

From Mediation to Medium: Aesthetic and Anthropological Dimensions of the Image (*Bild*) and the Crisis of *Bildung* in German Modernism

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For it makes a difference whether this formative drive operates blindly or with consciousness, whether it knows from where it emerged and whereto it strives; for this is man's only error, that his formative drive goes astray, takes an unworthy, altogether erroneous direction or, at least, misses its proper place or, if it has found it, stops half-way at the means that are supposed to lead him to his goal. (Hölderlin, 1987, 39-40; translation modified)¹

The principal content of cultural life . . . involves the struggle against transience. Yet this battle is waged offensively, namely, as a quest for expanding the physical and intellectual dominion over reality; the objective here is to fortify what has been conquered against the passage of time. The fossilization (of these contents) in rigid traditions, that is, their 'Egyptification,' would admittedly ensure the highest degree of permanence attainable. And yet, life itself overruns all fixed forms, just as the seafaring peoples overran the empire of the middle period. (Arnold Gehlen, 1956, 100)²

I. "Perpetual Metamorphosis": *Bild* and the Organic Entelechy of Romantic *Bildung*

In his 1817 preface to a new edition of *The Metamorphosis of Plants* (first published in 1790), Goethe notes how, "when we study forms, the organic ones in particular, nowhere do we find permanence, repose, or termination. We find rather that everything is in ceaseless flux. This is why our language makes such frequent use of the term 'Bildung' to designate what has been brought forth and likewise what is in the process of being brought forth."³ Beyond the two distinct meanings of *Bildung* here identified, there is yet another manifestation of it, namely, "a drive (*Trieb*) to recognize living forms as such, to understand their outwardly visible and tangible parts in relation to one another, to lay hold of them as indicia of inner parts" (Goethe, 1981: 13, 55/1952, 23). From the start, that is, there is something intrinsically tautological about theories of *Bildung*, since in their mode of origination and formal execution such theories prove all but homologous with the phenomena they purport to describe.⁴ By its very nature, *Bildung* oscillates between a mode of production and a product; indeed, in its Goethean incarnation as meticulous empirical research, *Bildung* simultaneously sets forth a theory of life while disavowing the propositional (and hence contestable) status of a theory. Unlike a complex theory, that is, *Bildung* is not "proposed." Rather, it "emerges" – "imperceptibly" (*unmerklich*) as F. Schlegel was to observe of *Wilhelm Meister* – in an epigenetic and self-transforming manner whose blueprint, as critics like Helmut Müller-Sievers and Robert Richards have again shown, we find in Goethe's botanical theory.⁵ As a trajectory of metamorphosis, then, *Bildung* proves structurally cognate with the discrete material phenomena on which its descriptive acuity is focused. The emergence of *Bildung* thus enacts theory as a process gradually ushering its subject to states of greater complexity and self-awareness. Key-texts such as Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre*, demonstrate how *Bildung* incrementally reconstitutes its subject as a teleological sequence of reflexive turning points. In so doing, narrative abandons the episodic or sectional conception of aesthetic form in favor of an organic, dialectical progression that enacts rationality as a process rather than presupposing it in the form of a self-possessed, Cartesian agency. Yet what, we must ask, sets this process into motion and what determines its trajectory as teleological and purposive (*zweckmäßig*) rather than variational and contingent?

The fuel that keeps this dialectical machine running and on track is found, appropriately enough, at the very root of Goethe's botanical research, namely, in his theory of *Bild* and *Urbild*. Inspired by Blumenbach's *Über den Bildungstrieb* (1781), his own botanical hypotheses during his Italian Journey (1784), and by Kant's discrimination between mechanical and organic models of judgment (*Critique of Judgment*, § 65), Goethe develops his concept of *Bildung* in his 1790 essay on the *Metamorphosis of Plants* and in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*. Both texts strongly anticipate Hegel's discussion of sense-certainty in the *Phenomenology* by arguing that the epigenetic quality of *Bildung* – its capacity to “emerge” rather than be expressly conceived or proposed – has to do with the dual meaning of *Bild*. For a given organic formation, however minimal and innocuous, is never static but, however unbeknownst to itself, serves as the objective point of reference for a discursive intelligence that is analogously self-transforming. To study the morphology of a perfoliate rose or the skeleton of a bull is not simply to arrive at an image of an object; rather, it is to fashion an image, a complex representation, which in turn will mirror back to the observer the particular kind of intelligence gradually realized by such activity.⁶ “At all times,” Arnold Gehlen notes, “and extending to the highest achievements, appropriating the world simultaneously involves taking possession of our selves.”⁷ What in a letter of 1787 Goethe hails as his “discovery of a principle that, like Ariadne's thread, will guide me through the labyrinths of human development” (*der Menschen Bildung*) thus holds him in its spell even decades later: “Having been dedicated especially to mineralogy and geognosy, and more moderately to geology, for some sixty odd years now, I collect various significant items so as to progressively develop further by means of an incrementally growing expertise” (*um durch stufenweis wachsende Kenntniß einer fortschreitenden Bildung teilhaft zu werden*).⁸

As Goethe's autobiographical ruminations make clear, the image (*Bild*) of an object thus encrypts and anticipates the intelligence realized in the conceptualization of that image. Such a position constitutes a secular echo of a central tenet in Christian moral theology, namely, that man will acquire an inner spiritual dimension to the extent that he responds to the need to develop fully the *imago dei* present in him in accordance with the laws of spiritual development described by Christian ascetical and mystical theology. A secular echo of that trajectory, Goethe's concept of *Bildung* furthermore posits that the development of the image necessarily entails a second reflection. In it the observer recognizes his/her own intelligence as structurally cognate with the developmental trajectory of the object (e.g., the plant) itself. Similarly, “perception” (Hegel's *für-wahr-nehmen*) is not a state but a reflexive act of emancipation in the evolving history of the spirit. In it, mind re-evaluates the notion of the “object” as a seemingly autonomous and inert objective existence by recognizing that very notion as its own product and so reclaiming it for the nascent sociality of representation (*Vorstellung*). As it solicits its own discursive explication and so is socialized as a “concept” (*Begriff*), the image effectively redeems being (*Sein*) from its contingent drift through time. It assimilates being to the order of representation, which is to say, integrates it into the network of all other images, signs, analogies, theories, etc. that already make up the complex discursive and inherently social architecture of human affairs and mental life. Hegel calls this the “liquefaction” (*Verflüssigung*) of the “actual” or the submission of the “concrete” to the “infinite power of the negative” (*die ungeheure Macht des Negativen*).

This is not the place fully to rehearse the pivotal role of *Bild* in German Idealism's attempts to secure the “ground” of Reason in some immanent, that is, latently intellectual conception of *Bild* – a crucial operation if its core claim of rationality as *self*-determination or “autonomy” is to be sustained. Doing so would require a rereading of Kant's chapter on the “schematism” in the first *Critique*, Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) and his “Über Geist und Buchstaben in der Philosophie,” as well as Schelling's 1797 *Abhandlungen*. For early German Idealism and for the Romantic conception of *Bildung*, the “image” (*Bild*) proves to be the very seed of rationality as a process of developing, circulating, and revising a normative conception of the world and, thereby, of a viable social order. For it is *prima facie* the image that sublates external being into the order of purposive representation (*Vorstellung*). In so doing, the image inaugurates a narrative trajectory of “perpetual reconfiguration” (*fortwährendes Umbilden*, as Goethe calls it in his 1790 *Metamorphoses of Plants*) or “reflexive

determination" (*Reflexionsbestimmungen*, Fichte's term) that is the quintessence of Romantic *Bildung*. While dematerializing external being, the image also emerges as an object of continual interpretive labour in its own right. Like Leibniz's monads, the speculative image encrypts what I regard as the formal core features of Romantic *Bildung*: self-generation, differentiation, reproduction, teleology, complexity, variation, discipline, and institution. Though first introduced in the local context of his 1790 *Metamorphosis of Plants*, Goethe's concept of "intensification" (*Steigerung*) – "whereby a progressively more perfected form raises itself all the way to the point of reproduction" (*indem eine immer vollkommene Gestaltung sich zuletzt bis zu der neuen Fortpflanzung erhebt*) – simultaneously effects an analogous qualitative heightening within the observing intelligence.⁹ As an instance of entelechy, the image's compact form implicitly forecasts its eventual aesthetic and social effects. Cumulatively known as *Bildung*, these effects comprise among others a historico-systematic conception of aesthetics and discrete genres, a sweeping (Hegelian) reconfiguration of modern disciplines under the aegis of a single, speculative master-narrative, as well as the creation of entire institutional frameworks dedicated to a coordinated and systematic definition of all knowledge and study as "historical."

Before turning to the conceptual tensions inherent in the speculative, dialectical Romantic conception of *Bild* – and to a sense of incipient cultural crisis bound up with drawing out into the open these tensions so magisterially performed by Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* – it may help to illustrate how the Romantic image enacts life in the virtual medium of aesthetic form. Two examples from *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* will help focus the most salient elements. We recall how, after being knocked down and briefly passing out during the robbery in Book 4, the protagonist awakens to the *Urbild* of the Amazon:

Er hatte seine Augen auf die sanften, hohen, stillen, teilnehmenden Gesichtszüge der Ankommenden geheftet; er glaubte nie etwas Edleres noch Liebenswürdigeres gesehen zu haben . . . In diesem Augenblicke, da er den Mund öffnen und einige Worte des Dankes stammeln wollte, wirkte der lebhafteste Eindruck ihrer Gegenwart so sonderbar auf seine schon angegriffenen Sinne, daß es ihm auf einmal vorkam, als sei ihr Haupt mit Strahlen umgeben, und über ihr ganzes Bild verbreite sich nach und nach ein glänzendes Licht . . . Unaufhörlich rief er sich jene Begebenheit zurück, welche einen unauslöschlichen Eindruck auf sein Gemüt gemacht hatte. Er sah die schöne Amazone reitend aus den Büschen hervorkommen, sie näherte sich ihm, stieg ab, ging hin und wider und bemühte sich um seinen Willen. Er sah das umhüllende Kleid von ihren Schultern fallen; ihr Gesicht, ihre Gestalt glänzend verschwinden. Alle seine Jugendträume knüpften sich an dieses Bild. Er glaubte nunmehr die edle, heldenmütige Chlorinde mit eignen Augen gesehen zu haben ihm fiel der kranke Königssohn wieder ein, an dessen Lager die schöne, teilnehmende Prinzessin mit stiller Bescheidenheit herantritt. 'Sollten nicht,' sagte er manchmal im stillen zu sich selbst, 'uns in der Jugend wie im Schlafe die Bilder zukünftiger Schicksale umschweben und unserm unbefangenen Auge ahnungsvoll sichtbar werden? Sollten die Keime dessen, was uns begegnen wird, nicht schon von der Hand des Schicksals ausgestreut, sollte nicht ein Vorgenuß der Früchte, die wir einst zu brechen hoffen, möglich sein?' (Goethe, 1981: 7, 227-28; 235)

(His eyes were fixed on the gentle, distinguished, calm and compassionate features of the newcomer: he thought he had never seen anything more beautiful or noble . . . When he opened his mouth to murmur some words of thanks, the vivid impression of her presence had the strangest effect on his impaired senses. Her head seemed to be surrounded by shafts of light and there was a glow spreading across her whole appearance . . . Time and again he recalled the incident which had left such an indelible impression on his mind. He saw the lovely Amazon riding out of the bushes, saw her come towards him, get off her horse, walk up and down, and occupy herself with his needs. He saw the coat falling from her shoulders, her face and figure disappearing in a blaze of light. All his youthful visions returned to his mind and associated themselves with this image. He now thought he had seen the heroic Clorinda with his own eyes; and he also remembered the sick

prince with the beautiful loving princess approaching his bed. ‘Do not images of our future destiny appear before our unclouded eyes in the dreams of our youth as premonitions?’ he kept saying to himself, ‘Is it not possible that Fate sows the seeds of what later is to befall us, a foretaste of the fruits we are later to enjoy?’¹⁰

As he mulls over the potential import of this archetypal image, Wilhelm stages for the attentive reader just how complex the apparent antithesis of “fate” and “self-determination” may prove. For while leaving intact the organicist and epigenetic logic of *Bildung* – to which Goethe the novelist is just as committed as Goethe the botanist – the passage highlights the quasi-mythical entelechy of the *Urbild*, its magical power and speculative potential as “seed” (*Keim*) for the protagonist’s future. Rather than repudiating the idea of “fate,” as a more radical version of Enlightenment rationality might do, Goethe’s passage (and indeed the novel as a whole) sublates fate into the image’s intrinsic, speculative potentiality. Yet as the narcissistic literary identifications with Tasso’s Tancred make clear, Wilhelm is mistaken to the extent that he seizes on the Amazon’s *Urbild* as an external, separate object to be seized and fetishized in a state of languid convalescence. The organic, teleological progression from *Keim* to *Frucht* is never something to be passively received but, on the contrary, must be realized *in actu* – something Arnold Gehlen was to emphasize when speaking of action (*Handlung*) as “a structural law . . . that governs *all* human functions from the physical to the intellectual” (Gehlen, 1988, 16).¹¹ It is this narcissistic absence of an active principle (Hegel’s *Arbeit* or Goethe’s *Praxis*) that shows “fate” to be less the opposite of “self-determination” than an as yet inadequate conception of *Bestimmung* (“determination”) as a necessarily immanent, self-regulating process. However jejune and narcissistic Wilhelm’s reading of it might seem, the Amazon’s *Bild* not only presages his developmental advances in the coming books but also triggers a concurrent progression in the reader’s interpretive competence. For in recalling the novel’s opening scene, which had depicted Wilhelm and Marianne’s unwittingly theatrical and narcissistic infatuation with their costumed, androgynous other, readers, by the time they have reached the robbery-scene in Book Four, are put on guard. Wilhelm’s identification now is seen less as a momentous part of the story than as the image of a specific developmental stage in the protagonist’s *Bildung*. In this manner, the entelechy of a given image – always perched somewhere on the continuum between “seed” (*Keim*) and “fruit” (*Frucht*), between its cryptic status as mere trope and its eventual mediation (*Vermittlung*) of a trans-individual meaning – also throws into relief some of the broader pedagogical and institutional objectives “imperceptibly” realized by the genre of the *Bildungsroman*.

A later scene will round off the teleological and complex speculative implications of the image. Recalling her visit to her uncle’s estate, the “beautiful soul” of the “Confessions” that make up Book 6 of *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* now unfolds a scene of instruction in which the “image” (now tellingly an object of aesthetic labour, a “painting”) functions as the focal point of discursive and reflexive engagement:

Er leitete meine Aufmerksamkeit auf die verschiedenen Gemälde, die an der Wand aufgehängt waren; mein Auge hielt sich an die, deren Anblick reizend oder deren Gegenstand bedeutend war; er ließ es eine Weile geschoben, dann sagte er: ‘Gönnen Sie nun auch dem Genius, der diese Werke hervorgebracht hat, einige Aufmerksamkeit. Gute Gemüter sehen so gerne den Finger Gottes in der Natur; warum sollte man nicht auch der Hand seines Nachahmers einige Betrachtung schenken?’ Er machte mich sodann auf unscheinbare Bilder aufmerksam und suchte mir begreiflich zu machen, daß eigentlich die Geschichte der Kunst allein uns den Begriff von dem Wert und der Würde eines Kunstwerks geben könne, daß man erst die beschwerlichen Stufen des Mechanismus und des Handwerks, an denen der fähige Mensch ich jahrhundertlang hinaufarbeitet, kennen müsse, um zu begreifen, wie es möglich sei, daß das Genie auf dem Gipfel, bei dessen bloßem Anblick uns schwindelt, sich frei und fröhlich bewege. Er hatte in diesem Sinne eine schöne Reihe zusammen gebracht, und ich konnte mich nicht enthalten, als er mir sie auslegte, die moralische Bildung hier wie im Gleichnisse vor mir zu sehen. Als ich ihm meine Gedanken äußerte, versetzte

er: "Sie haben vollkommen recht, und wir sehen daraus, daß man nicht wohl tut, der sittlichen Bildung einsam, in sich selbstverschlossen nachzuhängen; viel mehr wird man finden, daß derjenige, dessen Geist nach einer moralischen Kultur strebt, alle Ursache hat, seine feinere Sinnlichkeit zugleich mit auszubilden, damit er nicht in Gefahr komme, von seiner moralischen Höhe herabzugleiten . . ." Ich hatte ihn nicht im Verdacht, daß er auf mich ziele, aber ich fühlte mich getroffen, wenn ich zurückdachte, daß unter den Liedern, die mich erbauet hatten, manches abgeschmackte mochte gewesen sein, und daß die Bildchen, die sich an meine geistlichen Ideen anschlossen, wohl schwerlich vor den Augen des Oheims würden Gnade gefunden haben. (Goethe, 1981: 7, 408-409)

(He directed my attention to the various paintings hanging on the wall. My eyes fixed on those which looked pleasant or had a notable subject. He let this happen for a while, and then said: "Now pay some attention to the spirit that produced these works. Noble souls see God's hand in His creation; but why shouldn't we give some consideration to the hands of his imitators?" He then drew my attention to some pictures that had not struck me particularly, and tried to make me understand that only study of the history of art can give us a proper sense of the value and distinction of a work of art. One must first appreciate the burdensome aspects of technical labour that gifted artists have perfected over the centuries, in order to comprehend how it is possible for a creative genius to move freely and joyfully on a plane so high that it makes us dizzy. With this in mind, he brought together a number of pictures, and when he explained them to me, I could not avoid seeing in them images and symbols of moral perfection. When I told him this, he said: "You are absolutely right, and one should not pursue the cultivation of one's moral life in isolation and seclusion. We are more likely to find that a person intent on moral advancement will have every cause to cultivate his senses as well as his mind, so as not to run the risk of losing his foothold on those moral heights . . ." I never suspected that this was aimed at me, but I did feel affected when I thought back to certain, rather insipid things in those hymns which had contributed to my edification. I also realized that the images which had attached themselves to my spiritual concepts would hardly have found favor in my uncle's eyes.) (Goethe, 1989, 248)

One of many such scenes of oblique instruction and aesthetic improvement to be found throughout Goethe's novel, this episode features the "beautiful soul" of Book 6 conversing about seemingly "innocuous images" at her uncle's estate. Regardless of their motifs or referential connections, all of these paintings serve as parables (*Gleichnisse*) for the arduous progression through which alone the aesthetic and moral accomplishment of the chapter's female protagonist can be ensured. No system of piety can ever claim to offer a shortcut to such a rich and differentiated inwardness. Self-possession and moral autonomy cannot be achieved through a leap of (Pietist) "faith" but, instead, can only be attained through (aesthetic) "work."¹² That is, *Bildung* must at all times undergo mediation through aesthetic objects, images whose earnest contemplation will impress on the observer a "more refined sensibility" (*feinere Sinnlichkeit*) as an emblem of whatever spiritual goal one may identify for oneself. Indifference (or simply "poor taste") to aesthetic form, of which the "beautiful soul" suddenly feels guilty, betokens a failure to grasp spiritual life itself as an object of labour, a Hegelian process of becoming whose truth demands that one recollect (*erinnern*) and so take reflexive possession of one's entire history. Undergoing mediation through so many images, *Bildung* stakes its progressive and teleological appeal on the symbiosis of inwardness and recollection (*Innerlichkeit* and *Erinnerung*). A given image assumes its purposive role within the larger narrative trajectory of *Bildung* only by being reflexively and differentially integrated into a rich social history of symbolic production, a point emphasized by the "beautiful soul's" interlocutor, who observes "that only the study of the history of art can give us a proper sense of the value and distinction of a work of art."¹³ Only by forgoing a narrowly referential and rigidly allegorical construction of their particular motifs – that is, by "suspending the form of their familiarity" (*das Aufheben der Form ihres Bekanntseins* (1952, 29)), as Hegel calls it – do images disclose their speculative and teleological import. The ultimate mission of

the image is thus to solicit in the contemplating subject a reflexive insight into the fundamentally developmental nature of cognition, that is, its historico-systematic nature as *Wissenschaft der Erfahrung des Bewußtseins* (“Science of the Experience of Consciousness”).

At the very core of Goethe’s and Hegel’s conception of *Bildung* we thus find the image as the objective correlative for the historicity and “labor of the concept” (*Arbeit des Begriffs*). Already, it is worth noting that labor (in its physical and intellectual sense), and its underlying, Protestant work-ethic that Mann’s contemporary Max Weber had so poignantly analyzed in his 1905 study, will be anathema to Hans Castorp. A descendant of many Lutheran generations, “his respect for work was, in its way religious and, as far as he knew, unquestioning . . . (Yet) he could not love it – for one simple reason: it did not agree with him.”¹⁴ For Goethe’s protagonists, of course, there can be no talk of labor and self-examination becoming “a strain on (their) nerves.” Consequently, images for them will almost unfailingly pay great speculative dividends and so ensure their determinate progression towards a more complex, more authoritative, and more fully socialized form of selfhood. For this process to succeed, however, it is presupposed that the image latently anticipates its interpretive completion – that it is inherently metonymic, contiguous with and functionally related to its reflexive fulfillment in the concept. Within what D. A. Miller calls the “genetic” model of narrative and subjectivity, the “image” (the *Bild* in *Bildung*) must never be a random trope, a metaphor whose function within the broader history and system of *Bildung* we could not ascertain.¹⁵ On the contrary, as a mode of production, *Bildung* is premised on a stringent model of interpretation (what Hegel calls “determinate negation”). It posits that reflection will always, even if only after much “tarrying” or lengthy detours, succeed in suspending a given image’s seemingly contingent and initially oblique significance by reflexively – and that also means historically – reappraising its *form* as the “actual” content.¹⁶ To take that crucial step is to redeem inert and indifferent matter (“externality”) for the self-regulating, teleological narrative of reason, a narrative destined to attain full self-awareness (as well as professional and institutional expression) in the speculative discipline of philosophy as *Wissenschaft*. Within the narrative order of *Bildung*, that is, all being is inherently metonymic, an entelechy cryptically foreshadowing its own conceptual explication and discursive socialization as *Geist*.

II. “The gorge, the sea”: Ambiguous Symbolization as a Basic Anthropological Category

As should be apparent by now, to understand the nexus between “image” and “development” in some key-figures of the German philosophical and literary tradition (Goethe, Hegel, Spengler, and Thomas Mann) requires a conceptual framework that is not already circumscribed by the far-flung narrative agenda of *Bildung* and naturalized as an etymological kinship between *Bild* and *Bildung*. That is, if we are to gauge the complex and ambivalent status of the “image” within a philosophical or literary model of development, we must reclaim the “image” from its preemptively *generative* and teleological deployment in Goethe’s and Hegel’s narrative practice. We must at least temporarily suspend the reigning assumption of *Bildung* itself, according to which the image mediates sensuous, material being (Hegel’s *das sinnliche Sein*) as mere fuel required and in due course consumed by a sweeping philosophical narrative, one that remains firmly dialectical in its method and teleological in its ultimate metaphysical perspective. While mindful of Benjamin’s lucid proposal to approach the image as “dialectics at a standstill” (*Dialektik im Stillstand*), I initially mean to take a somewhat different approach, one that emphasizes *Bild* and *Bildung* as the formal and institutional encryption of deep-seated, mythic energies to which Modernism proved particularly alert.¹⁷ In two remarkable, if also (mostly for political reasons) now largely ignored works, the German anthropologist Arnold Gehlen (1904-1976) elaborated among other things two points of great consequence for the ensuing discussion of *Bild* and *Bildung* in Oswald Spengler and Thomas Mann. In his 1940 book, *Der Mensch: seine Natur und Stellung in der Welt* (*Man: His Nature and Place in the World*), Gehlen had first argued that any form of representation, specifically that of the image, constitutes an ambivalent instance of “practice” (*Handlung*) by means of which aspects of danger and control are carefully and

purposely balanced. The "image" holds a unique function in that its totemic force and iconic *Gestalt* – both rendered palpable in primitive ritual – clearly precede the cult of "expressivism" (Charles Taylor) with its associated theorems of aesthetics as *Reflexionsmedium* and as a complex focus of historical interpretation. To be sure, Gehlen readily acknowledges how the image and all other material objectifications of an inherently ritualized "practice" of formalization are functionally oriented towards, indeed bring about, a quasi-institutional stability. It is a matter that he particularly emphasized in his 1956 study *Urmensch und Spätkultur (Primitive Man and Modern Culture)*.

And yet, upon closer inspection, such stabilization proves curiously ambivalent because it arises from strictly impersonal, non-intentional motives that have little or nothing to do with self-expression, causal representation, and discursive signification. In fact, at a basic anthropological level, the magic force of the image and contiguous instances of symbolic practice (formalizations of sacrifice, marriage, burial, etc.) must be understood as logically anterior to all of the former. In a primal sense, that is, the image as a recursive, and hence symbolically *available*, form stabilizes the subject within its sphere by conferring a quasi-totemic fixity on an initially entropic and dangerous domain. As Gehlen puts it:

Das Daseinsgefühl, man könne nicht aus der Welt fallen und diese erlebbare Welt gebe selbst die dauernde Hintergrundserfüllung für ihr vereinsamtes Geschöpf her, dieses Gefühl ließ sich nur in einer symbolischen, inhaltsüberfüllten Darstellung ausdrücken – im großen Tier . . . Die archaische 'Kunst' ist deswegen eine Kulturtat höchster Verdichtung, weil man dieses letztgenannte Bedürfnis im darstellenden Tun selber befriedigte und damit diesen ganzen Zusammenhang ins Bewußtsein hob. Bild ist nicht gleich Bild: es kam in keinem Sinne darauf an, eine 'persönliche Schau' der Wirklichkeit auszudrücken . . . Die ungeheuerere Ausdruckskraft der jungpaläolithischen Höhlenbilder liegt daran, daß man spürt, daß eine Konzeption der Welt darin liegt, einer Welt, die mit keinen anderen zu veranlassen war, sich selbst zu stellen. Darin liegt die gewaltige Überlegenheit der Darstellung über den Begriff: die erstere handelt vom Sosein des Gegenstandes her und stellt es wirklich auf Dauer, und in diesem Handeln wird die Stabilität der Welt selbst ins Bewußtsein gehoben. Der Begriff dagegen 'meint' nur etwas und verfliegt, wenn er nicht durch Außenstützung am Leben gehalten wird . . . Man transzendierte (das Wirkliche), es im Bilde darstellend, ins Diesseits. (Gehlen, 1956, 62-63)

(The mood of existence (*Daseinsgefühl*) from which the self derives the assurance that it won't fall off the edge of the world, and that the experiential world itself will serve as a lasting, complementary background for its isolated (human) creatures, all this could only find expression in a symbolic and over-determined presentation (*Darstellung*), in a dramatic singular presence – a powerful animal . . . For that very reason, archaic art amounts to a cultural deed of supreme condensation, for in the very act of presentation humans would secure and stabilize this vital relation to the world and, in so doing, raise the entire complexion of their practice to consciousness. Images are not all alike, for what mattered here was not to "express" a "subjective perspective" of reality . . . Rather, the immense expressive force of Neolithic cave painting stems from its ability to convey to us the conception of an entire world, a world that could not be brought to make itself accessible by any other means. Herein lies the enormous superiority of presentation (*Darstellung*) vis-à-vis the concept; the former takes up the very being of its object, stabilizes and fixes it in time, and in so doing stabilizes the world itself for consciousness. By contrast, the concept merely "means" something and evaporates if it is not kept alive by external supports . . . This (is what we mean) by "transcending towards the material world.) (My translation)

Drawing on what Paul de Man would eventually re-christen as "the positional power" of language, the image gradually transmutes an initially unstable "action" into the most fundamental mode of "being-to-hand" (Heidegger's *Zuhandensein*), namely, by assimilating it to the order of *logos* itself and, by extension, assimilating a once-sublime event into a recursive *practical habitus*; Gehlen calls this the "habitualization of practice" (*Habitualisierung des Verhaltens* (1956, 47)). Both in its motivation and

in its effects, the oblique formalization of perception into quotidian “practice” effectively “disburdens” (*entlastet*) the individual and so enables it to take on new challenges. To the extent that analytic inquiry stays focused on this pragmatic effect of the image, the latter can be thought outside of its “expressive” or “intentional” function within the ever-shifting and intrinsically contingent communicative agendas and aesthetic peculiarities of discourse or communication.

Gehlen’s arguments effectively negotiate between a Hegelian and an American pragmatist tradition that until the recent reinterpretation of German Idealism, and Hegel’s philosophy in particular, had seemed wholly incompatible.¹⁸ For Gehlen, the image uniquely highlights the precarious moment of contact between the human and an alien sphere – a *Lebenswelt* that specifically denies human beings the organic “fit” and mutual “fitness” that prevails between animal organisms and their “environment.” Inasmuch as it is a constitutive and distinctive characteristic of the human individual “to be forced to develop a perspective vis-à-vis itself” (*zu sich selbst Stellung nehmen zu müssen* (Gehlen, 1940, 9)), this subject remains inherently “unfinished” (*unfertig*) and hence burdened by its inchoate and precarious relationship to the world. Yet even as the absence of any instinctual guidance renders the human individual’s relation to “its” world terminally contingent (*weltoffen*), this apparent deficit also constitutes a unique source of strength or, at least, a potentiality for a process that the later eighteenth century was to capture in the word *Bildung*.¹⁹ Drawing on the anthropological conceptions of Herder, Kant, and Schiller, Gehlen emphasizes how responding to his inherently “unfinished” disposition effectively generates the overarching category of “praxis” (*Handlung*) that will guide his own philosophical anthropology. “Lacking the organic means” (*organisch mittellos*) and thus “deficient” and “burdened” in his relation to the world, Gehlen’s human being “must find *relief* from the burden of overwhelming stimulation; he must transform his deficiencies into opportunities for survival” (Gehlen, 1988, 28[0]).²⁰ As the single category linking all physical and intellectual acts, Gehlen’s *Handlung* at all times realizes two intimately entwined objectives:

In allen Handlungen des Menschen geschieht ein Doppeltes: er bewältigt tätig die Wirklichkeit um ihn herum, indem er sie ins Lebensdienliche *verändert*, weil es eben natürliche, von selbst angepaßte Existenzbedingungen außer ihm nicht gibt oder weil die natürlichen unangepaßten Lebensbedingungen ihm unerträglich sind. Und, von der anderen Seite gesehen, holt er damit aus sich eine sehr komplizierte Hierarchie von Leistungen heraus, ‘stellt’ in sich selbst eine Aufbauordnung des Könnens ‘fest,’ die in ihm bloß der Möglichkeit nach liegt, und die er durchaus eigentätig, auch gegen innere Belastungen handelnd, aus sich herauszuzüchten hat . . . daß die umgebende Welt ‘durchgearbeitet’ wird, und zwar in Richtung der Verfügbarkeit und der Erledigung: die Dinge werden der Reihe nach in Umgang gezogen und abgestellt, im Zuge dieses Verfahrens aber unvermerkt mit einer hochgradigen Symbolik angereichert, so daß endlich das Auge allein, ein müheloser Sinn, sie übersieht und in ihnen zuletzt Gebrauchs- und Umgangswerte *mitsieht*, welche vorher mühsam eigentätig erfahren wurden. (Gehlen, 1940, 39, 41)

(All human actions are twofold: First, man actively masters the world around him by transforming it to serve his purposes for the simple reason that there are no natural, organically fitted conditions of existence into which man might enter, or because the ‘natural,’ unadjusted conditions of existence are intolerable for him. Second, to accomplish this, he draws upon a highly complex hierarchy of skills and establishes within himself a developmental order of abilities; this order is based on potential usefulness of the skills and must be constructed singlehandedly by man, sometimes overcoming internal resistance to doing so . . . In so “processing” the ambient world, all things are thereby unwittingly endowed with a high degree of symbolism such that, eventually, the eye alone (an effortless sense) can take them in and quickly assess their potential usefulness and value. In succession, objects are experienced by man and then set aside, a process in which these objects are imperceptibly saturated with a highly sophisticated symbolism. Thus the eye, our most effortless sense, may “survey” them and finally is able to take in casually the utility- and practical

value of things that previously had revealed itself only through arduous experience.) (Gehlen 1988, 29, 32, translation corrected)

In so “disburdening” (*entlasten*) its precariously unstable, organically “unfit” situation, human practice largely strives to deactivate a plenitude of stimuli, threats, and contingencies. Whatever its occasion and intentional purposes, the underlying, deep-structural “motive” of all “practice” is to “attenuate all immediate contact with the world” (1940, 39). In ways that may justly strike one as problematic (all the more so in light of Gehlen’s overt sympathies for the National Socialists’ relentless trumpeting of a *Gemeinschaft* whose institutional and collective ethos sought to disable all “subjective” and private deliberation), “practice” here aims at its own formalization.²¹ Such an objective originates in the individual’s pragmatic concern with self-prolongation, survival, and the continuous challenge to stabilize its relation to the world by creating a collectively binding, quasi-institutional set of norms. Gehlen’s “symbolism,” then, is prized not for its “expressive” qualities but, on the contrary, for its dispassionate, objective vanquishing of external contingency. Fundamentally, human practice not only addresses a specific “task” but, at the same time, pursues the telos of its own increasingly effortless, quasi-automatic implementation, a process crucially supported by the artificial (semiotic) inventory of symbols, images, and signs. Far from facilitating an idiosyncratic, “expressive” act – except where such practice itself is being proposed as an exemplary, social norm in its own right (e.g., Romantic theories of originality and genius) – the image thus functions as the objective correlative of “practice.” As a formal, proto-institutional device, it stabilizes, “socializes,” and to a considerable extent even dissolves the individual by transforming an initially contingent, entropic, and often menacing perceptual world into a predictable and continuously habitable environment embraced as normative by an entire community.

Yet the image could never achieve this result if it were simply to repress the contingent and potentially threatening instability that defines the human individual’s relation to his/her world. Rather, it must reconstitute that danger in symbolic form – namely, as ambiguity or, as Lukács and Mann would put it, irony. Such ambiguous acts of formalization allow the human individual to assert a measure of control over the phenomena in question and simultaneously prove alert to the contingent, potentially misguided and misleading effects of its own symbolic practice. Put differently, the image effects what Gehlen calls a “stabilized antagonism” (*stabilisierte Spannung*), a symbolic balancing of dangerous potentialities and residual fears. Through its totemic relationship to being, its formalization of something first symbolized in ritual and then stabilized in the conscious symbolic practice of myth, the image also reveals itself as the most elemental form of representation, an “act” (*Handlung*) of formalization whose pragmatic motivation – viz. to stabilize our relationship to the world (Gehlen, 1956, 183; 204) – remains always active, even in the *Spätkultur* of Spengler’s and Mann’s highly industrialized, technologically and culturally sophisticated subjects.

Crucial for understanding the changed role of the (technological) image in Mann’s Modernist narrative is precisely this element of danger, this surfeit of a mythic and menacing energy to which the image as symbolic form owes its very existence, and which it can consequently never make wholly disappear. Arguably, Hans Castorp’s entire seven-year long sojourn on the magic mountain courts danger by suspending the security and predictability of his Northern-German, Protestant life and work ethic and, instead, exploring the precarious lack of foundation of that seemingly timeless bourgeois order. Arguably the most conspicuous instance of courting danger – both literally and figuratively – occurs in the chapter “Snow,” which has often been read as summarizing the entire plot of Mann’s novel. Hans Castorp’s near-fatal skiing expedition into the contour-less world of mists, snow drifts, and “primal silence” (*Urstille* (Mann, 1981, 666/1995, 467) revives the *Urbild* of danger that had etched itself into his psyche long before. For as a youth vacationing on the island of Sylt, he had at times

stood dressed in white trousers, safe, elegant, and reverent beside the mighty, rolling surf, as if it were a caged lion, yawning and showing its fearful fangs and cavernous gorge. Then he would go

for a swim, and a lifeguard would blow on his little horn to warn those brash enough to venture beyond the first breaking wave, or merely to get too close to its onrushing storm – and even the final thrust of the cataract was like the slap of a giant paw against the back of his neck. As a young man, Hans Castorp had learned the exhilarating thrill of brushing up against powers whose full embrace would destroy you. What he had not learned back then, however, was a taste for extending the thrilling contact with deadly nature until it threatened with its full embrace . . . until contact with it verged on a peril that knew no limits, until it was no longer the last thrust of foam and a soft paw, but the wave itself, the gorge, the sea. (Mann, 1995, 467)

(Auf Sylt hatte er, in weißen Hosen, sicher, elegant, und ehrerbietig, am Rande der mächtigen Brandung gestanden wie vor einem Löwenkäfig, hinter dessen Gitter die Bestie ihren Rachen mit den fürchterlichen Reißzähnen schlundtief ergähnen läßt. Dann hatte er gebadet, während der Strandwächter auf einem Hörnchen denjenigen Gefahr zublies, die frecherweise versuchten über die erste Welle hinauszudringen, dem herantreibenden Ungewitter auch nur zu nahe zu kommen, und noch der letzte Auslauf des Katarakts hatte den Nacken wie Prankenschlag getroffen. Von dorthier kannte der junge Mensch das Begeisterungsglück leichter Liebesberührungen mit Mächten, deren volle Umarmung vernichtend sein würde. Was er aber nicht gekannt hatte, war die Neigung, diese begeisternde Berührung mit der tödlichen Natur so weit zu verstärken, daß die volle Umarmung drohte . . . bis der Verkehr das Kritische streifte und ihm kaum noch beliebige Grenzen zu setzen waren. Bis es sich nicht mehr um Schaumauslauf und leichten Prankenschlag handelte, sondern um die Welle, den Rachen, das Meer.) (Mann, 1981, 666-67)

Yet Hans Castorp's ill-fated skiing trip does not simply *repeat* this primal, oceanic experience of his youth. Rather, it conjures up the ocean's brute and potentially lethal embrace as a mnemonic reference point, an "image" whose iconic concision stands in sharp contrast to the amorphous and precarious original experience. It is precisely the image's symbolic economy and stability which accounts for the almost surreal "courage" with which Mann's protagonist ventures into the predatory silence of the "elements." That is, Hans Castorp unconsciously formalizes the memory of danger as it had once left its physical imprint on his senses in childhood by reviving and so containing it in the objective gestalt of an "image." Characteristically, Mann's narrative emphasizes the ambiguity of the resulting image, for it not only allows Hans Castorp to feel continuities between his youthful past and the present but, in so doing, also seduces him into thinking of his present persona as being "in control" and sheltered because his symbolic condensation of experience into memory appears to have permanently bracketed the materiality of the experiential world. Yet to condense danger into the symbolic gestalt of the image also means to submit (however unwittingly) to the dangerous volatility of the image, that is, to the temptation of misreading it as a "mere" image – nothing more than a benign reappearance of childhood memories. Tellingly, Mann's narrative highlights Hans' careless and almost fatal perception of the snow-covered landscape as but "a fairy-tale world, childlike and funny. Boughs of trees adorned with thick pillows, so fluffy someone must have plumped them up . . . a landscape of crouching, cowering gnomes in droll disguises – it was comic to behold, straight out of a book of fairy tales" (Mann, 1995, 462).²²

As Arnold Gehlen had argued, the image serves to contain a fundamentally unpredictable and discontinuous experiential world in symbolic forms. The resulting iconic product functions like any other tool and hence is susceptible of being transferred and applied to new challenges and purposes. Yet in his anthropological meditation on the ambivalent role of symbolic forms and entire institutions, Gehlen also recognizes that the increasing stabilization and eventual effacement of being by our perceptual and conceptual mechanisms will over time cause the latter to become autonomous and to confront their one-time beneficiaries as an objective and impersonal super-structure or system. Gehlen here speaks of the inherent propensity of all forms to mutate into quasi-autonomous institutions and, as such, to undergo a "transformation of purpose" (*Zwecktransformation*).²³ In the specific context here at issue, such *Zwecktransformation* will gradually shift emphasis away from the incidental content of

form and towards form *as* a quasi-institutional content in its own right. With its referential and quasi-totemic origins long expunged, the "image" (*Bild*) confronts late-bourgeois subjects as an autonomous, quasi-institutional fact, an aesthetic convention that often stands in synecdochic relation to larger, equally habitual modes of ideation and cognition. With the arrival of neo-Classical aesthetics in the mid-eighteenth century (and well before that in France), the normative stability of "genre" legitimates, yet by the same token also attenuates, the experimental or performative energy inherent in all aesthetic practice. Hence a figure like William Blake, in whose oeuvre the word "energy" holds a uniquely privileged function, seems a late and improbable rebel against the far-advanced reification of "energy" into genre, of "vision" into "taste," and of "illumination" into the book as a mass-produced commodity. Assimilated with reflex-like efficiency by highly socialized subjects as the canonical inventory of a "cultural heritage" (*Bildungsgut*), the melancholic and epigonal imagination so pervasive in literature, music and the visual arts between 1830 and the onset of World War One came increasingly to be viewed as the symptom of an oppressively "invariant" (Gehlen, 1956, 45) complexion of cultural meanings.

Spengler and Mann would eventually address this syndrome under the name of *Zivilisation*. For Gehlen, however, the stability, even inertia, of the image is neither incidental nor merely a function of some particular aesthetic program. Rather, it attests to the deep-seated anthropological functionalism that drives and conditions all symbolic practice:

Beim Bildwerk denke man an die oben beschriebene Kategorie der *Ablösung des Verhaltens vom zufällig real Vorfindbaren*; damit rückt das Bild samt dem zugeordneten Verhalten in die Ebene des *Wortes*, denn das Wort läßt sich ebenfalls vom Vorfindbaren ablösen, und zugleich kann man in Wort oder Bild auf jenes Vorfindbare sich als ein *dauerndes* richten. Der ganze Komplex ist jetzt erst eigentlich geistig bewältigt und im Bewußsein verfügbar. Es gibt zwei tiefste menschliche, unerfüllbare Bedürfnisse, die nicht in der Wirklichkeit, aber wenigstens im Bewußtsein zur Hintergrund Erfüllung kommen können: das eine besteht darin, die dauernde Unzerstörbarkeit eines in sich geschlossenen Seins, wie sie die Materie selbst hat, zu erreichen, und doch das Selbstbewußtsein zu behaupten. Das andere geht darauf, daß unsere eigenen Gedanken und Wünsche sich ohne Außenwiderstand realisieren ließen: Zwischen diesen entferntesten Polen unserer Sehnsucht vermittelt das Bild: in ihm finden sie zusammen, denn es ist das daseiende dauernde Außenwelt und zugleich ganz die geistige eigene Antwort. Diese höchste Synthese – erst Spinoza hat sie philosophisch in dem Zusammenfallen von *extensio* und *cogitatio* formuliert – kommt im Kultbild an die Grenze der Hintergrund Erfüllung wenigstens im Bewußtsein. (Gehlen, 1956, 171-73)

(The image-product ought to be viewed in relation to the (anthropological) category of . . . *dissociating practice from what is contingently at hand*. Yet in so doing, the image, along with its associated practices, enters the domain of logos, for the word, too, exists separate from what might be present. Both word and image allow us to relate to what may or may not be present as something *permanent*. Only now has an experiential complexion been intellectually appropriated and so entered into a stable relation to consciousness. There are two elemental, human and unattainable types of need that may never be satisfied in reality, though they can be assuaged within the virtual background of consciousness: one consists in attaining the lasting indestructibility of a self-contained being, as is the case with matter itself, and yet preserve self-consciousness all the same. The other is our desire to realize our own thoughts and wishes without any external resistance. It is the image that mediates between these diametrical opposites; in it they converge, for it furnishes an actual, permanent empirical world and at the same time an intellectual, autonomous response to it. The supreme synthesis – for which only Spinoza furnished the philosophical formulation with the synthesis of *extensio* and *cogitatio* – reaches the threshold of its virtual, conscious fulfillment in the ritual image.) (My translation)

The quote highlights the anthropological, functional, and partially also symptomatic, tension-fraught status of the image – its underlying anthropological and latently mythical dimension – to which modern philosophical accounts of representation (e.g., Hegel below) remain largely unresponsive. The image is *eo ipso* a locus of encrypted danger, volatility – in part because it was meant to keep in focus and symbolically contain an irreducibly contingent and volatile world to which humans never had a biologically stabilized, organic relationship.²⁴

III. Telos or Rupture: Death and Organic Process in Simmel, Spengler, and Mann

What, then, accounts for this fundamental, anthropological compulsion to produce images? For a long genealogy of intellectuals and artists that would include Schopenhauer, Wagner, Nietzsche, Simmel, Spengler, Gehlen, and also Mann himself, the answer to that question lies in the palpable lack of any organic means and “fit,” the absence of an organic “environment,” and in the consequent and insistent fact of contingency and, ultimately, of death itself within all human experience. The production of images and their ritual stylization as “art” – practices that extend back to the very dawn of humanity – thus attests to an elemental perplexity about this conundrum. Specifically, the question is whether death can only be understood as an irrational, if also inescapable *disruption* of an otherwise purposive and organic development, or whether death is itself an integral and indispensable condition of a uniquely human developmental trajectory that the nineteenth century had formally and institutionally conceived as *Bildung*.²⁵ The question, in other words, is whether death simply contradicts the idea of an organic model of causality – that is, an entity in which parts and the whole are simultaneously cause and effect. If we follow Kant’s definition (*Critique of Judgment* § 65) and premise our understanding of organic life, including our own, on a teleological intelligence (a mode of explanation that, as Kant repeatedly stresses, must necessarily remain hypothetical, an “as if”), then the question arises: does death constitute the goal (*causa finalis*) of a given, organic development, or is it its very negation; or, a third possibility, might death turn out to be a necessary condition without which no development whatsoever is conceivable.

In a remarkable essay, first published in a 1910 issue of *Logos*, Georg Simmel had remarked that, rather than viewing death as a sudden caesura, a spatio-temporal “termination of our being” (*ein Aufhören seines Seins*), the developmental potentialities and actuality of human life is at all times conditioned by death. Because “at any particular moment of our life we *are* beings who will die . . . death does not merely condition our life in the hour of death but constitutes a formal criterion of life and, as such, colors all of its contents.” The result is a pervasive ambiguity within life itself, for “just as any automatic or spontaneous move can be interpreted as a drive for life, for ‘more’ life, it can also be seen as an escape from death” (my translation).²⁶ Perhaps, Simmel muses, “the essence of our activity constitutes a mysterious core that we, as so many others, can only grasp by parsing it as we seek to master life and escape death. For every discrete step of life presents itself not only as a temporal approximation of death but as positively and *a priori* conditioned by death, which is itself a real and integral feature of life . . . Life, which we use up as we approach death, is *eo ipso* used up to escape from death” (my translation).²⁷ This paradox lies at the very heart of that peculiar “sympathy with death” displayed time and again by Mann’s protagonist in the *Magic Mountain*, and it explains why images in the *Magic Mountain* are so precariously suspended between epiphany and catastrophe, bourgeois comfort and primal danger, and why the overall narrative is permeated by ambiguity or (in Mann’s and Lukács’ parlance) irony.

The entire speculative conception of *Bild* and *Bildung* set forth by Goethe, Hegel, Humboldt, Schleiermacher, among others, posits a fundamental isomorphism between the entelechy of its empirical objects and the disciplines (biology, speculative physics, historical hermeneutics, musicology) and institutions (the university, the museum, etc.) concerned with tracing the operation of a “developmental drive” (*Bildungstrieb*) in its material and conceptual objects. In short, *Bildung* as a social, disciplinary, and institutional project purports to be the “natural” consequence of an oblique yet

unrelenting dynamic ascribed *a priori* by its intellectual progenitors to its “objects,” and that in a reflexive move is subsequently reclaimed as intrinsic to framing these objects in a normative body of knowledge. Describing the *Bildungsroman* as “the *interiorization of contradiction*” and as “a phenomenology that makes normality interesting and meaningful *as normality*,” Franco Moretti hinted some time ago at the conceptual tension within a narrative paradigm that “so effectively absorbs individual contingency into a normative vision of the social” (Moretti, 10-11). “How,” he continues, “can the tendency toward *individuality*, which is the necessary fruit of a culture of self-determination, be made to coexist with the opposing tendency to *normality*, the offspring, equally inevitable, of the mechanism of socialization?” (16). In fusing a conception of organic development with (organicist) theoretical models furnishing a representative and non-contradictory understanding of such development, *Bildung* effectively brings about a full amalgamation of organic life and its interpretive and theoretical articulation. Hence, when posing the question of “why . . . did modern Western civilization discard such a perfect narrative mechanism?” Moretti suggests that “the answer lies precisely here: it was too perfect. It could only be convincing in so far as historical experience continued to make absolute cohesion and totalizing harmony not only a desirable ideal, but a conceivable one too. But the historico-cultural context suited to the ‘perfection’ of the classical *Bildungsroman* had an unusually brief life” (Moretti, 72).

Moretti’s apt trope of the “brief life” enjoyed by the *Bildungsroman* hints at the most salient point, namely, that any theory mimicking the organic logic of its objects will necessarily be subject to the natural and inescapable limit of all organic being: death. Rather, the theoretical paradigm of *Bildung* or *Kultur* would itself have a limited life-expectancy, would prove but an epoch that – like the bourgeois, liberal-democratic nation state whose emergence and consolidation it had facilitated and sustained – must eventually decline and pass away. This is not to say, however, that the major theorists of *Bildung* had not thought about and wrestled with this problem. For Kant, the finitude of the individual required shifting the plot of *Bildung* from that individual to a trans-generational covenant that points toward an incremental cultivation of the idea of reason: “In *man* (as the only rational creature on earth) those natural capacities which are directed to the use of his reason are to be fully developed only in the race, not in the individual.”²⁸ Behind such a model and its concurrent postulate of “immortality” in the *Critique of Practical Reason* there lurks, as Georg Simmel had argued, the old mythic idea of metempsychosis. That is, in an effort to overcome the naïve and inherently fatalistic antithesis of life and death (Simmel calls it the *Parzen-Vorstellung*), philosophy must “regard the individual organism as the abbreviation of a soul that spans immeasurable temporal distances and forms, as it were, a cursory presentation of the species itself . . . Recalling those crude symbolisms whereby primitive societies anticipate the most profound empirical and metaphysical conceptions of a highly evolved culture, metempsychosis points out to us that it is perhaps a *single* step whereby death is turned into a constitutive part of life and so is overcome” (Simmel, vol. 12, 82; 95, my translation).

Simmel specifically invokes Hegel as the figure whose philosophy both understood and took that step (vol. 12, 85-7). We recall how, in his “Preface” to the *Phenomenology*, Hegel transposes death from a material into a figural notion, and from a contingent fate befalling the individual organism to a necessary hermeneutic framework without which the self-explication of organic, intellectually capable life would remain unthinkable. As the following, famous passage from the “Preface” also makes clear, however, death must be ultimately contained as a trope for the inherent capacity and propensity of all contingent being toward self-transcendence on behalf of a larger whole whose “actuality” (*Wirklichkeit*) inheres in its progressive self-realization. Only by enduring and “seeing through” the figural martyrdom of death can actuality (*Wirklichkeit*) become truth (*Wahrheit*) and contingent, individual being (organic and inorganic) realize its universal, conceptual destiny:

Der Tod, wenn wir Jene Unwirklichkeit so nennen wollen, ist das Furchtbarste, und das Tote festzuhalten das, was die größte Kraft erfordert. Die kraftlose Schönheit haßt den Verstand, weil er ihr dies zumutet, was sie nicht vermag. Aber nicht das Leben, das sich vor dem Tode scheut und von der Verwüstung rein bewahrt, sondern das ihn erträgt und in ihm sich erhält, ist das Leben des

Geistes. Er gewinnt seine Wahrheit nur, indem er in der absoluten Zerrissenheit sich selbst findet. Diese Macht ist er nicht als das Positive, welches von dem Negativen wegsieht, wie wenn wir von etwas sagen, dies ist nichts oder falsch, und nun, damit fertig, davon weg zu irgend etwas anderem übergehen; sondern er ist diese Macht nur, indem er dem Negativen ins Angesicht schaut, bei ihm verweilt, Dieses Verweilen ist die Zauberkraft, die es in das Sein umkehrt.²⁹

(Death, if that is what we want to call this non-actuality, is of all things the most dreadful, and to hold fast what is dead requires the greatest strength. Lacking strength, Beauty hates the Understanding for asking of her what it cannot do. But the life of Spirit is not the life that shrinks from death and keeps itself untouched by devastation, but rather the life that endures it and maintains itself in it. It wins its truth only when, in utter dismemberment, it finds itself. It is this power, not as something positive, which closes its eyes to the negative, as when we say of something that it is nothing or it is false, and then, having done with it, turn away and pass on to something else; on the contrary, Spirit is this power only by looking the negative in the face, and tarrying with it. This tarrying with the negative is the magical power that converts it into being.)³⁰

Affirming the Romantics' speculative and organicist conception of the image as the speculative seed for the teleological trajectory of *Bildung*, death here functions as the master-trope governing all dialectical mediation. Evoking a Christian, specifically Lutheran, understanding of "transubstantiation," "resurrection," and "sublation," as well as of the *passio* of "dismemberment" (*Zerrissenheit*), death serves as the linchpin of *Bildung* by mediating the contingent, partial, and finite existence of the modern individual with its collective essence (*Geist*).³¹ In assigning death a strictly immanent, indeed functional role within its unfolding master-narrative, Hegelian reflection thus deploys death in a strictly figural manner. Yet for exactly that reason, the *Phenomenology's* unfolding of "truth" (*das Wahre*) as an organic "movement" (*Bewegung*) rests on a pre-conceptual instance of "faith" whose open acknowledgement would lead to the death of the entire speculative project.³²

To be sure, Hegel has profound philosophical justification for construing death as a figural and, as such, necessarily transitional threshold in the dialectical progression of self and other. Death, for Hegel, is never merely a material event, nor does it ever prove terminal. Yet his speculative conception can only succeed if it is prepared to sacrifice the liberal-humanist notion of the individual as holding unique and intrinsic value – that is, as an end in itself. For Hegel no less than for Darwin, the individual can only ever hold an incidental, transitional function within the developmental meta-narrative of a particular type of rationality. It merely furnishes the contingent organic vessel (or "survival machine," as Richard Dawkins calls it) for the dynamic realization of *Idee* and *Geist*, or for the adaptive, functionalist logic of evolution (up to and including its eventual self-legitimation as the "theory of evolution"). It is inevitable that such a developmental process must continually discard or consume the contingent vessels to which it has temporarily entrusted the realization and transmission of its own truth. Hence, if the developmental narrative of Hegelian dialectics or Darwinian functionalism views death as figural, it must take the same view of life at the level of the individual organism. As early as 1799, Schelling had noted that as it "advances the development of individual forms, nature is by no means concerned with the individual – on the contrary, it aims at the annihilation (*Vernichtung*) of the individual." For as soon as "the common objective (*das Gemeinschaftliche*) has been secured, nature will abandon the individual, . . . indeed will proceed to treat it as an impediment (*Schranke*) of its activity, one that it works to destroy. For the individual must appear as the means, and the species as the end of nature."³³

Yet from the moment that Schelling and Hegel set forth this conception, and particularly Hegel's response to the former, we also find a number of Romantics undertaking a thorough critique of the image as a speculative tool for the reflexive labor of *Geist*. The most conspicuous (and for German Modernism most consequential) representatives of such a critique are Schlegel, Hölderlin, and Novalis. Arguably the most incisive questioning of a systematic, progressive, and self-authorizing model of philosophical reflection, Novalis' *Fichte-Studies* of 1795-96 already scatter the seeds for Mann's

technology-based revaluation of the image as inherently regressive, a mythic disruption of the delicate balancing-act proffered by the Goethean Bildungsroman. Novalis' critique, an aesthetic philosophy whose continued pursuit Hölderlin was to advocate under the heading of a "mythology of reason," ultimately rejects as naïve the notion that the image is but an expressive, functional vehicle – be it for philosophy, which treats it as an entelechy destined to achieve self-transcendence in the concept, or for a sentimental conception of aesthetics that posits the image as a vehicle for affective and expressive self-realization.³⁴ Instead, the critique first launched in Novalis's *Fichte-Studies*, and soon taken up by Schlegel's *Athenaeum* fragments and Hölderlin's poetological writings of 1799-1800, aims to recover the image's fundamental, anthropological origins in ritual and myth. No mode of rationality, however insistently reflexive and meta-descriptive, can ever recover the totality of its underlying conditions. To Mann's protagonist in *The Magic Mountain*, this notion becomes perhaps most palpable during his nocturnal researches into the elusive borderlands between inorganic matter and life: "Between life and inanimate nature, however, was a yawning abyss, which research sought in vain to bridge" (1981, 387/1995, 271). In reclaiming "scientific theories (as) part of the novel's mythopoeic equipment" (Herwig, 151), Mann follows Novalis's view that the mythic obliquity of all origination is latently preserved in images, even (or, perhaps, especially) when philosophical reflection purports to have overcome the image's semblance-character. What Novalis had called the "magical" power of the image, its "conjury" of an otherwise inchoate and threatening world not yet analytically broken down into discrete things or "objects," once again surfaces in the discourse of philosophical anthropology and social psychology of the early twentieth century, particularly in the wake of World War I. Having read Georg Brandes' lectures on the Romantic School in Germany, Mann was surprised by the extent to which his own *Zauberberg* was implicated in Novalis's mystical and deliberately a-systematic Romanticism.³⁵ As we shall see, both for Novalis and Mann the integrity of the conscious and fully socialized individual thus appears premised on the fact that the event of its origination has been displaced. As Novalis' most famous reader, Freud, was to put it, "consciousness arises in the place of a memory trace" (*das Bewußtsein entstehe an Stelle der Erinnerungsspur*).³⁶

The later Freud's pessimistic farewell to Cartesianism is in perhaps all too obvious alignment with Mann's concurrent project in the *Magic Mountain* – though that novel also lampoons the frivolous, equivocal, and utopian character of psychoanalysis. Both Freud and Mann, yet also Benjamin and Spengler at virtually opposite ends of the intellectual and political spectrum, offer representative instances of how Modernism effectively reverses the epigenetic and developmental confidence of nineteenth-century narrative. In Freud's late case histories and subsequent writings on religion, myth, and art, the image functions as the catalyst for a reversal of *Bildung*, triggering a "rebarbarization" of the bourgeois psyche as it inexorably gravitates back towards its mythic origins.³⁷ As is the case in the later Freud, Spengler's *Decline* and Mann's *Magic Mountain* effectively draw out the long-repressed implications of Goethean organicism by insisting that its initial, self-generating and progressive motion from image to concept necessarily finds its completion in an obverse, regressive tendency equally innate in the bourgeois psyche – a craving for oblivion and absorption into an impersonal, mythic state ultimately attainable only in death. Having casually demurred at the "conjunction of illness and stupidity" in another patient as a "stylistic blunder" of sorts, Hans Castorp finds himself chastised by Settembrini for "intellectual backsliding (*Rückneigung*), a return to the views of that dark, tormented age," a "fearful era when harmony and health were considered suspicious and devilish, whereas infirmity in those days was as good as a passport to heaven" (Mann 1995, 96-97/1981, 139-40). To the self-styled custodian and educator Settembrini, Hans Castorp's aesthetic construction of disease, its stylization as image, revives a pessimistic strain in German intellectual and artistic history that includes Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Nietzsche as its principal representatives. Anticipating Arnold Toynbee's reading of Western narrative as the unwitting enactment of a deep-structural rhythm of withdrawal-and-return, such "backsliding" of bourgeois culture constitutes the syntactic blueprint for the *Magic Mountain* overall, a novel whose protagonist not only absconds from the "harsh" and implacable bourgeois and economic rationality of his native Northern Germany, but who ultimately is forced to awaken from his languid, supine seven-year "hibernation" in the enchanted world of the

Berghof sanatorium as he merges into the indistinct mass of volunteers hastening toward their fatal destination in the blood-drenched soil of World War One. Indeed, we clearly are intended to understand Hans Castorp's final joining of the "wicked dance" (*argos Tanzvergnügen*) in the mud-and blood-drenched battlefields of World War One as a complex return, not only of the Medieval motif of *danse macabre* so ingeniously fleshed out in the novel's eponymous chapter, but also to patterns of sacrifice, the dithyrambic enactment of death in the tragic myth (*tragon oide*) of ancient Greece, all of which function as leitmotifs throughout Mann's novel. The visual gestalt of the *danse macabre*, a *rondeau* or generational merry-go-round of ephemeral, human bodies, resurfaces in the inexorable logic of with which World War I photography captures the anonymous dead bodies as they once again blend into the clay from which, according to Genesis, they had once been so tenuously molded.



Figure 1: German trench with dead German soldiers at Verdun after its capture by French troops on 20th April 1916



Figure 2: Medieval woodcut featuring the motif of *danse macabre*

Yet to what extent is it permissible for criticism to align itself with the apparent pessimism, even fatalism of such images? To what extent may our own, *critical* arguments posit such a "return" merely as an instance of regression? For to speak of "regression" is to imply, necessarily, some kind of failure to "progress," that is, a contingent breakdown in an already assumed metonymic and orderly trajectory known as *Bildung*. It would be intellectually more sound, then, to speak (in loosely Freudian terms) of a "return of the repressed" here, namely, the return of an elemental and necessarily repressed antagonism intrinsic to *Bildung* itself.³⁸ For in embracing an organicist development that is self-generating, teleological, and forever expanding in complexity and projected returns, *Bildung* must at the same time repress the material and organic reality of death as the outer limit of aesthetic and speculative models of rationality. For Gehlen, as for Spengler and Mann, the return of the repressed thus coincides with the way that the material reality of death calls into question the organic purposiveness assigned to aesthetic forms and social institutions. Close scrutiny of highly complex, institutionally fixed and deeply habituated forms and institutions – summarized, usually in disparaging ways, as "civilization" by Wagner, Nietzsche, Mann, Spengler and other precursors and actual representatives of German Modernism – exposes something that Gehlen labels a "reversal of motivational direction" (*Umkehr der Antriebsrichtung*). By it, we are to

understand the inevitable reversal of a practice, initially conceived as *immanently purposive*, into a *means*; that is, we here confront the obverse of the previously analyzed process in which a pragmatic action gradually evolved into an immanently purposive one. The process of more immediate concern to us now is one in which the subjective-emotional, experiential side of ritual emerges as the intended goal, the actual purpose of ritualized behavior. In other words, ritual itself is being enacted in instrumental fashion in order to bring about a collective intoxication (*Sozialrausch*) or the ecstatic subjective condition (*Selbststeigerung*) associated with it. (My translation)

(. . . ist nunächst einfach das unvermeidbare Umschlagen eines als *Selbstzweck* entwickelten Handelns zu einem *Mittel* gemeint, d.h. wir haben hier die Gegenseite des im 1. Teil untersuchten Vorgangs, in dem das Mittelhandeln sich zum Selbstzweck überhöhte. Der uns jetzt näher interessierende Prozeß ist der, in dem die subjektiv-emotionale, die Erlebnisseite des Ritus zum eigentlich angestrebten Ziel wird, zum Zweck des ritualen Verhaltens. Der Ritus wird also instrumentalisiert, er wird vollzogen, um den Sozialrausch oder die mit ihm verknüpften Zustände der Selbststeigerung zu provozieren.) (Gehlen, 1956, 273)

Examples of practices and images undergoing such a reversal abound throughout the *Magic Mountain*. One only need to recall Mynheer Peeperkorn's improvised, late-night bacchanals or Hans Castorp's immersion in the euphonious lassitude of Debussy's *L'après midi d'un faune*: "Here oblivion itself, a blissful inertia, and the innocence of timelessness all reigned supreme. It was depravity with the best of consciences, the idealized apotheosis of a total refusal to obey Western demands for an active life" (Mann, 1995, 637, translation modified).³⁹ What Gehlen identifies as the motive of "collective intoxication" is, of course, most conspicuously depicted in the closing chapter of the *Magic Mountain*, as all the trappings of polite and enlightened, civil society rapidly succumb to long-repressed, primitive aggression, first instanced by Naphta's and Settembrini's duel and now transposed to a global key in the mechanized slaughter of World War One.

Yet the novel has been long charting the decadence of virtually all those confined in the morbid world of the sanatorium, particularly their oblivion- and intoxication-craving response to sonic and visual images. Perhaps most poignant among these visual scenes is a depiction of a silent film screening at the *Bioskop* theater in Davos. Already numbed by "the bad air that weighed heavily in their lungs and clouded their minds in a murky fog," Mann's three visitors – Hans, Joachim, and the moribund Karen Karstedt – submit to a radically new, technological array of convulsive and disjointed images: "all sorts of life, chopped up in hurried, diverting scraps that leapt into fidgety action, lingered, and twitched out of sight in alarm, to the accompaniment of trivial music, which offered present rhythms to match vanishing phantoms from the past" (Mann 1995, 310/1981, 445). Bizarre and shocking in their visual discontinuity, such cinematic images are motivically linked to an equally grotesque instance of *danse macabre*, namely, Herr Popov's sudden epileptic fit during lunch. Though a chance event, that convulsion is quietly regarded by those in attendance as a "dissolute revelation" (*wüste Offenbarung* (Mann, 1981, 421/1995, 294)) of remarks ventured more discretely by Dr. Krokowski just before lunch; yet it also foreshadows the ultimate, technologically enhanced fit of irrationality that will seize all of Europe at the close of the novel in 1914. What unfolds at the *Bioskop*, meanwhile, is a veritable cascade of discontinuous images, "an Oriental potentate . . . dispatched by a knife," followed by "pictures from all over the world: the top-hatted president of the French republic . . . the viceroy of India, life and customs of an aboriginal village on New Mecklenburg, a cockfight on Borneo . . . a street of brothels in Japan with geishas sitting caged behind wooden lattices," etc. Once it abruptly expires and

the lights went up in the hall and the audience's field of dreams stood before them like an empty blackboard, there was not even the possibility of applause. There was no one there to clap for, to thank, no artistic achievement to reward with a curtain call. The actors who had been cast in the

play they had just seen had long since been scattered to the winds; they had watched only phantoms, whose deeds had been reduced to a million photographs brought into focus for the briefest of moments so that, as often as one liked, they could then be given back to the element of time as a series of blinking flashes. Once the illusion was over, there was something repulsive about the crowd's nerveless silence. Hands lay impotent before the void. People rubbed their eyes, stared straight ahead, felt embarrassed by the brightness and demanded the return into the dark. (Mann, 1995, 311, translation modified)

(Man sah das Leben und Treiben in einem Eingeborenendorf von Neumecklenburg, einen Hahnenkampf auf Borneo . . . eine Bordellstraße in Japan, wo Geishas hinter hölzernen Käfiggittern saßen" (Mann, 1981, 446) and "Wenn aber das letzte Flimmerbild einer Szenenfolge wegzuckte, im Saale das Licht aufging und das Feld der Visionen als leere Tafel vor der Menge stand, so konnte es nicht einmal Beifall geben. Niemand war da, dem man durch Applaus hätte danken, den man für seine Kunstleistung hätte hervorrufen können. Die Schauspieler, die sich zu dem Spiele, das man genossen, zusammengefunden, waren längst in alle Winde zerstoßen; nur die Schattenbilder ihrer Produktionen hatte man gesehen, Millionen Bilder und kürzeste Fixierungen, in die man ihr Handeln aufnehmend zerlegt hatte, um es beliebig oft, zu rasch blinzelndem Ablauf, dem Elemente der Zeit zurückzugeben. Das Schweigen der Menge nach der Illusion hatte etwas Nervloses und Widerwärtiges. Die Hände lagen ohnmächtig vor dem Nichts. Man rieb sich die Augen, stierte vor sich hin, schämte sich der Helligkeit und verlangte zurück ins Dunkel.) (Mann, 1981, 445-46)

As has often been noted, Mann's novel is shot through with technological references (film, X-ray photography, amateur photography, the gramophone, and an array of minor visual distractions).⁴⁰ Cumulatively, they transform the generative, speculative function of the image as it had underwritten classical narratives of *Bildung*. As Mann himself noted, it is tempting to repudiate Modernism's photographic and cinematic transformation of the image in a spirit of "prudish humanism" (*humanistische Prüderie*). Yet such philistine earnestness misses the creative, artistic opportunities opened up by the "technologizing of art" (*Technifizierung des Künstlerischen*).⁴¹ For while such a development carries with it undeniable overtones "of the decline and death of the soul, might not, even as the province of the soul is claimed by technology, technology itself acquire soul?" (Mann, 1986, 246).⁴² Something of the sort arguably takes place in the *Bioskop* episode, if only by intensifying the spectator's intuitive grasp of their own transience as organic and embodied beings. As he continues to weave his "oriental carpet" of mythic references, Mann here reintroduces Settembrini's earlier characterization of the *Berghof* sanatorium as a cosmopolitan Hades or limbo for so many tubercular "shadows." The final image of "a young Maroccan woman" with "swelling breasts half-bared" and nostrils "flared wide, her eyes full of animal life, her features vivacious" leaves the audience staring "in bewilderment at the face of this charming specter (*Schatten*)" before "the phantom vanished. A bright void filled the screen, the word *Finis* was projected on it" (Mann, 1995, 312).⁴³ It is hard to conceive of a more poignant, Modernist update on what Robert Richards has termed the "erotic authority of nature in Goethe" – an Amazon of captivating, vibrant presence unapologetically teeming with *ewig weiblich*, erotic possibility.⁴⁴ By contrast, in Mann's technology-driven inflection the "image" as the one-time erotic source of unlimited developmental possibilities is revealed as the most ephemeral of "shadows." Once it has abruptly vanished, its illusion is immediately felt by the audience to spell *Finis* not only for the distractions to which these "death-devoted" specimens of the European bourgeoisie have so willingly surrendered, but also its overtly phantasmagorical character serves as an obituary to the large-scale, narrative project of *Bildung*. As Friedrich Kittler has noted, "media, always amount to projectiles into the beyond (*Flugkörper ins Jenseits*). If gravestones served as symbols at the very dawn of culture, our media technology reintroduces us to all mythic deities."⁴⁵ With their mechanized reproduction of perception and cognition alike, film and photography terminate the functional and organic kinship between Eros and (pro)creativity, image (*Bild*) and development

(*Bildung*). Yet precisely because they no longer operate as mimetic or speculative vehicles, photographic and cinematic images may now expose some volatile and potentially threatening (but long repressed) aspects intrinsic to the *Urbild* itself. What Sabine Haupt calls the “return of ritual in the modern media” (*Rückkehr des Kultus im modernen Medium* (548)) is precisely what Gehlen had meant when speaking of the image’s latent mythic content – a content merely glossed over by its expressive or speculative deployment in the bourgeois narratives (literary and philosophical) that defined the early-nineteenth-century notion of *Bildung*.

IV. Modernist Mythology: Technology, Regression, and the Image in the Magic Mountain

Mann’s critical examination of the scope and limits of a logical optimism, represented above all by the figure of Settembrini in the *Magic Mountain*, can point to numerous intellectual precursors in German Romanticism. Early documents of such a critique can be found in Hölderlin’s writings from Frankfurt and Homburg (1796-1800), in Novalis’ *Fichte-Studies*, and later in Schelling’s 1820 Erlangen lectures (*Initia Philosophiae Universae*).⁴⁶ It comes as no surprise that Thomas Mann kept reading Novalis’s “Hymns to the Night” (as well as Georg Brandes’ commentary on Novalis) while working on the *Zauberberg*. Spengler and Mann effectively write the most comprehensive and complex obituaries to this speculative model of *Bildung*, and they do so (especially Mann) by radically questioning the generative, teleological, and self-determining powers of the image as the mediating linchpin for the subject’s reflexive progression. For there is another way in which *Urbilder* may impact and shape the deracinated subject of modernity – not as entelechies ensuring the individual’s continued social, cultural, and biological flourishing along an open-ended, progressive trajectory but as catalysts of a regressive motion leading its defenseless or even willing subjects back towards a confrontation with myth and “fate.” In Spengler’s and Mann’s wary meditations on modernity and Modernism, the image is shown to index, however involuntarily, the persistence of mythic, atavistic forces within consciousness. Inasmuch as these forces tenaciously re-impose themselves on the individual, they incrementally disrupt the self-generating, self-regulating, and firmly teleological process of cognitive, aesthetic, and/or economic mobility known as *Bildung*. Seen as the objective correlative of a seemingly inescapable fate – the very notion that Goethe’s and Hegel’s conceptions of *Bildung* had sought to vanquish – *Bild* triggers a regressive motion towards oblivion, night, and the Circe-call of nothingness. Ultimately, what goes by the name of “decadence” is little more than a sustained and unflinching drawing-out of latent, indeed constitutive antagonisms and contradictions that lie at the very foundation of the Romantic theory of *Bildung*.

Antecedents for this problem abound throughout the later nineteenth century.⁴⁷ We only need to recall Wagner’s Siegfried, whose propulsive rhythmic and energetic psychological persona is suddenly suspended as he recognizes – triggered by the reflection of his own image in a brook – Mime’s claim to being his “father and mother at once” to be a fraud. Henceforth punctuating his dramatic progression, the image of his absent mother and father shapes the hero’s development as a quest for his origin, particularly for the sound (*Klangbild*) of his mother’s voice that he retrieves from his subconscious through the serendipitous song of the *Waldvogel*. By the time of *Götterdämmerung* Siegfried’s conquests in the here-and-now can only advance on the basis of his drinking an oblivion-inducing potion that will eventually precipitate his downfall. A similarly regressive motion shapes *Tristan and Isolde*, with the music-drama’s eponymous protagonists fatefully cathected onto a single *Urbild* or Freudian *Urszene* – that of Tristan languishing under Isolde’s care and, at the crucial moment, arresting her by looking into her eyes as she means to slay him in revenge. It is not that this momentous gaze reclaims Tristan’s and Isolde’s “death-devoted” hearts for life; rather, it sets them on a trajectory that will eventually force them to voluntarily enact this *Urszene* with, rather than against, one another – and so bring about “a redemption that needs no god to accomplish it.”⁴⁸ Indeed, by mid-century, and certainly after 1871, the theoretical optimism of *Bildung* seems to have worn threadbare, in part as a result of the concept’s apparent susceptibility to cooptation or outright usurpation by

economic imperatives and by the invidious logic of specialization and a means-end rationality typical of modern professionalism. For anti-capitalists like Wagner and Marx (however dissimilar in most other respects), the middle-class subjects of *Bildung* find themselves caught in a disciplinary, professional, and institutional vice. Nietzsche's biting parody of an imperturbable optimism that had seized the *Reich* of the Bismarckian and early Wilhelminian era – "We are culture! We are *Bildung*! We are at the peak! We are the top of the pyramid! We are the telos of world history" – throws into relief the dangers of a teleological conception that, since Kant, had been an intrinsic formal component of *Bildung*.⁴⁹ What were once felt as organic potentialities now have atrophied into conformist, philistine "values." True to form, Nietzsche will read this gradual atrophy of *Bildung*, the surrender of its once complex, indeed incalculable theoretical and artistic possibilities to philistine concerns with moral and economic "values" as a "preferred regression to the instinctual" (*lieber wieder zurück in die Unbewusstheit des Triebes*).⁵⁰ Similarly, Spengler was to remark on the peculiar resurgence of what he terms *eine zweite Religiösität*, a kind of after-religion – "an ultimate, strictly practical global mood shared by fatigued cosmopolitans" (*eine letzte rein praktische Weltstimmung müder Großstadtmenschen*).⁵¹

A more than thousand-page long tome of truly immoderate aspirations, Oswald Spengler's *Decline of the West* (1918/1922) professes to furnish a "morphological account of world-history" and, on that basis, predict the future course of history. Its palpable hubris notwithstanding, Spengler's *Decline* merits attention not only as a key-intertext for Mann's *Magic Mountain* but also because of its holistic interpretation of the long nineteenth century (1789-1918). As he completed his *magnum opus* during the closing months of World War One, Spengler saw himself perched at the threshold between the final, Romantic variation on a highly evolved European *Zivilisation* and an ominous new "Caesarism" that, not altogether inaccurately, he predicted would spearhead "the transition from a constitutional to a formless, particularized power" as well as "wars of annihilation" in the twentieth century and, in the twenty-first century, lead to the "an increasingly primitive nature of political forms, (and) the dissolution of nations into one shapeless population to be contained within an empire of increasingly primitive and despotic nature."⁵² Presaging the defeat of the nineteenth-century ideal of *Bildung* by a technology- and capital-driven process of globalization, Spengler prognosticates a world that, sometime around the year 2000, would be seized as "loot" (*Beute*) by imperial regimes, themselves constituted by rootless and rapacious cosmopolitan "nomads." Though estranged from their humanity by modern technology, these post-historical subjects also prove imbued with mythic, regressive traits and incline to a "tribal" or "second religiosity" (*Fellachenreligion; zweite Religiösität*) "in which the opposition between cosmopolitan and provincial piety has dissolved along with that between primitive and high culture" (Spengler, 947). Echoing Spengler, Gehlen would later observe how "it is the increasing rationalization of life itself that ushers in the formation of myth (*Mythenbildung*), a phenomenon almost never remarked upon because we ourselves abide within the 'myth of development' from mythos to logos" (Gehlen, 2004, 259).

Some eighty years before American Neoconservatism was to seize the geopolitical stage with Messianic fervor, Spengler forecasts for the beginning of the twenty-first century the rise of a "Caesarism" that will have successfully liquidated the nineteenth-century liberal-democratic nation-state. In place of the latter, Spengler predicts the emergence or, rather, reappearance of an "a-historical" (*geschichtslose*) society teeming with rapacious and bellicose energies of mythic proportion. The old constitutional mechanisms of liberal democracy will have largely collapsed, and "elections will inexorably deteriorate into the kind of farce that they had become in (late-Republican) Rome. Capital now organizes the process in the interest of those who control it, and the electoral event has become a comedy staged under the title of 'self-determination' of the people" (Spengler, 1142-43).⁵³ Spengler calls this the "dictatorship of capital and its political weapon, democracy . . . The *private* interests of the economy declare open season on (the world's) vast resources; and no legislation is permitted to oppose their conquests. They arrogate legislative authority unto themselves, write laws in their interest, and to do so they make use of the instrument that they had furnished for this very purpose: democracy and a well-funded party-system" (1193).⁵⁴

Exemplary also in their fusion of conservatism and pessimism, Spengler's gloomy predictions institute a caesura at the precise point of his book's sensational appearance in 1918. What he sees expiring with the Great War is "the same principle" that "everyone, from Schopenhauer to Shaw, has been bringing into the same form without being aware of it." They all are being "guided by the notion of development (*Entwicklungsgedanken*), even those who, like Hebbel, knew nothing of Darwin" (Spengler, 475). For Spengler, the concept of "development" (alternately named *Bildung* or *Entwicklung*) constitutes *the* overarching "matrix" of the entire long nineteenth century less because that century itself had spawned ambitious "theories of development" – which it certainly had, including those offered by Goethe, Schopenhauer, Schelling, Hegel, Marx, Darwin, and Nietzsche – than because theoretical and artistic endeavors of every conceivable kind constitute themselves, as it were by default, in temporal and teleological narrative form. That is, they axiomatically (or *organically*) accommodate themselves to the form of a self-generating, progressive, and continuously self-transforming account.

Serendipitously coordinated with the defeat of the Central Powers in the fall of 1918, Oswald Spengler's first volume of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* issued a direct and highly controversial challenge to the liberal-democratic conception of *Bildung* and to the latter's naive embrace of a technology- and capital-driven notion of unlimited progress and "growth." Spengler's "Introduction" captures the salient point:

Von jedem Organismus wissen wir, daß Tempo, Gestalt und Dauer seines Lebens und jeder einzelnen Lebensäußerung *durch die Eigenschaften* der Art, zu welcher er gehört, bestimmt sind. Niemand wird von einer tausendjährigen Eiche vermuten, daß sie eben jetzt im Begriff ist, mit dem eigentlichen Lauf ihrer Entwicklung zu beginnen . . . Der Geschichte des höhern Menschthums gegenüber aber herrscht ein zügelloser, alle historische und also organische *Erfahrung* verachtender Optimismus in bezug auf den Gang der Zukunft, so daß jedermann im zufällig Gegenwärtigen die 'Ansätze' zu einer ganz besonders hervorragenden linienhaften 'Weiterentwicklung' feststellt, nicht weil sie wissenschaftlich bewiesen ist, sondern weil er sie wünscht . . . Ich sehe statt jenes öden Bildes einer linienförmigen Weltgeschichte . . . das Schauspiel einer Vielzahl mächtiger Kulturen, die mit urweltlicher Kraft aus dem Schoße einer mütterlichen Landschaft, an die jede von ihnen im ganzen Verlauf ihres Daseins streng gebunden ist, aufblühen, von denen jede ihrem Stoff, dem Menschthum, ihre *eigne* Form aufprägt, von denen jede ihre *eigne* Idee, ihre *eigenen* Leidenschaften, ihr *eignes* Leben, Wollen, Fühlen, ihren *eigenen* Tod hat . . . Jede Kultur hat ihre neuen Möglichkeiten des Ausdrucks, die erscheinen, reifen, verwelken und nie wiederkehren. (Spengler, 28-29)

(Of every organism we know that the speed, form, and duration of its life and every discrete manifestation of its life are being conditioned *by the properties* of the species to which it belongs. Nobody will suppose that a thousand-year-old oak is only now about to commence the actual course of its development. The history of humankind, however, is dominated by an unfettered optimism – contemptuous of all historical and, hence, organic *experience* as regards the course of the future. As a result, everybody professes to notice amidst the contingency of the present the beginnings to a truly eminent, linear progressive development, not because it has been scientifically proven but because he wishes it to be so . . . Contrary to the barren image of a linear course for universal history, I see the drama of numerous powerful cultures as they emerge with primal vigor from the womb of a maternal source to which each one of them is bound throughout its entire lifespan. As they flourish, each of them imprints on its material, humankind, its own *proper* form, and each of them has its own *proper* idea, its own *proper* passions, its proper life, will, feeling, and its own *proper* manner of death . . . Every culture possesses its own, novel possibilities of expression, such as arise, mature, wither, and will never return.) (My translation)

As is the case with several of his arguments, Spengler's uncompromising view of death as finality clearly anticipates Heidegger's critique of metaphysics as a highly evolved form of *Seinsvergessenheit* and of temporality as the irreducible horizon of being-in-the-world; in Spengler's formulation, "it is not by accident that 'time' is a word for the fact of irreversibility."⁵⁵ It is this irreversibility, too, which shapes his outlook on the finitude and distinctive developmental rhythm of a given culture, for "all cultures are organisms" (*Kulturen sind Organismen* (Spengler, 140)). Thus, once it "has attained its goal and has externally realized the idea, the entire plenitude of its intrinsic potential, a culture abruptly grows *rigid* (*erstarrt*), dies off, its blood congeals, its vitality expires – and it turns into *civilization*."⁵⁶ Noting already in his "Preface" that "from Goethe I derived the method, from Nietzsche the problematic" (*von Goethe habe ich die Methode, von Nietzsche die Fragestellungen* (ix)), Spengler uncompromisingly frames all cultural phenomena within Goethe's organic conception of development as a sequence of morphological states:

Kulturen sind Organismen. Weltgeschichte ist ihre Gesamtbiographie. Die ungeheure Geschichte der chinesischen oder antiken Kultur ist morphologisch das genaue Seitenstück zur Kleingeschichte des einzelnen Menschen, eines Tieres, eines Baumes oder einer Blume. Das ist . . . keine Forderung, sondern eine Erfahrung. Will man die überall wiederholte innere Form kennen lernen, so hat die vergleichende Morphologie der Pflanzen und Tiere längst die Methode dazu vorbereitet. Im Schicksal der einzelnen, aufeinander folgenden, nebeneinander aufwachsenden, sich berührenden, überschattenden, erdrückenden Kulturen erschöpft sich der Gehalt aller Menschengeschichte. (Spengler, 140)

(Cultures are organisms, and universal history is their total biography. The monumental history of Chinese or ancient culture is the precise morphological equivalent of the micro-history of the individual human being, an animal organism, a tree, or a flower. This is . . . not some postulate but a matter of experience. If we seek to become acquainted with a continually reiterated inner form, then the comparative morphology of plant- and animal-life has long prepared the method for doing so. The content of human history is fully contained in the fate of individual, successive, or concurrently evolving, interacting, overlapping, and competing cultures.) (My translation)

Forthright about his massive debt to Nietzsche, Spengler is preeminently concerned with the way that cultures expire.⁵⁷ Part of his main argument – viz., that *Kultur* and *Bildung* ultimately cannot transcend death as the outer limit or horizon of the organicist logic on which they had premised both their morphological processes ("life") and their disciplinary and institutional self-understanding ("science") – is that developmental processes will exhibit a distinctive temporal signature. Contrary to the chronological, quantitative, and equivalent units with which modern Reason measures out time and space, Spengler (similar to Bergson's and Proust's meditations) understands temporality as an organic, rhythmic, and inherently finite *durée*: "The habitus of a group of organisms also has its own specific life-span and developmental tempo."⁵⁸ For it is the nature of all organic life to have its own, inalienable rhythmic and dynamic signature, a unique property that, however, comes at the expense of a necessarily limited lifespan: "All organic life . . . possesses direction, drives, will, and a dynamic quality that is intimately related to longing, a dynamic quality that has nothing whatever in common with the kinesis of the physicist."⁵⁹ The end of *Bildung*, however, is not simply the decline and eventual death of the culture to which it had given rise and which it had ushered to its greatest flourishing. For as a given culture progressively calcifies into a *Zivilisation*, a new vista also opens on what is essentially a post-historical and post-human order, an age of machines and technology, of self-aware and self-regulating, post-human "systems." It also is, in the words of Leo Naphta – Thomas Mann's proxy for some of Spengler's (and Georg Lukács's) ominous predictions in *The Magic Mountain* – an age of "terror" (Mann, 1981, 561/ 1995, 393).

A more immediately organic corollary of developmental time having run out and terminated in what Spengler (and, somewhat later, Arnold Gehlen) envisions as a post-historical, technology-driven

society involves the withering of procreativity. For Spengler, “infertility” not only marks “the displacement of organic procreation by construction” (*wo die Konstruktion an Stelle der Zeugung tritt* (Spengler, 459)) but also the physiological fact of childlessness, an important trait notably shared by a number of protagonists of the European *Bildungsroman* (Dickens’s Pip, Keller’s Heinrich Lee, Wagner’s Siegfried, George Eliot’s Gwendolen Harleth, and of course Thomas Mann’s Hanno Buddenbrook and Hans Castorp, to name but a few obvious instances. Well before Spengler’s *Untergang*, Mann already captures such atrophied vitality in Hanno Buddenbrook’s impulse to draw a closing line across the family chronicle, right below his own name. Pressed to justify his action, he can only stammer, “I thought . . . I thought . . . there wouldn’t be anything more” (“*Ich glaubte . . . ich glaubte . . . es käme nichts mehr*”).⁶⁰ Modernity for Spengler thus manifests itself as a pervasive sense of “fatigue,” a physiological trope that both he and Mann regularly encountered in their reading of Nietzsche and brilliantly fleshed out in Mann’s early characterization of Hans Castorp’s propensity to “doze” (*dösen*).⁶¹ When first introduced in chapter two of the novel, this telling leitmotif of “dozing” actually presents us with a holograph containing at least three distinct levels of insight at once – the palpable increase in psycho-physiological fatigue of Spengler’s and Mann’s late-bourgeois subjects, the transmigration of *Kultur* and *Bildung* from an expressive event to autonomous objects and institutions, and the consequent revaluation of the object-image as the catalyst, not for a generative but for a regressive motion. Following the characteristic, early demise of his parents – itself an index of an atrophied vitality in the younger generation likely to extend to Hans Castorp himself – our protagonist absorbs one of his *Urbilder* as he “watch(ed) with silent, profound, and unconscious attention as his grandfather’s hands – beautiful, white, gaunt, aged hands, with rounded, sharply tapered fingernails and a green signet ring on the right forefinger” accomplish the ritual of dinner (Mann, 1981, 32-33/1995, 19).

From the start, Hans Castorp proves responsive to the image’s capacity to transport him forward over vast expanses of time and toward the implications of his own mortality, a typological echo of his grandfather’s imminent death: “Hans Castorp looked down at his own still awkward hands and sensed stored within them the possibility that one day he would hold and use his knife and fork as adeptly as his grandfather” (1995, 19).⁶² Behind the hypnotic power of such recurrent motion as it is here executed by the grandfather’s hands – a motion sculpted and chiseled by decade-long habitude and thus apprehended by Hans as a single, indivisible *Gestalt* or image – stands a Bergsonian conception of time as *durée*, an endlessly flowing process experienced in an indivisible moment of intuition rather than through discrete and analytic intellectual processes. It is a conception shortly afterwards objectified in the chapter’s titular “baptismal bowl,” an object just as remote and entrancing as the grandfather’s hands:

Den Teller angehend, so war sein weit höheres Alter ihm von der Innenseite abzulesen. ‘1650’ stand dort in verschnörkelten Ziffern, und allerlei krause Gravierungen umrahmten die Zahl . . . Auf der Rückseite aber fanden sich in wechselnder Schriftart die Namen der Häupter einpunktirt, die im Gange der Zeit des Stückes Inhaber gewesen: Es waren ihrer schon sieben, versehen mit der Jahreszahl der Erbübernahme, und der Alte in der Binde wies mit dem beringten Zeigefinger den Enkel auf jeden einzelnen hin. Der Name des Vaters war da, der des Großvaters selbst und der des Urgroßvaters, und dann verdoppelte sich die Vorsilbe ‘Ur’ im Munde des Erklärers, und der Junge lauschte seitwärts geneigten Kopfes, mit nachdenklich oder auch gedankenlos-träumerisch sich festsehenden Augen und andächtig-schläfrigem Munde auf das Ur-Ur-Ur-Ur, – diesen dunklen Laut der Gruft und Zeitverschüttung, welcher dennoch zugleich einen fromm gewahrten Zusammenhang zwischen der Gegenwart, seinem eigenen Leben und dem tief Versunkenen ausdrückte und ganz eigentümlich auf ihn einwirkte: nämlich so, wie es auf seinem Gesichte sich ausdrückte. Er meinte die kühle Luft, die Luft der Katharinenkirche oder der Michaeliskrypte zu atmen bei diesem Laut . . . (Mann, 1981, 35)

(As for the plate, one could read its much greater age right on its surface. There stood ‘1650’ in ornate numbers, and framing the date were all sorts of curlicued engraved lines . . . The underside, however, was inscribed in a variety of ever-changing scripts with the names of those heads of the household who had been its owners over the course of time. There were seven names in all now, each rounded out with the date of inheritance, and the old man in the white necktie pointed with his ringed forefinger as he read off each of them to his grandson. His father’s name was there, as was in fact his grandfather’s, and his great-grandfather’s; and now that syllable came doubled, tripled, and quadrupled from the storyteller’s mouth; and the boy would lay his head to one side, his eyes fixed and full of thought, yet somehow dreamily thoughtless, his lips parted in drowsy devotion, and he would listen to the great-great-great-great – that somber sound of the crypt and buried time, which nevertheless both expressed a reverently preserved connection of his own life in the present to things now sunk deep beneath the earth and simultaneously had a curious effect on him: the same effect visible in the look on his face. The sound made him feel as if he were breathing the moldy, cool air of Saint Catherine’s Church or the crypt in Saint Michael’s.) (1995, 21)

The passage illustrates Hans Castorp’s intuitive grasp of the preternatural, mythic authority of objects. He responds to them not as *things* (in the pragmatic, instrumental sense of Heidegger’s *Zeug*) but as phantasmagorical images attesting to the unfathomable yet enduring potency of a distant past. What accounts for the baptismal bowl’s mesmerizing, entrancing power is its capacity to alert Hans to a reality that is felt, not known, albeit felt not as something uniquely personal or expressive but as some buried quality that slowly reemerges from the sands of time. As Mann’s neologism *Zeitverschüttung* intimates, the development of the novel’s protagonist is likely to scramble the narrative integration of being into image, and of image as subsidiary to a paradigm of rationality as a temporal, dialectical progression. Echoing Hans Castorp’s earlier, intuitive merging with the timeless gestalt of his grandfather’s hands, his contemplation of the baptismal bowl again emphasizes the oblique force of historical and inter-generational continuity. Gehlen would later observe how “by its very nature, culture involves a century-long distillation of complex notions and decisions, yet also a recasting of the latter in fixed forms, in order that these latter may be passed on . . . and so may not only survive the passage of time but indeed also man himself.”⁶³ Yet such “reverently preserved connection of his own life in the present to things now sunk deep beneath the earth” rests on a radical acceptance of death, even an “infatuation” with it, as the true and final locus of all kinship and meaning. Unlike the Goethean and Hegelian subject, Mann’s Modernist hero no longer moves “through and beyond” death but, instead, encircles its mythic, non-transcendable power with growing psychological acuity.

Both as a material object and hypnotic image, the bowl conjures up in Hans Castorp’s mind the idea of the past as a wholly impersonal and dispassionate stratum. Indeed, “this formal conditioning of life *in its entire development* by death comes to us in the form of the image, one that will not advance to intellectual conclusions of its own.”⁶⁴ Though engraved “in a variety of ever-changing scripts,” the bowl’s legend of seven previous generations tellingly fuses the same last name, Castorp (likely suggested to Mann by a fifteenth-century patrician of his native Lübeck) with the monotonously repeated prefix “Ur-.” Stressing the equivalence of successive generations with prosodic concision, that syllable hypnotizes Hans Castorp with the recursive motion of birth and death, withdrawal and return, and of his own young hands destined to reenact the chiseled, cultivated motion of his grandfathers. Encrypted and motivically “prefigured” (*vorgebildet*) in this image is the larger concept of an impersonal, trans-generational bio/logic of transmission – of ancestral, psychophysiological traits reimposing themselves on Hans as inexorably as fate or the myth of metempsychosis. The image’s mythic potentialities are revived in the reddish glow (*Rotdunkel*) of the x-ray laboratory, a cavernous, primitive space where, assisted by a “younger, squat, red-cheeked local (*Eingeborener*) in a white smock,” Behrens and his inscrutable machine (Figure 3) produce an “interior portrait” of the protagonist:

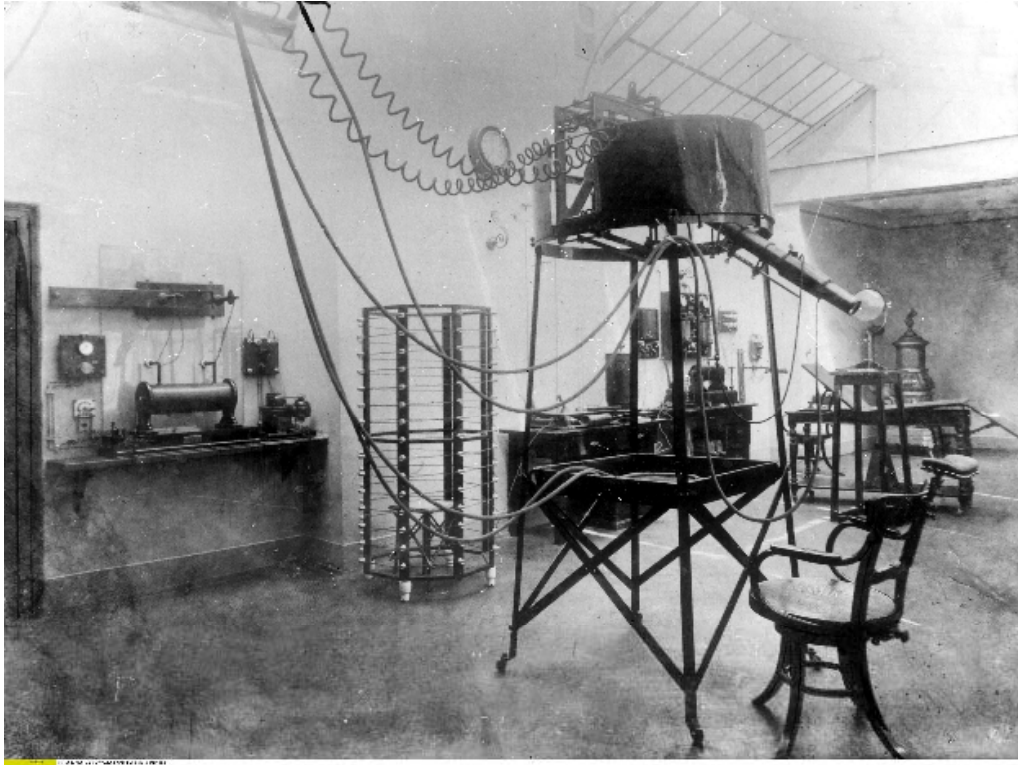


Figure 3: X-Ray machine (*Roentgenapparatur*) of c. 1904

Und Hans Castorp sah . . . was aber eigentlich dem Menschen zu sehen nicht bestimmt ist und wovon auch er niemals gedacht hatte, daß ihm bestimmt sein könne, es zu sehen: er sah sein eigenes Grab. Das spätere Geschäft der Verwesung sah er vorweggenommen durch die Kraft des Lichtes, das Fleisch, worin er wandelte, zersetzt, vertilgt, zu nichtigem Nebel gelöst, und darin das kleinlich gedrechselte Skelett seiner rechten Hand, um deren oberes Ringfingerglied sein Siegelring, vom Großvater her ihm vermacht, schwarz und lose schwebte: ein hartes Ding dieser Erde, womit der Mensch seinen Leib schmückt, der bestimmt ist, darunter wegzuschmelzen, so daß es frei wird und weiter geht an ein Fleisch, das es eine Weile wieder tragen kann. (Mann, 1981, 309)

(And Hans Castorp saw exactly what . . . no man was ever intended to see and – what he himself had never presumed he would be able to see: he saw his own grave. Under that light, he saw the process of corruption anticipated, saw the flesh in which he moved decomposed, expunged, dissolved into airy nothingness – and inside was the delicately turned skeleton of his right hand and around the last joint of the ring finger, dangling black and loose, the signet ring his grandfather had bequeathed him: a hard thing, this ore with which man adorns a body predestined to melt away beneath it, so that it can be free again and move on to yet other flesh that may bear it for a while.) (1995, 215-216)



Figure 4: X-Ray photograph of hand with ring c. 1896

Like the earlier scene featuring the baptismal bowl, this episode again emphasizes how in this *Umbildungsroman* (as it has been called) the encounter with images will not yield some discrete object-knowledge, let alone more evolved “notions” (*Begriffe*).⁶⁵ Rather, the image triggers a complex process of regressive identification with the past, with death, and with the mythic force that impresses on Hans Castorp the continuity of generations as something far more powerful (even sheltering) than the faltering, rational fictions of bourgeois morality, humanist pedagogy, and possessive individualism. Hence, “when considering it later, as a young man, he realized that the image of his grandfather was imprinted much more deeply, clearly, and significantly in his memory than that of his parents” (1995, 22).⁶⁶ The unusual tenacity of the grandfather’s image stems from the fact that the child has not yet been trained to denude the image of its totemic and iconic force by framing it, as it were *a priori*, in some narrative or conceptual matrix. Instead, “the perceptions gained by his own calm, alert child’s eye were . . . unspoken and therefore uncritical perceptions . . . which when they later became conscious memories retained their

exclusively positive stamp, immune to all discussion or analysis” (*wort- und zergliederungsfeindlich*” (Mann, 1981, 38/Mann, 1995, 23)).

Yet if, as Walter Benjamin was also to argue, “history decays into images, not into stories,” then the regressive development of Mann’s protagonist whose launching we here witness must, by its own, inexorable logic, progressively loosen and ultimately dissolve the psycho-physiological boundaries of the modern, cultured bourgeois individual.⁶⁷ Made palpable to him by serendipitous images such as the baptismal bowl or his grandfather’s funeral, Hans Castorp not only embraces the cyclical, mythic sense of continuity that links his own (final) generation of Castorps to those past, but, in so doing, gradually drifts away from the “harsh” rationality of competitive, productive, and acquisitive bourgeois capitalism. Unsurprisingly, the narrator volunteers some ironic meditations on his protagonist’s thoroughly “average” physiological and intellectual constitution: “if you just saw him there, so blondly correct, his hair nicely trimmed, his head with the stamp of something classic about it, his air cool and languid, suggesting an inherited, unconscious arrogance, then you could not doubt that this Hans Castorp was an honest, unadulterated product of the local soil, superbly at home in it – even he himself, had he ever actually considered the matter, would not have doubted it for a moment” (1995, 29).⁶⁸ In his suspended, “dozing” animation, the Hans Castorp already depicted as a supine, dissociated tourist on his own native soil anticipates the “horizontal,” proto-funereal mode of existence in which he will soon join the tubercular cosmopolitans at the *Berghof* sanatorium in Davos (Figure 5). Faintly enervated and decidedly “average,” his atrophied psycho-physiological constitution and flaccid bearing also anticipate the final and permanent languor of the dead whose first influential and comforting image he had encountered at the funeral of his grandfather. That event already revives and, by its very recurrence, consolidates the *Urbild* or primal scene of his father’s death and burial a few months earlier: “now he remembered it, and all the impressions from before reemerged simultaneously – in every precise, piercing, and incomparable detail.” The apparent antagonism between spirit and body, between “something religious, gripping, and sadly beautiful” and something bluntly “material, physical,” is absorbed by the superior stability of the ritual of the open-casket funeral. Introducing the

danse macabre leitmotif that the novel will later develop at greater length, the narrator comments on how “the explicit and well-intended purpose of all these arrangements was apparently to show that Grandfather had now passed on forever to his authentic and true form” (1995, 26).⁶⁹



Figure 5: Tuberculosis patients during their “rest-cure” on a snow-covered patio in Davos, c. 1903

A key example for the collapse of *Bildung* under the weight of its unresolved antagonism, as well as for the quasi-cinematic technique with which Mann’s novel stages that collapse, involves Hans Castorp’s developing recollection of his erotic fixation on his one-time schoolmate, Pribislav Hippe. Like a Proustian *mémoire involontaire*, this developing awareness originates in perplexity, a moment of *déjà vu* triggered by the physiological particularities of Clavdia Chauchat. Lingering over “her narrow eyes and broad cheekbones,” Castorp wonders inwardly: “‘What is it,’ he thought, ‘what or who is it that she reminds me of, for heaven’s sake.’ But try as he might, his weary brain could find no answer” (1995, 84).⁷⁰ A dream that same day, in which Clavdia’s and Pribislav’s figures repeatedly blend (Mann, 1981, 129-31/1995, 88-9) triggers the quasi-photographic development of an earlier negative or memory-trace into a positive recognition. Bleeding from the nose and thoroughly exhausted and disoriented from his precipitous overly ambitious exploration of the mountainous landscape, Hans “found himself transported to an earlier stage of life, one which only a few nights before had served as the basis (*Urbild*) for a dream filled with more recent impressions.” As the similarities (high cheekbones, the attribution of “Kirghiz” background, and a “husky, opaque, slightly gruff voice” (*seine Stimme . . . die angenehm belegt, verschleiert, etwas heiser war* (Mann, 1995, 118/1981, 171)) fade into consciousness, the narrative also releases the symbolically charged details of Hans Castorp’s single encounter with Hippe, one of whose homoerotic dimensions he had but the

faintest sense at the time. Returning to the *Berghof*, “his face pale as linen and his suit . . . blood-stained, so that he looked like a murderer,” Hans belatedly enters Edhin Krokowski’s timely disquisition on “love as a form of illness conducive to disease” (*Die Liebe als krankheitsbildende Macht*). Delivered in a “hybrid terminology, a blend of poetical and academic styles,” Krokowski’s Freudian exposition of how “suppressed love was not dead (but) continued to live on in the dark, secret depths, straining for fulfillment – and broke the bands of chastity and reappeared . . . in (the) transmuted, unrecognizable form” of illness only registers occasionally with the protagonist (1995, 124-126).⁷¹ For sitting behind Clavdia and gazing at her “limp back, Hans Castorp’s thoughts grew jumbled, ceased being thoughts, became daydreams into which Dr. Krokowski’s drawling baritone and gently rolled *r* drifted from some great distance.” For Clavdia’s “limp” and “drooping” posture, which for the first time alerts Hans Castorp to her inner anatomy (“her neck bones were visible above the collar line of her white blouse” etc.), triggers yet another involuntary memory: “Pribislav had held his head like that, too” (Mann, 1981, 177/1995, 123).

One reason why this incremental recognition has such an unsettling effect is that Hans Castorp now confronts the terminal unintelligibility or, at least, the persistent ambiguity of his sexual persona. Is he erotically drawn to Clavdia, or might she turn out to be but a substitute? Here, in any event, she appears to function within an intricate chiasmic structure in which the socially proscribed erotic attraction to a healthy boy is being exchanged – just as its “rather embarrassing memory” (*eine etwas peinliche Erinnerung* (Mann, 1981, 183/1995, 127)) threatens to enter into consciousness – for the socially sanctioned erotic attraction to a “sick” woman. The psychological intensification and cognitive development so often associated with physiological and cultural decline throughout Mann’s work thus converge in the novel’s obvious and intentionally problematic counterpart to Goethe’s exotic Amazon.⁷²

Versteht sich, es war um eines gewissen Zweckes willen, daß die Frauen sich märchenhaft und beglückend kleiden durften, ohne dadurch gegen die Schicklichkeit zu verstoßen; es handelte sich um die nächste Generation, um die Fortpflanzung des Menschengeschlechts, jawohl. Aber wie, wenn die Frau nun innerlich krank war, so daß sie gar nicht zur Mutterschaft taugte, – was dann? Hatte es dann einen Sinn, daß sie Gazeärmel trug, um die Männer neugierig auf ihren Körper zu machen,--ihren innerlich kranken Körper? Das hatte offenbar *keinen* Sinn und hätte unschicklich gelten und untersagt werden müssen. Denn daß ein Mann sich für eine kranke Frau interessierte, dabei war doch entschieden nicht mehr Vernunft, als . . . nun, als seinerzeit bei Hans Castorps stillem Interesse für Pribislav Hippe gewesen war. Ein dummer Vergleich, eine etwas peinliche Erinnerung. Aber sie hatte sich ungerufen und ohne sein Zutun eingestellt. (Mann, 1981, 182-83)

(Granted, there was a very definite reason why women were allowed to dress in that exhilarating, magical way, without at the same time offending propriety. It all had to do with the next generation, the propagation of the species, yes indeed. But what happened when the woman was sick deep inside, so that she was not at all suited for motherhood – what then? Was there any point in her wearing gossamer sleeves so that men would be curious about her body – about her diseased body? There was obviously *no* point in that whatever, and it ought to be considered improper, to be forbidden. Because for a man to be interested in a sick woman was certainly no more reasonable than . . . well, than, for Hans Castorp to have pursued his silent interest in Pribislav Hippe back then. A stupid comparison, a rather embarrassing memory. But it had just come to him, insinuating itself all on its own.) (1995, 127)

From the standpoint of a bourgeois morality, Clavdia may function as the legitimate (because female) surrogate for an ultimately “inescapable” homoerotic *Urbild* that has lain dormant since Hans Castorp’s youth. Yet that *Urbild* will insistently re-impose itself wherever a given perception, having acquired the quasi-institutional, formal stability of an image (*Bild*), undergoes what Gehlen calls *Zwecktransformation*. Only then may the conscious image-representation reactivate the archetypal and

repressed order of an erotic *Urszene*. Contrary to the Goethean and Hegelian model, such Modernist “development” constitutes a form of regression, a tracing backwards of previously under-developed archetypes, photographic negatives clamoring that their mythic and possibly fatal contents be fully acknowledged. Needless to say, the same gradual emergence of something latent into something fully apparent also characterizes the logic of the novel’s ultimate protagonist and intellectual catalyst—the disease of tuberculosis itself.⁷³

In a recent, astute essay, Eric Downing has explored the photographic nature of Hans Castorp’s development and, on that basis, proposed to read Mann’s novel as an *Entwicklungs-* rather than *Bildungsroman*. For Downing, “the subject, rather than being simply inscribed or painted (‘gebildet’), is to be developed (‘entwickelt’), or more precisely: having first been ‘exposed’ and taken on or in its impressions from the outside world . . . the subject is then to be developed, brought out and, finally, potentially, ‘fixed’ or ‘befestigt’.”⁷⁴ It is Downing’s cautiously optimistic view of “development” as a process responsive to stabilization and consolidation to which I take exception. For the subject on whom such chemical or alchemical attention is visited will progressively recognize him- or herself *ex negativo* in both the photographic and philosophical sense – which is to say, *to have been fixed and determined all along*. As made evident by Hans Castorp’s at times callously prevaricating and ultimately dismissive attitude towards his self-appointed mentor, Settembrini (another instance would be the figure of Leo Naphta), to “develop” in Mann’s narrative means for the individual to respond to, admit, and prove “cheerfully receptive” (*aufnahmelistig*) to the unalterable and truly implacable fact of his/her own *a priori* determinacy. Obscure, illegible, and yet inexorable, the “negative” of the modern medium of photography thus comes into critical focus for us as the true equivalent of mythic consciousness. In the final meditation on the Pribislav–Clavdia–Hans triangulation, the narrative leaves no doubt of this fatalistic, truly Spenglerian conclusion. Shrewdly anticipating critics’ eventual preoccupation with a visual, photographic model of development, Mann’s passage in the poignantly entitled chapter “Growing Anxiety” (*Aufsteigende Angst*), dwells on the gradual fusion and ultimate collapse of image and referent, of Clavdia and Pribislav, into one another. Musing again on the Kirghiz cheekbones, which “pushed against (Clavdia’s) unusually wide-set eyes,” the shutter of Hans’s optical memory brings into focus and captures both, the mythic recurrence of Pribislav *as* Clavdia and the alarming implications of that fact for his own psycho-sexual development:

Dann aber waren da namentlich die Augen selbst gewesen, diese schmal und (so fand Hans Castorp) schlechthin zauberhaft geschnittenen Kirgisenaugen, deren Farbe das Graublau oder Blaugrau ferner Berge war . . . Clavdia’s Augen, die ihn rücksichtslos und etwas finster aus nächster Nähe betrachtet hatten und nach Stellung, Farbe, und Ausdruck denen Pribislav Hippe’s so auffallend und erschreckend ähnlich waren! ‘Ähnlich’ war gar nicht das richtige Wort, – es waren dieselben Augen . . . Das war erschütternd in jedem Sinn; Hans Castorp war begeistert von der Begegnung, und zugleich spürte er etwas wie aufsteigende Angst, eine Beklemmung derselben Art, wie das Eingesperrtsein mit dem günstigsten Ungefähr auf engem Raum ihm verursachte: auch dies, daß der längst vergessene Pribislav ihm hier oben als Frau Chauchat wieder begegnete und ihn mit Kirgisenaugen ansah, war wie ein Eingesperrtsein mit Unumgänglichem und Unentrinnbarem, – in beglückendem und ängstlichem Sinn Unentrinnbarem. Es war hoffnungsreich und zugleich auch unheimlich, ja bedrohlich, und ein Gefühl der Hilfsbedürftigkeit kam den jungen Hans Castorp an. (Mann, 1981, 206-7)

(And then there were the eyes themselves, those narrow and absolutely magical . . . Kirghiz-shaped eyes, bluish-gray or grayish-blue like distant mountains . . . Clavdia’s eyes, which had examined him brazenly and somewhat sternly from close up, and which in shape, color, and expression so amazingly and frighteningly resembled those of Pribislav Hippe. “Resembled” was not the right word – they were the same eyes . . . It was thrilling in every sense of the word. Hans Castorp was inspired by this meeting, and at the same time he sensed something like a growing anxiety, much like that suffocating feeling of being locked up in a box together with auspicious chance; what was

more, the fact that the long-forgotten Pribislav had reappeared up here as Frau Chauchat and had looked at him with Kirghiz eyes made him feel as if he were locked up together with something inevitable and inescapable – an inescapability that both cheered and alarmed him. It filled him with hope; and at the same time an eerie, even threatening sense of helplessness stole over the young Hans Castorp.) (1995, 144)

Notwithstanding his eventual, rather strained repudiation of Spengler, Mann's careful reading of the *Decline of the West* clearly shares in that work's view of how the generative force of the Goethean *Urbild* has been fundamentally eroded. At a micro-level, Hans Castorp's incremental and uneasy recognition of his own, intricately recessed sexuality – and of the potential of his sexually ambiguous persona for unraveling his bourgeois identity – amounts to a series of “shocks” such as Walter Benjamin was to attribute to film images. Yet to make that observation is not to institute a categorical divide between an organic and a mechanical aesthetics. Rather, Mann's narrative highlights the capacity of technological images to “create” a new and richer model of interiority – no longer of the Cartesian or even Hegelian, self-regulating and dialectical variety. Technology “animates” (*beseelt*) in that it focuses our attention on a previously unacknowledged antagonism that had always been part of speculative attempts to distill a fully formed, rational subject from the primal material of the image. Leaving aside for the moment the question of causation, it seems clear that the technological image fundamentally subverts the organic and free developmental possibilities for which, in Goethe and Hegel, the auratic image had served as the speculative linchpin. Photography thus displaces the progressive, teleological axioms of *Bildung* with one of *Entwicklung*, thereby throwing into relief the extent to which modern individual and society alike remain imbued with implacable and inescapable mythic (or unconscious) forces. In Mann's novel, photography, film, and the phonograph (amidst a host of other, more ephemeral media) effectively deracinate the organic and dialectical model of *Bild* and *Bildung* and its delicate balancing of social, economic, and cultural mobility and development. The mortuary aura of photographic and X-ray images contests Romanticism's self-generating and self-certifying model of subjectivity – teleologically constituted, autonomous, and uncontestedly human – a model so confidently set forth in the writings of Kant, Herder, Goethe, Schiller, Hegel, Humboldt. Photography effectively inverts the developmental logic of *Bildung* by staging development as a regressive trajectory wherein a pre-determined configuration or *gestalt*, an unconscious value, is gradually exposed as a positive and inescapable fact. Staging the resurgence of fate and a preformationist model over the organicist, epigenetic theories of the early nineteenth century, the photographic image dramatizes the inexorable time-lapse regression of *ectype* into archetype, of the civilized, humanist self into the mythic strata of its unconscious, atavistic *Urbild*. Like the silent but inexorable logic of tuberculosis itself, Mann's narrative capitalizes on this seemingly free or, rather, “involuntary” archeological motion of characters tracing, developing, and ultimately perishing in the confrontation with their own unconscious.

While there is no space to pursue the matter further, it should be noted that this regressive pattern also characterizes numerous other figures in the *Magic Mountain*, most conspicuously Leo Naphta. As the Eastern shtetl Jew turned Jesuit turned Socialist, Naphta's personal *Bildungsgeschichte* effectively recapitulates the developmental process of European modernity, a process – as Spengler, who had qualified Stoicism and Socialism as “phenomena of expiration” (*Ausgangerscheinungen*) (Spengler, 555) also argued – that would ultimately have to terminate in the modern individual's confrontation with his or her own *Urbild* or *Urszene*. With his final suicidal deed, Naphta achieves precisely that completion, reinstating the mythical and repressed *Urbild* that has followed and haunted him since childhood. Objectified in the primitively carved, wooden sculpture of a medieval *Pieta* that he carries with him and prominently displays throughout his European peregrinations, the *Urbild* in question is that of his father's profoundly sympathetic approach to his office as *Schächter* (kosher butcher). Mann's narrative positions Naphta's father in opposition to the facile ethos of secular compassion displayed by the modern *goyim* who, by stunning the animal with the crude blow of an axe, fancy that they have “spared” it all suffering. It is precisely by these *goyim*, of course, that Naphta's father

himself is soon thereafter slaughtered, with his son as a witness, during an anti-Semitic pogrom in Czarist Russia.⁷⁵

Ultimately, the *Magic Mountain* proves far more equivocal in its political and metaphysical perspectives than the political pronouncements that Thomas Mann chose to make in public after his commitment to the Weimar Republic and to a liberal-democratic model of the polity beginning in 1922. While that political shift was undoubtedly genuine and hard-won, however cautious its initial formulation, Mann's novel remains happily unaffected by its author's quest for political certitudes and for a kind of public righteousness conferred by them. What had not yet been devised for the new order of the Weimar Republic was a mechanism that could plausibly take over for the conception of *Bildung* and the complex, dialectical inwardness of the bourgeois individual whose final collapse is being charted by the *Magic Mountain*. For the novel uncovers with astonishing precision how the spiritual and psychosexual confidence of the nineteenth-century bourgeoisie has been utterly depleted, that its history has been written and, at the time of conscious remembering and telling, has already been concluded. Consequently, the developmental possibilities stressed by Goethe's and Hegel's model of *Bildung* must be reinterpreted as but a belated elucidation of the bourgeois individual's mythic determinacy – a notion somewhere in between the metaphysical notion of "fate" and the genetic paradigm of DNA. Such a view effectively spells the demise of the liberal-humanist premise of free, self-determining agents and nations. To the extent that it is being more fully developed by recollection, the post-auratic image of technology progressively erases a once open and indeterminate future. Once it has been wholly concluded, the development of the post-auratic, technological "image" equates with what the speculative conception of *Bildung* had been unable to acknowledge as a key-implication of its organicist premise: death. In discussions of *The Magic Mountain*, this conjunction of the image in the age of modern technology and death is, of course, well understood, if for no other reason than that it is repeatedly prompted by poignant scenes and commentaries interspersed throughout Mann's narrative itself. Yet what these readings have often failed to consider are the larger anthropological, socio-cultural, and psycho-aesthetic transformations of which this conjunction itself is but a symptom. In enjambling the photographic, post-auratic image with illness and death, Mann's novel ultimately sides with Spengler's and Naphta's pessimism as it furnishes a magisterial and richly sympathetic literary obituary to the bourgeois economic, social, and aesthetic project of *Bildung*.

Notes

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¹ "Es ist nemlich Unterschid ein ob jener Bildungstrieb blind wirkt, oder mit Bewußtsein, ob er weiß, woraus er hervorgieng und wohin er strebt, denn diß ist der einzige Fehler der Menschen, daß ihr Bildungstrieb sich verirrt, eine unwürdige, überhaupt falsche Richtung nimmt, oder doch seine eigentümliche Stelle verfehlt, oder, wenn er diese gefunden hat, auf halbem Wege, bei den Mitteln die ihn zu seinem Zwecke führen sollen, stehen bleibt." Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Friedrich Beissner (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1943-1985) vol. 4: i, 221-222.

² "Der wesentliche Inhalt des kulturellen Lebens . . . ist der Kampf gegen die Vergänglichkeit. Aber dieser Kampf wird offensive geführt, nämlich als ein Ringen um die Erweiterung der physisch und geistig beherrschten Realität, und es gilt, den Gewinn jeweils gegen den Zeitfluß abzusichern. Die Fossilierung in starren Traditionen, die Ägyptisierung, würde die höchsterreichbare Dauergeltung bedeuten, aber das Leben selbst überrennt die festen Formen, wie die Seevölker das Mittlere Reich." Arnold Gehlen, *Urmensch und Spätkultur* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1956), 100; all translations from this text are mine.

³ Johann W. v. Goethe, *Botanical Writings*, trans. Erika Müller, ed. James Engard (Honolulu: U of Hawaii Press, 1952), 23; henceforth cited parenthetically as Goethe, 1952. German: Goethe, *Werke* (Hamburger Ausgabe), ed. Erich Trunz, 14 vols. (Munich: Beck, 1981), 13: 55; henceforth cited parenthetically as Goethe, 1981: 13, followed by page number.

⁴ As John Tyler Bonner and Robert M. May put it in the 1871 Introduction to Darwin's *Descent of Man*, "a criticism often leveled against the theory of evolution by natural selection is that it is little more than a collection of Just So Stories, in which particular facets of behavior or morphology are argued to be 'adaptive' or 'optimally designed' to fulfill purposes which are tautologically inferred from the behavioral or morphological feature in question." Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, ed. Bonner and May (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), xiv.

⁵ Helmut Müller-Sievers, *Self-Generation: Biology, Philosophy, and literature around 1800* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997); Robert Richards, *The Romantic Conception of Life: Science and Philosophy in the Age of Goethe* (Chicago: University of Chicago press, 2002).

⁶ For two lucid expositions of Hegel's theory of apperception, see Arnold Gehlen, *Urmensch und Spätkultur* (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 2004), 13-14 and Terry Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 20-34. In his 1956 anthropological analysis of institutions, Gehlen had already stressed the intersubjective nature of Hegel's theory of object-perception.

⁷ Arnold Gehlen, *Der Mensch: seine Natur und Stellung in der Welt* (1940) (Wiesbaden: Akademische Verlagsgesellschaft Athenaion, 1978), 165; henceforth cited parenthetically as Gehlen, 1940. English: *Man: His Nature and Place in the World*, trans. Clare McMillan and Karl Pillemer (New York: Columbia UP, 1988); henceforth cited parenthetically as Gehlen, 1988.

⁸ Goethe, *Werke* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1909) Part 4, vol. 8: 255 and Part 4, vol. 47: 185.

⁹ Goethe, *Werke*, Part 4, vol. 49: 209-10.

¹⁰ Johann W. v. Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, trans. Eric Blackall (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1989), 134-35 and 139; henceforth cited parenthetically as Goethe, 1989.

¹¹ German: "eine Einheit des Strukturgesetzes . . . das *alle* menschlichen Funktionen von den leiblichen bis zu den geistigen beherrscht." (Gehlen, 1940, 23)

¹² Franco Moretti comments on the structural significance, in *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*, of a mode of "work that produces not commodities but . . . 'harmonious objects': objects that 'return' to their creator, thereby permitting the entire 'reappropriation' of one's own activity." *The Way in the World: The Bildungsroman in European Culture* (New York: Verso, 1987), 29.

¹³ Gehlen remarks on the peculiar narrowing of aesthetic production as it finds itself resonating with a progressively greater and more complex inventory of previous works and collective, interpretive attitudes within a given genre. See Gehlen, 2004, 80.

¹⁴ Thomas Mann, *The Magic Mountain*, trans. John E. Woods (New York: Vintage, 1995, 33); henceforth cited parenthetically as Mann, 1995. German: "Seine Achtung vor (der Arbeit) war also

religiöser und, soviel er wußte, unzweifelhafter Natur. Aber eine andere Frage war, ob er sie liebte; denn das konnte er nicht, so sehr er sie achtete, und zwar aus dem einfachen Grunde, weil sie ihm nicht bekam." Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1981), 52; henceforth cited parenthetically as Mann, 1981, followed by page number. For Weber, the Protestant imperative of unceasing work is not meant to secure possessions for consumption but, rather, as material evidence of the continued efficacy of the work ethic itself. Hence "inactive contemplation is . . . valueless," just as "unwillingness to work is symptomatic of the lack of grace." *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 2003), 158-59.

¹⁵ D. A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1988), 26.

¹⁶ For a discussion of Hegel's later semiological theory in the 1817 *Encyclopedia* and its departure from Romantic theories of language, see my *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, Melancholy, 1780-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), 256-63 and the critical literature cited there.

¹⁷ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1999), 462. See also the subsequent discussion of the dialectical image and its conditional legibility for a critique steeped in a modified historical materialism, 462-74.

¹⁸ See Pinkard, *Hegel's Phenomenology*, esp. 1-19; Robert Pippin, *Idealism as Modernism*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Blackwell, 1999), 157-84.

¹⁹ The English translation rather awkwardly transliterates Gehlen's compound "weltoffen" as "world-open" (1988, 27-8); Gehlen's concept (1940, 36) signifies the obverse of the organic fit between animal organisms and their habitat or biotope, that is, a contingent and unpredictable relationship to the world.

²⁰ German: ". . . muß der Mensch sich entlasten, d.h. die Mängelbedingungen seiner Existenz eigentätig in Chancen seiner Lebensfristung umarbeiten." (Gehlen, 1940, 34)

²¹ On Gehlen's initially supportive and gradually dissenting view of national socialism, see the introduction by Karl-Siegbert Rehberg to Gehlen, 1988. While recapitulating various criticisms levelled against Gehlen's theory (including his under-estimation of the role of instincts in human behavior and his overly instrumental understanding of language), Rehberg also notes how from the outset Gehlen's anthropology categorically denied any biological basis for racist theories; "Introduction," to Gehlen (1988), xxv-xxxvi. For a critical view of Gehlen, see Jürgen Habermas, *Philosophical-Political Profiles*, trans. Frederick G. Lawrence (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1983).

²² German: "Das Bild der Welt war märchenhaft, kindlich, und komisch. Die dicken, lockeren, wie aufgeschüttelten Kissen auf den Zweigen der Bäume . . . das hockende, possierlich Vermummte der Landschaft, das ergab eine Gnomenwelt, lächerlich anzusehn und wie aus dem Märchenbuch" (Mann, 1981, 659). In the longest of his published autobiographical statements, entitled "On Myself" (1940), Mann makes an explicit connection between danger and narrative: "After all, what is the German Bildungsroman, which the *Magic Mountain* seems to bring to a parodic conclusion, if not the sublimation and spiritualization of the novel of adventure?" *Über mich selbst: Autobiographische Schriften*, ed. Martin Gregor-Dellin (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1983), 82.

²³ While greatly indebted to the late Nietzsche, Oswald Spengler also anticipates Gehlen's pragmatist conception: "Transvaluation of all values – that is the innermost character of every civilization. It begins by reconfiguring (*umzuprägen*) all forms of an earlier culture by interpreting and handling them

differently. Transvaluation no longer generates (*erzeugt*) but merely reinterprets. This is what accounts for the negativity of all such epigonal periods. The merely presuppose the genuine creative act and so merely inherit a great reality” (Spengler, 449; my translation).

²⁴ For two major studies of symbolic behavior on relation to ritual and its stabilization as myth, see Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of Symbolic Forms*, vol. 2 on “Mythical Thought,” trans. Ralph Manheim (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955) and Hans Blumenberg, *Arbeit am Mythos* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1979). On the social and historical reception of myth in nineteenth-century Germany, see George S. Williamson, *The Longing for Myth in Germany: Religion and Aesthetic Culture from Romanticism to Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

²⁵ Simmel, Georg. “Zur Metaphysik des Todes,” *Gesamtausgabe*, vol. 12 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2001), 81-96; henceforth cited parenthetically.

²⁶ German: “Aber in jedem einzelnen Momente des Lebens *sind* wir solche, die sterben werden . . . (Der Tod) formt unser Leben nicht erst in der Todesstunde, sondern er ist ein formales Moment unseres Lebens, das alle seine Inhalte färbt . . . Ebenso wie jede automatische oder willkürliche Bewegung als Drang nach Leben, nach Mehr-Leben gedeutet werden kann, ebenso kann sie es als Flucht vor dem Tode” (Simmel, vol. 12, 83-4).

²⁷ German: “Vielleicht ist das Wesen unserer Aktivität eine für uns selbst geheimnisvolle Einheit, die wir, wie soviel andere, nur durch Lebenseroberung und Todesflucht erfassen können. Jeder Schritt des Lebens zeigte sich nicht nur als eine zeitliche Annäherung an den Tod, sondern als durch ihn der ein reales Element des Lebens ist, positiv und a priori geformt . . . Das Leben, das wir dazu verbrauchen uns dem Tode zu nähern, verbrauchen wir dazu ihn zu fliehen” (84).

²⁸ Immanuel Kant, “Ideen zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht,” in *Werke*, ed. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997), vol. 11: 35. German: “Am Menschen . . . sollten sich diejenigen Naturanlagen, die auf den Gebrauch seiner Vernunft abgezielt sind, nur in der Gattung, nicht aber im Individuum vollständig entwickeln.”

²⁹ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, ed. Johannes Hoffmeister (Hamburg: Meiner, 1952), 29-30; henceforth cited parenthetically as Hegel, 1952.

³⁰ G. W. F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977), 19; henceforth cited parenthetically as Hegel, 1977. Hegel, 1952, 29-30). See also Georg Simmel, “Zur Metaphysik des Todes” (“On the Metaphysics of Death”), originally published in *Logos* in 1910.

³¹ “So the heart learns to scoff at death and sin and to say with the Apostle: ‘O death, where is thy victory . . . (I Cor. 15.55-57). Death is swallowed up not only in the victory of Christ but also by our victory, because through faith this victory has become ours.” “The Freedom of a Christian” in Martin Luther, *Selections from his Writings*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), 66; see also Luther’s reference to the “death of death” in “Commentary on Galatians” (Luther, 117), which anticipates Hegel’s “twofold negation” in the *Phenomenology*.

³² Drawing on Heraclitus, Hölderlin and Hegel speak of “identity” as “mediation” (*Vermittlung*), modernity’s reformulation of the pre-Socratic *en diapheron eauton* (“das eine in sich selbst Unterschiedene”). Hegel speaks of mediation as “nothing but self-sameness (understood) as its own movement” (*die Vermittlung ist nichts anders als die sich bewegende Sichselbstgleichheit* (1952, 21/1977, 11; translation modified)). What is the relation of *Bild* to myth, and what does it mean to

develop an image: is the image itself but a catalyst for the dialectical emancipation *from* myth and irrationality (Goethe, Hegel) – an entelechy of the systematic *cum* historical type of rationality concerned with its explication? And, extending that line of questioning, can the knowledge produced by such development be sheltered from the potential irrationality of what it finds? Is the formalization of an image an instance of emancipation or repression? Put differently, is Hegel's theory of speculative "mediation" and "sublation" a genuine overcoming of myth or its repression in the name of a self-certifying, Enlightenment rationality? In the same vein, we may ask whether the image – seen as an archetype of "fate" – constitutes a mythic longing, such as is metaphorically flagged for us at the exact mid-point of Mann's novel by a reference to the "summer solstice" (*Sonnenwende*) and its coincidence with the appearance of the self-styled nihilist and intellectual terrorist Leo Naphta?

³³ Schelling, *Erster Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, in F. W. J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1982), 50n; 51.

³⁴ Hölderlin, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 4: i, 299.

³⁵ In his diaries (5th July 1920) Mann remarks: "Las dieser Tage eifrig in Brandes' Romant. Schule in Deutschland, verblüfft, bei Novalis Gedanken zu finden, die sich bei der Durchdringung der Zbg-Welt einstellten, ohne daß ich mir ihrer etwaigen früheren Reception bewußt gewesen wäre" (Thomas Mann, *Tagebücher, 1918-21* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1979), 450). The text in question is *The Principal Currents of nineteenth-century Literature* by the eminent Danish scholar Georg Brandes; the second volume, which treats "The Romantic School in Germany," appeared in a German translation in 1897. On Novalis's critique of Fichteian Idealism and his view of the self as terminally contingent and unstable, see my *Romantic Moods: Paranoia, Trauma, Melancholy, 1780-1840* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 2005), 45-63.

³⁶ Sigmund Freud, "Jenseits des Lustprinzips" in *Studienausgabe*, ed. Alexander Mitscherlich (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1982), vol. 3: 235.

³⁷ Thomas Mann, *Doktor Faustus* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1980), 496.

³⁸ In his correspondence, Mann repeatedly highlights his self-conscious transformation of the Bildungsroman genre. Having approached the *Magic Mountain* from the very start as a "satyr-play" vis-à-vis his just published novella *Death in Venice*, Mann eventually was to characterize his novel as "a kind of *Bildungsroman* and Wilhelm Meisteriade" (to Arthur Schnitzler, 4 September 1922; Mann, *Briefe*, ed. Erika Mann (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1995), vol. 1, 199-200) and as a "modernization and parody" of that genre, to Felix Bertaux (23 September 1924, *Briefe*, vol. 1, 214), and to Ernst Fischer (25 May 1926, Mann, *Briefe*, vol. 1, 256).

³⁹ German: "Hier herrschte das Vergessen selbst, der selige Stillstand, die Unschuld der Zeitlosigkeit. Es war die Liederlichkeit mit bestem Gewissen, die wunschbildhafte Apotheose all und jeder Verneinung des abendländischen Aktivitätskommandos" (Mann, 1981, 909). Wood's translation accidentally omits some of Mann's poignant phrase "Hier herrschte das Vergessen selbst, der selige Stillstand, die Unschuld der Zeitlosigkeit."

⁴⁰ Earlier, Hans Castorp joins the *Berghof* residents in dispelling his boredom by gazing into "some optical gadgets for amusement, a stereoscopic viewer, through the lenses of which you stared at photographs you inserted into it . . . a long, tubelike kaleidoscope that you put up to one eye, and by turning a little ring with one hand, you could conjure up a magical fluctuation of colorful stars and arabesques; and finally, a little rotating drum in which you placed a strip of cinematographic film." The

disruptive impact, particularly of the last contraption, on the beholder's eye is matched by its volatile representations, which show "a miller wrestle with a chimney sweep, (and) a schoolmaster paddle a pupil" (Mann, 1981, 120/Mann, 1995, 82).

⁴¹ From a short review essay, "Die Welt ist Schön," first published in *Berliner Illustrierte Zeitung* (no. 52, 23 Dec. 1928) and here quoted from Mann, *Die Forderung des Tages* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1986), 245; henceforth cited parenthetically as Mann, 1986. On the presence of visual and other technologies in the *Magic Mountain*, see also Eric Downing, "The Technology of Development: Photography and Bildung in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*." *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 77 (2003): 91-129; Sara Danius, *The Senses of Modernism: Technology, Perception, and Aesthetics* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 2002), 55-90; and especially the excellent study by Sabine Haupt, "'Rotdunkel'. Vom Ektoplasma zur Aura: Fotografie und Okkultismus bei Thomas Mann und Walter Benjamin." *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 120. 4 (2001): 540-70.

⁴² German: "Wenn nun, indem das Seelische der Technik anheimfällt, die Technik sich beseelt?" (246).

⁴³ German: "Ein junges marokkanisches Weib . . . die strotzende Brust halb entblößt . . . Ihre Nüstern waren breit, ihre Augen voll tierischen Lebens . . . Man starrte verlegen in das Gesicht des reizvollen Schattens . . . Dann verschwand das Phantom. Leere Helligkeit überzog die Tafel, das Wort 'Ende' ward darauf geworfen" (Mann, 1981, 446-47).

⁴⁴ Richards, 325 (I take the phrase from one of Richards' chapter titles).

⁴⁵ Quoted in Haupt, 541, n.7. In her excellent essay, Haupt dwells on the capacity of the technology-based, medial image "to expunge the archetype" (*das Abbild das Urbild . . . allmählich auslöscht*) (542). She also notes the contiguity between the cinematographic image of the Moroccan woman and the x-ray "portrait of Clavdia's interior" (*Innenporträt* (1981, 490/1995, 343)) that Hans Castorp will carry in the vest-pocket above his own heart as a "shadowy token" (*Schattenpfand* (Mann, 1981, 491/Mann, 1995, 344) of his beloved's affection.

⁴⁶ On Novalis, see Manfred Frank, *Einführung in die frühromantische Ästhetik* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1989), 248-86; Géza von Molnar, *Novalis: Romantic Vision and Ethical Context* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), Andrew Bowie, *From Romanticism to Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 65-89, and my own discussion in *Romantic Moods*, 33-53.

⁴⁷ On the problem of decadence in the *Magic Mountain*, see Helmut Müller-Seidel, "Degeneration und Décadence: Thomas Manns Weg zum Zauberberg," and Peter Pütz, "Krankheit als Stimulans des Lebens," both in *Zauberberg Symposium 1994*, ed. Thomas Sprecher (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1995).

⁴⁸ Roger Scruton, *Death-Devoted Heart: Sex and the Sacred in Wagner's Tristan and Isolde* (New York: Oxford UP, 2004), 3. On the stunningly dramatic and intimate moment in *Tristan*, see Scruton, 40-42. On Wagner's critique of bourgeois *Bildung*, well known to have been powerfully influenced by Schopenhauer, see Bryan Magee, *The Tristan Chord: Wagner and Philosophy* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000), 126-51.

⁴⁹ German: "Wir sind die Kultur! Wir sind die Bildung! Wir sind auf der Höhe! Wir sind die Spitze der Pyramide! Wir sind das Ziel der Weltgeschichte!" Friedrich Nietzsche, "Über die Zukunft unserer Bildungsanstalten" ("On the Future of our Educational Institutions"), 1872, in *Sämtliche Werke*, ed. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, 15 vols. (Munich: dtv, 1980), 1: 706; my translation.

⁵⁰ Nietzsche, "Schopenhauer als Erzieher" ("Schopenhauer as Educator") in *Sämtliche Werke*, 1: 379.

⁵¹ Oswald Spengler, *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (1918/1922) (Munich: Beck, 1998), 455; henceforth cited parenthetically; all translations are mine.

⁵² See Spengler's schematic table on "Zivilisation" following p. 71; he was to argue this thesis more fully at the end of volume two (1922) of *The Decline* (Spengler, 1141-44).

⁵³ The crisis of parliamentary democracy in Germany between 1918-24 preoccupies most major intellectuals, including Mann, whose *Betrachtungen eines Unpolitischen* (*Reflections of a Non-Political Man*) appeared in September of 1918, as did Spengler's *magnum opus*. Other voices would include Carl Schmitt's critique of liberal-democratic government in *Political Romanticism* (1919) and *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* (1923) and Max Weber, co-author of the Weimar constitution, yet notably wary of the contradictions intrinsic to the liberal-democratic project; see Weber, "Parliament and Government in Germany under a New Political Order," in *Political Writings*, ed. Peter Lassman and Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994), 130-271.

⁵⁴ On Spengler's evident debt to Nietzsche, see John Farrenkopf, "Nietzsche, Spengler, and the Politics of Cultural Despair," *Interpretation* 20. 2 (1992-93): 165-85 and Massimo F. Zumbini, "Untergänge und Morgenröten: Über Spengler und Nietzsche," *Nietzsche-Studien* 5 (1976): 194-254. On Spengler and Mann, see Nathan A. Cervo, "Civilization as Spent Culture: Mann's 'Infant Prodigy' and Spengler's *Decline*," *Mosaic* 23. 1 (1990), 73-86: 86; Roger A. Nichols, "Thomas Mann and Spengler," *German Quarterly* 58 (1985): 361-74; and esp. Barbara Beßlich, *Faszination des Verfalls: Thomas Mann und Oswald Spengler* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2002). See also Theodor Adorno's incisive essay, "Spengler nach dem Untergang" ("Spengler after the Decline"), in *Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann et al. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1998), vol. 10. 1: 47-71.

⁵⁵ German: "'Zeit' ist nicht umsonst ein Wort für die Tatsache der Nichtumkehrbarkeit" (Spengler, 676). Echoes of Spengler's critical response to German Idealism clearly permeate many of Heidegger's most familiar conceptions, such as a critique of technology and global capitalism already anticipated in the closing pages of the second volume to *The Decline of the West* and in Spengler's later *Man and Technology*. Likewise, Spengler's trenchant critique of liberal democracy and its almost mystical devotion to the idea of "freedom" ("Gebrauchen wir das bedenkliche Wort Freiheit, so steht es uns nicht mehr frei, dieses oder jenes zu verwirklichen, sondern *das Notwendige oder nichts*" (Spengler, 55)) and his prophetic indictment of a fully instrumentalized model of "thinking" ("das Leben *bedient* sich des Denkens wie eines Zauberschlüssels" (Spengler, 1185)) foreshadow Heidegger; similarly, Spengler's reference to "das *Urgefühl der Sorge*, das die Physiognomie der abendländischen . . . beherrscht" (Spengler, 177) clearly presages Heidegger's elaborations of *Sorge* in *Sein und Zeit* (1928) and Freud's *Unbehagen* in *Das Unbehagen in der Kultur* (1930). See also rhetorical and conceptual affinities between Heidegger's conception of *Dasein* and arguments in *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (published five years earlier) in Spengler, 439-40.

⁵⁶ German: "Ist das Ziel erreicht und die Idee, die ganze Fülle innerer Möglichkeiten vollendet und nach außen hin verwirklicht, so *erstarrt* die Kultur plötzlich, sie stirbt ab, ihr Blut gerinnt, ihre Kräfte brechen – sie wird zur *Zivilisation*." (Spengler, 143)

⁵⁷ "Today it is not possible to express anything which hasn't already been touched upon in Nietzsche's posthumous works" (quoted in Farrenkopf, 1992, 166). In a remarkable passage on a post-teleological

conception of development as pragmatic and inherently contingent variation, Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals* clearly anticipates Spengler's point about the way that death will haunt any theory premised on an organicist model: "die ganze Geschichte eines 'Dings,' eines Organs, eines Brauchs kann dergestalt eine fortgesetzte Zeichen-Kette von immer neuen Interpretationen und Zurechtmachungen sein, deren Ursachen selbst unter sich nicht im Zusammenhange zu sein brauchen, vielmehr unter Umständen sich bloß zufällig hintereinander folgen und ablösen. 'Entwicklung' eines Dings, eines Brauchs, eines Organs ist demgemäß nichts weniger als sein progressus auf ein Ziel hin, noch weniger ein logischer und kürzester, mit dem kleinsten Aufwand von Kraft und Kosten erreichter progressus – sondern die Aufeinanderfolge von mehr oder minder tiefgehenden, mehr oder minder voneinander unabhängigen, an ihm sich abspielenden Überwältigungsprozessen, hinzugerechnet die dagegen jedesmal aufgewendeten Widerstände, die versuchten Form-Verwandlungen zum Zweck der Verteidigung und Reaktion, auch die Resultate gelungener Gegenaktionen. Die Form ist flüssig, der 'Sinn' ist es aber noch mehr . . . Selbst innerhalb jedes einzelnen Organismus steht es nicht anders: mit jedem wesentlichen Wachstum des Ganzen verschiebt sich auch der 'Sinn' der einzelnen Organe – unter Umständen kann deren teilweises Zu-Grunde-gehn, deren Zahl-Verminderung (zum Beispiel durch Vernichtung der Mittelglieder) ein Zeichen wachsender Kraft und Vollkommenheit sein. Ich wollte sagen: auch das teilweise Unnützlich-werden, das Verkümmern und Entarten, das Verlustig-gehn von Sinn und Zweckmäßigkeit, kurz der Tod gehört zu den Bedingungen des wirklichen progressus." Nietzsche, *Kritische Studienausgabe*, ed. M. Montinari and G. Colli (Munich, dtv: 1980), vol. 5, 314-15. English: *On the Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Douglas Smith (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 58-59.

⁵⁸ German: "Zum Habitus einer Gruppe von Organismen gehört aber auch eine bestimmte Lebensdauer und ein bestimmtes Tempo der Entwicklung" (Spengler, 147).

⁵⁹ German: "Alles Lebendige besitzt . . . Richtung, Triebe, Wollen, eine mit Sehnsucht auf's tiefste verwandte Bewegtheit, die mit der Bewegung des Physikers nicht das geringste zu tun hat" (Spengler, 159).

⁶⁰ Thomas Mann, *Buddenbrooks*, trans. John Woods (New York: Viking, 1993), 510; German: *Buddenbrooks* (Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1985), 534.

⁶¹ Asked his age by Settembrini, Hans Castorp "didn't know! For the moment at least, he didn't know how old he was, despite intense, indeed desperate attempts to collect his thoughts. And to win some time, he asked for the question to be repeated, and then he said: 'Me . . . how old am I? I'm in my twenty-fourth year, of course. That is, I'll be twenty-four soon. Forgive me, I am very tired,' he said. 'Tired' isn't the word for it. You know what it's like when you're dreaming and know that you're dreaming, and try to wake up, but can't" (Mann, 1981, 122/1995, 83). On Spengler's relation to Nietzsche, see the essays by Zumbini and Farrenkopf, cited above note 53.

⁶² German: "Hans Castorp sah auf seine eigenen, noch ungeschickten Hände und fühlte darin die Möglichkeit vorgebildet, späterhin ebenso wie der Großvater Messer und Gabel zu halten und zu bewegen" (Mann, 1981, 33).

⁶³ German: "Kultur ist ihrem Wesen nach ein über Jahrhunderte gehendes Herausarbeiten von hohen Gedanken und Entscheidungen, aber auch ein Umgießen dieser Inhalte zu festen Formen, so daß sie jetzt . . . weitergereicht werden können, um nicht nur die Zeit, sondern auch die Menschen zu überstehen" (1956, 25).

⁶⁴ "Diese Formung des Lebens *in seinem ganzen Verlaufe* durch den Tod ist bisher sozusagen etwas Bildhaftes, das von sich aus noch nicht zu irgendwelchen Schlüssen vordringt" (Simmel, "Zur Metaphysik des Todes," vol. 12: 85).

⁶⁵ For discussions of the *Magic Mountain* in the generic context of the *Bildungsroman*, see T. J. Reed, *Thomas Mann: The Uses of Tradition* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2002), 226-74; Martin Swales, *The German Bildungsroman from Wieland to Hesse* (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1978), 105-28; and Michael Minden, *the German Bildungsroman: Incest and Inheritance* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 205-44.

⁶⁶ German: "Prüfte der junge Mann sich später, so fand er, daß das Bild seines Ältervaters sich ihm viel tiefer, deutlicher und bedeutender eingepägt hatte als das seiner Eltern" (Mann, 1981, 37).

⁶⁷ Benjamin, 1999, 476. It is worth noting that Benjamin profoundly admired the *Magic Mountain*, "a work of unbelievably magisterial quality" (*von unglaublich souveräner Mache*) as he put it in a letter to Gershom Scholem (19 February 1925).

⁶⁸ German: ". . . wenn man ihn auch nur ansah in seiner blonden Korrektheit, mit seinem gut geschnittenen, irgendwie altertümlich geprägten Kopf, in dem ein ererbter und unbewußter Dünkel sich in Gestalt einer gewissen trockenen Schläfrigkeit äußerte, so konnte kein Mensch bezweifeln, daß dieser Hans Castorp ein unverfälschtes und rechtschaffenes Erzeugnis hiesigen Bodens und glänzend an seinem Platze war, – er selbst hätte es, wenn er sich daraufhin auch nur geprüft hätte, nicht einen Augenblick lang bezweifelt." (Mann, 1981, 46)

⁶⁹ German: "Alle diese Anstalten hatten ihren genaueren und guten Sinn offenbar in dem Gedanken, daß der Großvater nun auf immer zu seiner eigentlichen und wahren Gestalt eingegangen war" (Mann, 1981, 42). Spengler, whom Mann had begun to study thoroughly in late 1919, offers a strikingly related observation: "It is with deep and profoundly significant identification that the awakening interiority of a child is connected to the death of a relative. *Suddenly* it grasps the lifeless corpse, which has wholly become matter and spatial, and *simultaneously* it senses itself as a unique *being* in an alien, expansive world" (Spengler, 215).

⁷⁰ German: "Woran, dachte er, woran und an wen in aller Welt erinnert sie mich nur. Aber sein müder Kopf wußte die Frage trotz einiger Anstrengung nicht zu beantworten" (Mann, 1981, 123-24).

⁷¹ German: "Dr. Krokowski erörterte (den Gegenstand) in einer gemischten Ausdrucksweise, in zugleich poetischem und gelehrtem Stile . . . der Liebesbefehl lasse sich nicht knebeln, nicht vergewaltigen, die unterdrückte Liebe sei nicht tot, sie lebe, sie trachte im Dunklen und Tiefgeheimen auch ferner sich zu erfüllen, sie durchbreche den Keuschheitsbann und erscheine, wenn auch in verwandelter, unkenntlicher Gestalt . . . in Gestalt der Krankheit!" (Mann, 1981, 178-81).

⁷² As Mann remarked on the *Magic Mountain*, "Hans Castorp's story is the story of an intensification (*Geschichte einer Steigerung*): by means of the feverish seclusion on the magic mountain, our simple hero is raised to moral, spiritual, and sensual adventures of which he would previously not even have dreamt. Yet the story of this intensification is simultaneously also a case of intensification in its own right, that is, as narrative" (Mann, 1983, 81).

⁷³ On the problematic construction of disease as metaphor, see Susan Sontag's canonical and still thought-provoking *Illness as Metaphor* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1978) and Laura Otis, *Membranes: Metaphors of Invasion in Nineteenth-Century Literature, Science, and Politics*

(Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), esp. her chapters on Virchow and Koch and on Mann, 8-36 and 148-67. Regarding Mann's extensive readings in physiology and pathology relative to the *Magic Mountain*, see Christian Virchow, "Medizin und Biologie in Thomas Manns Roman *Der Zauberberg*. Über physiologische und biologische Quellen des Autors," in *Das 'Zauberberg' Symposium 1994 in Davos*, ed. Thomas Sprecher (Frankfurt: Klostermann, 1995), 117-72 and Peter Pütz, "Krankheit als Stimulans des Lebens. Nietzsche auf dem Zauberberg," *ibid*, 249-64.

⁷⁴ Downing, Eric. "The Technology of Development: Photography and Bildung in Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg*." *Deutsche Vierteljahresschrift* 77 (2003): 91-129; quote from 101.

⁷⁵ Almost certainly, Mann was also thinking of Wagner's famous diary entry of 1 October 1858, in which he describes witnessing the slaughter of animals and expounds his theory of sympathy; *An Matilde Wesendonk: Tagebuchblätter und Briefe, 1853-1871* (Berlin: Duncker, 1904), 49-54.