

Polymorphous Synchrony: German Industrial Workers and the Politics of Everyday Life

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Class formation: clear-cut distinctions or “fuzzy” multiple layering

In West Germany during the 1950s, the social history of modernity was initiated by raising a series of questions probing the “internal structure” (*inneres Gefüge*) of industrial society.¹ The predominant conception was of a self-contained era, shaped by a small number of structural elements. In such a perspective centered on static formations, little attention was given to internal ruptures and dynamic processes. This structuralist approach was in fact the linear continuation of a view of the social order which had been developed in the 1930s and '40s by Otto Brunner, one of its chief proponents, in his studies exploring the way “land and power” were constituted during the early modern period.

Since the late 1960s, there has been a substantial shift in emphases in historiography. Social and political conflict has become a key topic which is often addressed under the impact of a heightened openness vis-à-vis social-scientific questions and approaches, especially those transported from across the Atlantic. Critical confrontation with diverse brands of Marxism and the challenges presented by new tendencies in “cultural studies” have sparked further modulations, indeed expansions in angle and perspective: increasingly, scholars feel a need to include the category of secular dynamism termed “class formation”.

Jürgen Kocka, one of the principal representatives of “historical social science” in Germany, has pointed to the dissolution of older macrogroupings in society, their internal “bonds [and] identities”, their external defining “boundaries”.² In his view, “the same class position” – such as that of wage labor, where raw materials, the means of production and the product

¹ See the programmatic statement by W. Conze, *Die Strukturgeschichte des technisch-industriellen Zeitalters* (Cologne, 1957); for the background of this view see the writings of the eminent historian of societal structures and *Verfassung* in late medieval times, Otto Brunner; cf. idem, *Sozialgeschichte Europas im Mittelalter* (Göttingen, 1978), p. 5.

² J. Kocka, *Arbeitsverhältnisse und Arbeiterexistenzen. Grundlagen der Klassenbildung im 19. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1990), pp. 4, 521; cf. idem, *Lohnarbeit und Klassenbildung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in Deutschland 1800–1875* (Berlin and Bonn, 1983), pp. 24ff.; on the approach of “historical social science”, cf. idem, *Sozialgeschichte*, 2nd ed. (Göttingen, 1986), chap. IV. Such a structural-analytical view is the predominant tendency (save for contributions on France) in the comparative volume on West Germany, France and the United States edited by I. Katznelson and A. R. Zolberg, *Working-Class Formation. Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1986).

are used and processed (but not appropriated) by the wage laborer – provides the basis for *shared common interests*. Such interests are aimed at bringing about improvements in one's situation, or at least forestalling any deterioration. A person's "class position" also creates opportunities for accumulating and exchanging "common experiences and shared attitudes, hopes and fears".³ Emphatically rejecting all notions predicated on the *inevitability* of particular structures and behavior, Kocka stresses that there can be joint action or shared organization – albeit only "under certain specific conditions".⁴ He conceives of the multiplicity of active factors which either promote or impede such a "community of interests" (*Gemeinsamkeit*) as a synchrony of "competing structures".⁵ As Kocka theorizes, ethnic and religious "affiliations" and gender distinctions "cut like furrows" through and across socioeconomic class positions.

The historiography of everyday life helps to take us a basic step further, facilitating a perspective not dominated by the weight of the assumed "grand overall picture" – i.e., class reified as a social "object" or "entity". In *Alltagsgeschichte*, attention centers on the simultaneous character, the essential synchrony of different practices, which may in part even be contradictory. What is salient here is the dynamic process unfolding *within*, *below* or even *at odds with* the framework of "common shared" interests.⁶ To formulate it more concretely: there is no doubt that wage laborers were dependent in a myriad of respects; yet in those very relations of dependency, they managed to stake out or win over bits of time and chinks of space *in which they were able to create and develop their "own sense" of things – for themselves (and with others)*. Of course, the resultant array of exclusions, of laying down lines and boundaries, was always directed against their "class brothers and sisters". Indeed, such boundaries may have even been predominantly aimed at them. The markers of respectability ran deep and were highly resilient: factors such as pride in the product and seniority of the jobholder, or the sociogeographical divide separating locals (and commuters from nearby localities) and relocated workers who had moved in from other areas. In any event, the classic

³ Kocka, *Lohnarbeit*, pp. 26f.

⁴ It is an open question whether justice is really done to the richness of various brands of Marxism – many by no means so "doctrinaire and certain" or rigidly one-dimensional – by assuming that only after the "Weberian" shift in perspective is there any possibility for Marxist approaches grounded in undogmatic analysis. After all, the rich range of Marxist ideas includes observations on the "unequal development" of "material and artistic production" (cf. *Grundrisse der Kritik der politischen Ökonomie* [1857/58], Frankfurt/M and Vienna, n.d. [1973], pp. 30f.) as well as the empirically dense look at French society around 1850 contained in the "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte".

⁵ Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte*, pp. 29f.

⁶ For greater detail, see my introduction, "Was ist und wer treibt Alltagsgeschichte?", in A. Lüdtke (ed.), *Alltagsgeschichte. Zur Rekonstruktion historischer Erfahrungen und Lebensweisen* (Frankfurt/M, 1989), esp. pp. 11–26, in English translation: Lüdtke (ed.), *The History of Everyday Life*, trans. W. Templer (Princeton, forthcoming).

“determination” of labor by the owners of capital, managers and master craftsmen or other middlemen, constituted only *one* element in a multiply layered, complexly structured field of social forces.⁷ Workers’ concrete practice and experience cannot simply be reduced to a zero-sum game. Labor was far more than mere instrumental action. That is evident from the way in which laborers experienced their practice: namely as a process geared to making a product for third parties, while *simultaneously* assuring their own survival and making creative use of opportunities for autonomous activity and self-affirmation, as well as affection – or even animosity. The term “labor” denoted a practice that was multiple and diverse in structure – a *polymorphous complex* in which economic, social and cultural factors all had a significant role to play.⁸

. Historical reconstructions of women’s work have provided a major impetus for broadening this view, pointing to fresh ways of looking at the meaning of “labor”. Moreover, such gender-specific research has served to put the other half of historical reality – excluded from view or suppressed by male historiography – back on the stage of scrutiny.⁹ At long last, it has finally become academically respectable to pose questions about gender relations.¹⁰ These studies indicate that the basic meaning of women’s wage-labor in settings such as department stores, the service industries and in private households were essentially reducible to one basic occupational reality: “profession: female”.¹¹ Even in factories, the low wages paid to female workers and the formal designation of “jobs for women” in mechanized spinning and weaving mills were the expression of a gender-based class-internal boundary – one that in many cases tended to intensify the inequalities and discriminations suffered by the laboring class as a whole.¹²

⁷ But cf. Kocka, *Lohnarbeit*, p. 24.

⁸ On this linkage, cf. esp. G. Sider, *Culture and Class in Anthropology and History: A Newfoundland Illustration* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 6f., 120f., 192f.

⁹ See H. Docekal, “Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft – ein unverzichtbares Projekt”, *L’Homme: Zeitschrift für Feministische Geschichtswissenschaft*, 1 (1990), pp. 7–18; G. Pomata, “Partikulargeschichte und Universalgeschichte – Bemerkungen zu einigen Handbüchern der Frauengeschichte”, *L’Homme*, 2 (1991), pp. 5–44.

¹⁰ As much as women’s history predominates (probably initially with good reason), more recent publications indicate that it is principally female scholars who are now taking a serious look at the theme of gender relations and masculine life, cf. J. W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York, 1988), and for relevant literature in German, see K. Hausen and H. Wunder (eds.), *Frauengeschichte – Geschlechtergeschichte* (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1992); conceptually stimulating, since it stresses the self-interpretations of historical subjects, is A. Kessler-Harris, “Gender Ideology in Historical Reconstruction”, *Gender & History*, 1 (1991), pp. 31–49.

¹¹ U. Nienhaus, *Berufsstand weiblich: Die ersten weiblichen Angestellten* (Berlin, 1982); cf. D. Wierling, *Mädchen für alles: Arbeitsalltag und Lebensgeschichte städtischer Dienstmädchen um die Jahrhundertwende* (Berlin and Bonn, 1987).

¹² Exemplary is K. Canning, “Class, Gender and Working-Class Politics: The Case of the German Textile Industry, 1890–1933” (Ph.D., Johns Hopkins University, 1988); cf. K. Canning, “Gender and the Politics of Class Formation: Rethinking German Labor History”, *American Historical Review*, 97 (1992), pp. 736–68.

Even more important is the insistence from this perspective of recognizing the salient fact that wage-labor in bourgeois society has always been reinforced by the institution of housework.¹³ In this domestic sphere, women were exposed to multiple pressures, often in addition to their gainful employment outside, or contract work at home. The mundane everyday reality of women was shaped by the wearying contours of domestic labor: housework as the effort to maintain familial relations,¹⁴ to ensure the daily reproduction of the labor of the male (so-called) “breadwinners”, to bring up children and secure the biological reproduction of the species.

The painstaking reconstruction of women’s work also reveals the presence of certain possibilities for a mode of female counterpower. Women invested their energies, time and ambition in cooking up a “hearty” stew, especially one containing meat or fat; or they made an effort to prepare a nice, tasty dessert (perhaps because desserts had a special power to evoke certain childhood memories). Such culinary creativity was particularly important in working-class kitchens, under the constrained conditions in which the majority of workers’ families or those of “junior” civil servants eked out a modest existence. These cooks derived inner satisfaction from the savory meals they prepared. At the same time, the obvious contentment of those who ate their homemade dishes provided clear recognition from meaningful others, especially the family “breadwinners”.¹⁵ Even

¹³ U. Knapp, *Frauenarbeit in Deutschland*, vol. 2: *Hausarbeit und geschlechtsspezifischer Arbeitsmarkt im deutschen Industrialisierungsprozess – Frauenpolitik und proletarischer Alltag zwischen 1800 und 1933* (Munich, 1984); see also the case study on the “segment” of women organized in a Social Democratic framework by K. Hagemann, *Frauenalltag und Männerpolitik. Alltagsleben und gesellschaftliches Handeln von Arbeiterfrauen in der Weimarer Republik* (Bonn, 1990).

¹⁴ The following remain highly thought-providing: G. Bock, B. Duden, “Arbeit aus Liebe – Liebe als Arbeit”, *Frauen und Wissenschaft* (Berlin, 1976); L. Tilly and J. W. Scott, *Women, Work and Family* (New York, 1978); T. Hareven, *Family Time and Industrial Time: The Relationship between Family and Work in a New England Industrial Community* (Cambridge, 1982); K. Hausen, “Große Wäsche. Technischer Fortschritt und sozialer Wandel in Deutschland vom 18. bis ins 20. Jahrhundert”, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, 13 (1987), pp. 273–303; H. Rapin (ed.), *Frauenforschung und Hausarbeit* (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1988); and more generally, H. Medick and D. Sabeian (eds.), *Interest and Emotion: Essays on the Study of Family and Kinship* (Cambridge, 1984); cf. also the mixture of personal recollections and careful reconstruction in C. Steedman, *Landscape for a Good Woman: A Story of Two Lives* (New Brunswick, 1986).

¹⁵ Cf. my “Hunger, Essens-‘Genuß’ und Politik bei Fabrikarbeitern und Arbeiterfrauen. Beispiele aus dem rheinisch-westfälischen Industriegebiet, 1910–1940”, in A. Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis in den Faschismus* (Hamburg, 1993); for a similar perspective with examples drawn from industrial towns in northwest Lancashire, see E. Roberts, *A Woman’s Place: An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890–1940* (Oxford and New York, 1984), esp. pp. 110ff. regarding a sharp separation of roles from spaces for action; on working-class fathers, see H. Rosenbaum, *Proletarische Familien. Arbeiterfamilien und Arbeiterväter im frühen 20. Jahrhundert zwischen traditioneller, sozialdemokratischer und kleinbürgerlicher Orientierung* (Frankfurt/M, 1992), chap. 4; in her study on Social Democratic women in Hamburg, Hagemann found that comparatively little value was placed on domestic duties, cf. *Frauenalltag*, p. 644.

during the crisis winter 1916/17, married and single women tried to produce some kind of casserole or sweet pie for their loved ones from the meager makeshift ingredients of turnips – a dinner that was more than just a mundane meal, despite the modesty of available ingredients.

Buoyed by the experience gained in caring and cooking for their families, women gained the confidence to venture into a new species of autonomous action – not limited to the sphere, but extending into the streets. The intensified struggle for survival triggered by the war spurred public action, and it is particularly noteworthy that the street protests over hunger beginning in 1915 were organized largely by young people and women. Consequently, it is not simply coincidental that studies on working-class women have tended to focus on the war years.¹⁶ By contrast, research on the lives of working-class men, has almost always tended to focus on peacetime conditions. Critical debate over “historical social science” in Germany has been fuelled by deepening skepticism vis-à-vis its structural-historical penchant, its tendency to simplify and reduce a multiply layered practice in order to separate sharply differentiated profiles.¹⁷

Various factors have shaped the debate, of which the influence West German scholarship has been only one. I would like to single out three key sources for the altered perspectives in working-class history. Edward P. Thompson’s magisterial class biography, *The Making of the English Working Class*,¹⁸ presented a vivid, complex panorama of the experiences of the “unpropertied classes”, male and female pre-industrial wage-laborers. Thompson also generated a variety of stimulating new ideas on how to examine forms of cultural and self-interpretation. His emphasis is not on wages and prices, but on how they relate to the criteria of a just economic order. Barrington Moore also underscored this dimension: in his analysis, the struggle against “injustice” was the decisive cultural and material motivating force for working-class action in a number of countries.¹⁹

Highly influential, though less often cited in the relevant literature, is the work of the late Herbert Gutman. In a study of the silk industry in Paterson, New Jersey, he scrutinized an area of industrialization generally neglected by German historiography, namely small-scale factories. In particular, Gutman’s investigation of the sweat and toil of black slaves and

¹⁶ U. Daniel, *Arbeiterfrauen in der Kriegsgesellschaft. Beruf, Familie und Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Göttingen, 1989), on the “counter-public sphere”, p. 241; aspects of this topic are also dealt with in S. Meyer and E. Schulz, “Wie wir das alles geschafft haben”. *Alleinstehende Frauen berichten über ihr Leben nach 1945* (Munich, 1984).

¹⁷ A stimulating summary of such critique can be found in Th. Lindenberger and M. Wildt, “Radikale Pluralität. Geschichtswerkstätten als praktische Wissenschaftskritik”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 29 (1989), pp. 393–411, esp. pp. 401ff.

¹⁸ (London, 1963). The 1987 German edition has the somewhat misleading title *Die Entstehung [i.e., genesis] der englischen Arbeiterklasse*.

¹⁹ B. Moore, *Injustice. The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (Boston, 1978).

black industrial workers has shed welcome light on the multiplicity of expressive cultural forms with which workers create and promulgate their *own* interpretations of their *own* history. An array of practices as diverse as the naming of babies or the everyday care of children reflect a clear effort to achieve some modicum of dignity, to strive for a sphere and substance of “their own”.²⁰

A third impressive study along these lines is Michelle Perrot’s monograph on strikes in France during the 1870s and ’80s.²¹ From Perrot’s perspective, the proper way to locate patterns of collective refusal by workers lies outside the variations of wages and prices. She contends, rather, that struggles for pay and improved working conditions only become comprehensible against a broader backdrop: the networks and rhythms of social communication. In her view, strikes are inseparable from the web of possibilities and necessities for “*s’endimancher*” – for “putting on one’s Sunday best” and celebrating, the realm of restday festivity.

In the light of such research, our historical interest in the realities of everyday life, the hopes and anxieties of people at grass roots level, appears to be a kind of “compensatory modernization” – a way of amending for historiographic oversights in the past. Despite the productive thrust of *Alltagsgeschichte*, I believe the genuinely new vistas opened up by this approach have so far been only partially recognized. Let me point out three key shortcomings.

First, the industrial labor processes themselves are often reduced to little more than statistical descriptions. Typical emphasis centers on reconstructions of the ideal contours of labor – how it *ought to be*, as seen from the angle of economists, engineers and even shop-floor functionaries. A distorting prism is created, making it difficult to discern the extensive array of actual situations and their contradictions; lines of fracture – and thus the very dynamism of historical processes – fail to catch the attention. In this approach, “experience” denotes what is apparently recurrent and “always the same”. It becomes a synonym for “routine” – suggesting a parallel to Fernand Braudel’s often cited notion of “*vie matérielle*”: humankind is submerged “up to its neck” in this flux of material life, for the most part “totally unaware of its existence”.²²

Second, this view goes hand-in-hand with a corresponding conception of “politics” guided by a notion of the “big picture”, the “grand connec-

²⁰ H. Gutman, *Work, Culture and Society in Industrializing America* (New York, 1977); H. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750–1925* (New York and London, 1976); a revised version of key arguments is contained in idem, “Family Ties among Afro-Americans before and after the Emancipation of the Slaves in North America”, in Medick and Sabeian, *Interest and Emotion*.

²¹ M. Perrot, *Les ouvriers en grève. France 1871–1890*, 2 vols. (Paris and The Hague, 1974); for the following, *ibid.*, vol. 2, pt. III, esp. pp. 548ff., quote p. 550.

²² F. Braudel, “Materielles Leben und wirtschaftliches Leben”, in F. Braudel, *Die Dynamik des Kapitalismus* (Stuttgart, 1986), pp. 11–37, here p. 16.

tions" in world history – a view which first evolved within the dual historical process that first began in the late eighteenth century, characterized by capitalization and the formation of the state. Politics in this framework, refers to phenomena at *state* level, to national communication; any separate and independent practice developed at local grass-roots level is then conceived to be merely a kind of prefatory stage, a prelude to this "higher" form of politics.

Third, the multiplication of ways of life and experience, the presence of *multiple* voices commenting on their own history, gives rise to another question: what is the connection between such multiplicity and other forms of action aimed at achieving a sphere and substance "of one's own making" – both in the heartland of industrial development and at the so-called periphery? What simultaneities – or better, dyssynchronisms – can be identified? I.e., what might it mean to develop a *comparative* approach to labor experiences and working-class politics?

Labor processes and experience in the workplace

For both male and female factory employees, "work" was steeped in a fluid mixture of ambivalent experiences. Yet what was incompatible did not necessarily have to be contradictory. These diverse "varieties" of workplace experience did not corroborate the extreme positions: they were not isomorphic with pessimistic images of a (dys)utopian "brave new world", nor did they confirm technocratic phantasies about the end of human toil and tribulation in a scientific millennium where there was a "rational solution" to all problems.

Alfred Schütz defined the distinction between the two German terms for "experience" – *Erfahrung* and *Erlebnis* – by proposing that the former was made up of *Erlebnisse* that had been "singled out, distinguished by attention".²³ But what, one may ask, are the threshold and characteristic forms of attention? In any case, the degree and mode in which the worker's *body* was used were a key element in factory labor.²⁴ Within one's own group and class, physical work was both a stigma and mark of distinction. For many laborers, especially those who had recently migrated into industrial regions, menial jobs and work in transport were the first – and for a long time often the sole – source of gainful employment they could find. Men were expected to push and heave heavy loads of all kinds: sacks of potatoes, barrels of butter, piles of coal or earth, blocks of wood and

²³ A. Schütz and Th. Luckmann, *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*, vol. 2 (Frankfurt/M, 1984), p. 14. [In common speech, *Erlebnis* tends to denote "any event through which one has lived", whereas *Erfahrung* stresses "knowledge gained from experience in that event", or the "sum total of knowledge accumulated". – trans. note.]

²⁴ For more detail, cf. my "Wo blieb die 'rote Glut'? Arbeitererfahrungen und deutscher Faschismus", A. Lüdtkke, *Alltagsgeschichte*, pp. 224–282, esp. pp. 240–248 and now in English translation in: Lüdtkke, *The History of Everyday Life*.

metal. At times, females also performed such back-breaking labor, while menial shop-floor tasks such as scouring and scrubbing were set aside exclusively as “women’s work”.

Many of those who had to survive by irregular employment found a temporary hand-to-mouth “means of livelihood” in these physically grueling tasks.²⁵ At the same time, menial laborers who hauled heavy loads, or cleaning women, were frequently looked down upon and excluded by other manual workers – especially those who had to prove their skilled “dexterity” working at machines.²⁶ In this regard, there was no difference in the assessments made over the span of several decades by the first and second generation of factory employees.

A second significant kind of experience was not group-specific, but depended on different levels of physical exertion. In the eyes of many workers – of women even more than men – both the hard physical difficulty and attraction of manual labor were linked with the perception of the so-called “collar line” – how blue, how white, how soiled. The divide between the social classes was at play here, charged with powerful feelings of resentment and envy: how could any activity still be called “work” if it did not entail dirt, sweat and pain, and only rarely led to accidental injury?²⁷ Moreover, how could men who had little or no personal everyday knowledge of hard physical labor climb the managerial ladder in factories and reach the height of power in government and society?

This sort of experience was little influenced by the degree of mechanization on the shop floor: mechanical aids provided virtually no relief from manual labor. For example, the charging of blast furnaces and brick ovens was not made any easier in physical terms by the introduction of new machine-systems and faster motors – on the contrary, it became even more strenuous.²⁸ The results of a survey conducted in 1910 by Adolf Levenstein among some 6,000 unionized mine workers, metal workers (lathe oper-

²⁵ For regions on the periphery and outside of urban industrial conglomerations, cf. K. M. Barfuss, *“Gastarbeiter” in Nordwestdeutschland 1884–1918* (Bremen, 1986); for the mid-nineteenth century, see also H. Gerstenberger (ed.), *Wanderarbeit. Armut und Zwang zum Reisen* (Bremen, 1984).

²⁶ On this distinction between menial and more skilled labor, highlighting the example of dockworkers and emphasizing the refractory behavior of “casual laborers”, cf. M. Grüttner, *Arbeitswelt an der Wasserkante. Sozialgeschichte der Hamburger Hafentarbeiter, 1886–1914* (Göttingen, 1984), esp. pp. 85ff., 92ff.

²⁷ This particular aspect of the delimitation “from below” remains marginal in the detailed case study by J. Kocka, *Unternehmensverwaltung und Angestelltenschaft am Beispiel Siemens 1847–1914. Zum Verhältnis von Kapitalismus und Bürokratie in der deutschen Industrialisierung* (Stuttgart, 1969), chap. IV; for an international comparison, see O. Zunz, *Making America Corporate 1870–1920* (Chicago, 1990).

²⁸ N. Osterroth, *Vom Beter zum Kämpfer*, 2nd pr. (Berlin and Bonn, 1980; 1st ed.: 1920), pp. 42ff.; B. Parisius, *Lebenswege im Revier. Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen zwischen Jahrhundertwende und Kohlenkrise* (Essen, 1984), pp. 32ff., 80ff., 98, 104ff.; N. R. Nissen (ed.), *Menschen – Monarchen – Maschinen. Landarbeiter in Dithmarschen* (Heide, 1988), pp. 31ff., cf. p. 95.

ators, drillers and fitters) and textile plant workers pointed in the same direction. The predominant feeling in all three groups was a pervasive sense of dissatisfaction.²⁹

They shared a fundamental mood of discontent, but differences could be discerned. Levenstein asked his interviewees whether work at a machine was “pleasurable” – or “is it devoid of any interest for you personally?”³⁰ While three-quarters of the textile workers who responded gave answers which Levenstein interpreted as reflecting a basic “dissatisfaction”, the miners and metal workers who expressed dissatisfaction were fewer (60 percent and 56 percent respectively). The written responses ranged from an unqualified “hate” mentioned by one worker to the “pleasure” voiced by a carpet weaver when his product turned out “nice and beautiful”. The decisive factor was not just the specific industry, the mode for calculating wages (mainly piecework) or the final amount in the paypacket. A toolmaker summed up what many felt when he said that “work that was constantly monotonous” suffocated any and every “joy” on the job.

The attitudes expressed by mining and metal workers were a mixed bag – reflecting more than simply disinterest in or even a dislike of machinery. On the contrary: their tasks necessitated a high degree of attention both to the piece being worked on and also to the operation of machinery (or to the immediate natural environment, such as the “pit”). Moreover, pleasure could be derived (and with it certain material advantages) on exploring and learning to control the leeway for action present “at” the machines,³¹ and to preserve such personal space for autonomous activity.³²

Despite the sporadic nature of statements by workers on their everyday factory experience, these remarks raised doubts about any thesis postulating an all-pervasive sense of “monotony” on the factory floor. Even when a machine was operated on a regular, clockwork basis, it might look different when seen from “inside”, from the perspective of the worker actually at the controls. Levenstein cited a lathe operator:

Your eyes are transfixed, staring at the slowly revolving piece in the lathe. You hold your hand casual, cool, yet ready to respond. But your thoughts are free to

²⁹ A. Levenstein, *Die Arbeiterfrage – mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der sozialpsychologischen Seite des modernen Großbetriebes und der psychophysischen Einwirkungen auf die Arbeiter* (Munich, 1912), pp. 47ff., 53–75; cf. pp. 123ff., 187ff., 199ff.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 44, esp. 53ff.

³¹ On the distinction between working “at” and “with” (the aid of) machines, such as operating a crane, cf. H. Popitz *et al.*, *Technik und Industriearbeit*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen, 1976), pp. 112ff., 128ff.; such distinctions on the basis of activity are far more appropriate to work experience than designations that refer to various but abstract degrees of “skill”.

³² On this orientation, as well as intra-class distinctions, see the penetrating reconstruction of work processes and more general interpretations of the way of life of coal miners, slate quarry laborers and saltworkers in R. Samuel (ed.), *Miners, Quarrymen and Saltworkers* (London, 1977).

roam, they drift out through and beyond the red factory walls; and only your ear, ever attentive, records any change in the pace of the machine, the wearing down of the cutter. [. . .] You stop thinking of anything but the beat of the rhythm [. . .]³³

The response of a weaver indicated that such “rhythms” could also mark a kind of *synchrony* between what was near and further afield: “I hope I’ll always have enough to fill my belly”, he confided, speaking at the same time of his wish “to awaken in my children the spark of divinity”.³⁴

Work signified many different things in the worker’s experience. It was not reducible to a simple contrast between “joy on payday” and the miseries of monotony. “Slaving away” at one’s job and “time pressures” did not preclude a certain satisfaction. Among both male and female workers, furtive glances alternated with cheerful smiles.³⁵ Nonetheless, the contours of everyday synchronisms and “patchwork” mixtures often differed depending on the branch of industry involved, firm size and type of activity – though physiognomy of workplace experience in factories was formed by the typical features.

The reconstruction of everyday practice, which explores such hints, discloses a second code, repeatedly masked, in the rhetoric of working-class movements. At least in the case of *male* workers, one can discern a so-called “long wave” in the assessment of work with machinery in factory settings – one which demanded (and facilitated) both physical effort *and manual dexterity*. This was based on the experience that daily wage-labor in factories, even in carefully supervised or physically gruelling production environment, involved far more than just passive endurance of unreasonable demands and enervating toil. Again and again, autonomous action proved indispensable. Handling the materials and machines required a diversified, hands-on approach – an activity which each individual had to learn to handle on his/her own. In exchanges with fellow workers and superiors, whether cooperating or in disagreement, those involved utilized traditional signs and forms – but did so *in their own way*.

Autonomous activity also encompassed phenomena such as unauthorized rest periods and fooling around on the job, that risky horseplay and shopfloor “tomfoolery” combatted vigorously by supervisors – i.e., a kind

³³ Levenstein, *Die Arbeiterfrage*, p. 107.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

³⁵ On female factory workers, see T. Hareven, *Family Time* and esp. K. Canning, “Gender and the Politics of Class Formation”, pp. 744ff.; starting about 1908/10, an attempt was made in the German Textile Workers’ Association (DTAV) either to justify more extensive protective regulations for women – or to exclude them from the functions of union leadership singling out their “special characteristics” as females, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 762ff.; on the range of experience in factory work and the synchronisms of factory employment and housework, see A. Lüdtke (ed.), *Mein Arbeitstag – mein Wochenende. Arbeiterinnen berichten von ihrem Alltag 1928* (Hamburg, 1991); on the array of such “glances”, *ibid.*, p. 29.

of *Eigensinn*³⁶ with and at machines (especially during cleaning operations performed on running machinery). The aim was to get even for all the stress and strain, staking out niches for one's own time, free temporal space for oneself. Moreover, expectations, incentives and unreasonable demands on time and energy – set down in orders, forms of wages, factory regulations and duties toward fellow workers – were not merely ignored or passively accepted, but were repeatedly transformed in everyday practice. These forms of *appropriation* of industrial labor were not based on neglect of the actual work process. On the contrary: intimate familiarity with the various required operations and a precise knowledge of the field of social forces in the factory were the essential prerequisites for being able to satisfy one's own needs and *simultaneously* carry out work orders. Work offered a dual opportunity: to prove one's competence to oneself and others, and then to be able – if only for a few short seconds – to ignore everything and everybody in order to be alone, “with and by oneself”.

Traces of the multiplicity of forms of appropriation are reflected in the participant observations made by outsiders. The Protestant minister Paul Göhre and Minna Wettstein-Adelt (who expressly tried to imitate Göhre's initiative three years later) noted that factory and machine work comprised more than just operating hand-wheels or adjustment of screws, cleaning equipment or transporting unfinished and final products.³⁷ In Göhre's case in particular, his efforts to describe every detail attest to the fact that he was no superficial observer on the factory floor. Indeed, his report provides the reader with an “echo” of those “now silent voices” which Walter Benjamin termed a “secret index” of the past.³⁸ This outside observer did not see labor solely as some sort of “metabolism with nature” (Marx). His report reflects the insight that one element was quite indispensable for the workers he observed: namely their own autonomous action and activity.

Both observers recorded the expressive forms manifest in the workplace in extensive detail. Wettstein-Adelt described the way female weavers adorned “their” looms with tiny pictures and ribbons, marking them out

³⁶ *Eigensinn* is a central term in the author's analysis of workers' everyday life, denoting willfulness, spontaneous self-will, a kind of self-affirmation, an act of (re)appropriating alienated social relations on and off the shop floor by self-assertive prankishness, demarcating a space of one's own. There is a disjunction between formalized politics and the prankish, stylized misanthropic distancing from all constraints or incentives present in the everyday politics of “*Eigensinn*”. In standard parlance, the word has pejorative overtones, referring to “obstreperous, obstinate” behaviour, usually of children. The “dis-compounding” or writing it as “Eigensinn” stresses its root signification of “one's own sense, own meaning”. – Trans. note.

³⁷ P. Göhre, *Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter und Handwerksbursche. Eine praktische Studie* (Leipzig, 1891); M. Wettstein-Adelt, *Dreieinhalb Monate als Fabrik-Arbeiterin* (Berlin, 1893).

³⁸ W. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte”, in idem, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1, pt. 2 (Frankfurt/M, 1974), pp. 691–704, here 693.

as their own turf. Göhre sketched a varied panorama of verbal and non-verbal languages: the laborers utilized these idioms in order to communicate with their fellows on the job, or to gain some distance and latitude from them. He depicted in detail the varieties of teasing – probably both painful and embarrassing to an academic outsider like himself, and the practice of *Bartwischen* (“beard-polishing”) in that decidedly “male” shop environment.³⁹

Eigensinn

“Living together” on the job was marked by forms of cooperation dictated by necessity.⁴⁰ But sandwiched in between these were elements of recalcitrant, bloody-minded *Eigensinn*.

Cooperation dictated by necessity

This category included forms of cooperation and self-monitoring among workers which helped them “survive and get by” on the job. Two aims were important: to reduce the risks of accident⁴¹ and to secure the expected or desired wage level. However, such a mode of cooperation was also useful in “appropriating” the various managerial attempts to discipline the workers,

³⁹ Göhre, *Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter*, p. 78; treated in greater detail in my “Cash, Coffee-Breaks, Horseplay: *Eigensinn* and Politics among Factory Workers in Germany circa 1900”, in M. Hanagan and Ch. Stephenson (eds.), *Confrontation, Class Consciousness, and the Labor Process* (New York, 1986), pp. 65–95.

⁴⁰ For the following, I have drawn on my article “Die Ordnung der Fabrik. ‘Sozialdisziplinierung’ und *Eigensinn* bei Fabrikarbeitern im späten 19. Jahrhundert”, in R. Vierhaus et al. (eds.), *Frühe Neuzeit – frühe Moderne?* (Göttingen, 1992), pp. 206–231, esp. 217–244. On the practice and experience of manual labor “at” and “with” (the aid of) tool machines, see my “Wo blieb die ‘rote Glut’?”, esp. pp. 240ff., 253ff.; on the so-called “internal life” of German factories, see the well-documented analysis by L. Machtan, “Zum Innenleben deutscher Fabriken im 19. Jahrhundert. Die formelle und informelle Verfassung von Industriebetrieben, anhand von Beispielen aus dem Bereich der Textil- und Maschinenbauproduktion (1869–1891)”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 21 (1981), pp. 179–236. In individual studies, the ever-recurrent “icons of industry” tend to be reproduced, i.e., heavy industry and mining – by comparison, other spheres of production and branches of industry have attracted little research to date; on the mining industry, however, note the superb studies by F.-J. Brüggemeier, *Leben vor Ort. Ruhrbergleute und Ruhrbergbau, 1898–1919* (Munich, 1983) and H. Steffens, *Autorität und Revolte. Alltagsleben und Streikverhalten der Bergarbeiter an der Saar im 19. Jahrhundert* (Weingarten, 1987), pp. 109–164; cf. also K.-P. Mallmann and H. Steffens, *Lohn der Mühen. Geschichte der Bergarbeiter an der Saar* (Munich, 1989); and for an international comparison, see K. Tenfelde (ed.), *Sozialgeschichte des Bergbaus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich, 1992).

⁴¹ Cf. A. Andersen and R. Ott, “Risikoperzeption im Industrialisierungszeitalter am Beispiel des Hüttenwesens”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 28 (1988), pp. 75–109; H. Trischler, “Arbeitsunfälle und Berufskrankheiten im Bergbau 1851 bis 1945. Bergbehördliche Sozialpolitik im Spannungsfeld von Sicherheit und Produktionsinteressen”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 28 (1988), pp. 111–151.

making such incursions easier to handle. This was a daily necessity – especially under the system of team piecework, an increasingly common wage mode after 1900. This form of wage-earning was dominant in work processes involving the shaping of materials,⁴² e.g., in the metal industry and in all branches of machine manufacture.⁴³ Productivity quotas, quality standards and time-periods were coupled with a constant self-discipline to toe the line, accommodate and conform. Work to be performed was not assigned to individual workers, but to an entire work team. The team – and that usually meant the foreman – handled the matter of how the wages were divided up, but was supervised by a master craftsman. It was necessary to maintain open communication with your fellow workers, and to agree on procedures, both within and between teams.

In such team piecework, an individual's wages depended on whether the group fulfilled its assigned quota or even managed to exceed it. It was essential for "newcomers" to learn the proper pace. It was also important to "restrain" overenthusiastic novices: they had to be forewarned that assigned quotas should not be overfulfilled by too wide a margin. If performance went beyond 130 percent of the quota, the quota would be increased in the future with a consequent worsening of the wage rate. The figure of 130 percent mentioned in autobiographical reports and interviews is a standard that remained fresh in workers' memories even decades later. Apparently, that magic figure allowed employees some breathing space for recuperation and some elbowroom to create their "own" work pace. The product of the manufacturing process, wages and invested effort remained calibrated in a way that was generally felt to be "fair and just". But gentle hints, warnings and friendly persuasion did not always have the desired result. It then became imperative to give a worker's readiness to cooperate a "gentle little shove" in the right direction by resorting to more physical means of persuasion.

Eigensinn

The workers did not simply work in the same area, cooperating as the occasion arose – they virtually lived together in intense contact hour after hour. Göhre's participant-observer reports and the autobiographical inter-

⁴² H. Kern, M. Schumann, *Industriearbeit und Arbeiterbewußtsein*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt/M, 1974), pp. 147ff.; cf. L. Lappe, "Technologie, Qualifikation und Kontrolle", *Soziale Welt*, 37 (1986), pp. 310–330, esp. 316ff.

⁴³ L. Bernhard, *Die Akkordarbeit in Deutschland* (Leipzig, 1903); M. Bernays, *Auslese und Anpassung der Arbeiterschaft der geschlossenen Großindustrie, dargestellt an den Verhältnissen der "Gladbacher Spinnerei und Weberei" AG zu Mönchen-Gladbach im Rheinland* (Leipzig, 1910), p. 189; D. Landé, "Arbeits- und Lohnverhältnisse in der Berliner Maschinenindustrie zu Beginn des 20. Jahrhunderts", in Verein für Sozialpolitik (ed.), *Auslese und Anpassung der Arbeiterschaft in der Elektroindustrie, Buchdruckerei, Feinmechanik und Maschinenindustrie* (Leipzig, 1910), pp. 302–498, here 356. Team piecework is mentioned only in passing in Th. v. Freyberg, *Industrielle Rationalisierung in der Weimarer Republik, unter-*

views of the 1920s and '30s,⁴⁴ refer to a multitude of forms of mutual contact among the men, as well as practices aimed at creating a modicum of distance. These included both ritualized playfulness and “serious” conversations. In addition, everyone apparently also took part in non-verbal exchanges, and body contact was often sought quite naturally – in any case, it was hard to avoid.⁴⁵ There was a broad spectrum of interaction, including rough physical teasing, the practice of “beard-polishing” so graphically described by Göhre, getting into short playful scraps, and just “horsing around” on the job. Often, this involved badgering fellow workers when “no one was looking”. Machine operators, who had been briefly inducted, as well as highly experienced repairmen would repeatedly stake out physical and social space in the workplace for themselves, demonstrating a developed sense of *Eigensinn*.

Such body contact, often quite painful, demonstrated the existence of a fund of shared experience among both, the “players” and their victims: to be stuck in one place, soiled and made dirty, constantly subject to intrusions and manipulations engineered by persons largely or totally beyond the control of those manipulated. For the space of a few moments at least this rough teasing created or established the presence of a double-edged distance: vis-à-vis hierarchies within one’s own class, as well as those beyond. Such boisterous horseplay carved out a spatial and temporal niche in which the foremen and bosses – and indeed any and all demands from outside and above – were held at temporary arm’s length.

Eigensinn was the attempt to gain some welcome respite, at least for a few brief minutes, from unreasonable external (and shop floor) demands and pressures. In the eyes of fellow workers, this behavior was often interpreted as genuine “hostility”: thus, the lathe operator Moritz Bromme expressed his disgust for the “jackass talk” of most of his fellow workers. He was not alone in feeling that fellow workers could be “absolute devils”.⁴⁶ Brusquely creating a space of demonstrative distance vis-à-vis

sucht an Beispielen aus dem Maschinenbau und der Elektroindustrie (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1989); “group fabrication” is dealt with on pp. 152ff., but team piecework is touched on solely in connection with Siemens, where it was lauded in 1926 as highly especially useful for inducing self-control and monitoring among workers – and thus for procedures geared to maintaining a “tight production schedule”, *ibid.*, p. 237.

⁴⁴ See my “Deutsche Qualitätsarbeit”, “Spielereien” am Arbeitsplatz und “Fliehen aus der Fabrik”, in F. Boll (ed.), *Arbeiterkulturen zwischen Alltag und Politik* (Vienna, 1986), pp. 155–197, esp. 163, 165, 178ff.

⁴⁵ See Göhre, *Drei Monate Fabrikarbeiter*, pp. 76ff. In other industrial branches of industry, such as mining, the “physicality” of factory work and life in the workplace has likewise received little attention – or has even been regarded as a quasi-taboo topic; but cf. F.-J. Brüggemeier, *Leben vor Ort*, pp. 138ff.; and for a more fundamental treatment of related questions, W. Kaschuba, “Volkskultur und Arbeiterkultur als symbolische Ordnungen”, in Lüdtke, *Alltagsgeschichte*, pp. 191–223, esp. 205ff., and in English translation: Lüdtke, *The History of Everyday Life*.

⁴⁶ M. Th. W. Bromme, *Lebensgeschichte eines modernen Fabrikarbeiters* (1905, repr. Frankfurt/M, 1971), p. 282; cf. Levenstein, *Arbeiterfrage*, pp. 97, 129.

others could go to extremes, even involving the stealing of tools.⁴⁷ Among other things, such theft reflected the severe competition between the men.⁴⁸ But it is also evident that pilfering on the job opened up a space for maneuver where more was at stake than just making sure you had a slight advantage when it came to pay. It was also a source of simple fun to “put one over” on a fellow worker by roughing him up or ripping him off. *Eigensinn* – in the sense of “having it one’s own way” – could refuse any mode of compliance or participation, even in the face of all expectations raised by (political) alternatives for a new or “better” social order.⁴⁹

Eigensinn’s physicality created brief respites, spaces of at least a few moments when a worker could be *bei sich* – “by and for himself” – brusquely turning his back(side), so to speak, on the others. Isolated individual distancing was not uncommon, manifested in daydreaming or taking an unauthorized break. Yet here too, distinctions remained fuzzy: “turning off” or “tuning out”, withdrawal could lead to a breach of regulations, for the most part unspectacular, such as during the risky cleaning of operating machinery with its potential for accidents. More ostentatious “nonsense” was also possible, like trying one’s hand at a gymnastic feat, clowning around perched on a transmission belt up near the ceiling. *Eigensinn* was always ambiguous, not just divisive: it also opened up options for togetherness. Obstinate physical acts reproduced and reconfirmed the social hierarchy between older and younger men – for example, between the semi-skilled and apprentices or those assigned to do the donkey work. It was a demonstration of “masculinity”. At the same time, they created situations of mutual perception and recognition: the next time round a

⁴⁷ Regarding the stealing of tools by fellow workers, see reports contained in biographical accounts put together by the Gutehoffnungshütte mill in Oberhausen in the 1930s using interviews with retired workers, cf. Haniel Archive, GHH 40016/9 and my “Cash, Coffee-Breaks, Horseplay”, p. 82. By contrast, the widespread practice of “ripping stuff off”, apparently regarded by Hamburg dockworkers as a legitimate form of compensatory (re-)appropriation, was not directed against one’s “own people”, cf. M. Grüttner, “Unter-klassenkriminalität in Hamburg. Güterberaubungen im Hamburger Hafen, 1888–1923”, in H. Reif (ed.), *Räuber, Volk und Obrigkeit. Studien zur Geschichte der Kriminalität in Deutschland seit dem 18. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt/M, 1984), pp. 153–184.

⁴⁸ The increasingly detailed formulations of factory conduct codes over the years indicate that precisely in this area, there was an effort to stiffen regulations; for a more thorough treatment, see my “Die Ordnung der Fabrik”, in Vierhaus, *Frühe Neuzeit – frühe Moderne?*, pp. 206–231, esp. 223, fn. 45.

⁴⁹ This corresponds to the particular form of “self-representation” that Luisa Passerini has examined among Turin industrial workers in the 1920s and ’30s as a widespread alternative to an attitude aimed at changing society as a whole and oriented toward the level of state politics, cf. Passerini, *Fascism in Popular Memory. The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 22 f.: “On self-representation . . . is characterised by irreverence, thanks to the ability to be detached from the existing order of things and even from oneself, and to reflect critically on, and laugh at, the current state of the world [emphasis mine, A. L.]. It is an approach that turns the world on its head. . . . But it is acting nonetheless . . . we have promises, symbols, and stimulus to action, not real and lasting transformation of power relations”.

former victim could easily cross over and become one of the “players”. Everyone knew he was a potential target for prankishness.

Eigensinn was polymorphous, had multiple manifestations: moseying around the shop floor, momentarily “tuning out” or daydreaming. But it was especially evident in mutual body contact and teasing, joshing around, ragging. In doing this, workers did not directly suspend working operations; rather, they just allowed them to “run on”, “letting them go”, as it were. Changes brought about by “efficiency” measures in the work place had little or no impact on these everyday practices.⁵⁰

Scholarly (and would-be learned) observers of “folk life” in the late eighteenth century believed the great majority of farmers, craftsmen and the propertyless in rural and urban Germany evinced a dogged “obstinacy”, a willful stubbornness they termed *Eigensinn*. Such behavior was permissible, but only among children.⁵¹ Adults could not give in to the “enjoyment of the brief moment”, they weren’t supposed to get upset if their wishes were thwarted. Such “dangerous bad habits” had to be knocked out of children. It was imperative to promote physical and mental disciplining by constant admonishment and continuous constraint. Only in that way would “human goodness” find its proper expression in daily life.⁵²

From this historical perspective, *Eigensinn* involved a particular kind of physicality – gestures and gesticulations commonly associated with a tight-lipped unwillingness to communicate. It was thus akin to that mode of taciturn behavior often interpreted as “dim-wittedness”.⁵³ Such “dullards” were socially awkward, never found the right word, and were unable to participate in social intercourse. Blushing and lowering one’s glance were considered to be the unmistakable signs of thick-headedness. “Dim-wittedness” revealed a lack of social skills, an inability to function in

⁵⁰ Cf. Lüdtke, “Deutsche Qualitätsarbeit”, pp. 190ff. There is likewise no parallel here to the suggestion by M. Seidman that the numerous forms of hidden and inconspicuous appropriations or evasive action, ranging from factory sabotage to refusal to work or restraint on the job, should be interpreted as proof for the existence of a *fundamental* orientation of “workers against work”. Seidman overlooks the variety of concrete modes of behavior and the various forms of independent interpretation of factory work and serial production. Yet see idem, *Workers against Work: Labor in Paris and Barcelona During the Popular Fronts* (Berkeley, 1991), pp. 170, 188, 231ff., 313ff. Expressive forms of physicality underwent change *outside* the factory workplace, especially in connection with mass sports – not just for the participating athletes, but for the spectators (overwhelmingly male) as well, see R. Lindner, “Die Sportbegeisterung”, in U. Jeggle et al. (eds.), *Volkskultur in der Moderne* (Reinbek, 1986), pp. 249–259, esp. 252.

⁵¹ But note the references to folk tale traditions in which the wish is that “refractory” children might die rather than be so “doggedly obstinate”, cf. O. Negt and A. Kluge, *Geschichte und Eigensinn* (Frankfurt/M, 1981), pp. 765ff.

⁵² Cf. L. Sulzer, *Versuch von der Erziehung und Unterweisung der Kinder* (Göttingen, 1748), cited in K. Rutschky, *Schwarze Pädagogik* (Frankfurt/M, 1968), pp. 25ff.

⁵³ G. Stanitzek, “Blödigkeit”. *Beschreibungen des Individuums im 18. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen, 1989).

normal society. "Dullards" tended to be modest, and their bashful diffidence could at times be interpreted as a naïveté meant to please, a first accommodating step in the direction of willing obeisance. However, *Eigensinn* could also turn into aggressive contrariness. The refractory Silesian peasants described by the popular philosopher Christian Garve remained motionless and taciturn in direct confrontation with their manorial lord. Yet hardly had he turned his back then they burst out laughing, mimicking his actions, and apparently did not take the "master" very seriously.⁵⁴

Two characteristics link the "manual-laboring classes" at the end of the eighteenth century with the industrial working class in the late nineteenth (or mid-twentieth) century. First, there is a fundamental continuity in the importance accorded to physical exertion – strength and "muscle" remain in high demand. Second, the forms of forced collectivity in work teams have been retained over the centuries. Both in craft workshops of the distant past and on the work teams in industrial factories, workers were generally cramped together in close physical proximity. Fellow workers were literally unavoidable, their proximity occasionally becoming downright insufferable.

Joshing and highly physical "ragging" interpreted, reflected (and indeed "processed") the various work operations on the shop floor. Boisterousness also had a verbal component; abuse and brutally "affectionate" forms of address were all "part of the game". But most important were the tactile dimensions: physicality and direct bodily contact. These were a constant element in agricultural work, small workshops,⁵⁵ small-scale and larger factories. In this regard, one can postulate a singular species of Braudelian "*longue durée*". The experience of manual labor in workshops and factories was given special expression in the *Eigensinn* of the workers themselves.

Eigensinn and Resistance?

Eigensinn is generally conceived to be a subcategory of resistance or lack of cooperation. In the predominant perspective, historical modes of behavior swing between two poles: obedience and submission on the one hand, uncooperativeness and open resistance on the other.⁵⁶ By contrast,

⁵⁴ Chr. Garve, "Über den Charakter der schlesischen Bauern und ihre Haltung gegen die Regierung (1786/96)", in K. Wölfel (ed.), Chr. Garve, *Popularphilosophische Schriften*, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 799–1026, here p. 859f.

⁵⁵ On manual trades, see R. Wissell, *Des Alten Handwerks Recht und Gewohnheit*, 2nd. rev. ed., 6 vols (Berlin, 1971–1988); A. Griebinger, *Das symbolische Kapital der Ehre* (Frankfurt/M, 1982); cf. R. Darnton, "Workers' Revolt: The Great Cat Massacre of the Rue Saint Severin", in R. Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes of French Cultural History* (London, 1984), pp. 75–104.

⁵⁶ J. Peters generally agrees to this framework, see his "Eigensinn und Widerstand im Alltag. Abwehrverhalten ostelbischer Bauern unter Refeudalisierungsdruck", *Jahrbuch für Wirt-*

an analysis centered on *Eigensinn* explores a complex realm of behavior beyond such black-and-white, “either–or” juxtapositions. Workers tended to ignore broader practical calculations in their efforts to be “by themselves” or “together with their buddies”. The implementation of cooperation, the inculcation of respect for older workers or those who “set the tone” took priority over strategies aimed at some personal advantage, such as recognition by more distant superiors or an improvement in individual earnings.

Yet there were limits to the applicability of team logic. An individual worker might try to be completely “by himself”: through a variety of means: by “tuning out” or attempts to “escape” from the confining presence of the others, by “fooling around” at his bench or concealing information about the degree of material hardness during shearing operations or changes in transmission ratios on the lathe. In such situations, the main aim was not to earn the respect of other workers or get something in return, but to generate elbowroom and distance oneself from the immediate environment. Bodily contact and physical proximity apparently motivated workers to try again and again to gain some space and to be left alone. This form of obstinacy was not resistance.

Eigensinn was not intentionally directed against the factory code or the obligations of work-place camaraderie. Social and power-related constraints were not attacked head-on, but sidestepped or ignored. It was not a warding off of time as such, but rather an obstinate insistence on one’s own time and space – sometimes in unobtrusive silence, occasionally in boisterous rowdiness – which emerges as the intrinsic expression of a personal sense of how things should be.

Yet here too, a variety of transitions remained a constant possibility. Thus, even in a field of social forces charged with recalcitrance, individual and group actions against the bosses “upstairs” might arise.⁵⁷ For example,

schaftsgeschichte, 1991/II, pp. 85–103; at the same time, however, he convincingly shows the balanced importance of “action and devotion” in peasant behavior in reconstructing the everyday life of estate-dependent peasants in Brandenburg in the eighteenth century. In the light of this description, the existence side-by-side – and the often smooth interchange – of careful calculation on the one hand, and lack of planning, on the other, becomes quite plausible.

⁵⁷ In this connection, see the characterization of individually “unobtrusive”, frequently subdued or even taciturn forms of confronting intrusions and attempts at control originating “from above” in J. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London, 1990), esp. pp. 183ff. Scott views symbolic actions as being closely intertwined with practices of refusal or appropriation. Explosive outbursts – at celebrations, for example – do not impede individual actions, but rather serve to pave the road for them. Such activity includes the avoidance of tax demands, the forbidden planting of a small plot of rubber trees, ignoring various rules and regulations, and illegal consumption, ranging from the theft of food for one’s own personal needs to the stealing of small amounts of the harvest. In his analysis, a decisive aspect is that these “hidden-unobtrusive” interpretations and practices do not function as a “safety valve” for releasing pent-up pressure against economic or authority-related constraints and compulsion (though I think the practices are seen here too

when master craftsmen or foremen resorted to the familiar “intimate” form of address instead of the formal pronoun of respect (i.e., “*Du*” rather than “*Sie*”), workers would respond loudly in kind, replying to their superiors with that same disrespectful “*Du*” – if they were in fact paying any attention at all. Joint action was also an option in the machine-manufacturing shop, as Bromme reported. Workers there were normally on an “each man for himself” basis. However when pay cuts were instituted, joint action could be organized in surprisingly short time – for example, a demand by workers to have the time spent cleaning up the lathes calculated as part of formal working hours.⁵⁸

Eigensinn and Self-Discipline

Open clashes with direct or indirect attempts to control people on the shop floor, or obstinate efforts by workers to establish some distance between themselves, both had one basic aim: to resist the encroachments of superiors. Self-discipline was unavoidable in this context.⁵⁹ The constant efforts to deal with (and rework) disciplinary demands “in one’s own way” had certain consequences. Individual attempts to “escape” from the restricting ambience of the other men or “tuning out” was one mode; trying on occasion to act in unison with fellow workers was the other. If quotas in team piecework were to be maintained or reduced, then workers had to discuss the issue and arrive at some concrete agreement. But even the emphatic act of “going the limit and beyond”, “no holds barred”, i.e., of excess, “*dépense*” or “breaking out” of the confined togetherness were bound up with the rules of the work team or the factory environment.

much as a product of the constraints!). Rather, he postulates the operation of a kind of “infrapolitics”. In Scott’s view, it does not supplant resistance or resistiveness, but functions rather as a necessary precondition for it. Scott’s analysis is largely based on ethnological research in rural Malaysia. On English farm workers in the twentieth century and their brand of *Eigensinn*, recognizable in modes of “deference”, cf. H. Newby, *The Deferential Worker. A Study of Farm Workers in East Anglia* (Harmondsworth, 1977). Strategies of popular resistance, evasions, ruses and “ways of using imposed systems” in popular culture, an “ethics of tenacity (countless ways of refusing to accord the established order the status of a law, a meaning or a fatality)” are intriguingly explored in M. de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, 1984, quotes pp. 18, 26.). See also J. Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture* (London, 1989), pp. 32ff. On the synchronicity of evasion, participation and an inconspicuous process of repeated withdrawal, manifested in the case of a “middle-class child” growing up in the era of German fascism, see P. Brückner, *Das Abseits als sicherer Ort. Kindheit und Jugend zwischen 1933 und 1945* (Berlin, 1980). On the multiply layered dimensions of fields of force and power strategies, see the very thought-provoking study by W. Sofsky and R. Paris, *Figurationen sozialer Macht* (Opladen, 1991).

⁵⁸ Bromme, *Lebensgeschichte*, pp. 259f.

⁵⁹ On self-control, self-constraint, the psychological instruments of self-compulsion and their formation within a kind of “counter-move” against the monopolization of violence by the state, see N. Elias, *Über den Prozeß der Zivilisation* (1937), vol. 2, 2nd ed. (Munich and Zurich, 1969), pp. 316ff.

And such rules had to be respected. At the very least, it was not possible or appropriate simply to ignore them in every instance. If recognition was to be achieved, staking out a more permanent space of one's own, the proper degree of "teasing" and "ripping off" had to be maintained, not going too far. There were limits. Excesses alternated with self-discipline.

This was especially true of all attempts to implement alternative modes of behavior through formal organizations. The "mass turnout" called for by Social Democracy around 1910 during its campaign for universal suffrage in Prussia propagated the "step of the masses" ("*Massentritt*"). This solemn and well-ordered way of marching along should differ from the "lockstep" of the military, because participants of Social Democratic demonstrations would avoid any machine-like presentation. However, the "step of the masses" was not predicated solely on an expected mutual agreement arrived at among left-wing workers.⁶⁰ More was required. This potentially revolutionary mode of discipline necessitated a strict regime of subordination. Such subordination was no longer justified by reference to the will of a monarch or the "state", but was nonetheless regarded as an indispensable sacrifice for achieving a "better" future. Moreover, future utopias were expressly defined in terms of a discipline that may resemble a normal standard: namely the measured beat of a clock. Watches given as gifts by Social Democrats bore an engraved demand: "8 hours work – 8 hours sleep – 8 hours education". Even a more fun-oriented variant, which replaced education by "recreation", still stuck to that strict tripartite division: 8 full hours for recreation.⁶¹

Multiple layers and limits to linkage: comparisons "From the Bottom Up"

The historical reconstruction of the ways of life prevailing among industrial workers discloses a variety of modes of perceptions, experience and actual practice. In particular, it highlights the presence of multiple layering. What one discovers is not a single and unified experience, but rather a synchrony of diverse and even contradictory elements. This attempt at reconstruction is context-specific. The spatial field is comprised of individual firms and factories, localities or neighborhoods, even entire regions. Monographic or case studies are assembled, often sketching painstakingly accurate pictures of particular situations or circumstances. But how can these individual images be linked together? Or is this often voiced demand for interconnectedness inappropriate?

⁶⁰ See the detailed discussion of this, with numerous examples culled from speeches and the Social Democratic press, in B. J. Warneken, "Die friedliche Gewalt des Volkswillens". Muster und Deutungsmuster von Demonstrationen im Deutschen Kaiserreich", in B. J. Warneken (ed.), *Massenmedium Straße. Zur Kulturgeschichte der Demonstrationen* (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1991), pp. 97-119.

⁶¹ P. Schirmbeck, comp., *Vom Beginn der Industrialisierung bis 1945*, 2nd pr. (Rüsselsheim, 1981), p. 36; on the variant of "recreation", see the 1894 example in: D. Mühlberg (ed.), *Proletariat. Kultur und Lebensweise im 19. Jahrhundert* (Leipzig, 1986), p. 262.

Since the late eighteenth century, the course of European social history has been dominated by a “double revolution” (E. Hobsbawm): sociopolitical movements for emancipation on the one hand, and processes of capitalization on the other. Seen from this macro-perspective, studies of individual localities can seem rather parochial: the focus is too low, too close to the ground. After all, the historical process appears to be identical with the formation of supralocal overarching structures and entities, especially those of class and bureaucracy. In this connection, it is by no means surprising that Jürgen Kocka has repeatedly stressed the need for a *synthetic* view.⁶² The guiding question in such a synthesis concerns the nature of class formation in what Kocka terms “nationally constituted societies”.⁶³

Yet it may be argued that the dominant notions of “class” fail to do empirical justice to the dynamic character of industrial labor. A veritable patchwork of mixed modes of behavior, based on both cool calculation and obstinate *Eigensinn*, are reduced to a dichotomous “either-or”: the inclusion or exclusion of generally large-scale social groups. A similar problem arises when the formation of the nation-state is identified as centrally influencing the history of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In his comparative microstudy of two industrial localities in western Germany in the nineteenth century, Erhard Lucas has convincingly shown that numerous differentiating factors were at play. Wage labor in Duisburg-Hamborn differed from that in Remscheid not only in terms of the dominant industry: large iron and steel mills and mines vs. small-scale iron manufacture. Other key differences stemmed from worker origin (locally born or immigrant), differences in dialect, residential style and neighborhood type (company settlements in Hamborn, small individual homes in Remscheid), church affiliation and religious denomination. In contrast, the dimension of nation-state did not play any pervasively significant role. Both towns were, after all, part of the German Reich, Prussia (more specifically its Rhine Province), and municipal authority for both rested in the same administrative center in Düsseldorf.⁶⁴

⁶² Kocka, *Lohnarbeit*, pp. 15f.; Kocka, “Sozialgeschichte zwischen Struktur und Erfahrung. Die Herausforderung der Alltagsgeschichte”, in J. Kocka, *Geschichte und Aufklärung* (Göttingen, 1989), pp. 29–44, here 42ff.

⁶³ Kocka, *Sozialgeschichte*, pp., 135ff., 171; Kocka, “Probleme einer europäischen Geschichte in komparativer Sicht”, in Kocka, *Geschichte und Aufklärung*, pp. 21–28, here 25; Kocka, “Sozialgeschichte zwischen Struktur und Erfahrung”, *ibid.*, here pp. 42ff. For an international comparison of societal configurations, see B. Moore, *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* (Boston, 1966). The usual type of comparative investigation is characterized by questions regarding similarities and differences between individual features or specific social segments and/or forms of perception and action, cf. the penetrating studies by I. Steinisch, *Arbeitszeitverkürzung und sozialer Wandel. Der Kampf um die Achstundenschicht in der deutschen und amerikanischen Eisen- und Stahlindustrie 1880–1929* (Berlin and New York, 1986) and F. Boll, *Arbeitskämpfe und Gewerkschaften in Deutschland, England und Frankreich. Ihre Entwicklung vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert* (Bonn, 1992).

⁶⁴ Cf. also the example of Düsseldorf: local and immigrant industrial workers supported the Catholic workers’ organizations, but many of those with upgraded skills joined the ranks of

Even two generations later, under German fascism, regional features were far more salient than mere ideological/propagandistic window dressing.⁶⁵ At the same time, the influence of (party-)political “camps” and “social-moral milieus” apparently affected only political activists.⁶⁶ The orientation of the overwhelming majority of the population was in terms of region, locality and especially immediate family. The microgeographical levels of residential street and neighborhood (albeit with certain reservations) also played a role. In this respect the experiences of most individuals were ambivalent and mixed. They oscillated between much-welcome support during emergencies and often near-total obtrusive control of daily behavior in the public sphere (e.g., on streets and in bars).⁶⁷ Thus, the respective degree of penetration and salience of national, regional and local institutions, orientation patterns, zones and forms of conflict must be examined empirically in the context of wage labor, its fields of force and spaces for action – such salience cannot be postulated a priori.

The painstaking historical reconstruction of wage labor indicates that autonomous control and control by others were not mutually exclusive phenomena. But if wage labor was in fact not clearly and conclusively “determined” in its content, as presumed by the customary assumptions and “grand” theories on industrialization, then a central feature of all such macroscopic conceptions appears open to question: namely the notion that *conditions* for action were the decisive factor. If constraints on action and temptations to act are viewed not as fixed “givens” but as fluent moments in a spiral which moves from perceiving and interpreting reality to acting

Social Democracy, cf. M. Nolan, *Social Democracy and Society: Working-Class Radicalism in Düsseldorf 1890–1920* (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 42ff., 113ff.

⁶⁵ In this connection, see the large-scale project “Lebensgeschichte und Sozialkultur im Ruhrgebiet 1930–1960”, including various published studies: L. Niethammer (ed.), *“Die Jahre weiß man nicht, wo man die heute hinsetzen soll”*. *Faschismuserfahrungen im Ruhrgebiet 1930–1960* (Berlin and Bonn, 1983); L. Niethammer (ed.), *“Hinterher merkt man, daß es richtig war, daß es schiefgegangen ist”* (Berlin and Bonn, 1983); L. Niethammer and A. v. Plato (eds.), *“Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten”* (Berlin and Bonn, 1985); see also F. J. Henne, “A German Path to Fordism: The Socio-Economic Transformation of a Region: The Bergische Land and the Sauerland, 1930–1960” (Ph.D., University of Chicago, in progress).

⁶⁶ M. R. Lepsius, “Parteiensystem und Sozialstruktur: zum Problem der Demokratisierung der Gesellschaft”, in W. Abel et al. (eds.), *Wirtschaft, Geschichte und Wirtschaftsgeschichte, Festschrift für F. Lütge* (Stuttgart, 1966), pp. 371–393, here 383ff.; on “fuzziness” in respect to “camps” and “milieus” and/or their synchronism, see A. v. Plato, “Ich bin mit allen gut ausgekommen”. Oder: war die Ruhrarbeiterschaft vor 1933 in politische Lager gespalten?, in Niethammer, *Die Jahre weiß man nicht . . .*, pp. 31–65, esp. 60ff.

⁶⁷ Cf. B. Parisius, *Lebenswege im Revier, Erlebnisse und Erfahrungen zwischen Jahrhundertwende und Kohlenkrise – erzählt von Frauen und Männern aus Borbeck* (Essen, 1984); E. Roberts’ work remains highly provocative regarding neighborhood, since his approach rejects romanticization, see Roberts, *A Woman’s Place*, p. 189ff. There have been few attempts to date to examine the public spheres of “free” or commercial amusement (in contrast to conviviality in voluntary associations), but note the bulk of contributions in D. Kift (ed.), *Kirmes – Kneipe – Kino. Arbeiterkultur im Ruhrgebiet zwischen Kommerz und Kontrolle (1850–1904)* (Paderborn, 1992).

upon it and – in turn – to perceiving the changed state of things, the ruptures and “holes” in the “web” of historical processes emerge in a new light. Social reality is multiply layered. Consequently, I believe it is imperative that we recognize just how narrowly one-dimensional the supposedly “big questions” in historical analysis, such as the formation of social classes and the state, really are. That is, they alone are an insufficient basis for historical reconstruction.⁶⁸

The alternatives are still rather fragmentary. For the time being, we are traversing uncharted territory, nothing is certain. Yet it is wise to avoid falling prey to the type of “anxiety reaction”⁶⁹ prevalent in such situations, the reassuring regression to what is tried, tested and familiar. One option is to focus our attention on the historical *subjects* themselves, exploring them in the context of their *immediate* modes of action and expression (so that what may appear incompatible does not have to be categorized as “contradictory”!). It may be that there is a kind of fundamental flaw inherent in perspectives where social institutions, levels and actors are viewed in terms of presumed functional relations and symbolic resonances. The assumption that all phenomena are interconnected, inter-mediating with each other, seems to be a distinctively European legacy of German philosophical idealism.⁷⁰ In my view, an approach that leaves open the question of the mediation between or the mutual interconnectedness of social phenomena (and thus likewise their presumed continuity) is more serviceable for research.⁷¹ Such a position is doubtlessly contestable, and fraught with

⁶⁸ Note the references by H. Boll, “Verlust vergleichender Deutungsfähigkeit? Bemerkungen zu einigen Neuerscheinungen komparativer Sozial- und Arbeiterbewegungsgeschichte”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 28 (1988), pp. 426–459. F. Lenger, “Beyond Exceptionalism: Notes on the Artisanal Phase of the Labour Movement in France, England, Germany and the United States”, *International Review of Social History*, 36 (1992), pp. 1–23 provides an example of a comprehensive panorama, including both sociostructural and cultural elements, though with reference to the level of societal comparisons of “class formation” (moreover, there is no intention to discuss the conceptual or theoretical nature of comparison as a method).

⁶⁹ Georges Devereux, *Angst und Methode in den Verhaltenswissenschaften* (Munich, 1973).

⁷⁰ This also applies to Pierre Bourdieu’s suggestion (which has enjoyed a considerable support echo) that specific “forms of habitus” – i.e., a “subjective, though not individual system of internalized structures, shared schemata of perception, thinking and action” be assumed as a “precondition for every . . . perception” – based on the assumption that “everything has already been mediated”, cf. P. Bourdieu, *Sozialer Sinn. Kritik der theoretischen Vernunft* (Frankfurt/M., 1987 [French 1980]), p. 112. See likewise Bourdieu’s emphatic (though systematically unelaborated) comment that habitus is “caught up in a process of incessant transformation”, idem, “Antworten auf einige Einwände”, in K. Eder (ed.), *Klassenlage, Lebensstil und kulturelle Praxis. Theoretische und empirische Beiträge zur Auseinandersetzung mit Pierre Bourdieus Klassentheorie* (Frankfurt/M., 1989), pp. 395–410, esp. 406 f.

⁷¹ Cf. relevant suggestions by Michel Foucault, for example in his *Sexualität und Wahrheit*, vol. 1 (Frankfurt/M., 1977 [Paris, 1976]), esp. pp. 113ff.; references to the “ubiquitous presence of power” do not presuppose a general context embracing all social levels, strategies and tactics; rather, in the discourse of sexuality, power and knowledge are considered “discontinuous segments”, *ibid.*, p. 122. On ruptures in the continuities, see also Foucault’s

inconsistency. But perhaps that very inconsistency can help to disclose something of the past's irreverent discontinuities, open structures which we tend only too often to homogenize and accommodate to our own needs and views in historical reconstruction.

The reconstruction of historical practice reveals life-lines containing many breaks. Upon analysis, what you discover are fragments, i.e., synchronisms of participation (such as in the "national revolution" of the Nazis) and *simultaneous* attempts to maintain individual distance, e.g., in attitudes toward Nazi fund-raising drives or in the (admittedly rarer) decision to oppose the wishes of a party functionary. Profiles emerge of individuals who were quite unheroic.⁷² The lines they move in are not straight; they twist and convolute, pausing, reversing – jumping not only forward, but unpredictably moving off at angles sideways or backwards unpredictably.

What this meant in the industrial work place was that dissimilar experiences did not result in competing behavioral orientations necessarily at odds with each other. Resistance to attempts by foremen to increase speed could go hand-in-hand with concurrence in their demands for a "respectable" level of output or affirmation of their esteem for "high-quality workmanship".⁷³ It was by no means inevitable for such differences to generate tensions or conflict situations. Analysis shows that mutual aid among fellow workers or helping out a buddy who felt momentarily indisposed could be succeeded fairly rapidly by massive reciprocal animosity; sometimes the very same persons were involved. This multilayered patchwork of *unconnected* preferences and dislikes even underlay what workers "shared in common". Distance and cooperation, animosity and solidarity were never far apart, and certainly were not mutually exclusive, even vis-à-vis the same individuals.

Unsuspected breaks and discontinuities in behavior, a factor of incalculability in their interaction – is that then the upshot? Behind increased levels of factory discipline, for example, there was always another layer that called everything into question once again – such as *Eigensinn*. Did

fulminating sketch *Vom Licht des Krieges zur Geburt der Geschichte* (Berlin, 1976 [recorded Paris, 1976, no French or English edition]).

⁷² On the philosophical debate, cf. H. Hrachovec, *Vermessen. Studien über Subjektivität* (Frankfurt/M, 1989); K. Meyer-Drawe, *Illusionen von Autonomie. Diesseits von Ohnmacht und Allmacht des Ich* (Munich, 1990); the volume by M. Carrithers, S. Collins and S. Lukes (eds.), *The Category of the Person: Anthropology, Philosophy, History* (Cambridge, 1985) revolves around the notion that there are universal connections to a "self" in all socially and culturally specific refractions, and that "individualistic" formulations appear to regulate all "Western" critique of the subject; cf. also C. A. Lutz and L. Abu-Lughod (eds.), *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (Cambridge, 1990).

⁷³ In this connection, cf. the broad longitudinal investigation of literary, natural-scientific and engineering conceptions and ideas of industrial labor and their gradual elaboration into the notion of "German work" by J. Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work: The National Debate, 1800–1945* (Princeton, 1989).

historical subjects always have some open options, “not yet realized” possibilities for self-expression, for demonstrating where they really stood? If so, then any attempt to derive a type from a set of regularities would be faulty deduction. Wouldn't it be more sensible to follow an approach that does not try to ignore multiple layers and ambiguities, but seeks instead to put them to specific historiographic use?

Modes of behavior in the work place, such as the degree and type of force present in behavior vis-à-vis fellow workers, superiors or subordinates, indicate more than just the complex of constraints and attractions of wage-labor and factory work. Rather, there is always a more extensive sociocultural force field involved, encompassing the times, rhythms and sites of work and non-work. Analysis should thus here focus on examining the identifying marks, establishing the “signatures” of various force fields – and not on interrelating the individual facets. One can determine where contours overlap and differ. The density of networks, as well as the blank spots, could be utilized as a yardstick for establishing similarity and difference. Such a tack would facilitate “comparisons from the bottom up”.⁷⁴ Moreover, it would permit new angles in approaching the pivotal question of how subjectivity is actually constituted. And that is undoubtedly as much a part of the complex of the so-called “big questions” in historiography as is the formation of the “modern state” or the industrial world.

Religion and the military: order and orderliness as fulfillment?

Attempts to create distance and pursue *Eigensinn* did not fundamentally rule out the possibility of brief or longer-term participation in a political party or trade union, engagement in forms of supralocal organizing. And even inside organizations, many members behaved in refractory ways reflecting their basic hard-nosed *Eigensinn*. The same individuals exploited

⁷⁴ The prerequisite for this are studies on spatially and socially delimited configurations of work and non-work, population, family and relatives, public spheres and realms of privacy, cf., for example, L. R. Berlanstein, *The Working People of Paris, 1871–1914* (Baltimore and London, 1984) or W. H. Sewell Jr., “Uneven Development, the Autonomy of Politics, and the Dockworkers of Nineteenth-Century Marseille”, *American Historical Review*, 93 (1988), pp. 604–637. Another special comparative perspective focusing on secular processes (in particular within a global context) is richly suggestive, namely Michael Mann's magisterial studies of power. Mann argues that societies consist of numerous overlapping social and spatial power networks that lay siege, so to speak, one to one another. Consequently, society cannot be conceptualized as a monolayered entity clearly and unambiguously fixed and defined by external boundaries. There are no sharply separable subsystems or dimensions. It is likewise impossible to proceed from clearly defined ascriptions or defining and justifying relations (in the sense of a source of “final authority”). If the claim of totality is empty and hollow, it is also incorrect to postulate that social structures are antecedent to action by persons or groups. Mann's main stress is directed against the supposition of any homogeneity of “intra-social” relations; such a homogeneity is conjured up, however, in speaking about “society” as such. Cf. M. Mann, *The Sources of Social Power*, vol. 1 (Cambridge, 1986), esp. chap. 1, “Societies as organized power networks”, pp. 1–33.

different modalities for self-expression, depending on the situation or moment. The ensembles of expressive means crystallized into multilayered “force fields”. These included patterns of orientation that were regulated “outside” group-specific or regional frameworks, and which were designed to “refract” such identifications: i.e., religious, church-related and military dimensions.

Religious dimensions: The pronounced “disdain for preachers and parsons” that the young pastor Göhre encountered in Chemnitz in 1890 did not reflect religious abstinence. He found there was appreciable sensitivity for religious rites and ritual, especially “proper” funerals, and he heard expressions of “respect and reverence for Jesus Christ”.⁷⁵ Although socialist and church institutions struggled against each other, locked in a battle for hearts and minds, the call by church groups and individual clerics for secular justice held a fascination even for the most dedicated opponents of organized religion. And the component of salvation in the Social Democratic “utopian state of the future” apparently appealed to certain “religious” or “spiritual” needs, even among those who despised anything associated with the church.⁷⁶

The ethos of secular fulfilment of duty characteristic of Protestant clergy (and by no means alien to the Roman Catholic church) was echoed in Social-Democratic rhetoric about the responsibility of socialists in struggling on behalf of the downtrodden and oppressed. On the other hand, religiously charged self-definitions sometimes served to harden the lines of incompatibility between workers’ organizations. Social Democrats considered Catholics superstitious and, in cases of doubt, readily submissive to any authority. It made no difference whatsoever if those Catholics were workers. Vice versa, many Catholics, quite apart from their own class position, regarded the “reds” as callous materialists unfamiliar with or opposed to the “piety of works”.⁷⁷ At the same time, the Bible was undoubtedly read as a programme for secular justice here on earth. However, it was not important to keep the two spheres separate: Jesus and William Tell could both be celebrated as literary paragons, as in the thinking of a miner in Essen who, since the 1920s, had been an active member of both the Union of Christian Miners and a Catholic miners’ association.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Göhre, *Drei Monate*, pp. 157ff., esp. 176, 180, 190.

⁷⁶ On the concepts, though not their scope and range in social and everyday practical contexts, cf. L. Hölscher, *Weltgericht oder Revolution. Protestantische und sozialistische Zukunftsvorstellungen im deutschen Kaiserreich* (Stuttgart, 1989); on the distribution and intensity of magical practices specifically in working-class circles, cf. the first-hand report by a Protestant minister who ministered to a parish in Magdeburg, *Huschenbett: Volksaberglaube. Ein Bericht aus der Gegenwart nebst Beurteilung* (Magdeburg, 1925).

⁷⁷ W. Spohn, “Religion and Working-Class Formation in Imperial Germany 1871–1914”, *Politics and Society*, 19 (1991), pp. 109–32, esp. 111ff.

⁷⁸ R. Noltenius (ed.), *Alltag, Traum und Utopie. Lese geschichten – Lebensgeschichten* (Essen, 1988), pp. 34–43; cf. Parisius, *Lebenswege*, pp. 92ff.

Military dimensions: Until 1918, all males, even those given a deferment or released from service, had to confront and deal with the anxieties and sense of fulfilment associated with military service, at least prophylactically. Military service meant an abrupt break with accustomed routines of everyday life, one's neighborhood and locality. That rupture was rendered especially painful by the practices of bullying and harassment experienced as a recruit. However, certain previous modes of orientation were not completely extinguished in the barracks; some were given a new "energy charge" – especially obedience, physical discipline and an "immaculate external appearance". Moreover, uniforms and the men who wore them enjoyed widespread popularity beyond barracks walls. A "veteran" non-com was considered a "darn good catch" for female wage-laborers, such as maids or cooks. In the words of the poet, not only "when the music sounds" did "Gertrude and Kathy and Gretchen . . . glance out from gable, gate and garden".⁷⁹

For males, the military was the only phase in their lives when, in exemplary fashion, they could directly link their own physical efforts and accomplishments with the lofty aim of the preservation of the Reich and the Kaiser's condescension.⁸⁰ After one's stint in the military, if not before, "service" and its "discipline" often became a veritable measuring-rod for assessing personal everyday existence – even when one's own social class afforded little formal recognition to such national service. In any event, the pointed critique of militarism voiced by Social Democracy – and its constant attacks on maltreatment of soldiers by their superiors – should not mislead us into falsely concluding that every wage-laborer who had

⁷⁹ D. v. Liliencron's poem "Die Musik kommt" does not express jubilation, but is rather the consciously ironic description of a familiar street scene with youthful marching soldiers and pretty girls looking on curiously; cf. D. v. Liliencron, "Die Musik kommt", in L. Reiners (ed.), *Der ewige Brunnen. Ein Hausbuch deutscher Dichtung* (Munich, 1955), pp. 474f., freely trans. here by W. Templer.

⁸⁰ Differences between regional "workers' cultures" and associated differential compliance with authority are underlined by M. Cattaruzza, "Das Kaiserbild in der Arbeiterschaft am Beispiel der Werftarbeiter in Hamburg und Stettin", in J. C. G. Röhl (ed.), *Der Ort Kaiser Wilhelms II in der deutschen Geschichte* (Munich, 1991), pp. 131–144; on the one hand, she stresses the more pronounced corporative conceptions prevalent among workers in Stettin, but on the other points to a fundamental acceptance of the monarchy and the emperor among Hamburg workers as well (the latter staged far more strikes). Over the years, their "attitude toward the state remained reserved, but was not hostile", *ibid.*, p. 140; cf. also R. J. Evans (ed.), *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich. Stimmungsberichte der Hamburger Politischen Polizei, 1892–1914* (Reinbek, 1989), pp. 322ff. In contrast, A. v. Saldern stresses the mixed attitude present at the grass-roots level in Göttingen, consisting of a strong rejection of and disinterest in the (national) "state". It is significant, however, that the topics dealt with in the local party association always concerned matters "at a far remove" from the locality itself, and thus had no direct connection with local concrete realities, *idem, Auf dem Wege zum Arbeiter-Reformismus. Parteilalltag in sozialdemokratischer Provinz, Göttingen 1870–1920* (Frankfurt/M., 1984), pp. 63ff.

ever donned a uniform was filled with nothing but rage and anger when he looked back on his days down in barracks and out on the drilling ground.

In his memoirs, Franz Rehbein, an agricultural laborer from eastern Pomerania and later an active Social Democrat who had been in uniform from 1887–1890, commented that “half the drills” had been a waste, superfluous; in his fond memory, apparently the other half had not been. August Winnig, a construction worker and SPD member, writing some thirty years after his experience in uniform (and ten years after his abandonment of the ranks of Social Democracy), recalled: “The part I liked best was the drilling, a regimen we were subject to very directly. I was astonished to discover it wasn’t so disagreeable after all. The more I mastered the movements and rifle positions, the more I loved to drill. Not only did I derive pleasure from doing a drill well myself – I also got just as great a satisfaction out of it when others performed a nice snappy drill with their rifles, or some other adroitly executed exercise”.⁸¹ Perhaps that same “quality of workmanship” which Winnig and his fellow workers strived for or valued in the industrial work place was also manifest in the analogous “perfect” execution of a crack rifle drill.

The military’s aim was to transform the formless multitude into a disciplined “mass man” – an organ capable of carrying out orders, deployable at will. Public presentations of military units were characterized by demonstrating perfect order and subordination. Moreover, this form of public self-presentation also increasingly started to have an impact on a variety of social groups appearing in the public arena from the late nineteenth century on, quite aside from what their specific interests or goals were. Both the churches and the efforts by Social Democrats to organize an “alternative culture” (Vernon Lidtke) adopted similar forms when temporarily occupying public space. At church fairs as well as on May Day, workers’ festive parades were patterned along the lines of the military: a tightly disciplined marching column. Before 1914 and during the 1920s, the close-order column appeared to be manifest proof attesting to the seriousness of members and their organizational aims – evidence of the concrete power of the church or party.⁸² Taking part in the rites of a public

⁸¹ August Winnig, *Der weite Weg* (Hamburg, 1932), pp. 70f.

⁸² For varieties of Catholic organizing, cf. J. Mooser, “Volk, Arbeiter und Bürger in der katholischen Öffentlichkeit des Kaiserreichs. Zur Sozial- und Funktionsgeschichte der deutschen Katholikentage, 1871–1913”, in H.-J. Puhle (ed.), *Bürger in der Gesellschaft der Neuzeit* (Göttingen, 1991), pp. 259–273, here pp. 266ff.; see also the apparently self-explanatory adoption of the pose and conduct of the soldier from the World War in the “Red Ruhr Army”; on self-representation, cf. H. Marchwitza, *Sturm auf Essen* (Berlin, 1930). On Social Democracy in the 1920s, see G. Hauk, “‘Armeekorps auf dem Wege zur Sonne’. Einige Bemerkungen zur kulturellen Selbstdarstellung der Arbeiterbewegung”, in D. Petzina (ed.), *Fahnen, Fäuste, Körper* (Essen, 1986), pp. 69–89. Details indicate the extent to which the military habitus provided the yardstick: note, for example, the (printed) “Kommando-Kunde, für den Gau Oberbayern-Schwaben des Reichsbanners Schwarz-Rot-

demonstration of strength apparently also contained its own attractions for the participants, producing a sense of “pleasure” in the rigors of the close-order “drill” – laboriously practiced and finally perfected.

Politics

In a surprising formulation, Alexander Kluge termed politics the “enhanced intensity of every everyday feeling, every practice”.⁸³ Seen from that perspective, *Politik* is not limited to a specific concrete area. Neither the regulation of “public affairs” nor the binding distribution of scarce resources is a defining characteristic. On the other hand, politics is not rooted in the dichotomous distinction between “friend” and “foe” (in the sense of Carl Schmitt). Nor is it definable in terms of action based on the division of labor – “politics as a profession” (Max Weber) – or institutions. Likewise, its core is not “interests associated with the distribution, maintenance or transfer of power” (Weber).⁸⁴ If politics – conceived as a constantly realizable “compression” or “intensification” of feeling – can

Gold” (Munich, 1931), p. 1: “The leadership must be in a position to direct the organization as if it were an individual man . . .”; at the same time, the “exercises [should not be allowed] to degenerate into dull and dreary military drills” (p. 2) – a warning that only makes sense viewed in connection with the fact that such “drills” often were precisely that: a kind of military exercise; Bundesarchiv Koblenz, NS 26/800. Usually ignored are, however, the ways in which women reacted to this, and how they often dealt with “military airs and graces” privately and in public, ranging from love affairs between soldiers and servant girls to the sending of small gifts, “tokens of love”, to men at the front.

⁸³ A. Kluge, “Das Politische als Intensitätsgrad alltäglicher Gefühle”, *Freibeuter*, 1 (1979), pp. 56–62, here 61; cf. A. Kluge and O. Negt, *Maßverhältnisse des Politischen* (Frankfurt/M, 1992), pp. 91ff.; what is involved here is *not* a “fixation on any individual experiencing of pleasure and individual death” – a view which Thanos Lipowatz criticizes in his thought-provoking analysis of subjectivity focusing on Lacan (and Freud), see T. Lipowatz, *Die Verleugnung des Politischen. Die Ethik des Symbolischen bei Jacques Lacan* (Weinheim and Berlin, 1986), above quote, p. 240. To be sure, Carl Schmitt has employed the notion of the “ultimate intensity of connectedness or separateness” in his writings about “the Political”; see C. Schmitt, *Der Begriff des Politischen* (Munich and Leipzig, 1932), p. 14. In contrast to the point made here, however, he argues that this “connectedness or separateness” is totally distinct from moral or aesthetical (or other) domains and judgements.

⁸⁴ M. Weber, “Politik als Beruf” (1919), in M. Weber, *Gesammelte Politische Schriften* (Tübingen, 1958), pp. 493–548, here 494; on the spectrum of diverse conceptions of what is politics, cf. for example, D. Berg-Schlosser and Th. Stammen, *Einführung in die Politikwissenschaft*, 5th ed. (Munich, 1992), pp. 22ff. Th. Lipowatz develops an especially intriguing analysis in *Die Verleugnung des Politischen*, arguing passionately for a distinction between “public” and “private” spheres. In classical political theory, this opposition was developed on the basis of the “law” (p. 196, see also pp. 172ff.) and facilitates that postulation of the subject not being identical with itself that the author supports (p. 18). However, he proceeds on the assumption that in attempts to overcome the separation between those spheres, the dimension of “the social” was hypothesized to be all-encompassing or all-penetrating. As I see it, that does not affect Negt/Kluge or this attempt either, because the basic supposition here is that there is an insoluble difference between what is individual and what is “social” (despite all the tensely charged relations, including gaps and ruptures).

be localized at all, then it is not at the level of groups or organizations. No: it is *individuals* who “make” politics. They are the ones who experience emotion; at the same time, they are the actors who relate to feelings in their daily practice, creating or suppressing them. Even though Kluge does not make specific mention of *Eigensinn*, it can be regarded as politics par excellence when viewed in his emotion-centered terms of analysis, a kind of “enhanced intensity of every everyday feeling, every practice”.

In the investigation of everyday reality, the forms in which feeling and action are “intensified” appear to be highly diverse and complex. They do not exclude association with other forms of longer-term strategy or even dramatic action. Nonetheless, it is possible to distinguish among different “arenas” of politics.⁸⁵

In their specific practices of appropriating “given” conditions for life and survival, individuals experience pleasure or suffering. “Intensifications” are often related to the more narrow socio-spatial confines of workshops or neighborhoods. In this sense, an *arena of everyday politics* is indeed a meaningful concept. This should be distinguished from a separate arena involving supralocal control mechanisms and networking, one in which the state becomes a central reference point as a symbol and institutional focus of “sociality”. The unfolding of this *arena of formalized and state-oriented politics* is what is generally regarded as the realization and implementation of the “modern state”.

The activities of (state) officials and administrations have altered the shape of the arena in which everyday politics is made and experienced. Notwithstanding all the fluctuations and ruptures, such activities have increased markedly since the late seventeenth century, at least in central and western Europe. Nonetheless, micrological investigations indicate that everyday politics was not pared down or “absorbed” by the actions of these regulating authorities or the measures imposed by policing agents. On the contrary: it was everyday politics that expanded, increasingly code-termining the scope and contours of formalized politics. Both arenas can be conceptualized as aspects of a single field of force and action.⁸⁶

“Intensified” feelings and practice are not bound to the level of quotidian life and struggle. Rather, they are often related *simultaneously* to

⁸⁵ The term used here has been stimulated by ideas elaborated by Theodore J. Lowi; in a seminal article, he distinguished several types of constellations of interest and political activity, postulating three political “arenas”: “distributive”, “regulatory” and “redistributive”, cf. idem, “Decision-Making vs. Policy-Making”, *Public Administration Review*, 30 (1970), pp. 314–25.

⁸⁶ Note in this regard the substantial contribution of Foucault’s theses, persistently ignored in previous historical analyses, on the “ubiquitousness of power” qua relation, not as a thing or “possession” (though these latter are utilized by individuals or groups in interactions and situations – a point which Foucault fails adequately to acknowledge), cf. idem, *Sexualität und Wahrheit*, vol. 1, pp. 113ff.; also useful to examine in this connection is Foucault’s thinking about the forms of “self-affirmation” mediated via perception or respect for the body, *ibid.*, pp. 147ff.

both the far and the near, the insignificant and the “big time”. Of course, a certain asymmetry persists. The power of emotion and physical practice is manifested in innumerable refractions in every arena. But feelings do not constitute some sort of formless “raw material”. The ability to get by in everyday life is undoubtedly also even a part of a total concentration on formalized and state-oriented politics: even state officials, parliamentarians, or party functionaries have their private lives. Nonetheless, the everyday world of functionaries and professional politicians of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries is especially marked by the constant reference to formalized and state-oriented politics.

In a study of the work experiences of linen weavers in northern France around 1900, William Reddy has shed helpful light on the forms in which interlinkages can occur. That linkage was directly realized within the matrix of the work process. Insistence on maintaining the difference between fathers and sons (which simultaneously marked the divide between skilled and menial workers) was in keeping with the interest of those same skilled workers (and fathers) in preserving their power on the shop floor and protecting their wages vis-à-vis the owners and entrepreneurs.⁸⁷ Yet this example is not reducible to a zero-sum game. Collective action to maintain and shield a “wage scale” structured in terms of age and qualification was not based on ignoring the actual differences between the men. On the contrary: it was precisely the intensity of support for maintaining the vertical inequality among the workers, perceived to be fair and justifiable, which ultimately spurred on action against third parties – those who wished to siphon off profits and tighten their controlling grip. The “intensification” of emotion did not peak in manifestations of class antagonism. Rather, it remained something equivocal, ambiguous. The arena of everyday politics was preserved, and even bolstered, alongside that of public and formalized action.

Power blocs of the political regime as well as supralocally organized opposition movements all followed their own rhythms of alteration, radical change or continuity. This applies to socialist and Christian trade unions as well as the Christian (in particular Roman Catholic) workers’ associations and the “party of the proletariat” – the SPD (until 1917/18), and the later Social Democratic, socialist and communist parties spawned in the wake of its break-up.⁸⁸ Specific boundaries and horizons of attention

⁸⁷ W. M. Reddy, “Entschlüsseln von Lohnforderungen: Der Tarif und der Lebenszyklus in den Leinenfabriken von Armentières (1889–1904)”, in R. Berdahl *et al.*, *Klassen und Kultur* (Frankfurt/M., 1982), pp. 77–107.

⁸⁸ On the SPD and the associated Free Unions up to 1914, cf. G. A. Ritter, “Die Sozialdemokratie im Deutschen Kaiserreich in sozialgeschichtlicher Perspektive”, *Historische Zeitschrift*, 249 (1989), pp. 295–362; idem (ed.), *Der Aufstieg der deutschen Arbeiterbewegung. Sozialdemokratie und Freie Gewerkschaften im Parteiensystem und Sozialmilieu des Kaiserreichs* (Munich, 1990); on a Bavarian case deviating from the customary type of large northern German urban conglomeration, see K. H. Pohl, *Die Münchner Arbeiterbewegung. Sozialdemokratische Partei, Freie Gewerkschaften, Staat und Gesellschaft in München 1890–1915*

emerged in the various organizations; activists cultivated their own fields of engagement, often differing from locality to locality.⁸⁹ The step-by-step nationalization of social insurance programs and the enactment of legislation for the maintenance of industrial health and safety standards starting in the 1880s and 1890s created a new interface of contact between the working masses and the representatives of state authority. At the same time, these state programmes entailed heightened interaction with functionaries of workers' organizations: both in formal arbitration proceedings as well as in their own independent workers' bureaus, they acted as the trustees and champions of the interests of their "class comrades".⁹⁰

(Munich, 1992); in his *The Alternative Culture: Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany* (Oxford and New York, 1985), V. Lidtke examines "alternative" orientations in the cultural practices of the Social Democratic workers' movement; a highly convincing combination of reconstruction of ways of living and political organizing is presented in W. Maderthaner (ed.), *Sozialdemokratie und Habsburgstaat* (Vienna, 1988). Two instructive local monographs that consider work with persons seeking assistance (in the offices of the workers' organizations and trade unions) and relations *between* the organizations, exploring the local limits to "revolutionary" programmes (in Frankfurt and Cologne): R. Roth, *Gewerkschaftskartell und Sozialpolitik in Frankfurt am Main* (Frankfurt/M, 1991) and M. Faust, *Sozialer Burgfrieden im Ersten Weltkrieg. Sozialistische und christliche Arbeiterbewegung in Köln* (Essen, 1992). The literature on developments after 1918 is disparate and uneven; some brief references to studies containing further bibliography should suffice, though it must be mentioned that the various oppositional groupings and splinter factions are given only marginal consideration. For the SPD, see H. A. Winkler, *Von der Revolution zur Stabilisierung. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1918–1924* (Berlin and Bonn, 1984); idem, *Der Schein der Normalität. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1924–1930* (Berlin and Bonn, 1985); H. A. Winkler, *Der Weg in die Katastrophe. Arbeiter und Arbeiterbewegung in der Weimarer Republik 1930–1933* (Berlin and Bonn, 1987); for the KPD, S. Koch-Baumgarten, *Aufstand der Avantgarde. Die Märzaktion der KPD 1921* (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1986); H. Weber, *Die Wandlung des deutschen Kommunismus* (Frankfurt/M, 1969); for the Christian organizations, see M. Schneider, *Die Christlichen Gewerkschaften, 1894–1933* (Bonn, 1982); D.-M. Krenn, *Die Christliche Arbeiterbewegung in Bayern vom Ersten Weltkrieg bis 1933* (Mainz, 1991); on the Catholic Zentrum party, cf. E. L. Evans, *The German Center Party 1870–1933* (Carbondale, 1981); for the "Yellows" to 1914, see K. Mattheier, *Die Gelben* (Düsseldorf, 1973).

⁸⁹ In this connection, there is a highly illuminating comparison between the local SPD organizations in Braunschweig and Hannover and their "political styles" during the World War and down to about 1920 in F. Boll, *Massenbewegungen in Niedersachsen 1906–1920* (Bonn, 1981), esp. pp. 196ff., 251ff, 313ff.

⁹⁰ Reports from the social arbitration courts before 1914 are informative, though limited to individual cases, see R. Wissell, *Aus meinen Lebensjahren* (Berlin, 1983); see also U. Borsdorf, *Hans Böckler. Arbeit und Leben eines Gewerkschafters von 1875 bis 1945* (Cologne, 1982); for a more general conspectus, see G. A. Ritter, *Sozialversicherung in Deutschland und England. Entstehung und Grundzüge im Vergleich* (Munich, 1983), pp. 62–75 and U. Frevert, *Krankheit als politisches Problem, 1780–1880. Soziale Unterschichten in Preußen zwischen medizinischer Polizei und staatlicher Sozialversicherung* (Göttingen, 1984). On the official position and the struggle of interests at the level of the central government regarding the further development of protective measures in social policy, cf. H.-J. von Berlepsch, *"Neuer Kurs" im Kaiserreich? Die Arbeiterpolitik des Freiherrn von Berlepsch 1890 bis 1896* (Bonn, 1987); on state strategies for control, the best source is still Klaus Saul, *Staat, Indus-*

After 1918, the structures and duties of the social-welfare state spelled out in the Weimar constitution had a major impact in various spheres, including the administrative and judicial regulation of work relations. The forerunners here were trade union functionaries who rapidly transformed themselves into experts on wage law (motivated in part by their own interest in preserving a permanent job).⁹¹ In their eyes, wage agreements were the only effective instrument, and functioned as a symbol for the implementation of workers' rights. In this perspective, efforts by individuals (and their families) to get by and survive coincided with class and party interests in areas such as wage agreements and agreed working hours as well as insurance against risks on the job.

Experiences and the various forms of action in the industrial work place exhibited a characteristic "long wave" of their own. That wave was only partially linked with the fluctuations in state policy; on the other hand, it was certainly not isomorphic with movements in the economy or among social groups. From the 1870s, in almost all industrial branches work with machine tools focussed time and again on the "fit" of the specific products.⁹² Inseparable from this was the ongoing struggle over the type of wages and their mode of calculation, especially the practice (and division) of team piecework rates.

These conflicts were, however, largely separate from those revolving around legal conditions, wages and wage agreements. Only fundamental issues such as these latter directly impinged on the arena of formalized state-level politics.⁹³ And only when it came to conflicts in the sphere of wage policy did the degree of coalition freedom restricted by – or conceded by – the representatives of the respective political regime become an important factor.

The nearer ordinances and functionaries came to affecting the actual praxis of work itself, the more circumscribed was the degree of penetration of *this* mode of political regulation. Even fascism changed nothing in that

trie, Arbeiterbewegung im Kaiserreich. Zur Innen- und Sozialpolitik des Wilhelminischen Deutschland 1903–1914 (Düsseldorf, 1974).

⁹¹ On such union bureaucrats viewed from the perspective of a contemporary observer, see R. Michels, *Zur Soziologie des modernen Parteiwesens in der modernen Demokratie. Untersuchungen über die oligarchischen Tendenzen des Gruppenlebens* ([1911/1925], Stuttgart, 1958); cf. now esp. D. Brunner, *Bürokratie und Politik des Allgemeinen Deutschen Gewerkschaftsbundes 1918/19 bis 1933* (Cologne, 1992).

⁹² Cf. the measures on "Improving Efficiency in Industrial Production" which the Reich Minister for Armaments and Munition, Albert Speer, tried to impose in February 1942, particularly in the area of machine manufacture, see *Historisches Archiv Krupp WA 41/5–56* and the "empirical reports" later published as a "confidential memo": *Hauptausschuß Maschinen* (ed.), *Fließende Fertigung in deutschen Maschinenfabriken* (Essen, 1943).

⁹³ In connection with the quite different English context, see the debate in recent years on "rank and fileism" – i.e., whether conflicts between union functionaries and "simple" members should be seen as the crucial issue in labor and working-class history, or whether it is more productive to view these conflicts in the context of "industrial relations", increasingly influenced and regulated by the state; cf. the debate between R. Price, "'What's in a Name?'"

regard. The continuity of this distance maintenance may also have been bound up with the fact that some labor functionaries entertained their own notions about their specific organizational “base”. In his diary, an anonymous shop steward in a large spinning mill, for example, complained bitterly about the “foolishness of the masses”. After all, the main job as he saw it was to “deal with the dozens of demands and desires of the workers in daily interaction with factory management”. The individual cases he described were actually a corroboration for him of just “how much valuable time” had been wasted “by the Sisyphean task that had to be performed”. It was, he contended, irksome and repulsive to be drawn into all these mundane little quarrels and conflicts – for example, disputes regarding locker space or suspicions about “pilfering by fellow workers”. The job was a thankless one, involving nothing but more and more claims by workers, ever more outrageous. In this functionary’s view, workers seemed driven by pure selfishness. Yet it is noteworthy that one of the free trade unions found his diary interesting enough to publish; the volume appeared in 1925.⁹⁴

Such opportunities for friction provided an impetus for new strategies stemming from the “other side”. In the wake of restructuring on the national level and in the armaments industry after 1914, entrepreneurs and managers spearheaded new forms of paternalistic co-opting of workers. The concept and the ideology of the so-called “plant community” (*Werksgemeinschaft*) were specifically designed to encourage personal loyalty to the firm, especially in large enterprises.⁹⁵ This was also an approach that after 1933 perfectly accorded with Nazi notions of the “plant work force” (*Betriebsgefölgenschaft* – and not only when it came to the question of who had the power of ultimate decision on the shop floor and beyond!⁹⁶ In the close bond forged between performance for cash remuneration

Workplace History and ‘Rank and Filism’”, *International Review of Social History*, 34 (1989), pp. 62–77; J. Cronin, “The ‘Rank and File’ and the Social History of the Working Class”, *ibid.*, pp. 78–88 and J. Zeitlin, “‘Rank and Filism’ and Labor History: A Rejoinder to Price and Cronin”, *ibid.*, pp. 89–102.

⁹⁴ Deutscher Textilarbeiter-Verband (ed.), *Aus dem Tagebuch eines Betriebsrates* (Berlin, 1925); quotes *ibid.*, pp. 3, 6, 8 f. I am grateful to Volker Jäger, Leipzig, for this reference.

⁹⁵ See my “Deutsche Qualitätsarbeit”, “Spielereien”, pp. 188ff.; on the following, also cf. my “‘Ehre der Arbeit’: Industriearbeiter und Macht der Symbole. Zur Reichweite symbolischer Orientierungen im Nationalsozialismus”, in A. Lüdtke, *Eigensinn. Fabrikalltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik* (Hamburg, 1993) (a shorter version in English translation as “The ‘Dignity of Labour’. Industrial Workers and the Power of Symbols under National Socialism”, in D. Crew (ed.), *Recent Developments in German Social History* (forthcoming). Re the “long wave” of industrial paternalism, see also the material in K.-H. Gorges, *Der christlich geföhrte Industriebetrieb im 19. Jahrhundert und das Modell Villeroy & Boch* (Stuttgart, 1989); on the problematic more generally and for a French “case”, cf. G. Noiriel, “Du ‘patronage’ au ‘paternalisme’: la restructuration des formes de domination de la main-d’oeuvre ouvrière dans l’industrie métallurgique française”, *Mouvement social*, No. 144 (1988), pp. 17–35.

⁹⁶ In greater detail in M. Frese, *Betriebspolitik im “Dritten Reich”. Deutsche Arbeitsfront, Unternehmer und Staatsbürokratie in der westdeutschen Großindustrie 1933–1939* (Paderborn, 1991).

and symbolic awards for “plant loyalty”, even immediate family members were offered a chance to reap direct material benefits: summer camp for a worker’s son, sewing courses for his or her daughter.

“Generational linkages” and “shifting involvements”

In historical studies of societies in the modern era, the term “movement” almost inevitably connotes an underlying image of oscillating rise and fall. Arrows of varying length serve to illustrate the moving dynamics. Only comparatively recently has the recurrence of arc-shaped movements been observed in biographical trajectories: i.e., for generations now income among industrial workers during the final years of their employment careers has been seen gradually to decline.⁹⁷ This dynamic process is associated with the sense of belonging to a group claiming reciprocally that all members share a certain set of experiences. It also entails an exclusion: anyone lacking (and who could not have had) this fund of biographical experience is automatically discounted out, distanced. One striking example of this concretely experienced (and nonetheless mythical) “*generational linkage*” (K. Mannheim) is participation in the (First) World War.

The constant rise in the numbers of voters or sporadic increases in the membership of the SPD and other working-class organizations provided the generation born before 1880 with good reason for solid hope for a better life in the future. In the context of everyday life, there were phases marked by rising levels of real wages – signaling a definite “advancement”, despite constant substantial fluctuations in the amount of disposable income. In the two decades preceding 1914, the synchrony of these growth cycles could be interpreted as a guarantee heralding a “long wave” of further improvements. Yet after 1919/1920 – and the failure of the mass strike movements particularly in the Ruhr and in central Germany – such longer-term expectations were dashed, leading to a mood of massive disappointment. In the case of the generation born after 1900, the picture was different. Their “rite of passage” was experienced in the midst of industrialized, destructive chaos, namely the war (if indeed they had managed to survive).⁹⁸ Thus, there were two totally different generational experiences among adults in the 1920s. Nonetheless, these very diverse experiential

⁹⁷ See especially, H. Schäfer, “Arbeitsverdienst im Lebenszyklus. Zur Einkommensmobilität von Arbeitern”, *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, 21 (1981), pp. 237–267.

⁹⁸ On the patterns of interpretation of the war generation, see E. Jünger, *In Stahlgewittern* ([1920], 32nd pr. Stuttgart, 1990) and K. Theweleit, *Männerphantasien* (Frankfurt/M, 1977); an alternative view is presented in E. Toller, *Eine Jugend in Deutschland* ([1933], Munich, 1978), (= *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. IV). For a psychoanalytic approach to the generational experience of those born in 1906–1910, see P. Loewenberg, “The Psychohistorical Origins of the Nazi Youth Cohort”, *American Historical Review*, 76 (1971), pp. 1457–1502; an examination of prewar, wartime and postwar generations in the context of World War II can be found in W. Deppe, *Drei Generationen Arbeiterleben. Eine sozio-biographische Darstellung* (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1982). The narrative construction of “family” in family narrat-

patterns in the older and younger generations were closely interconnected. The loss of a predictable and “normal” intact world – either experienced personally in moments of mortal danger or vicariously in tales told by a father, brother, fiancé or husband – delineated the presence of a chilling common denominator mediated by the Great War.⁹⁹

From the mid-1920s (and in another guise in the 1950s), points of tension shifted once again. Millions of children had to learn to cope with the loss of their father killed during the war. On the other hand (or perhaps precisely for this reason), after 1924/25 (and in the later 1950s) this new generation was eager to seize the opportunities for increased consumption offered by the expanding urban centers. It would appear that in the eyes of the generation born roughly after 1910, the binding power of the older notion of workers’ respectability had been drastically attenuated. For them, the guiding principle was no longer a “secure”, “orderly” and respected life in the bosom of relatives, neighbors and fellow workers, but “getting ahead on one’s own”, “making it”.¹⁰⁰ This *cultural divide* between the generations was particularly evident in leisure patterns, such as the virtually “addictive” passion among the younger generation for motion pictures, a preference for American pop music or fast motorcycles. The older generation was dismayed, especially the “veteran” industrial workers and experienced SPD and communist party activists.¹⁰¹

Following hyperinflation in the autumn of 1923, there was another life-pattern shift for the older generation, namely a pronounced decline in the

ives is thematized in an exploratory study by I. Vesper and A. Weber, *Familien-Geschichten. Mündliche Überlieferung von Zeitgeschichte in Familien* (Hamburg, 1991).

⁹⁹ This experience of rupture is also reflected in the notion that a new type of man – i.e., the amalgam of frontline soldier and (industrial-skilled) worker – could remedy the supposed evils of the bourgeois age, cf. E. Jünger, *Der Arbeiter* ([1932], Stuttgart, 1985); on Jünger’s totalistic (and thus “metapolitically” oriented) conception of “work” as the aesthetic linking of performance and pleasure, see the penetrating study by H. Segeberg, “Krieg als Arbeit – Ernst Jünger und der Erste Weltkrieg”, in H. Segeberg (ed.), *Vom Wert der Arbeit. Zur literarischen Konstitution des Wertkomplexes “Arbeit” in der deutschen Literatur (1770–1930)* (Tübingen, 1986), pp. 335–378.

¹⁰⁰ Cf. U. Herbert, “Zur Entwicklung der Ruhrarbeiterschaft 1930 bis 1960 aus erfahrungsgeschichtlicher Perspektive”, in L. Niethammer and A. v. Plato, ‘Wir kriegen jetzt andere Zeiten’, pp. 19–52, here p. 22f.

¹⁰¹ J. Wickham, “Working-Class Movement and Working-Class Life: Frankfurt am Main during the Weimar Republic”, *Social History*, 8 (1983), pp. 315–343; on the popular mass culture of the 1920s, see A. v. Saldern, “Arbeiterkulturbewegung in Deutschland in der Zwischenkriegszeit”, in Boll, *Arbeiterkulturen*, pp. 29–70, esp. 59ff.; on gender-specific aspects, cf. A. v. Saldern, “Cultural Conflicts, Popular Mass Culture, and the Question of Nazi Success: The Eilenriede Motorcycle Races, 1924–39”, *German Studies Review*, 15 (1992), pp. 317–338. Studies of generational conflicts among workers have tended to presuppose a “previous” unanimity of outlook and sense of collectivity. In such a view, the success of the political propaganda and practice of National Socialism, which propagated “redemption” by “honor” and “(folk) community”, is reductively conceptualized as nothing but a reaction to the 1920s. Such a perspective fails to grapple with the question of the extent to which longer-term ambivalent attitudes present in worker orientations were indeed significant – and lent themselves to being usefully “exploited” by the Nazis.

worker migration. There was an unmistakable geographical solidification in working-class life.¹⁰² One feature of this immobility was the enormous rise in popularity of workers' cultural movements (rather than overtly "political" organizations). Along with the new policy of direct confrontation between communists and Social Democrats, the importance of local ties was probably contributed to a change in popular phraseology during this period: expressions gained currency that presupposed or stressed a fixed local position "in town", as well as the kindred political rhetoric of political "camps".

A readiness to engage in action, in conjunction with reluctance to engage in any form of political organization in the narrower sense, were among the consequences of the ruptures and shifts between the generations directly observed and noted by party leader and functionaries. It remains an open question whether (and to what extent) experiences with the state apparatus and society shaped in the Kaiserreich were actually shattered or simply brushed aside: e.g., experiences of class separation (such as social exclusion) or the formation of an independent "alternative culture" (Lidtke). In any event, in the early 1920s, *national orientations* had become a highly visible factor in the arena of supralocal politics, and had also begun to spread among the "proletarian masses". Before 1914, discourse within the Socialist International had hardly gone beyond the level of grandiloquent rhetoric at political meetings, even among Social Democratic activists. For the majority of workers, whether politically organized or not, reference points like the "Reich" or the "Germans" (or the "Saxons" or "Bavarians") were far more salient and palpable than appeals to any global (and thus totally abstract) bond of camaraderie, the rallying cry of "class solidarity".¹⁰³

Moreover, the murky underside of working-class politics was involved: the presence of *ethnic* (and *racist*) intra-class tensions.¹⁰⁴ Poles, Masurians,

¹⁰² On this, see remarks in D. Langewiesche, "Mobilität in deutschen Mittel- und Großstädten. Aspekte der Binnenwanderung im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert", in W. Conze and U. Engelhardt (eds.), *Arbeiter im Industrialisierungsprozeß* (Stuttgart, 1979), pp. 70–93, esp. table 2, pp. 84f.; F. Lenger, D. Langewiesche, "Räumliche Mobilität in Deutschland vor und nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg", in A. Schildt and A. Sywottek (eds.), *Massenwohnung und Eigenheim* (Frankfurt/M and New York, 1988), pp. 103–126; however, such global figures on mobility do not reveal whether the various movements (and patterns of immobility), quite different depending on such factors as occupation, formal qualification, industrial branch, age and sex (see Langewiesche, "Mobilität", pp. 78ff.), were universally changed in the process.

¹⁰³ Cf. v. Saldern, *Auf dem Wege zum Arbeiter-Reformismus*, pp. 64f.; Evans, *Kneipengespräche im Kaiserreich*, pp. 322ff. and especially 361ff. On the question of a fundamentally national or "patriotic" orientation – i.e., appeals to "the people of England" or "the British people" and not to the priority of class – an attitude present even among the unpropertied and wage-laboring classes of industrial England, see the illuminating study by P. Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class 1848–1914* (Cambridge, 1991).

¹⁰⁴ Chr. Kleßmann, *Polnische Bergarbeiter im Ruhrgebiet 1870–1945. Soziale Integration und nationale Subkultur einer Minderheit in der deutschen Industriegesellschaft* (Göttingen, 1978);

Russians and Italians were not seen by German workers as fellow laborers, “class comrades” or representatives of exotic “subcultures”. Rather, laborers from the “Slavic and Romance-language countries” were often rejected as unwanted competitors. What mattered was not just the fear (or belief based on past experience) that they could depress wages in the labor market; the differences in the everyday habits or behavior of these foreigners also upset their German counterparts. Factory inspectors and even union members expressed concern about “concepts of cleanliness” that were grievously “underdeveloped in comparison to our own standards” amongst alien workers temporarily hired for construction “campaigns” and longer-term jobs in mining and the steel mills. In a report on attempts to break a strike by transport workers in Berlin in 1904, the Social Democratic paper *Vorwärts* was hardly able to restrain itself in denouncing “Russian garbage cossacks”.¹⁰⁵ “National” vocabulary was thus often loaded with a double (ethnic, racist and social) meaning: the brusque rejection of “all those aliens”, along with the drawing of a clear stratificational distinction between “us” and “them”: German workers vs. the foreign “underclass”.¹⁰⁶

After 1918, the struggles in the Ruhr in 1923 led to a crescendo of national feeling and tension, extending beyond existing class divisions.¹⁰⁷ In this heated confrontation with the “victorious powers”, expectations were apparently raised that served as a mass rallying point long before the advent of the Great Depression in late 1929. The “national” foci of such an orientation submerging class differences were not limited to the level of formal politics. Trade unionists and representatives of management alike were quick to discover the industrial key to overcoming the economic crisis and counteracting the widely felt humiliation of the German nation-

for an enlightening parallel from Appalachia, cf. the study by J. W. Totter, *Coal, Class and Color: Blacks in Southern West Virginia, 1915–1932* (Urbana, 1990).

¹⁰⁵ U. Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany, 1880–1980*, trans. W. Templer (Ann Arbor, 1990), pp. 57–72, quotes pp. 57f.; on transport workers, overlooked by Herbert, and the rigorously negative defensive attitude prevalent toward them in the Social Democratic movement, see Th. Lindenberger, “Straßenpolitik. Zur Sozialgeschichte der öffentlichen Ordnung in Berlin” (Ph.D., Technical University Berlin, 1992), pp. 289ff.

¹⁰⁶ The local “underclass” – which generally had only migrated into most industrial combinations one or two generations earlier especially in the Ruhr – has been little examined to date; a penetrating photographic study on such a neighborhood (‘Segeroth’) in Essen can be found in F. Bajohr and M. Gaigalat (eds.), *Essens wilder Norden. Segeroth – ein Viertel zwischen Mythos und Stigma*, (Hamburg 1990).

¹⁰⁷ Cf. M. Ruck, *Die freien Gewerkschaften im Ruhrkampf 1923* (Cologne, 1986); however, Ruck also points to the limits of this “charged emotional situation”, noting “extreme right-wing sentiments” among those who had little or no experience in organizations, cf. M. Ruck, *Bollwerk gegen Hitler? Arbeiterschaft, Arbeiterbewegung und die Anfänge des Nationalsozialismus* (Cologne, 1988), pp. 56–73; but see also references to the protesting behavior of “socially declassé” young men in the ‘20s who had flocked to join the separatist movements in the Rhineland, cf. J. Thomassen, “Arbeiterschaft und rheinischer Separatismus im Krisenjahr 1923”, *Geschichte im Westen*, 7 (1992), pp. 53–61.

state: namely a rejuvenated emphasis on the old watchword of “German quality workmanship”.¹⁰⁸ Thus, specifically among the workers, the seeds of organized “national” agitation later sowed by the Nazis fell on fertile soil that had already been ploughed.

To characterize the withdrawal from “leftist” movements that has just been outlined as a “retreat into the private sphere” would be to narrow the aperture of historiographic vision, concentrating solely on a single isolated aspect. Such one-dimensional yardsticks fail to do justice to the practice of the multitude, especially their “shifting involvements”.¹⁰⁹ The dynamics entailed oscillation back and forth rather than a rigorous either-or divide. In his memoirs, recorded starting in 1919, the lathe operator Paul Maik noted the following dissimilar phenomena, reporting them *seriatim*: local prices for groceries, a distant catastrophe at sea, his daughter’s toothache, and the results of elections for the factory committee and the Reichstag. Maik’s span of attention encompassed more than what was either public or private. As separate as was work in his garden from the plant lockout or from changes in the Reichstag majority, the interconnections between these disparate phenomena were still quite clear: party politics and government policy were not considered something “totally different” and distant from the realm of everyday concerns. On the other hand, the tenor of one’s personal life was not rendered meaningful solely on the basis of the pronouncements and activities of the (professional) politicians. The “intensity of private affairs” retained its own specificity, space and priority. This gave rise to a basic and insoluble ambivalence: the individual and familial sphere formed the basis for participation in the public arena, while simultaneously providing a space for retreat, a private corner for putting some distance between yourself and the broader society, a bit of breathing space.¹¹⁰

Experience and symbolic practice: “German quality workmanship”

Human action and behavior facilitates and supports experiences, but can also destroy them. Experiences for their part, stimulate perceptions, but can also function as a filter. At the same time, experiences or “*Erlebnisse*, singled out, distinguished by attention”¹¹¹ facilitate that behavior which “realizes given conditions”, accepting, appropriating and changing them.

¹⁰⁸ Lüdtké, “Deutsche Qualitätsarbeit”, “Spielereien”, pp. 182 f.

¹⁰⁹ A. O. Hirschman, *Shifting Involvements* (Princeton, 1982).

¹¹⁰ In this connection, also note H. Rosenstrauch’s precise observations on the “organizational culture” and ordinary commonplace nature of common bonds of understanding – as well as isolation (in everyday life!) – among Austrian (card-carrying) communists and socialists from the 1930s on, but esp. from the 1950s until the 1980s, cf. *idem*, *Beim Sichten der Erbschaft: Wiener Bilder für das Museum einer untergehenden Kultur; eine Nacherzählung* (Mannheim, 1992).

¹¹¹ Schütz and Luckmann, *Strukturen der Lebenswelt*, p. 14; see also note 23.

Put in another way, action, behavior and interpretation are reciprocally interrelated. Toiling in order to cope with things and to relate to (or distance oneself from) events is based on perceptions of the world and of others that inevitably contain interpretations. Symbols provide representations for needs as well as for calculations of interests. But symbols are not reflecting “mirrors”. Rather, they *illuminate* both objects and persons, highlighting some distinguishing characteristics while obscuring others. Thus, it was possible to link increased labor effort in 1938 or 1942 with the “greatness of the Reich”; such acceleration in the name of the national effort could be encouraged, even justified. Take another more personal example: back in 1900, a marital row did not have to be interpreted as clear proof of a lack of respect for one’s husband, but could be seen as form of punishment for a wife’s disregard for the “natural” inequality between the sexes, a supposed “given fact” in biological and ethical terms. For their part, such interpretations generated actions designed to underscore their saliency. In other words: the appropriation and production of symbols mobilizes both interpretive and intrusive action.

This understanding of the nature and function of symbols derives from suggestions by the English anthropologist Victor Turner. In his *Forest of Symbols*, he analysed practices among the Ndembu that show the universe and human history in a new light.¹¹² In Turner’s view, symbols do not simply mirror a tertiary element – they do not point to a signified entity beneath and behind their referent, but rather they have their *own* justification and importance. Symbols always have a bi-directional effect as stimuli: they encourage cognitive meanings, and at the same time address emotive and sensory needs. Symbols generate conceptions about something “exalted”, along with emotions of loving care or disgust. They make “powerful” phenomena and “grand” concepts come alive, while simultaneously stimulating personal sensations. The latter in turn contain some recollection of the reality of that “powerful and exalted” thing.

One such symbol that was salient and meaningful for the great majority of workers, facilitating a sense of understanding extending beyond any one social class, was encapsulated in the image and concept of “German quality workmanship” (though it should be borne in mind that there was no consensus among all workers as a result of this symbol). Differing experiences and their interpretations overlapped in the concept denoted by this formula. Initially, an abiding ingredient was a suggestion of manual labor – a straightforward mode of activity, but with the added special value associated with physically exhausting work performed using the simplest of equipment. One typical example was the shoveling common to road

¹¹² V. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca and London, 1973), pp. 27ff., esp. pp. 48ff.; V. Turner, “Symbols in African Ritual”, in J. L. Dolgin, J. S. Kemnitzer and D. M. Schneider (eds.), *Symbolic Anthropology* (New York, 1977), pp. 183–194.

construction gangs, or the tapping of blast furnaces. Of course, manual labor had been elaborated and upgraded in the craft trades and industry, expanding to encompass the category of "quality workmanship". This included the notion of orderliness – a value expected to be upheld in the work place. But above all else, this concept of genuine labor was rooted in that manual "dexterity" (*Handfertigkeit*) which derived from a fundamental knowledge of the sequencing of the work process at the point of production itself – intimate familiarity with both tools and materials. Essentially, it was characterized by the sense of confidence and experience founded on skill in handling the most "modern" machine tools. It was this "skillful dexterity" – and it alone – which made it possible to create a string of high-quality products from what had been ordered and sketched out on the drawing boards.

Certain groups of workers felt a special affinity for descriptions of "work" in words or visual images. But even more than this, the formula of "quality workmanship" was reflected in patterns of industrial development that had significantly shaped the physiognomy not just of individual groups, but of entire regions and regional societies. Specialized "flexible production" had by no means ground to a halt in the heavy shadow of "mass production" based on a highly complex division of labor. In the manufacture of machine tools, the production of precision instruments (such as clocks and scales) and weapons, flexible methods had never become outmoded and been replaced.¹¹³ Specialized production from the days of home industry continued to be practiced in the manufacture of cutting tools and small-scale iron products in and around the cities of Remscheid and Solingen, as well as in the making of jewelry in the Pforzheim area or clock manufacture in the Black Forest. This was also true when it came to the sector of machine and vehicle production in central Württemberg (and for industrial "islands" in southern Swabia, such as rifle and handgun production in Oberndorf). There was a continuous process of further industrial development and "modernizing" of specific qualifications along highly flexible lines, adapting them to particular "tastes" and consumer demands. References to "skillfulness" or "nimble-fingered ingenuity" (*Tüfliersinn*) were never simply restricted to the classes engaged in the manual arts. Thus, the attraction that comparable icons have for admirers from various social classes can be related to a body of social experience extending over a period of comparatively "long duration".

Another relatively long-term feature was the fact that a substantial proportion of production personnel in these branches were worker-peasants.

¹¹³ Ch. Sabel, J. Zeitlin, "Historical Alternatives to Mass Production: Politics, Markets and Technology in Nineteenth-Century Industrialization", *Past & Present*, No. 108 (1985), pp. 133–176; for a study on change and redefinition of skills in an industry based on smaller-scale production units, see R. Whipp, *Patterns of Labour: Work and Social Change in the Pottery Industry* (New York, 1990).

Consequently, one focus of their attention was the maintenance of their position as peasants, the safeguarding of their family livelihood in the village.¹¹⁴ Their experiences were stamped by the rich variety of their own initiatives and constant physical toil, as well as the knowledge of their abiding isolation as very small agriculturalists, indeed “Sunday peasants”.

Yet manual (ambi-)dexterity and skill were not the monopoly of expressly “adroit” specialist and special-order production shops. That degree of skillfulness so indispensable down in the mineshaft, up on the blast furnaces and in the “fire mills” was also at a high premium in the centers of mass production, especially in regions with heavy industry. Moreover, this image of “labor” sported an additional aesthetic dimension. It was no accident that in Essen – “the city that Krupp built” – the town fathers erected a fountain in connection with festivities marking the incorporation in 1907 of the Rhineland province into Prussia: the fountain featured a half-nude male figure. That statue, patterned after the image of a steelworker, was not intended by the sculptor simply to represent the portrait of an idealized worker, but rather to allegorize “labor” per se – and thus celebrate emblematically the prime characteristic of the city and surrounding region.¹¹⁵

Beginning with mobilization the war in the autumn of 1914, quality workmanship was pointedly transformed into patriotic effort: “national labor”.¹¹⁶ After 1918, “national labor” and “quality workmanship” were fused in the modifier-plus-noun formula of *deutsche Qualitätsarbeit*. From union leaders to industrial bosses, technicians to shop stewards, the goal of “German quality workmanship” was intended to facilitate and encourage industrial recovery, sparking an improvement in the living standards of workers and their families. Before the inner eye of a host of authors and their diverse readers, images were conjured up of skilled and experienced machine-tool operators, cool and composed, fully in control of the situation, ready to master any challenge the future might present.

The images and formulae of *deutsche Qualitätsarbeit* carried a double load of semantic freight: on the one hand, an appeal to work experiences and attitudes; on the other, a patriotic reference to their significance for

¹¹⁴ Cf. the thought-provoking article by J. H. Quataert, “Combining Agrarian and Industrial Livelihoods. Rural Households in the Saxon Oberlausitz in the 19th Century”, *Journal of Family History*, 10 (1985), pp. 145–162; on “commuting migration” (and its genesis in the regional industrializations of the twentieth century), especially illuminating is J. Thomassen, “Pendelwanderung im Bereich der Industrie und Handelskammer Krefeld im ersten Viertel des 20. Jahrhunderts”, paper presented at the conference “Städtische Bevölkerungsentwicklung in Deutschland im 19. Jhd. im internationalen Vergleich” (University of Bremen, 27–28 January 1989); cf. also Lenger and Langewiesche, “Räumliche Mobilität in Deutschland”, pp. 109ff.

¹¹⁵ Cf. H. Schröter, “Der Jahrhundertbrunnen in Essen”, *Beiträge zur Geschichte von Stadt und Stift Essen*, 73 (1957), pp. 152–158.

¹¹⁶ See Campbell, *Joy in Work, German Work* and Trommler, *Die Nationalisierung der Arbeit*.

the “whole nation”. To urge on the great masses of workers – and in particular, first-generation workers – the Weimar government and the Nazi regime both praised the values of “living labor” and the readiness to roll up one’s sleeves and pitch in, as well as the utility of the manual skills of (male!) workers. This was true not only in Germany: similar pronouncements could be found in the waves of modernization and industrialization that swept over the Soviet Union from the introduction of the first Five-Year Plan, and were also echoed in the rhetoric and reality of Roosevelt’s “New Deal”. Yet here too, there were features in which the specific aspects of national-state ideology were unmistakable. The “Stakhanov” campaigns in the Soviet Union from 1935 on revolved around the “ideology of tonnage”, i.e., the primacy of physical strength and endurance.¹¹⁷ By contrast, within Roosevelt’s New Deal and the Democratic Party in the USA, images predominated that associated national greatness with praise for the dexterous “working-man” and celebration of the benevolence of industrialism, while characteristically stressing the value of each individual worker as a “citizen”.¹¹⁸

“German quality workmanship” had not only factory-internal and national components; its symbolism was also in keeping with the dominant *sex-role stereotypes*: the “quality worker” embodied the ideal of the male “breadwinner”. This was associated with an image of the family in which the “frugal” housewife served as helpmate to her breadwinning spouse, setting aside the butter for him alone, or the only (or biggest) portion of meat.¹¹⁹ The enhanced evaluation of women working at so-called men’s jobs during World War I, and the rapid and apparently silent return to the old situation and familiar hierarchies in the wake of demobilization in 1919, demonstrated the enduring salience of the symbol: women accommodated themselves to the fact that many areas of gainful employment were closed to them once again, considered off-limits occupationally. “Normality” returned and women resumed their roles as “accomplices” in their own oppression, contributing to the preservation of “patriarchal structures”.¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ R. Maier, *Die Stachanov-Bewegung 1935–1938* (Stuttgart, 1990), pp. 119ff.

¹¹⁸ G. Gerstle, *Working-class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City 1914–1960* (Cambridge, 1989), esp. pp. 166ff.; see likewise L. Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago 1919–1939* (Cambridge, 1990), esp. pp. 283ff.

¹¹⁹ On the unequal treatment of women and men in household and family settings, see C. Lipp, “Die Innenseite der Arbeiterkultur. Sexualität im Arbeitermilieu des 19. und frühen 20. Jahrhunderts”, in R. van Dülmen (ed.), *Arbeit, Frömmigkeit und Eigensinn* (Frankfurt/M, 1990), pp. 214–259 and 323–328, especially pp. 254ff.; see also Bromme, *Lebensgeschichte eines modernen Fabrikarbeiters*, pp. 351ff. and W. Seccombe, “Patriarchy Stabilized: The Construction of the Male Breadwinner Wage Norm in 19th C. Britain”, *Social History*, 11 (1986), pp. 53–75.

¹²⁰ Chr. Thürmer-Rohr, “Aus der Täuschung in die Ent-Täuschung. Zur Mittäterschaft von Frauen”, in Chr. Thürmer-Rohr, *Vagabundinnen. Feministische Essays* (Berlin, 1987), pp. 38–56, esp. pp. 49ff.

The equating of quality workmanship and male labor was manifested with brutal consistency, particularly in times of heavy unemployment. Using the example of the impact of the Depression 1931/32 on the industrial village of Marienthal in Lower Austria, Marie Jahoda and her associates provided a vivid description of how unemployed males, after losing their jobs, gradually “wearied” and subsequently skidded off the pavement of a regulated life “into chaos and emptiness”.¹²¹ The women, by contrast, remained “active”: the household and family demanded their constant attention, but also offered them a chance to evade slipping into the abyss of a “disintegration of time” – a pitfall which the men were apparently unable to avoid.

The penetrating power of the symbol of “German quality workmanship” was not linked with economic prosperity, depression or any specific political regime. Nor was it influenced by the boundaries dividing the various political camps. In any event, the complaint voiced by a German machinist who, inspired by high ideals, had ventured to the Soviet Union in 1931, is instructive. In a letter to the Moscow Comintern Central Office written on September 7, 1932, the machinist noted that he had been employed only as an “auxiliary driller” at a tractor factory in Kharkov, and not as a master lathe operator, as had been initially agreed in the contract. He had made numerous suggestions for improvements, but these had fallen on deaf ears. Nor had there been any response to his stubborn attempt “to contribute to the construction of the fatherland of the workers in accordance with the level of his qualifications”. The letter, in effect a farewell cum complaint, had been sent from Berlin, which the disillusioned skilled workman had returned to in deep disappointment.¹²²

During the transition phase to National Socialism, it became evident just how important the consensus regarding this class-transcending image of labor was in facilitating the process by which workers accommodated themselves to the needs and demands of National Socialism, especially in the field of armaments and defense production.¹²³

¹²¹ M. Jahoda, P. Lazarsfeld and H. Zeisel, *Die Arbeitslosen von Marienthal*, 3rd pr. (Frankfurt/M, 1975), esp. pp. 70ff., 83ff.

¹²² Central State Archive of the October Revolution, Register 5451, inventory list 39, item 100, folios 42–42a. I am grateful to Dr. Viktoria Tyashelnikova (Institute for Russian History RAN, Moscow) for her assistance in making this text available to me.

¹²³ For a more detailed treatment, see my “The ‘Dignity of Labour’”. Regarding the various “benefits” provided by Nazi organizations, see also the illustrated volumes by J. Pöchlinger (ed.), *Front in der Heimat. Das Buch des deutschen Rüstungsarbeiters* (Berlin, Vienna and Leipzig, 1942) and H. Hoffmann (ed.), *Me 109 – der siegreiche deutsche Jäger* (Munich, 1942). The question of the range and degree of acceptance remains open in its particulars, but should be scrutinized in connection with fluctuations in the tide of success and failure on the battlefield; cf. the basic studies by G. Rosenthal, “*Als der Krieg kam, hatte ich mit Hitler nichts mehr zu tun*”. *Zur Gegenwärtigkeit des “Dritten Reiches” in Biographien* (Opladen, 1990) and L. Niethammer, “Heimat und Front”, in Niethammer, “*Die Jahre weiß man nicht . . .*”, pp. 163–232.

The consequences: *Eigensinn* and accommodation

As historians, we tend generally (and in cases of doubt) to wind up on the side of the victors, however unintentionally.¹²⁴ For that reason, it is all the more important that we do not, *ex post facto*, ignore the rich “intensity” of concrete lives. One positive option lies in trying to avoid a reduction of individuals to some sort of simple sum, mechanically adding up the digits of their existence. Neither the dense patchwork complexities of social relations nor their changes or continuity can be adequately encompassed by mere operations of addition. More important questions involve the multiplicity – or more precisely, the polymorphous diversity – of synchrony. This focuses attention on the spectrum and range of what is historically possible in any given conjuncture.

It is not just a question of gaining new knowledge about unrecognized and previously ignored programmes and actions of the “downtrodden and vanquished”, redressing past historiographic neglect. Though such a romanticizing undertone reverberates at times through reconstructions of everyday historical reality, it cannot be sustained. The data stand at odds with such romanticist historiography: not just their vast variety, but often the sheer incompatibility of disparate, mulishly obstinate appropriations of expectations and demands coming from above. *Eigensinn* does not refer solely to benevolent needs and practices by the multitude of workers – but also to actions and attitudes that are downright misanthropic, full of contempt for one’s fellows. Indeed, such practices are often motivated by the desire to see others squirm and suffer.

History “after Auschwitz” cannot overlook the fact that autonomous activity and *Eigensinn* were and remain ambiguous in a quite bitter sense. Between 1933 and 1945, they opened up a space, a convenient corner for countless individual opportunities to withdraw, step aside and stand at a distance. The goal was survival. In a system that demanded, ever more emphatically, an unlimited “intensive” and ultimately “total” commitment, this amounted to an act that was *eo ipso* distinctly *political*. At the same time, such distancing functioned to help solidify Nazi rule in the arena of state and formal politics. Alongside popular concurrence, there was a broad area of accommodation with Nazism and its demands, a species of complaisant compliance, assuring the regime substantial space in which to maneuver. Thanks to this tactic of distancing, the occasional resistance that crystallized had no real impact. And people did not just

¹²⁴ Cf. W. Benjamin, “Über den Begriff der Geschichte” (ca. 1940), in *idem*, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 1/2 (Frankfurt/M, 1974), pp. 691–704; cf. likewise L. Niethammer, *Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?* (London, 1992); R. Konersman, *Erstarre Unruhe. Walter Benjamins Begriff der Geschichte* (Frankfurt/M, 1991), pp. 58ff., 97ff.; A. McRobbie, “The *Passagenwerk* and the Place of Walter Benjamin in Cultural Studies: Benjamin, Cultural Studies, Marxist Theories of Art”, *Cultural Studies*, 6 (1992), pp. 147–169, esp. pp. 154 f., 160ff.

adopt a modus operandi of *participant compliance* (*hinnehmendes Mitmachen*) during the early years of military success in the war – they adhered to it even “after Stalingrad”, indeed right down to May 1945.¹²⁵

Perhaps both views contain a kernel of truth: autonomous activity in keeping with the “intensity of the private sphere” cannot provide any guarantee for a reduction in domination and oppression. Nonetheless, it remains the indispensable prerequisite for attempts to advance supralocal organizing which respect the *politics of the private and the personal*.

Translated by William Templer

¹²⁵ This is not actually thematized by B. Kroener and M. Steinert; rather, in their contributions to a recent volume on Stalingrad, they stress the repression “of the regime”, see J. Förster (ed.), *Stalingrad. Ereignis – Wirkung – Symbol* (Munich, 1992), pp. 151–170, 171–185; cf. an illuminating chapter (V) in W. F. Werner, *‘Bleib übrig!’ Deutsche Arbeiter in der nationalsozialistischen Kriegswirtschaft* (Düsseldorf, 1983); see also Marc Roseman, “World War II and Social Change in Germany”, in A. Marwick (ed.), *Total War and Social Change* (London, 1988), pp. 58–78.