max Weber, Dana R. Villa dissociates Weber’s thought not only from a radical “student” of Weber’s like Schmitt, who would eventually embrace Hitler, but also from his much more intimate protégé, Georg Lukács, who would become almost equally notorious for endorsing Stalin. Because the contributions to Part I deal with intellectual giants such as Simmel, Weber, Mannheim, Kelsen, and Schmitt, each of whom cast such a disproportionately enormous shadow over the intellectual life of the Republic, other important figures in sociology (such as Ferdinand Tönnies and his followers, Werner Sombart, Hans Freyer, et al.) and law (most notably Gustav Radbruch), unfortunately receive little mention, and less notable figures who are discussed within the essays (e.g., Heller and Thoma) are given less emphasis.

Part II addresses developments in philosophy, theology, and science. John Michael Krois offers an excursus on the philosophy of culture, a discipline pioneered by the sociologist Georg Simmel and perfected by the philosopher Ernst Cassirer especially in his monumental, three-volume masterpiece, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*. Frederick Beiser offers a provocative challenge to the prevailing image of neo-Kantianism: in a polemically revisionist account of this major intellectual movement, he casts neo-Kantians as somewhat less than benevolent purveyors of pacifism and cosmopolitanism, explaining how long-simmering cultural and philosophical traditions of pessimism and nihilism ultimately displaced the authoritative role of genuinely Kantian themes in their writings. Peter E. Gordon provides a critical survey of general patterns and debates in Weimar theology from liberal Protestants (Adolf von Harnack) to crisis-theologians (Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, Friedrich Gogarten) alongside Jewish philosophers (Cohen, Rosenzweig, Buber) and partisans of political theology on both the right and the left (Schmitt, Benjamin, Bloch). Charles Bambach addresses the philosophy of history and the so-called crisis of historicism as understood by a diverse array of scholars such as Oswald Spengler, Ernst Troeltsch, Heinrich Rickert, and Martin Heidegger. Cathryn Carson offers a powerful and accessible survey of developments across the wide terrain of the natural sciences, from physics (Planck, Einstein, Bohr, Heisenberg, Schrödinger) to biology (Plessner, Driesch, von Uexküll) to the philosophy of mathematics and scientific method (Reichenbach, Cassirer, Carnap).

Part III is devoted to themes in aesthetics, literature, and film. Michael Jennings offers a careful exposition of themes and debates in Weimar *Kulturkritik*, or

cultural criticism, focusing on its two greatest exemplars, Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer. Karin Gunnemann provides a literary and historical glimpse into the political fortunes of the great writers and novelists of the Weimar era, focusing on Kurt Tucholsky, Alfred Döblin, and the brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann. Martin Ruehl takes us on a historical journey into the *George-Kreis*, the mysterious circle that surrounded the poet and political visionary Stefan George, whose many acolytes included Karl Wolfskehl, Ernst Bertram, and the historian Ernst Kantorowicz. In her essay, Sabine Hake provides a careful reconstruction of major themes and points of critical tension amongst Béla Balázs, Siegfried Kracauer, and Rudolf Arnheim, the three greatest theorists of film during the Weimar period. John V. Maciuka contributes a wide-ranging survey of the politics and aesthetics of developments in interwar German architecture, with special attention to the key institution of Weimar architectural modernism, the Bauhaus. Last but not least, Michael Steinberg draws our attention to the anthropological imagination of Aby Warburg, the great student of world culture and comparative mythology whose “Warburg Library,” founded in Hamburg, served as the meeting place for Weimar philosophers, historians, and cultural critics.

General cultural, social and political themes running through the entire interwar period occupy the contributors to Part IV of the volume. Susanne Marchand examines Weimar-era fascination with “the East” typified by Hermann Graf Keyserling’s *Schule der Weisheit*. Despite exhibiting the expected primitivizing, essentializing, and romanticizing characteristic of any form of “orientalism” this movement nevertheless opened German religious, historical, literary, and philosophical circles to a greater appreciation for Chinese, Indian, Egyptian, and Islamic traditions, among others. Tracie Matysik weighs the gains and losses experienced by the economically mobilized and politically enfranchised women of the Great War and Weimar eras. Women within Wilhelmine intellectual circles had already explored at length and with great sophistication the aspirations for social advancement held by moral subjects who understood themselves to be fundamentally different from their male counterparts. Matysik demonstrates the reaction of a representative group of such women (Helene Stöcker, Marianne Weber, and Lou Andreas-Salomé) to, firstly, the mass mobilization of women in the war effort, and then formal enfranchisement within the Republic, both of which represented forms of “participation” that were thrust upon German womanhood without its consultation and that closed off the realization of many of its pre-war aspirations for an alternative form of citizenship. Martin Jay challenges long-perpetuated and exaggerated narratives concerning the mistakes and missed opportunities of the German Left during the Republic: neither the brutal repression of radical socialists at the Republic’s birth nor recurrent fissures between the Social Democrats and Communists throughout its history guaranteed either the collapse of the Republic or a diminishing influence of the SPD within it. Ultimately, however unavoidable were the disastrous outcomes that befell the Republic and especially members of the Left. Jay insists that a fresh engagement with Weimar political history might serve as lessons for future socialist movements within liberal and social democracies.

While much of the volume has focused on continuities between the *Kaiserreich* and the Republic, Anson Rabinbach's piece concludes the book with some chilling reflections that highlight certain continuities between the Republic and the Third Reich. We, the editors, earlier in this introduction pledged ourselves to avoid any repetition of the tiresome teleology of earlier works on Weimar that conveyed a sense of inevitable tragedy. But we also wish to register the Republic's Nazi future in a way that will not leave the reader with an illusory image of Weimar as an island in time. In this spirit, Rabinbach demonstrates how fluid and flexible Nazi ideology was in practice—so amenable to multiple interpretations and accommodations, in fact, that the majority of elites and masses could demonstrate fealty to the regime in multiple ways and thereby maintain a continued and even increased level of “normalcy” after the Nazi *Gleichschaltung*, notwithstanding the tragic fates suffered by too many of those who had once been citizens of the Republic.

Acknowledgments

In the several years it took to shepherd this volume into print the editors have incurred a great many debts. We are especially grateful to Ian Malcolm, formerly of Princeton University Press, for his dedication to the project proposal during its initial phases. We are equally indebted to Brigitta van Rheinberg at Princeton University Press for her guidance and unflagging enthusiasm for bringing the book to completion. We would also like to thank Alex Traub (Harvard College) for his work in preparing the chronology, and Martin L. White for his superb work in creating the index. Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to our copyeditor, Catja Pafort, and our production editor, Kathleen Cioffi at Princeton University Press. Most of all we are grateful to each of the contributors for their patience and their professionalism in committing themselves to the complexities of a multi-authored volume.

Notes

1. Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1992), xiii.
2. Hans Mommsen, *The Rise and Fall of Weimar Democracy*, trans. Elborg Forster and Larry Eugene Jones (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), ix.
3. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic*, 164–67.
4. Max Weber, “Science as a Vocation,” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. and eds. H. H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1958), 131.
5. Eric Weitz, *Weimar Germany: Promise and Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 253.
6. Heinrich August Winkler, *Weimar 1918–1933: Die Geschichte der ersten deutschen Demokratie* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1993), 11.