

The Bourgeois and the Official: A Theme in German Literary History

Thank you all for coming. Thank you especially to Mr Hennig from the German Embassy and to those of you who have come from a long way away.

Certain conventions attach to an inaugural lecture. One is that it should be the occasion for some act of ancestor worship. It is 98 years since Henry Baron Schröder, Queen Victoria's favourite banker, endowed this professorship at a time when the need for Anglo-German friendship was pressingly apparent. J.H. Schröder was a man of good will, and of generosity too, and of a certain kind of modesty: at the opening ceremony in a London church, the building of which he had largely financed, he commented that it was really rather an excessive display of gratitude to embroider his initials on the altar-cloth – IHS. I am embarrassed for Cambridge that after a century of great German scholarship made possible by Schröder's endowment all it can currently offer is me. At least I can add a little borrowed lustre to this occasion by mentioning the names of some of my predecessors. I will spare the blushes of those who are happily still actively with us and who cannot therefore yet be canonized as ancestors. But I must mention Leonard Forster, a man of boundless and detailed erudition, who also had the great good sense to give me my first University job. His predecessor, the great W.H. Bruford, I met only in his retirement, at his remote Border-country retreat of Abbey St. Bathans, where, wearing a black skull-cap and like a reincarnation of the elderly Wieland, he was re-reading his way through his Loeb Classical Library. I was introduced to Bruford by my teacher, one of the 20th century's greatest teachers of German, not himself a Schröder Professor, though an

occupant of this country's oldest chair of German at University College London. Peter Stern was a profound critic and accomplished stylist, in life as in writing, and an exceptionally brave man. To him, and through him to Bruford, and to Bruford's predecessor, the turbulent fellow of Newnham, Elsie Butler, I owe a conception of literature as embedded in the socially and historically specific human lives from which it emerges. To understand German literature, philosophy, and culture is not only to understand our often unacknowledged intellectual and cultural debt to them. It is also to understand how our own lives are bound up with the complex and often tragic history of the German-speaking peoples.

It is to a theme of this kind that I wish to devote our time today. German literature has been called 'the discontinuous tradition'. I believe, on the contrary, and will now try to show, that underlying any surface discontinuities there is a remarkably robust and continuous social and institutional structure. I hope that this discussion will help to explain why the study of German literature, even in its early phases, often confronts us with problems that we think of as peculiarly modern: problems of identity, personal and collective, of faith and doubt, of the individual and the state and the nature of Art. I also hope, and my publisher hopes it even more fervently than I do, that I may thereby draw your attention to my *Very Short Introduction to German Literature*, to be brought out by Oxford University Press in February of next year, in which the theme is dealt with in more detail than is possible here. The thoughts I am putting before you this evening have been nearly forty years in the making. It is a privilege to be able to present them as Schröder Professor: I should also like to think that it is

appropriate to that office, and to the intentions of its founder, to do something for the wider public understanding of German culture and of its relation to German history.

German literature, in the sense I am using here, is the literature of the states, predominantly the Lutheran states, of the Holy Roman Empire, and of their nineteenth-century successor kingdoms, which were gathered by Bismarck into his Second Empire and, after an interval as the Weimar Republic, were the heartland of Hitler's Third Empire.

The Lutheranism is important. The Reformation of the early sixteenth century marks the beginning of German literature, in this sense, mainly because of a change in the status of the clergy. Where the Reformation took root, the clergy, the bearers of cultural values and memory, had to make their careers in dependence, direct or indirect, on the local monarch. Charged with providing, or supervising, primary education and other charitable activities, such as the care of orphans, which in Catholic states remained the responsibility of relatively independent religious orders or local religious houses, Protestant ministers were often virtually an executive branch of the state civil service. This instrumentalization of the clergy in the Protestant princely states exercised a profound influence on German literature and philosophy because of a peculiarity in Germany's political and economic development, which demands a little excursus.

The towns, mainly Imperial Free Cities (Cologne, Augsburg, Nürnberg, Ulm, for example), which in the late Middle Ages had been the most dynamic element in

German society – centres of commerce, industry, banking and of a richly inventive middle-class culture, especially in the visual arts – went into decline in the century after the Reformation and failed to adjust to Europe’s shift from overland to overseas trade and to the new importance of the maritime nations. Germany’s devastating religious civil war, from 1618 to 1648, sealed their fate. In the post-war period, with few exceptions, the great free cities decayed into mere ‘home towns’. The bourgeoisie, the entrepreneurial city-dwellers, lost both an economic and a cultural leadership which they did not regain for two hundred years. The princely territories, with their predominantly agricultural economies and rural populations that could be pressed into military service, gained correspondingly in relative power and influence. A revolt of the German middle classes, on the Dutch or English model, or even a Fronde, was out of the question. The Empire became a federation of increasingly absolute monarchs who in cultural as in political matters looked to the France of the Sun King as their model. The courtly arts, such as architecture and opera, dedicated to the entertainment and glorification of the prince and his entourage, did well, but printed books were predominantly academic (so often in Latin) or, if they were intended to circulate more widely among the depressed middle classes, were either trivial fantasies, without social or political significance, or works of religious devotion commending contentment with one’s lot.

However, one institution of the greatest importance to the middle class, and to the Protestant clergy, flourished better in Germany than elsewhere in Europe – the university. At a time when England made do with two universities, Germany, with only four or five times the population, had around forty. The university had come late

to the German lands – the first was at Prague in 1348 – but in the post-Reformation world it had a quite new significance. The absolute, princely state, with its ambition to control everything, needed officers to carry its will into every part of its domains, and these the university provided – principally, until the later eighteenth century, by training the clergy. For an able young man from a poor background the theology faculty, much the largest and most richly endowed, offered the best prospects of social advance and future employment.

Eighteenth-century Germany therefore was a stagnant society in which economic and political power was largely concentrated in the hands of the state, and intellectual life was in the grip of the state churches and their attendant universities. There was little room for private enterprise, material or cultural. Yet this society experienced a literary and philosophical explosion the consequences of which are still with us. The constriction itself put up the boiler pressure. In England and France there was a significant property-owning middle class, a bourgeoisie in the full sense of the word, able to find an outlet for its capital and its energies in trade and industry, emigration and empire, and eventually in political revolution and reform. In Germany the equivalent class was proportionally much smaller and shut away in the towns, where it could engage in political or economic activity of only local importance. What Germany had in abundance was a class of university-educated state officials (and of Protestant clergymen who were state officials by another name), who were close to political power, and were often its executive arm, but who could not exercise it in their own right, and could only look on enviously at the achievements of their counterparts in England, Holland, or Switzerland, or, after 1789, in France: ‘They do

the deeds', wrote Lichtenberg, 'and we translate the narrations of them into German'. In the middle of the eighteenth century Germany's official class entered a crisis. Under the name of Enlightenment, the deist and historicist critique of Christianity, mediated largely through England, began to detach Germany's theologically educated élite from the faith of their fathers. Since there was not much of a private sector in which an ex-cleric could seek alternative employment, and since loyalty to the state church was something of a touchstone for loyalty to the state itself, a crisis of conscience was an existential crisis too. The struggle for a way out was a matter of intellectual and sometimes personal life and death.

Two routes led out of the crisis. First, it was possible to adapt Germany's most distinctive state institution, the university, to meet the new need. New career paths became available through the extension, diversion or dilution of theology into new or related subjects of study or the creation of alternative fields. Classical philology, modern history, languages, and literatures, the history of art, the natural sciences, education itself, and, perhaps most influential of all, idealist philosophy – in these new or newly significant university disciplines eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Germany established a pre-eminence which lasted over a hundred years. In these new disciplines a new vocabulary developed for the description of personal and social existence, a secularization of Lutheranism. Among the most important elements in this new vocabulary were the concepts of moral (rather than political) 'freedom' and of 'Art', as the realm of human experience in which this freedom was made visible. The German 'classical' era gave to the world not only the meaning of the word 'Art' which enabled Oscar Wilde to say nearly a

hundred years later that it was quite useless, but also the belief that literature was primarily ‘Art’ (rather, say, than a means of communication).

Secondly, and more precariously, the ex-theologian could turn to the one area of private enterprise and commercial activity readily accessible to him: the book market. It has been calculated that, even excluding philosophers, 120 major literary figures writing in German and born between 1676 and 1804 had either studied theology or were the children of Protestant pastors. But there was a snare concealed behind the lure of literature. To make money, a book had to circulate widely among the literate classes, the professionals and business-people, and their wives and daughters, not just among the officials. But these business-people were the classes that the political constitution of absolutist Germany excluded from power and influence. It was not therefore possible to write about the real forces shaping German life and at the same time to write about something familiar and important to a wide readership. The price of success was triviality and falsification; if you were seriously devoted to real issues you would stay esoteric, and poor. The German literary revival of the eighteenth century was in great measure the attempt, fuelled by secularization, to resolve this dilemma. At first it seemed that the example of England, Prussia’s Protestant ally in the Seven Years’ War, might be the answer, and hopes of a German equivalent to the English realistic novel, at once truthful and popular, ran high. But Germany could not model its literature on that of England’s self-confident and largely self-governing capitalist middle class. Its social and economic starting-point was different, and it had to find its own way.

In Germany, political power and cultural influence were concentrated in absolute rulers and their courts. The interface between these centres and the rest of society, including specifically the groups that made up the reading public, was provided by the state officials (including, I repeat, the clergy and the professorate). The class of officials, therefore, - those who belonged to it, those who were educated for it, and those who sought access to it – formed the growth zone for the German national literature, not the class of professional writers for money. A state salary, or a personal pension from the monarch, provided a foundation so that a literary career, albeit part-time, was at least possible, while the writers' proximity to power, and to the state institutions, meant that the issues they raised in the symbolic medium of literature were genuinely central to the national life and identity, even if their perspective was that of non-participants. The founders of 18th-century German literature, Gottsched and Gellert, were university professors; Klopstock, the self-proclaimed model of the bard, earned only a sixth of his life's income from his publications, the rest came from stipends from his princely patrons. Wieland more successfully balanced his earnings from journalism, and from his novels on the art of government, against his pensions as professor and tutor to the duke of Weimar. Lessing fought for years to maintain his independence as a literary freelance but eventually settled for a regular salary as librarian to the duke of Brunswick. By the way all of these, except Wieland, had originally studied theology, and even Wieland was the son of a pastor. Herder remained true to his clerical vocation, but complained all his life of the time taken from his writing by his administrative tasks as superintendent of the Lutheran church in Weimar. Schiller, who had wanted to be a theologian, fled from the service of the Duke of Württemberg and tried to live by

writing, but was saved from penury only by his friends, by the Crown Prince of Denmark, and eventually by a modest pension from the duke of Weimar, which provided a crucial supplement and insurance when he at last found in Cotta a publisher willing to pay him well. Novalis and Eichendorff, as impoverished members of the nobility, needed their daytime positions in the Prussian and Saxon civil services in order to write in their leisure hours, or, as Novalis, one of the first laureates of solitary vice, chose to put it, to 'die by night in holy fire'. Hölderlin and Kleist sought desperately to escape their destinies in, respectively, the church and the army, but found refuge neither in literature, nor, like Hölderlin's friends, Hegel and Schelling, in the university, and ended in madness and suicide. The great exception, of course, was Goethe. Goethe was a real bourgeois, who could have afforded, like his father, to live off his capital and write, but who instead chose freely to live the life of an official in the service of an absolute ruler. But Goethe is another story - a story in at least three volumes. An example of how far Germany travelled during his long life in order to resolve the eighteenth-century crisis of its official class is provided by the finest poet of the era after Hölderlin, Eduard Mörike. Mörike was educated at the Tübingen seminary as Hölderlin was, and became a Swabian country pastor, as Hölderlin might have done, though when his doubts became too much for him he was able, as Hölderlin was not, to become a teacher of German literature at a girl's school in Stuttgart – neither the subject nor the school (founded in 1818) existed when Hölderlin needed them.

With the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806 Prussia, the largest and most powerful of the German Protestant states, acquired a new role of leadership.

But even after Napoleon's annihilating defeat of the Prussian *ancien régime*, also in 1806, and the subsequent brief period of reform, the Prussian commercial, industrial, and professional middle classes were still too weak to challenge the king, or even the landowning nobility, and introduce representative government or a separation of legislature and executive. Instead the successful bid for power came from the king's officials, and the autocratic absolutism of the eighteenth century gave way to the bureaucratic absolutism of the nineteenth.

However, an increase of population of 60% between 1815 and 1848 created new economic opportunities in Germany for bankers, merchants, and, eventually, industrialists. As the bourgeoisie revived, it battled for self-respect and cultural identity with the long-established middle-class instruments of state power. The bourgeoisie was a class with a more obvious interest in the economic and political unification of Germany than civil servants who owed their positions to the multiplication of power centres, and entry to it was not dependent on passage through the universities. In the early nineteenth century its frustrated political ambitions expressed themselves, particularly in Prussia, in the literature of escape known as 'Romanticism', of which Tieck and Hoffmann offer particularly influential examples, but as it gained in confidence its literary culture took on the more explicitly revolutionary, anti-official, colour that we associate with, say, Heine, Büchner, and the movement known as Young Germany— though the oppositional stance betrayed a continuing dependence on what was being opposed. Like the poets, the philosophers who dominated this period in Germany were, often reluctantly, and with difficulty, self-supporting and made their way outside the university and the official structure of

the state. Schopenhauer led a life of permanent semi-retirement on the proceeds of his father's commercial career, reinvested in banking concerns. Feuerbach was supported for the greater part of his career by a porcelain factory owned by his wife. Marx in his later years could rely on the assistance of Engels' family money, derived from the Manchester textile industry. Nietzsche also had the support of a family inheritance originally made in England, and not forfeited when his brother-in-law was bankrupted by a bizarre colonial adventure in Paraguay. However, despite their disdain for the earlier generation of state-employed professors, the new thinkers all maintained the intellectual ambitions of the old, and, rather than discard their systems, tried to invert them. They defined themselves as materialists where their predecessors had been idealists, but otherwise their systems showed as much ruthless determination to subjugate all human life to the rule of their thoughts as if they had been what they wanted to be –the agents of absolute rulers.

Official Germany still took the lead in 1848, when the ill-fated Frankfurt Parliament was summoned, a quarter of whose membership was made up of academics, clergy, and writers, and to the extent to which it was a revolution of professors, and perhaps rather further, the failed German revolution of 1848 was a revolution of the officials, the last act, and the finest hour, of the eighteenth-century reading public. But in the following twenty years Prussia, governed from 1862 by Bismarck, embraced economic liberalism as a means of sweeping away historic and institutional obstacles to the unification of its heterogeneous territories, and the long period of intensive growth began which was to transform Germany into an industrial giant. After the humiliation of official Germany at Frankfurt, with industry and

commerce flourishing in the sunshine of state approval, any sense of bourgeois inferiority passed, and the icons of the previous century were cheerfully ridiculed, as in Friedrich Theodor Vischer's parodistic *Faust Part Three* or the assaults on Idealist philosophy and theology by the early Darwinian Ludwig Büchner, the brother of the dramatist, with none of his intellectual and ethical depth, and the Richard Dawkins of his day. Literature itself became a paying concern as copyright became enforceable, and novels and plays with such strictly bourgeois themes as money, materialism, and social justice emerged from the realm of the trivial and linked Germany's written culture for a while with that of its neighbours in Western Europe. The uniquely German culture of the late eighteenth-century Golden Age, scholarly, humanist, cosmopolitan, survived under the patronage of the lesser courts, in the lee of political events and economic changes, until 1848, but thereafter it declined into academicism or, in the case of the kings of Bavaria, into eccentricity. But though the official class had lost supremacy, it had not lost power, and through the universities it remained the guardian of the national past. In the 1860s and 70s, as the redefinition of the German state came to preoccupy all minds, so the servants of the state were able to retain for themselves a certain authority and the two main factions in the middle class sank their differences in the national interest. The concept of 'Bildung', meaning both 'culture' and 'education', was the value on which all could agree, precisely because it left carefully ambiguous whether you achieved 'Bildung' by going to university or simply by buying the right books. The term 'Bildungsbürger' gained a currency at this time which it has never since lost. Suggesting a middle class united by its experience of 'Bildung', its main function is to identify the official with the bourgeois, to create a community of interest between salaried servants of the state and tradesmen, property-

owners and self-employed professionals. A crucial step in the definition of ‘Bildung’ was the canonizing of the literary achievements of the official class as ‘classical’, which may be said to have occurred formally in 1867 when the copyright which now secured the livelihood of contemporary writers was abolished in respect of a dozen ‘classical’ German authors – Goethe foremost among them – whose works were held to be so important that all publishers should be free to distribute them. The newly united Germany of 1871 was not only to be a nation like England or France – it was to have its literary classics like them too. A vast new field was thereby opened up for the universities. As independent writing became a sustainable commercial activity, the bureaucracy could withdraw into the editing of the national literature and into historical and critical study, ‘Germanistics’, as it was beginning to be called.

By the 1870s Marx's prophecy that the free markets aspired to by the national bourgeoisies would grow into a global market, a ‘Weltmarkt’ was clearly coming true. Though from 1879 a turn to protectionism and imperialism began to throttle the liberating effects of free trade, by the 1890s, Germany's armed forces were backed by the largest chemical and electrical industries in the world and a coal and steel industry that was catching up on the British. A British hegemony was giving way to a bi-polar world, and from the turn of the century something like a Cold War began in the cultural sphere. Britain turned away from the German models, particularly in philosophy and scholarship, which had had great prestige since the days of the Prince Consort, while voices in Germany emphasized the uniqueness of German literary, musical, and philosophical achievements and the need to protect ‘Kultur’ (the creation of the official classes) from contamination by the materialistic and journalistic (that is,

bourgeois) ‘civilization’ of the West, an antithesis given classic expression in Thomas Mann's *Unpolitical Reflections*. Britain and France at this time wove similar myths of their own special mission in world-history. After more than a decade of toying by the nations of Europe with fantasies of their own exceptionalism, in 1914 the war-games went real.

Globalization spelt the end of the bourgeoisie, in the strict sense, and not only in Germany. As the world economy grew into a single closed system, and as societies that shrank from the challenge of the political co-operation required by economic integration sought – in vain, of course – to seal themselves off in their own empires, so there was less and less room for a leisured capitalist class, and it was forced increasingly into work. The intrusion of work into the world of capital was reflected, in the first decades of the twentieth century, in an intellectual upheaval which broke apart the forms and conventions of the earlier stages of cultural modernity and was at least as violent in Germany and Austria as anywhere else. In literature, art, music, philosophy, and psychology, in expressionism and atonalism, in figures as different as Wedekind and Musil, Heidegger and Wittgenstein, Hesse and Freud, the concepts of identity, collective and personal, that had been appropriate to an age when the world was wide, and economic expansion was untrammelled by political institutions, were subjected to intense and hostile scrutiny. It was Germany's misfortune that the representatives of the bourgeoisie achieved political autonomy, and even supremacy, only when their social and economic and even their cultural position was fatally undermined. In 1918, 70 years late, Germany had its revolution at last. But the new republic was born in military defeat and shackled at once by an unequal peace. It was

shorn, not only of its symbolic overseas empire, but of much of its mineral wealth in the territories returned to France and the resurrected Poland. Its middle class which had grown into prosperity over the previous two generations was pauperized in the terrible inflations which reflected the lack of confidence in its future. Its French and British rivals, cushioned, for a while yet, by empire, and by the complacency of victory, could afford to ignore the challenge to their identity implicit in the global market. But Germany and Austria, friendless and unsupported by the labour of subject peoples, had to make their way back to prosperity by their own efforts, as the world's first post-imperial, and post-bourgeois, nations. The culture of the German and Austrian successor-states in the age of the Weimar Republic had about it a radical modernity, indeed post-modernity, whose full relevance to the condition of the rest of the world became apparent only after 1989.

In one crucial respect, however, the Weimar Republic had not been released from its past. The German bourgeoisie might have been reduced to a few super-rich families heading the vertically integrated industrial and banking cartels that had prospered in the days of Bismarck's 'state-socialism'. But the other component of the middle class, the officials (including the professorate), had survived the débâcle remarkably unscathed. The authoritarian monarch had gone, but the state apparatus remained, and its instinct was either to serve authority, or to embody it. The army, the academy, and the administration hankered after their king. They were ill at ease with parliamentary institutions that bestowed the authority of the state on a proletarianized mass-society – that is, a society based, not on the ownership of land, or even of capital, but on the need and obligation to work. In the absence of native republican

models, the continuing identity of 'Germany' was largely guaranteed by the persistence of the official class and its ideology of apolitical 'Bildung'. The ideology, however, diverted all but the most perceptive writers, such as the now repentant Thomas Mann, from the task of defending the constitution. On the one hand, any number of new theories of 'art', 'spirit', or 'life' provided as many reasons for dismissing contemporary politics as superficial or inauthentic - George, Spengler, Benn. On the other, the acceptance of political engagement could lead to a general rejection of conventional 'culture' and a coarse anti-intellectualism - Brecht, Becher, Goebbels. The Weimar Republic was betrayed on all sides, and if the writers and artists, on the whole, betrayed it from the left, the public service, including the professors, betrayed it, massively and effectively, from the right. The National Socialist German Workers' Party presented itself, like 'state socialism', as above the distinction between left and right, as the party of national unity in the new age of work, but its appeal was unambiguously that of nostalgia for the authoritarianism decapitated in 1918. The disastrous decision of the Western nations to respond with protectionism to the crisis of global depression took in Germany in 1933 the form of electing a government committed to withdrawing the country from all international institutions and establishing in the economy, as in the whole of society, a command structure based on a military model - a weirdly deranged memory of the Second Empire. In the Third Empire however there was none of Bismarck's subtle accommodation with bourgeois free enterprise. It was the period of officialdom's greatest and most cancerous expansion, as new layers of uniformed bureaucrats were imposed on old in a permanent revolution generating permanent turf wars, and all the while new, malign, and irrational policies were executed with the same humdrum

efficiency or inefficiency as ever and the traditions of Frederick the Great and the nineteenth-century reformers terminated in Eichmann and the camp commandants who played Schubert at the end of a day's work. By this stage however the culture of the German official class had ceased to be productive and was almost entirely passive. The universities, emptied of anyone of independent mind or Jewish descent, lost their global pre-eminence for ever, except perhaps in the area in which they had begun, Protestant theology.

After 1945 Germany was returned approximately to the boundaries of the Holy Roman Empire (without Austria) at the time of the Reformation. Socially and politically too the zones occupied by Britain, France, and the USA recovered something of sixteenth-century Germany, before the rise of absolutism: a federal republic, with a Catholic majority, dominated by the industrial, commercial, and financial power of several great towns. Hitler had succeeded where all previous German revolutionaries had failed: he had made Germany into a classless society. Thanks to the relatively rapid withdrawal of the occupying powers in the West the Federal Republic had from an early stage to confront, from its own resources, the question posed by this often unacknowledged continuity with the immediate German past. Culturally, the underlying continuity betrayed itself in a troubled relationship with the national origins. The literary and philosophical achievements of the period around 1800 still enjoyed their Second Empire status of 'classics', but they were stylized and reinterpreted as an 'other Germany' of the mind from which, in some mysterious and fateful process, the Germany of 1871-1945 had become detached. To claim, however, that the Federal Republic had recovered that 'other Germany' – and

the claim was implicit in the decision to call its cultural missions ‘Goethe Institutes’ – was to make the absurd claim that it somehow reincarnated the world of the late eighteenth-century principalities. Meanwhile in the German Democratic Republic, behind the shelter of the Wall, officialdom for forty years enjoyed an Indian summer, in seamless real continuity with the previous regime of malignant bureaucracy but in mental and emotional denial of any resemblance to it.

So it was left at first to relatively isolated writers and thinkers in the Federal Republic to begin defining an identity for the new Germany by remembering the nightmares from which it had awoken: the early Böll and Grass were unwelcome messengers. After the building of the Wall in 1961 however, and especially after the contestations of 1968, the gravitational field of the Democratic Republic pulled all left-wing thinking out of true, creating the illusion of a political alternative even when the regime was universally acknowledged to have lost all credit, spuriously reviving the attractions of ideas obsolete since 1918, such as authoritarian state socialism and German isolationism, and obscuring the significance of renewed globalization. It was to the global ‘culture-industry’, to an American TV series of 1979, not to thirty years of work by her native intelligentsia, that Germany owed her public awakening to the hideous truth that only then became generally known by the name of the ‘Holocaust’. When the global market finally swept away the last vestige of old Germany in 1989-90, the redefinition of the nation – the fourth in a lifetime – continued to be hampered by a persisting nostalgia which was only superficially directed at the old East (‘Ostalgie’). In reality that nostalgia was the last – let us hope, fading – trace of an animosity that runs through two hundred and fifty years of German literary

engagement with the concept of nationhood: the animosity between the official and the bourgeois, between the representatives of state power (which makes people virtuous) and the forces that make money (and so make people happy). For nearly three centuries the German literary and philosophical tradition has been compelled by local circumstances to concentrate on the point where the economic and the political collide in the definition of personal and national identity. The classes in whose mutual hostility that collision was in Germany long embodied have been swept away by the global tide of proletarianization which has turned us all into consumer-producers for the mass-market. But the conflict between the economic and the political has certainly not gone away, and the quest for identity that conflict engenders has always also contributed to a cosmopolitan, or internationalist, vein in German literature, exemplified above all by the great exception, Goethe. Those, such as Paul Celan, Uwe Johnson and W.G. Sebald, who in recent generations have tapped into it, even at the cost of a life of wandering or exile, have been more able than strictly national writers to make Germany's traumas into symbols of general significance for other countries caught like their own between a national past and a global future.

I have kept you for too long. If you leave through the door on my left, your right, at the rear of the auditorium you will find in the gallery the refreshments that you deserve.