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Liberalism and the bourgeoisie
Germany in comparative perspective

Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalismus in Deutschland*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/Main 1988, 381 S., brosch., 18 DM.

Dieter Langewiesche (Hrsg.), *Liberalismus im 19. Jahrhundert*, Verlag Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen 1988, 537 S., kart., 84 DM.

Jürgen Kocka (Hrsg.), *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich*, 3 Bde., Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1988, je 384 S., brosch., zus. DM 78.

Arno J. Mayer, *Adelsmacht und Bürgertum. Die Krise der europäischen Gesellschaft 1848–1914*, Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, München 1988, 344 S., brosch., 14,80 DM.

Liberalism in Germany

The book by Langewiesche¹ is the first general study of German liberalism since the 1978 study of James Sheehan.² Since that time a great deal of new work has appeared which any general study must take into account. Lothar Gall's seminal essay on early liberalism has had a major influence on research, particularly into liberalism in the Vormärz period, most of which appeared after 1978.³ For the period after 1848 there has been a considerable revision of the idea of liberalism as a ›failure‹ and studies of the bourgeoisie have in any case uncoupled that idea from the broader notion of a deferential society remaining under the domination of pre-modern elites.⁴ There have also been comparative studies which have questioned certain assumptions about other countries which informed some understandings of German liberalism.⁵ Although Sheehan anticipated some of the ideas involved, never for example arguing any crude ›failure of liberalism‹ case, he did not have much of

1 Henceforth the works under review will be referred to as Langewiesche, Langewiesche (ed.), Kocka 1, Kocka 2, Kocka 3, and Mayer.

2 James Sheehan, *German Liberalism in the 19th century*, Chicago 1978. A German translation was published in 1983.

3 Lothar Gall, *Liberalismus und »Bürgerliche Gesellschaft«*. Zu Charakter und Entwicklung der liberalen Bewegung in Deutschland, in: HZ 220, 1975, pp. 324–356. For a good indication of the range of work involved see Wolfgang Schieder (ed.), *Liberalismus in der Gesellschaft des deutschen Vormärz*, Göttingen 1983, especially the introduction by the editor.

4 Some of this was stimulated in response to the book by David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley, *The Peculiarities of German History: Bourgeois Society and Politics in 19th century Germany*, Oxford 1984, a modified version of the original German study which was published under the title: *Mythen deutscher Geschichtsschreibung. Die gescheiterte bürgerliche Revolution von 1848*, Frankfurt/Main 1980.

5 Langewiesche (ed.), and Kocka, 1, 2, and 3, as well as Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1987, are the best examples of this work and all arise out of the interdisciplinary study on the bourgeoisie under Kocka's direction at the Zentrum für interdisziplinäre Forschung at the university of Bielefeld.

this new and complex historiography to take into account.⁶ It is on how Langewiesche integrates this historiography into his general study of liberalism that I will focus attention.

After a brief introduction to the 18th century background, where Langewiesche points to our lack of knowledge about continuities between the enlightenment, Napoleonic and restoration periods, attention is turned to liberalism as an oppositional movement. Langewiesche justifies this because by this time much of the steam was running out of liberalising reforms from above. Instead, liberalism increasingly took the form of a constitutional movement which focused attention upon the attainment of political freedoms. What is more, a central theme throughout Langewiesche's study is that liberalism requires, for its development, some of the institutional arrangements which it also demands. Without some freedom to organise and to express opinions and without some institutions (parliaments, city councils, chambers of commerce, provincial estates, etc.) through which to organise, liberalism cannot develop as a movement but remains, at best, an informal current of opinion.

I think this is very true and it is borne out by many of the essays in the book edited by Langewiesche. It is clear, for example, that *opinions* of the kind worked out by liberals in the south German states and in Prussia also were developed in Vormärz Austria. Nevertheless, the lack of such institutions and the more stringent control over associations and freedom of expression prevented as clear a development of a liberal movement in Austrian Germany.⁷ In turn the institutional framework shaped the kind of liberal movement that developed in the different German states. The south German states with their state parliaments allowed the growth of state-wide liberal oppositions. In Prussia, by contrast, up to 1847 the provincial estates offered the highest level institution within which a liberal opposition could form, and this helps account for the provincial character of early Prussian liberalism.⁸

Langewiesche can also connect this to the kinds of demands raised by liberals. The concern to establish a secure political basis for liberalism led to a concentration upon constitutional demands. However, these demands were more for *rights* than *powers*. The theoretical basis of such rights appeared to be in natural rights, but in the German context their embodiment in constitutions granted by existing states could make them appear as positive »Toleranzen« created by government.⁹ What is more, therefore, the distinction between the state and the structure of rights the state creates can lead to the constitutionalist doctrine of dualism. This doctrine confines parliament to the role of opposition, or the representation of social interests (often seen as divisive and factional) rather than becoming the basis of governmental power.

It is, naturally, possible to see this political thought as the product of an intellectual tradition. That was largely the line taken by Krieger in his pioneering study »The German Idea

6 Some of the critical points were made, however, early on in the reception of Sheehan's work. See Geoff Eley, James Sheehan and the German liberals: a critical appreciation, in: Central European History 14/3, 1981, pp. 273–288.

7 Klaus Koch, Frühliberalismus in Österreich bis zum Vorabend der Revolution 1848; Harm-Hinrich Brandt, Liberalismus in Österreich zwischen Revolution und Großer Depression; Lothar Höbbel, Die Deutschfreiheitlichen Österreichs. Bürgerliche Politik unter den Bedingungen eines katholischen Vielvölkerstaates, all in: Langewiesche (ed.).

8 See Herbert Obenaus, Region und politisches Interesse im Vormärzliberalismus Preußens, in: Langewiesche (ed.). There are other reasons for regional variations which persist after 1848, as is made clear in: Toni Offermann, Preußischer Liberalismus zwischen Revolution und Reichsgründung im regionalen Vergleich. Berliner und Kölner Fortschrittsliberalismus in der Konfliktzeit, in: Langewiesche (ed.).

9 See further Dieter Grimm, Die Grundrechte im Entstehungszusammenhang der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft, in: Kocka 1.

of Freedom». ¹⁰ It is also the type of argument employed by John Keane when he argues that in German political thinking the notion of ›civil society‹ as incomplete and fractious, best expressed by Hegel, rather displaced alternative notions of civil society. In these alternatives civil society might be presented as standing in an harmonious relation to government (e.g. in the work of Ferguson, and earlier Locke), or as potentially able to function without a powerful state (Adam Smith) or even, in utopian versions (Paine) any state, or as the source of fruitful opposition to the all-powerful state to which mass politics could give rise (John Stuart Mill, Alexis de Tocqueville). ¹¹ From this one can go on to deduce German liberal hostility to ›party‹ as factious and the failure to press for parliamentary government.

Langewiesche's institutional approach complements this intellectual approach in a convincing way. Liberalism now appears in certain respects as a reflection of the political structures within which it develops, demanding reform of those structures, often of a quite radical kind, which will entrench liberal freedoms and influence. Obviously one has to go further and connect those liberal demands to their social and economic context. Here Langewiesche accepts much of the argument about ›mittelständisch‹ liberalism which envisaged a harmonious and ›classless‹ society of the propertied, largely based upon pre-industrial economic arrangements. Themes such as laissez-faire economics are marginal, if not negative, within this type of liberalism. More important are demands for more local rights in government and for the entrenching of freedoms in a constitution.

It has long been recognised that this is not the whole story. Langewiesche is well aware of the claims to be considered ›liberal‹ on the part of reforming officials who sought to reduce guild powers or tariffs or push through land tenure reform, and of Rhenish businessmen who had come to accept greater social inequality than the Mittelstand social vision could bear, and who were prepared, in the name of economic progress, to defend oligarchy as a necessary consequence and bulwark of such inequality. Nevertheless, his focus on opposition and political institutions tends to marginalise the role of reforming bureaucrats, and he points to studies of Rhenish liberalism which also suggest that their bourgeois class character has been exaggerated. ¹²

However, I think there is a rather bigger problem here. It is difficult to work out why some of the Mittelstand politics under discussion merit the name ›liberal‹ at all, when it believed in local autonomy in order to protect guild rights and keep out immigrants. In this sense, the government officials in states such as Prussia who tried to compel local communities to give up such restrictions are more deserving of the title ›liberal‹, if by that we mean those who try to increase the opportunities for individuals to decide for themselves such questions as where they will live and what job they will do. ¹³

I also think there are two particular problems with an approach which makes too much of the pre-industrial Mittelstand argument. First, it tends to fit into a broader argument which then sees this kind of liberalism giving way to one based on the acceptance of industrial society and its attendant class divisions and inequalities. Much of the remaining argument concerns only the dating and description of the shift from the one to the other kind of liberalism. Yet there is another ›social‹ model of liberalism available. One can see this social vi-

10 Leonhard Krieger, *The German Idea of Freedom: History of a Political Tradition*, Boston 1957.

11 John Keane, *Despotismus und Demokratie. Über die Unterscheidung zwischen bürgerlicher Gesellschaft und Staat 1750–1850*, in: Kocka 1.

12 See especially Elisabeth Fehrenbach, *Rheinischer Liberalismus und gesellschaftliche Verfassung*, in: Schieder, pp. 272–294.

13 The ›illiberalism‹ of such burghers is brought out clearly in: Mack Walker, *German Home Towns. Community, State, General Estate 1648–1871*, Ithaca 1971. The ›liberalism‹ of the state is brought out in: Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Deutsche Gesellschaftsgeschichte*, Bd. 2: 1815–1845/49, München 1987, especially pp. 281–296.

sion, for example, exemplified in the thinking of the Prussian reformer Christian Scharnweber, the subject of an essay on ›bureaucratic liberalism‹ by Barbara Vogel.¹⁴ Here the vision is one of ›commercial society‹, a vision which arguably is also to be found in writers of the Scottish enlightenment such as Adam Smith. Whereas the pre-industrial Mittelstands social vision is one of a static, no-growth economy in which controls are an important way of preventing too much inequality; by contrast, this social vision envisages increasing prosperity coming about through greater freedom and divisions of labour, though not necessarily giving rise to a new kind of economy in which agriculture has been displaced by industry as the major sector.

It seems to me that this is the image to which many Rhenish businessmen such as Hanse-mann and Camphausen subscribed. The contrast underpins the distinction between ›optimists‹ and the ›pessimists‹ on economic prospects before 1848. The balance varies with the economic situation: in the bad years of 1844–1847, for example, the pessimistic view was strengthened, and many Mittelstand elements moved away from any recognisable liberal position. The years of growth after 1854 strengthened the optimistic view and enabled positive links to be forged between bourgeois leaders of liberalism and many peasant farmers, small craftsmen and retailers. In many respects it seems to me that it is the return of pessimism after the economic downturn in 1873/74, as much as the acceptance of an emergent industrial society of class inequality, which leads to the third kind of social vision.

A distinction of this kind can also account for the way in which liberals in 1848, certainly at national and state level, seem quickly to forget all the Mittelstand themes which tend to be emphasised for Vormärz. Langewiesche recognises squarely that the parliamentary liberals of 1848 did not have much time for placing any ›social‹ rights alongside political rights in the constitutions which were drawn up. Admittedly, neither did they take a doctrinaire laissez-faire position, something which seems to be peculiar to English liberalism. One can explain the political defensiveness of most liberals in 1848 in terms of the need to bring an unwanted revolutionary situation under control, but I think this lack of interest in social guarantees for Mittelstand concerns is because the bourgeois liberals who have state-wide and nation-wide contacts never did subscribe to the ›static society‹ vision of many of their small-town constituents. Rather, I think, they went along with those constituents for so long as the principal goal was the modernisation or liberalisation of the corporate social arrangements of the time.¹⁵

Langewiesche's account of the politics of 1848 and the role of the national question is exemplary, and it is only this issue of the kind of social vision which underpins early German liberalism which I would question. Langewiesche understands well the concerns of those liberals and does not dismiss their anxieties about revolution or democracy as ›betrayal‹, but points rather to the underlying consistency of their values, which never included revolution and democracy.

Again, the institutional approach is illuminating for post-1848 liberalism. The Prussian constitution of December 1848 both shaped as well as permitted the development of a state-wide liberal movement. Langewiesche also makes it clear that the ›realists‹ who turned to Prussian leadership did so on the basis of genuine beliefs in progress and the need to liberalise Prussia as a condition of her playing a positive role in national unification. He has much sympathy for the National Liberal acceptance of Bismarck's achievements in 1867 and 1870/71 as something unavoidable and which they could shape in a liberal direction.

14 Barbara Vogel, Beamtenliberalismus in der Napoleonischen Ära, in: Langewiesche (ed.).

15 This idea of modernising corporate institutions is central to the essay by Wolfgang Kaschuba, Zwischen Deutscher Nation und Deutscher Provinz. Politische Horizonte und soziale Milieus im frühen Liberalismus, in: Langewiesche (ed.).

Later he points to the pride liberals took in the part they played in laying down the legal and economic basis of the new Germany in the years between 1867 and 1878.

I would agree with this, as well as with Langewiesche's account of how liberalism began to lose some of its integrative power, for example in relation to the labour movement. I think, perhaps, the point could be reinforced in institutional terms. Bismarck institutionalised the dualist doctrine – in his ›constitutional gap‹ theory during the constitutional crisis in Prussia from 1862 to 1866, and in the constitutions drawn up for both the North German Confederation and the Second Empire. At the same time, he provided liberals with avenues of influence not only through parliament, in which they were the dominant political force for the first decade or so, but also through the developing bureaucracy. On the other hand, the constitution of 1871 rather set back some liberal achievements because it decentralised power with its explicit recognition of state rights for the south German states (and, by implication, for Prussia). Liberals were now oriented to at least five different institutional arenas to achieve their objectives: the national parliament, the state parliaments, the developing national bureaucracy, the existing state bureaucracies, and local, especially urban, government. What is more, in the sovereign state institutions liberals operated by means of pressure, connection, and ideological agreement.

I think this institutional fragmentation of liberal effort helps account for the increasing incoherence of any liberal political vision and the breakup of any single focus of liberal political efforts. In turn that led, as Langewiesche brings out very well, to a stress on the ›national‹ values of liberalism and its self-image as the embodiment of high cultural values.¹⁶ Increasingly liberals adopted a rhetoric of being above party. Their opposition to Catholicism was sincerely grounded in the values of nationality, progress and reason. Their anti-socialist views, as Langewiesche argues with reference to Heinrich von Treitschke, implied a hard-headed acceptance of a need for a strong state to preserve the necessary inequalities of a bourgeois-dominated society against a socialism which threatened nationality, religion, family and property.

Langewiesche also very persuasively shows that much of the case for the ›failure of liberalism‹ is based upon this acceptance of the liberal self-image. Once party politics developed, liberals were bound to be reduced to just one party amongst many. Once that had happened, liberal parties actually fared reasonably well in elections. What is more, lack of party discipline or identification with a particular social milieu may actually have helped maintain the electoral basis of liberalism, by giving it flexibility in relation to a variety of social constituencies. Liberalism adapted progressively in important ways to the rise of mass politics, new international rivalries, and the social problems of industrial society. Langewiesche sees in liberal support for imperialism a projection of the national claims of liberalism into the international sphere of politics. That support in turn led to the formation of national political organisations with large memberships. Finally, in a very important section, Langewiesche deals with the impressive achievements of liberals in urban government.

These are important correctives to the story of a declining and increasingly irrelevant liberalism. In many ways these liberal adaptations were more impressive than what happened in countries such as France and Britain in the years before 1914. However, I do think there are two points to which Langewiesche could have given more emphasis.

First, the splits within liberalism need more consideration. Langewiesche rightly draws attention to the growing pessimism of all liberals as Bismarck undermined their position and retained personal dominance. But how the post-Bismarckian future was seen perhaps needs more explicit consideration. I would distinguish at least four responses amongst liberals. First, there were those who simply ceased to be liberal in any meaningful sense, so

16 See also Gangolff Hübinger, *Hochindustrialisierung und die Kulturwerte des deutschen Liberalismus*, in: Langewiesche (ed.).

completely did they accept authoritarian government, special measures against whole sections of the population, tariffs, etc. Second, there were those who increasingly saw in the authoritarian institutions of bureaucracy, army and elite government (as in many urban communes) the appropriate instruments for achieving reforms in such fields as education and public health which would help create ›free personalities‹. These liberals had largely abandoned any faith in the specifically *political* vision of liberalism. Third, there were those who sought more constitutional constraints over government – both through increased parliamentary power and also through legal controls. Finally, there were those who sought to ›parliamentarise‹ the state.

Splits within liberalism were, above all, provoked by divisions over the relationship between parliament and state. The original division between Progressive and National Liberals came over the Indemnity Bill: could one put aside the way Bismarck had ridden roughshod over parliament? The battles of 1878/79 were in part about ensuring that Bismarck did not get access to more revenues at national level if parliament still could not properly control how those revenues were spent. The divisions of the 1880s and 1890s came over the key question of the military budget. The ›authoritarian‹ liberals stressed the ›national‹ interest and the need to ensure that the ›accidents‹ of party balance could not determine military spending; the ›parliamentary‹ liberals stressed that without budgetary rights parliament was a nullity.

The chapters on post 1918 are something of a postscript. For Weimar what is brought out is the way continued political division amongst liberals, and the increasing role of interest groups in the liberal parties, rendered both necessary but also unconvincing the appeal to national interests above sectional concerns and made it difficult for liberals to take up any meaningful domestic political programme. Yet, as in the Second Empire, liberals possessed a political power out of proportion to their electoral standing – partly because they figured in virtually every coalition. What I found especially illuminating was by contrast the way liberals could develop a firmer party discipline at state level (as in Prussia and Hamburg) and cooperate with the SPD. But the logic of the argument points remorselessly to the ›liberal‹ electorate moving towards the two extreme poles of liberal practice and liberal rhetoric: at the one extreme to vote for splinter parties which explicitly represented narrow interests; at the other for a party which more radically than any other claimed to represent the ›nation‹, the Nazi party.

A final chapter considers the development of liberalism in the Federal Republic. Here Langewiesche rightly stresses the distinction between liberalism (or liberality) as a feature of a whole political system and a component in the values of most actors in that system, and liberalism as the politics of a particular party or social group. What really mattered in the Federal Republic was that eventually a liberal constitutional structure was created and that the two major parties, the CDU and the SPD, came to accept that as legitimate. Less important was the emergence of the FDP out of an illiberal or very archaic liberal beginning to the acceptance of distinctively liberal concerns (above all the free market), although that process is an interesting story.

It is almost unbelievable that Langewiesche manages to cover all this ground, in a clear and persuasive manner, in just 300 pages of a small paperback. To this is added some useful tables detailing many features (electoral, sociological) of liberal parties and other organisations at national, state and local levels. This book is now the indispensable starting point for anyone wishing to understand German liberalism.

The German bourgeoisie

There clearly are close links between the fortunes of German liberalism and the development of the bourgeoisie. A number of studies, both comparative and German, have made clear the relative unimportance of aristocrats in German liberalism.¹⁷ If one focuses upon the state as a vehicle of liberal reform, this tends to draw attention to the role of a bourgeois officialdom. If one concentrates upon the role of liberal political movements, the central figures are officials, professionals, and members of the economic bourgeoisie. More than perhaps any other liberal movement, German liberalism is bourgeois. That was, as I shall argue later, one of its major weaknesses as a political movement.

But if liberalism (nearly) equals bourgeois, bourgeois does not equal liberalism. The need to uncouple the two concepts was argued strongly by Blackbourn and Eley. They argued that bourgeois values and interests could come to dominate a society in which liberalism failed. The argument was often unclear, because the key terms such as bourgeois and liberalism were not properly defined and the identity and content of ›bourgeois dominance‹ remained vague.

The project led by Jürgen Kocka at the Centre for Interdisciplinary Research at the university of Bielefeld has been the single most important initiative in trying to clarify these issues and to stimulate research in Germany and elsewhere, frequently with an explicitly comparative character, into the many aspects of the subject.¹⁸ It has also brought together work that was already going on in a variety of disciplines, and there are a variety of other research projects which bear upon this subject.¹⁹

Even in a review article it is impossible to do justice to the extraordinary range of studies published in the three volumes on *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*. Here I will just focus on some findings on the German bourgeoisie. In the next section I will consider what those findings mean when placed in a broader comparative context. It is simply impossible to consider the non-German studies in their own right, and I have had to be very selective even with this German focus.

Very broadly one can make distinctions between economy, society, culture and politics. In the first instance, the term bourgeoisie is related to different branches of the economy. There is an older grouping based on the towns (the Bürger) but increasingly attention focuses upon state officials and professionals (together defined as the Bildungsbürgertum) and the capitalists who come to the fore in the various new branches of the growing free market economy (bankers, merchants, industrialists). Kocka generally excludes the Bürger groups from the category ›bourgeoisie‹, and so consequently many of those later defined as the ›old‹ petty bourgeoisie (self-employed craftsmen, small shopkeepers) as well as, from the later 19th century, the growing ›new‹ lower middle class (clerks in both public and private employment, elementary school teachers).²⁰

17 Christof Dipper, *Adelsliberalismus in Deutschland*; Rudolf Muhs, *Deutscher und britischer Liberalismus im Vergleich. Trägerschichten, Zielvorstellungen und Rahmenbedingungen* (ca. 1830–1870), both in: Langewiesche (ed.).

18 I have already reviewed another product of this initiative, Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, in: *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London* X/3, 1988, pp. 20–25.

19 There is, for example, the major study by Lothar Gall, *Bürgertum in Deutschland*, Berlin 1989; the studies on city and bourgeoisie Gall has edited: *Stadt und Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert*, München 1990; and the recent collection of essays edited by David Blackbourn and Richard Evans (eds.), *The German Bourgeoisie*, London 1991. There are many overlaps between these with the same authors cropping up in more than one publication.

20 In his introduction to »Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit« Kocka justifies this on cultural grounds; until these groups had acquired elements of bourgeois culture they could not be regarded as bourgeois.

One can always argue about such definitions and how to apply them (when does a ›small employer belonging to the lower middle class become an ›entrepreneur‹ belonging to the bourgeoisie?) but this does tend to yield a particular interest in three broadly defined groups: state officials (identified as bourgeois by social origins and lifestyle rather than occupation), members of the professions, and capitalists.

At this point two issues could be raised. How do each of these groups develop and how do they relate to one another? The studies of the professional and state-employed bring out a number of issues. Sigrist shows how even professionals in the private sector were oriented to the state which determined their education and certification as professionals and which often continued to control them, for example by setting standard fees for lawyer's services.²¹ Jarausch takes the argument further and argues that this state orientation of the professions meant that they stressed expertise and a corporate status guaranteed by the state over any commitment to parliament.²² König also touches upon this closeness to the state, comparing it to the situation of some professional-type occupations in Switzerland, although this study moves beyond the bourgeoisie proper.²³ Already one can see that two further preoccupations inform much of this historical study: the lack of liberalism amongst many of the professionals in the German bourgeoisie, and the explanation of this ›peculiarity‹ in terms of the particular weight of the state in shaping the careers and values of these people.²⁴

Most of the studies of the ›economic‹ bourgeoisie are explicitly comparative.²⁵ A number of points seem to suggest themselves so far as Germany is concerned. First, an industrial capitalist class is created fairly quickly and extensively. The speed helps account for the relative homogeneity. It is also clear that the really large businesses in Germany by 1900 are concentrated overwhelmingly in iron and steel and coal, whereas they are more diffused through other manufacturing sectors in Britain and France.²⁶ The extensiveness helps account for the self-sufficient character of this group in Germany which appears to have fewer social ties either with those above – the aristocracy – than in Britain, or with the state and professional elites (as in France) or even with those below (small businessmen, managers).²⁷ These are valuable points of comparison and I will take them up again in the next sec-

21 Hannes Sigrist, *Die Rechtsanwälte und das Bürgertum. Deutschland, die Schweiz und Italien im 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Kocka 2*. See also Michael John, *Between estate and profession: lawyers and the development of the legal profession in 19th century Germany*; Paul Weindling, *Bourgeois values, doctors and the state: the professionalisation of medicine in Germany 1848–1933*, both in: *Blackbourn/Evans, The German Bourgeoisie*, pp. 162–197, pp. 198–223.

22 Konrad Jarausch, *Die unfreien Professionen. Überlegungen zu den Wandlungsprozessen im deutschen Bildungsbürgertum 1900–1955*, in: *Kocka 2*.

23 Mario König, *Angestellte am Rande des Bürgertums. Kaufleute und Techniker in Deutschland und in der Schweiz 1860–1930*, in: *Kocka 2*.

24 See also the arguments along these lines in the contributions to *Kocka*, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit* by Dietrich Rüchemeyer, *Bourgeois, Staat und Bildungsbürgertum. Idealtypische Modelle für die vergleichende Erforschung von Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit*, pp. 101–120, and Hans-Ulrich Wehler, *Wie bürgerlich war das Deutsche Kaiserreich?*, pp. 243–280.

25 Youssef Cassis, *Wirtschaftselite und Bürgertum. England, Frankreich und Deutschland um 1900*; Richard Tilly, *Unternehmermoral und -verhalten im 19. Jahrhundert. Indizien deutscher Bürgerlichkeit*; Patrick Fridenson, *Herrschaft im Wirtschaftsunternehmen. Deutschland und Frankreich 1800–1914*, all in: *Kocka 2*.

26 See especially Cassis.

27 For further details on the relationship of capitalists to other social groups see the references to the literature provided by Karin Kaudelka-Hanisch, *The titled businessman: Prussian Commercial Councillors in the Rhineland and Westphalia during the 19th century*, in: *Blackbourn/Evans, The German Bourgeoisie*, pp. 87–114.

tion. Until they are linked to cultural values or political connections, however, it is difficult to know what wider significance to attribute to these features of the German bourgeoisie.

One thing this very forcefully suggests, however, is that there really is no obvious bourgeois unity to be had at the level of occupational or economic definition. Kocka suggests that the next point of analysis might be in the way bourgeois groups relate to other social classes. The problem with the studies on this subject is that they cannot, in many instances, begin from the economic or occupational situation because at that level many bourgeoisie *do not have* a relationship with other social groups. Interestingly the most informative studies tend to be for the economic bourgeoisie, especially industrial employers, precisely because in the field of industrial relations there *is* such a starting point.

At that level, a major concern has been with the rationality of capitalist behaviour. The idea of the ›feudalisation‹ of the German capitalists suggested that the anti-socialist and anti-trade union ›Herr-im-Haus‹ attitudes of the larger employers represented an imitation of aristocratic behaviour. That view has largely been abandoned in the face of research which shows that, especially in sectors such as iron, steel and coal-mining, with cartels, tariffs, and very large enterprises, various anti-union strategies made good sense. This particular aspect of the subject is not really considered in the volumes edited by Kocka.²⁸ Rather, more indirect relations with workers are considered in an interesting essay by Christiane Eisenberg on voluntary associations comparing England and Germany in mid-century.²⁹ Eisenberg argues that workers and bourgeois did not get on together when they met in such associations, as much because of clashes of social styles and values as because of any underlying political or economic conflict. What mattered in Germany was that there were precious few other organisational possibilities for workers, so that these tensions took on a great importance in shaping class relations. Eisenberg argues that only where workers were able to develop powerful and effective organisations of their own could they negotiate cooperative relationships with middle class groups. I find this a persuasive argument. It is also borne out by other findings, for example Langewiesche's point that the growth of a powerful social democratic movement in Hamburg before 1914 contributed to the effective SPD and left-liberal cooperation in the Weimar Republic.

This suggests that bourgeois self-confidence might be increased by the lack of working class organisation. There was also clearly a good deal of bourgeois superiority vis-à-vis rural society. In part one sees that expressed in terms of the hostility to Catholicism, concentrated as it was into more rural and economically less developed parts of Germany. It does appear that in Germany Catholicism was, unlike in France, less a matter for divisions *within* bourgeois ranks, but more one negative element helping unify a bourgeois sense of identity.³⁰

The complexity of this bourgeois identity in relation to rural society is brought out well by Jacobeit.³¹ Jacobeit points out how capitalist German agriculture had become by the second half of the 19th century and how implicated in this were many peasants. They were, in effect, part of a rural bourgeoisie, and in many of their tastes, their ways of presenting an image of themselves, for example, in photographs, they were thoroughly bourgeois. Yet this process coincided with the creation of an image of rural society as tradition, of the peasant as, in Wilhelm Riehl's phrase, one of the forces of preservation (*Mächte des Beharrens*)

28 But see now *Dick Geary*, The industrial bourgeoisie and labour relations in Germany 1871–1933, in: *Blackbourn/Evans*, The German Bourgeoisie, pp. 140–161.

29 *Christiane Eisenberg*, Arbeiter, Bürger und der »bürgerliche Verein« 1820–1870. Deutschland und England im Vergleich, in: *Kocka* 2.

30 *Gabriel Motzkin*, Säkularisierung, Bürgertum und Intellektuelle in Frankreich und Deutschland während des 19. Jahrhunderts, in: *Kocka* 3.

31 *Wolfgang Jacobeit*, Dorf und dörfliche Bevölkerung im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert, in: *Kocka* 2.

against the various forces for movement (*Mächte der Bewegung*). Jacobite very persuasively argues that this image was a bourgeois construction with a serious underlying political purpose, namely the defence against radical demands for the extension of bourgeois values downwards into the ranks of the unpropertied.

Again, the main thrust of this argument appears to be that such shifts in bourgeois values, from innovation to tradition, from emancipation to defensiveness, are to be understood in terms of rational self-interest rather than in terms of the power of pre-modern elites and values to tame the bourgeoisie. The same points are made finally in relation to the aristocracy. The very rich, especially from the world of banking and commerce, intermarried with leading families of the nobility. This was a general European phenomenon and, as various studies show, the development of a plutocracy went further in Britain than in Germany.³² The acquisition of titles, access to court, country villas, the position of reserve officer in the army are all seen as indicators of feudalisation. However, Ute Frevert tackles this issue head-on by arguing that one of the most apparently aristocratic of practices, that of duelling, actually changed its character and function when appropriated by the bourgeoisie.³³ It is a pity that there are not equally critical treatments of such subjects as the reserve officer rank or the purchase or building of country villas.³⁴ At times one wonders if the argument has not been pressed a little too far, but certainly there seems to be little to be said for the older ideas of bourgeois incorporation into pre-modern aristocratic values.

Two other specific themes explore both the attractions and limitations of the bourgeois way of life in Germany. A section on German Jews makes it clear that for them assimilation into the bourgeoisie specifically, and not just acceptance into civil society at any social level, was of central concern.³⁵ In many respects this seems to be especially German, although there are only limited international comparisons in the studies. At the same time, a study of certain novels in late 19th Germany and France suggests that culturally Jews were always regarded to some degree as outsiders.³⁶ What I think is important, however, is that in many other countries Jewish groups expected also to remain an important part of rural society or of the urban working class, so that this overwhelming focus on bourgeois assimilation in Germany could create very special problems.

32 Werner Mosse, *Adel und Bürgertum im Europa des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Eine vergleichende Betrachtung, in: *Kocka 2*. See also the various essays in part I of *Kocka 1* entitled »Europäische Vielfalt«. Especially useful for comparison with other west European countries are: *Eric Hobsbawm*, *Die englische middle-class 1780–1920*; *Hartmut Kaelble*, *Französisches und deutsches Bürgertum 1870–1914*; *Marco Meriggi*, *Italienisches und deutsches Bürgertum im Vergleich*; *Ernst Bruckmüller and Hannes Stekl*, *Zur Geschichte des Bürgertums in Österreich*; *Albert Tanner*, *Bürgertum und Bürgerlichkeit in der Schweiz*. Die »Mittelklassen« an der Macht; *Bo Strath*, *Die bürgerliche Gesellschaft Schwedens im 19. Jahrhundert*. Soziale Struktur und politischer Wandel.

33 Ute Frevert, *Bürgerlichkeit und Ehre*. Zur Geschichte des Duells in England und Deutschland, in: *Kocka 3*. An English version focusing on Germany alone has been published in: *Blackbourn/Evans*, *The German Bourgeoisie under the title Bourgeois honour: middle-class duellists in Germany from the late 18th to the early 20th century*, pp. 255–292.

34 But see the interesting essay by *Dolores L. Augustine*, *Arriving in the upper class: the wealthy business elite of Wilhelmine Germany*, in: *Blackbourn/Evans*, *The German Bourgeoisie*, pp. 46–86, which argues that there is a thoroughly modern and bourgeois character to much of this activity.

35 *Kocka 2*, Part V »Die jüdische Minderheit in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft« contains four essays. *Shulamit Volkov*, *Die Verbürgerlichung der Juden in Deutschland*. Eigenart und Paradigma; *Moshe Zimmermann*, *Eintritt in die Bürgerlichkeit*. Vom Selbstvergleich deutscher mit außereuropäischen Juden im Vormärz; *Steffi Jersch-Wenzel*, *Minderheiten in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*. Juden in Amsterdam, Frankfurt und Posen; *Egon Schwarz*, *Das Bild der Juden in deutschen und französischen Romanen des ausgehenden 19. Jahrhunderts*.

36 Schwarz, ebd.

The other theme is that of women and it is explored in a fresh and illuminating way in two studies which focus upon law.³⁷ Ursula Vogel in particular argues persuasively that the exclusion of women from the claims to legal equality that were embodied in bourgeois law³⁸ is different in kind from every other exclusion. First, it was permanent. A worker subject to an unequal legal status in contracts or someone below the level of income or property to qualify for the vote could always hope to become an employer or rich enough to earn the franchise. A woman excluded from the vote had no such chance. Second, it was contradictory. To deprive married women of legal rights was justified in terms of a certain view of marriage and the family. However, that case could not be extended to spinsters or widows. Indeed, the law often had to recognise such women (as well as married women when the property of their side of the family was at stake or when their husbands were absent or incapable for some other reasons of entering into legal relationships) as capable legal agents. This undermined any consistent resort to any universal argument of biological difference or lack of physical strength to justify the exclusion of women from legal equality, and in any case such an argument contradicted a central liberal tenet that the law should ignore such differences.

Vogel concludes that whereas bourgeois values in respect of other unequally treated groups (slaves, religious minorities, manual workers, the poor) was capable of reform, that it was a matter of time before these issues were addressed, in the case of women this inequality was actually a central, even essential, component of bourgeois values. The fact that in the later part of the 19th century women began to acquire more legal rights (divorce, property) in Britain compared to Germany might, on that basis, be taken to indicate how more thoroughly bourgeois a society was Germany. Clearly these are controversial claims but they are presented persuasively. I would also draw attention to another important point Vogel makes: that in the British legal structure reforms could take the form of piecemeal additions of hitherto excluded groups to the ranks of the 'privileged', but in Germany, with general legal codes rather than specific statutes, and an orientation to experts rather than parliamentarians, such questions had to be tackled in a more systematic fashion.

That leaves the issues of bourgeois culture and politics. The former is perhaps the most difficult but also the most important component of bourgeois identity. We have seen that there is little bourgeois unity to be seen at economic and social levels. The general agreement on bourgeois politics in Germany is that it is highly fragmented, as Langewiesche's study of liberalism makes clear. The problem is that the term 'bourgeois culture' dissolves as one moves closer to it, especially as there are so many changes over the 19th century.

Four areas seem to be especially suggestive. One is to take the idea of particular notions of social virtue and style as bourgeois. Respectability, punctuality, hard work, independence, cleanliness are such virtues. They are mentioned in an impressionistic way in some of the essays Kocka has edited, and there are very suggestive ideas about exploring such subjects as the impact of school or railway timetables upon the bourgeoisie. But these do not go much further.³⁹

37 Ursula Vogel, *Patriarchale Herrschaft, bürgerliches Recht, bürgerliche Utopie. Eigentumsrechte der Frauen in Deutschland und England*; Ute Gerhard, *Die Rechtsstellung der Frau in der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft des 19. Jahrhunderts. Frankreich und Deutschland im Vergleich*, both in: Kocka I.

38 On that see Grimm, *ebd.*, as well as his contribution *Bürgerlichkeit im Recht*, in: Kocka, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, pp. 149–188.

39 See the illuminating study by Wolfgang Schivelbusch, *The railway journey: the industrialisation of time and space in the 19th century*, Leamington Spa 1986. A German version was published under the title: *Geschichte der Eisenbahnreise*, München 1977. School timetables, both in their implications for punctuality and also for the way the world of knowledge is organised, could be a very fruitful subject of study.

A second approach is to look at the family. Within the ranks of the bourgeois proper it might be suggested that there is a particular model of the family which prevails – with a husband going to a separate place of work, a non-working wife, and some domestic servants.⁴⁰ One might compare this to aristocratic conceptions of marriage and family as well as with that of the pre-modern Bürger.⁴¹ In turn lower class families would contrast markedly in terms of structure even if amongst some groups (skilled workers, clerks) there was a serious attempt to emulate the ›bourgeois‹ forms. However, this subject is largely omitted in the books under review, though it has been considered in many other studies.

A third approach is to consider the way in which members of the bourgeoisie are brought up to accept particular values. There is only one essay in this collection which deals explicitly with this, a study of ideals of education in grammar schools (Gymnasien).⁴² Kraul brings out well the rhetoric of idealism in these schools, for example in the annual reports and speeches of headmasters. She also argues that, as the schools increasingly stress obedience and loyalty to the monarchy, and also as the curricula becomes increasingly empirical, so this idealism acquires a hollow and more obviously ›ideological‹ character. Similar trends seem to be taking place in the secondary schools on the next rung down the school hierarchy, the Realschulen. Rather more impressionistic is a comparison of German views about English schools and vice versa⁴³ which stresses that the real purpose of schooling was seen in terms of discipline and control and that in the more state-dominated German system this was especially apparent.

More generally Kaschuba explores bourgeois autobiographies.⁴⁴ In a very suggestive study he focuses a good deal of attention upon the idea that the formal universalism of bourgeois culture (anyone can join in; it is relevant to everyone) is linked to informal strategies of exclusion (joining in requires a certain amount of cultural capital as well as wealth). Schooling, travel, the cult of sensibility and friendship often linked to particular cultural activities, the informally exclusive character of many Vereine – all point to a culture distinguished in this way. This seems to be a very fruitful approach and points to a distinctive but also widespread pattern in mid-19th century Germany.⁴⁵

A fourth approach is to look at ›culture‹ in the narrower sense of the use of leisure time and the kinds of cultural goods – books, theatre, music, etc. Unfortunately, apart from Eisenberg's study with its focus on the relationship to workers, there is not very much on voluntary associations, a key institution in such leisure activity. However, this has been a subject of study elsewhere.⁴⁶ The main focus in the books under review is upon literature.⁴⁷

40 See Blackburn's introduction to *Blackbourn/Evans*, *The German Bourgeoisie*, pp. 1–45.

41 *Gall*, *Bürgertum in Deutschland* portrays, for example, the growing separation of work and home and the exclusion of wives from the world of work as a network of Mannheim burger families became part of a highly successful bourgeoisie.

42 *Margaret Kraul*, *Bildung und Bürgerlichkeit*, in: *Kocka* 3.

43 *Katharina Rutschky*, *Bilder, Zahlen und Gesetze. Triebkräfte der Verschulung in Reiseberichten englischer und deutscher Experten*, in: *Kocka* 3.

44 *Wolfgang Kaschuba*, *Deutsche Bürgerlichkeit nach 1800. Kultur als symbolische Praxis*, in: *Kocka* 3.

45 *Kraul*, *ebd.*, cites similar points in recollections of those who had been grammar school pupils. The idea is used to good effect in relation to clothes and fashion in *Hermann Bausinger*, *Bürgerlichkeit und Kultur* in: *Kocka*, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, pp. 121–142. It is used also by *James J. Sheehan*, *Wie bürgerlich war der deutsche Liberalismus?*, in: *Langewiesche* (ed.), *One sees such patterns in towns as different as Mannheim* (see *Gall*, *Bürgertum in Deutschland*) and *Hamburg* (see *Percy E. Schramm*, *Neun Generationen*, 2 Bde., Göttingen 1964, Bd. 2).

46 See, for example, *Thomas Nipperdey*, *Verein als soziale Struktur in Deutschland im späten 18. und frühen 19. Jahrhundert*, in: *Nipperdey*, *Gesellschaft, Kultur, Theorie*, Göttingen 1976, pp. 174–205; *Otto Dann* (ed.), *Vereinswesen und bürgerliche Gesellschaft in Deutschland*, München 1984.

Some of the points are comparative, such as the popularity of the historical romance novel in the 1815–1830 through Europe which Lützelers persuasively links to a bourgeois concern to find a middle way between revolution and reaction.⁴⁸ Whereas this points to a common European feature, Vosskamp's essay on the *Bildungsroman* does suggest that the more abstract and idealised form of such novels (unlike the more practical concern of a book such as *David Copperfield* with how someone learns to adjust to their world) was distinctively German.⁴⁹ Naturally this can be linked back to other essays about idealism in the schools and the cult of sensibility.

I found especially interesting Hohendahl's study of literary history.⁵⁰ As early as the 1830s this had been established as an important intellectual form and sought to identify a particular national tradition. What is more, in the work of Gervinus, this had a political function – arguing that Germany had first established her identity in religion (Luther and the Reformation), then in literature (above all in the work of Goethe and Schiller), and the next step would be political. Hohendahl goes on to plot further developments in this approach as literary history shifted increasingly from the literature to the supposed bases of that literature – in language, folklore and finally and depressingly in biology.

The way literature was put to political use, and the increasingly right-wing character of such use is also brought out in Georg Iggers' comparison of the development of history in 19th century Germany and France.⁵¹ Iggers sketches out the story he has told before at length of the rise to dominance of university history in Germany, in which learning, narrative, a focus on high politics and institutions, and a sense of the uniqueness of national histories all combined.⁵² More interesting is the way in which competing approaches to history were marginalised. In France where a university system had yet to become dominant, a socialist like Jean Jaurès could establish a major reputation as a historian, and someone like Emile Durkheim could argue for ›structural‹ approaches. When Karl Lamprecht suggested such an approach, in terms of the cultural basis of history, he was quickly sidelined. Interestingly, the radical potential of such ›culturalist‹ or ›structuralist‹ approaches might take right as well as left wing forms.⁵³ In a way these studies tell us more about German bourgeois politics than do the essays in Kocka 3 on politics which are all comparative and I will consider them below.

My one reservation about the volumes edited by Kocka is that sometimes the essays are too general. A focus on some specific event could often have brought out central themes more effectively. For example, the Schiller centenary celebrations of 1859 could be used to bring together arguments put forward by Kraul, Kaschuba, and Hohendahl. Grammar

47 There is also a very interesting essay by Monika Steinhauser, »Sprechende Architektur«. Das französische und deutsche Theater als Institution und monument public (1760–1840), in: Kocka 3, but this raises a further complex of themes which there is not space to explore.

48 Paul-Michael Lützelers, Bürgerkriegs-Literatur. Der historische Roman im Europa der Restaurationszeit (1815–1830), in: Kocka 3.

49 Wilhelm Vosskamp, Der Bildungsroman in Deutschland und die Frühgeschichte seiner Rezeption in England, in: Kocka 3.

50 Peter Uwe Hohendahl, Bürgerliche Literaturgeschichte und nationale Identität. Bilder vom deutschen Sonderweg, in: Kocka 3.

51 Georg G. Iggers, Geschichtswissenschaft in Deutschland und Frankreich 1830 bis 1918 und die Rolle der Sozialgeschichte. Ein Vergleich zwischen zwei Traditionen bürgerlicher Geschichtsschreibung, in: Kocka 3.

52 Georg G. Iggers, Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft. Eine Kritik der traditionellen Geschichtsschreibung von Herder bis zur Gegenwart, München 1971.

53 In Weimar, for example, the ›völkisch‹ approach to German history of someone like von Srbik could be used as an alternative to the conventional view which took the 1871 state as defining the subject of German history. See Bernd Faulenbach, Ideologie des deutschen Weges, München 1980.

school headmasters, teachers and pupils played a leading role in the celebrations. They put forward a particular national image in which the idealist figure of Schiller was central but which did not easily connect to any particular political programme. There was very clearly a ›bourgeois‹ appropriation of Schiller (commoner by birth) which was anti-aristocratic, scornful of complete immersion in the ›workaday world‹, dependent upon the accumulation of a good deal of cultural capital. Other themes such as the autonomy of art and the use of art to interpret ›life‹ could also be brought out.⁵⁴ This would also enable greater integration of the various disciplines, which often remain fairly separate in these volumes, for example by considering the iconography of the celebrations in relation to the social groups involved, the rhetoric of the speeches, and the themes of the publications the celebrations produced.

The German liberalism and bourgeoisie in perspective

A number of very important comparative points come out of the essays edited by Kocka and by Langewiesche. Above all, I think they point to a particularly close connection between bourgeoisie and liberalism in Germany. Clearly a fairly autonomous and differentiated middle class within a developing civil society is fundamental to the development of any coherent liberalism. Studies which refer to many parts of eastern Europe, such as Congress Poland and Russia, make it quite clear that liberalism had little chance of achieving much without such a social underpinning.⁵⁵ In Poland opposition came to focus on a more radical intelligentsia, as a state-dependent, privileged and often foreign bourgeoisie was not the vehicle for the formation of liberal ideals. In Russia there were small moves towards gentry liberalism based on decentralisation and bureaucratic liberalism based on modernising objectives. But without a strong bourgeoisie to pick up the ball and run with it, these ideas conflicted with one another and ran into insuperable problems when taken too far.⁵⁶ Similar problems to those that confronted the minority of liberal nobles and officials in Germany in the early 19th century presented themselves here in an even more difficult way.

The one exception seems to be that of Hungary where key elements of the nobility did espouse liberalism, and seemed to be the functional equivalent of the bourgeoisie in other countries.⁵⁷ The interest in land reform along liberal lines, the firm control of local government, the resistance to Habsburg control from the centre, and the need to consider how to assimilate dangerous peasant and non-Hungarian threats: these all, it is argued, pushed this

54 These ideas are developed by *Thomas Nipperdey*, *Wie das Bürgertum die Moderne fand*, Berlin 1988. See also his comments on Bausinger, in: *Kocka*, *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, pp. 143–148.

55 On east European bourgeoisies see *Gyorgi Ranki*, *Die Entwicklung des ungarischen Bürgertums vom späten 18. zum frühen 20. Jahrhundert*; *Waclaw Długoborski*, *Das polnische Bürgertum vor 1918 in vergleichender Perspektive*, both in: *Kocka 1. Elzbieta Kaczynska*, *Bürgertum und städtische Eliten. Kongreßpolen, Rußland und Deutschland im Vergleich*, in: *Kocka 3. Harmut Zwahr*, *Konstitution der Bourgeoisie im Verhältnis zur Arbeiterklasse. Ein deutsch-polnischer Vergleich*, in: *Kocka 2. On liberalism in eastern Europe see the contributions to part IV of Langewiesche (ed.), »Südost- und Osteuropa: Ungarn und Rußland«.*

56 *Dietrich Beyrau*, *Liberaler Adel und Reformbürokratie im Rußland Alexanders II.*, brings out the first point. *Heinz-Dietrich Löwe*, *Bürgertum, liberale Bewegung und gouvernementaler Liberalismus im Zarenreich um die Wende vom 19. zum 20. Jahrhundert*, brings out the last point especially well in relation to Stolypin's peasant programme.

57 *Andras Gergely*, *Der ungarische Adel und der Liberalismus im Vormärz*; *Istvan Diöszegi*, *Die Liberalen am Steuer. Der Ausbau des bürgerlichen Staatssystems in Ungarn im letzten Drittel des 19. Jahrhunderts*, in: *Langewiesche (ed.)*.

nobility, especially those in its middling ranks, towards liberalism. Partly the puzzle is a product of semantics – these middle nobles would be gentry in Britain or commoners in many western European countries. However, I think there is a tendency, especially on the part of Diószegi, to paint an over-rosy picture. The nobility were already severely divided over resistance by late 1848, and the shift of ›liberal‹ opinion towards the Ausgleich of 1867 was clearly in an authoritarian direction.⁵⁸ The failure to take proper note of non-Hungarian interests increasingly hollowed out the claims of this politics to be liberal in any real sense of that word.

So German liberalism from this perspective is strong and clearly bourgeois. It is also popular in comparison with French liberalism which was, by 1878, undercut by more populist forms of republicanism and which took on an increasingly old-fashioned and archaic appearance. This is brought out particularly well by Allan Mitchell⁵⁹ who shows how French liberalism, with its stress on freedom from state interference, was unable to adapt as effectively as German liberalism to the social problems of industrial society and the progress science had made in the treatment of various diseases. A modernist, secular bourgeoisie seems to be at the heart of the German liberal view of such matters, stressing effective action by authoritarian and state methods over parliamentary methods and a libertarian ethos.⁶⁰

Italian liberalism was more clearly bourgeois at a national level (the nobility tended to focus on local affairs). However, the stronger role of a professional bourgeoisie compared to Germany, the weaker development of any national politics, and the lack of any rival to these bourgeois liberals at national and parliamentary level, meant that increasingly this small elite was concerned with internal struggles at the centre, and its politics was largely divorced from the localities. By comparison, in Germany liberalism remained coherent at levels where it had power, for example in city government, and ideologically more clearly identifiable at a national level.

The most comparisons have been made with Britain.⁶¹ Two key points need to be made. First, government in Britain lay in the hands of a national parliament and there was no other significant level of power, at provincial or local level. Political power required the use of parliamentary methods – including the maintenance of political alliances to ensure majorities. The relative unimportance of local government or of state bureaucracy meant that any other political style, be it the command of expert arguments within a bureaucratic agency or the informal command of a local network of families with influence, was of subordinate importance to that associated with electoral influence and command of parliament through oratory and political deals. Second, liberalism was identified not as an ideology, or the values of a social milieu, but as the issues taken up by a major party. These issues cut across social groups. British liberals could never regard party as ›faction‹; nor could they

58 See I. Deak, *The Lawful Revolutions: Louis Kossuth and the Hungarians 1848–1849*, New York 1979; G. Szabad, *Hungarian Political Trends between the Revolution and the Compromise 1848–1867*, Budapest 1977.

59 Allan Mitchell, *Bürgerlicher Liberalismus und Volksgesundheit im deutsch-französischen Vergleich 1870–1914*, in: Kocka 3.

60 However, for an ›archaic‹ liberal defence against such state-imposed medical reforms within Germany, see Richard Evans, *Death in Hamburg: Society and Politics in the Cholera Years, 1830–1910*, Oxford 1987.

61 Apart from essays already cited from the books under review, see also Wolfgang Mommsen, *Einführung. Deutscher und britischer Liberalismus: Versuch einer Bilanz*; Geoff Eley, *Liberalismus 1860–1914: Deutschland und Großbritannien im Vergleich*, in: Langewiesche (ed.). An English version of the latter piece appears under the title *Liberalism, Europe and the bourgeoisie, 1860–1914*, in: Blackbourn/Evans, *The German Bourgeoisie*, pp. 293–317.

regard it as the vehicle of a particular idea or interest. Ideas did play an important part in holding liberalism together – an idea such as disestablishment of the Irish Church in 1868/69 was crucial to party unity for a brief period. But the ›idea‹ was also a policy, and the clutch of policies altered, often quite quickly.

What this meant was that liberalism was socially more diverse than in Germany. Muhs brings out the importance of aristocratic liberalism in Britain. This is relatively unimportant in Germany.⁶² A number of studies have indicated how a strong and fairly independently organised radical and labour movement was a crucial support for the coalition of interests that was the Liberal Party from the 1860s.⁶³ Obviously many middle class elements also supported the party.

It is not possible to consider in detail why this is so, or to compare the situation to Germany.⁶⁴ But three points of central importance emerge, some of which indicate German distinctiveness generally and not just in relation to Britain.

First, and in this respect it is Britain that is unique, is the overwhelming importance of the centre in politics. In Germany liberalism could entrench itself in local and state politics as well as at the centre. However, the character of that entrenchment was different, which helped fragment the character of liberal politics. What was perhaps distinctively German was the relatively equal importance of each level for liberals. In Italy the national level was far more important; local politics had a completely separate character. In France there simply did not exist, since the Napoleonic centralisation, independent institutional fora for a liberal politics at departmental level.

Second, parliament was not sovereign in Germany. Furthermore, a point Langewiesche makes in a stimulating and wideranging comparative essay,⁶⁵ Germany was unique in that democratisation, in the sense of universal manhood suffrage, preceded parliamentarisation. Liberals had to cope with a mass electorate, but winning over a majority of that electorate would not secure them power. That forced them increasingly into non-parliamentary institutions and to dependence on arguments about the national interest over factious party.

Third, that process tended to make liberalism distinctively bourgeois in Germany. Unable to hold out the prospect of a share in power at parliamentary level, but unwilling to take up explicitly the interests of particular groups, liberalism lost non-bourgeois support to political forces that would take up those interests. That tended to mean that at home, at national parliamentary level, liberalism looked increasingly defensive and negative – stressing the vices of Catholics, socialists, particularists such as the Guelphs, and ethnic minorities. It also reduced its scope for making political alliances even when differences with government policies suggested this as a useful tactic.

Here the failure of parliamentary advance is absolutely crucial. There is a lot of evidence to suggest that the general problems of liberals and bourgeois groups in late 19th century Europe were the same – how to cope with increasing international rivalry and the burden of arms expenditure, with an organised labour movement, with the social problems of urban-industrial life, with the rise of economic protectionism. A liberalism based on parliament in

62 Muhs, ebd.; Dipper, ebd.

63 Eisenberg, ebd. See also John Breuilly, *Liberalism or Social Democracy: a comparison of British and German labour politics, 1850–1875*, in: *European History Quarterly* 15, 1985, pp. 3–42. There is a German version of this in Jürgen Kocka (ed.), *Europäische Arbeiterbewegungen im 19. Jahrhundert*, Göttingen 1983. A considerably revised and updated version in: John Breuilly, *Labour and liberalism in 19th century Europe: essays in comparative history*, Manchester 1992.

64 See now my essay, *Liberalism in mid-19th century Britain and Germany*, in: Breuilly, *Labour and liberalism*.

65 Dieter Langewiesche, *Liberalismus und Bürgertum in Europa*, in: Kocka 3.

certain respects could appear less modernist in adapting to these problems than German liberalism. German liberals, oriented to state provision, authoritarian agencies such as city oligarchy and expert bureaucracy, could in certain respects move towards the ›right‹ solutions more quickly than a Gladstonian liberal.

Yet the inability to make political coalitions was crippling. In the end French and English liberals did make such coalitions, because the need to hold together to obtain power is the basis of political alliances between those with different values and interests. French liberals with quite archaic views actually accepted political alliances with socialists before 1914; Asquith was compelled to move closer to elements in the labour party and espousing social liberalism after 1905; even Giolitti was bringing some Italian liberals into a positive relationship to labour.

German liberalism did not fail in this respect because it was not bourgeois or »bürgerlich«. If anything it was *too* confined to middle class constituencies, *too* bourgeois in its concerns. Its problem was that, in an age dominated by mass politics where parliament was the most effective way of formulating and implementing political programmes, it was oriented to non-parliamentary forms of political action. The last issue one has to raise, however, was whether this orientation was part of a German middle class capitulation to the power and values of pre-modern elites and also whether this was distinctively German.

First, there are a range of studies which suggest such a ›feudalisation‹ or ›gentrification‹ process occurring in other countries. Wiener's study of England has had a major impact in Britain, and not just on academic circles.⁶⁶ Recently the head of the Institute of Directors, without directly referring to Wiener's study, presented the Wiener thesis in its entirety at a major public function. The thesis, basically, is that towards the end of the 19th century an independent, modernist, scientific entrepreneurial culture which had developed in the provinces began to crumble. Businessmen sent their sons to public schools and then on to Oxford and Cambridge, where Greek and Latin was taught in preference to French and German; and where the education of a gentleman took precedence over a thorough grounding in physics and chemistry. In the provinces businessmen moved out of towns into suburbs where they built villas or purchased country houses. Nostalgia for an older England, for preservation rather than innovation gained ground. Successful entrepreneurs married into the aristocracy and the business community shifted to the Conservative Party. One can see the attractions of this argument to adherents of Thatcherism which claims to return to those Victorian values of entrepreneurialism before they were undermined by an establishment made up, amongst other elements, of the monarchy, the BBC, the trade unions, and the professions.

One can add much more detail to this picture. Take, for example, certain features of Manchester history. In 1851 the foundation of Owens College, precursor of the university, was based upon the bequest of a successful businessman who had received no higher education. The bequest was managed by similar business friends of John Owens. They looked to Scotland and Germany for a model of higher education, disdaining the Anglican and gentry ethos of Oxbridge as irrelevant. One of the first professorships established was in chemistry. Yet by the late 1870s Owens was seeking university status and for this it had to convince the government of its sound credentials. It began to move towards the dominant (that is the Oxbridge) image of a university – placing more stress on the classics, on English and history, on halls of residence. It moved out from the city centre and had a new building erected in a neo-Gothic style (interestingly enough, this was sited on Oxford Road). For some 20 years it was part of a federal university (joined with Leeds and Liverpool), but in 1903 gained independence as the Victoria University of Manchester, named now after a

66 Martin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the decline of the industrial spirit 1850–1980*, Cambridge 1981, reprinted 1987.

monarch rather than a local businessman. Increasingly it moved away from its links to the local community and adjusted to the dominant culture.

Yet one can tell a quite different story as well. Part of the story questions the notion of an original ›modernist‹ bourgeoisie. Right at the start there was a stress on the classics and the professor of chemistry was paid less than the professors of Greek and Latin. But above all, one needs to question the idea of a ›dominant‹ culture and adaptation to it. At Manchester there persisted a concern to teach science and research methods, a concern expressed in a subject such as history just as much as in the natural sciences.⁶⁷ The study of law remained marginal for a long time. Theology had a quite different position in a place where nonconformity was a major concern and where it was religious controversy rather than indifference which ensured a secular foundation. When a faculty of theology was introduced (at the same time as faculties of commerce and technology) it did not signal imitation of Oxbridge. The point was to study religion properly rather than to prepare people for the Anglican ministry. The move to university status came at precisely the time there was agonised debate over a faltering in Britain's economic performance.⁶⁸ The stress was on professionalism as a key to successful competition, especially in the field of education, an ethos which challenged both pre-modern and simple entrepreneurial values.⁶⁹ The innovations introduced had a marked effect on the progress of curricular reform at Oxbridge and in London. Neo-Gothic architecture was seen by the architect Waterhouse as innovatory, and he spent as much time on making sure the laboratory facilities were right as on the facade of his building.

I have given this example at length because it is necessary to show how sterile is the obsession with outside appearances – the facades – and the use of simple contrasts between tradition and modernity, dominant and subordinate culture. One has to go below the surface to ask questions about *functions*. What does a certain style mean in terms of economic behaviour or the exercise of political power?

Numerous studies do not do this. Mosse's essay, for example, displays these drawbacks.⁷⁰ What is the significance of one or another rate of intermarriage between ›aristocrats‹ and ›bankers‹ if we do not know what it means to be an ›aristocrat‹ or a ›banker‹ in that particular society? Mosse implies that on the basis of some data on intermarriage and other social prestige indicators, he can identify the emergence of a dominant elite. But how is this possible? How do we know the ›dominant elite‹ actually dominates? Does their domination depend centrally upon the kind of social prestige they enjoy and the cultural images they project? Or is that the tip of the iceberg, and is more significance to be attributed to the way pressure groups work, public opinion is shaped, parliamentary influence is built up, labour relations are conducted, etc.? Neither Wiener nor Mosse ask such questions and so their contentions are unproved.

The thrust of the studies in the books Kocka has edited, as well as that edited by Lange-wiesche and his general study of liberalism is away from such arguments. Indeed, the great danger now is that the idea of a silent bourgeois revolution, of a dominant bourgeois culture will become another, equally sterile conventional wisdom replacing that of the feudalisation or gentrification thesis. Clearly there are various bourgeois cultures, just as there are various liberal political styles and capitalist modes of behaviour.

67 See Peter Slee, *Learning and a liberal education: the study of modern history in the universities of Oxford, Cambridge and Manchester 1800–1914*, Manchester 1986.

68 In addition to Peter Slee's book cited in the previous footnote, see also his short essay, *Concern for skills*, in: *Culture, Education and Society* 40/1, 1986, pp. 163–170.

69 See now Harold Perkin, *The Rise of Professional Society: England since 1880*, London 1989.

70 Mosse, in: Kocka 2.

Nevertheless, the trend is to be welcomed. One can see the sterility of much of the older argument in the work of Arno Mayer. Here the feudalisation or gentrification thesis is presented as a pan-European phenomenon. In a number of sweeping chapters Mayer relentlessly presses home this argument. At the economic level industry is less important than is often assumed, and agriculture, artisan manufacture, private banking and petty retailing much more important. Mayer insists on the continuing prestige and wealth of nobilities in his second chapter. In his third chapter he points to the continuing, even widening popularity of monarchy, the power of upper chambers in which the nobility dominate, and even noble influence in the composition of lower chambers. In chapter 4 he argues for the cultural domination of the aristocracy – e.g. in the cultivation of ›historicising‹ styles (Renaissance, neo-Gothic, Baroque, etc.). In chapter 5 he goes on to plot the intellectual turn against enlightenment, democratic and liberal thinking towards elitism and cultural pessimism. Finally, he sees the consequences of all this in the lurch rightwards in politics and the path to 1914 in which armies, dominated by noble officers, would slaughter one another in a war which made no sense to any sober, calculating bourgeois ethos. Mayer gloomily concludes: It would take the two World Wars and the Holocaust, or the Thirty Years' War of the 20th century, to finally dislodge and exorcise the feudal and aristocratic presumption from Europe's civil and political societies. (English edition, p. 329.)

It is difficult to work out how to begin criticising this book. Mayer does not make the task any easier by scandalously omitting *any* references, even to quotations! No doubt one can write more quickly if the tedious necessity of providing references is omitted, and it may be that publishers breathe a sigh of relief at not having to print all those tedious references, but it *is* a necessity and one cannot really take a work of academic history seriously if it is left aside.

Turning to the substance of the book, I find it unconvincing. The technique is one of building up layer after layer of highly selective assertion which never penetrates to the function or meaning of what is being considered. Economic historians have long recognised that industry, in the sense of large scale factory production, never did come to employ more than a minority of the labour force or account directly for more than a small part of total economic production. But to imply that the rest of the economy is therefore traditional is wrong. Agriculture was transformed into a commercial undertaking; small workshops and retail establishments also were now oriented to the competitive market. All were tied into complex webs of interdependency with one another. Just describing the relative sizes of sectors crudely defined as agriculture, industry, artisan production, etc. is meaningless until one looks at their changing functions relative to one another and within the economy generally.

Looking at aristocratic ›styles‹ at the level of ›facades‹ means little.⁷¹ To just read off ›deference‹ from the purchase of a country villa and a shift of residence from town to country is convenient but misleading. One can locate such behaviour even in the complete absence of a traditional aristocracy, for example in France and even more strikingly in the USA. Is one to argue that the American bourgeoisie were capitulating to an absent culture, to a non-existent class? The popularisation of monarchy can equally be interpreted as a bourgeois or populist appropriation from its original aristocratic setting. Monarchy is increasingly seen as national, as a ruler and his/her family abstracted from the context of court and position at the pinnacle of an aristocratic hierarchy.

71 The essays in: *Blackbourn/Evans, The German Bourgeoisie*, are especially good on this. For example, *Augustine*, shows how the villas of great industrialists, such as the Villa Hügel built outside Essen for the Krupp family, had a quite different set of functions from a ›traditional‹ aristocratic villa, functions which were rationally related to the economic concerns of the Krupps.

To take the use of historicising styles as somehow conservative or aristocratic or traditional is misleading. The stress on historicity, on authenticity actually began in Germany as part of the bourgeois and idealist reaction against the excessively abstract reason of some elements of enlightenment thought. It encouraged professionalisation in areas such as history, art history, linguistics, and folklore and if anything was diametrically opposed to any dilettante, eclectic appropriation of the past such as one found in court opera and royal art collections. It was the modernity of armies which made them so lethal in 1914–1918, as well as the efficiency with which industrial production and mass mobilisation could be set into motion. It was Ludendorff and Lloyd George (significantly one was an officer and the other a civilian politician), thoroughly modern men in their view of how to fight modern wars and in their rise from commoner status, who came to the fore over increasingly irrelevant aristocratic or gentry figures such as Asquith or the Kaiser. The most thoroughly aristocratic armies, those of Russia and the Habsburg Empire, were also the least effective.

One could go on and on in this vein. What is needed is differentiation: by country, by region, and by function. Mayer's account is selective, unreferenced and undifferentiated. It is not actually of much use to engage in equally blanket contradictions of his argument, simply providing a different reading to each of the examples he brings forward. Instead, what is needed is genuinely comparative history which is more focused, which penetrates below façades to ask how similar functions are carried out in different societies, and which then relates that back to the arguments about the position and character of the bourgeois in those societies.

Conclusion

The books edited by Kocka and Langewiesche provide us with many fine examples of such comparisons, and Langewiesche's study of liberalism is informed throughout by an awareness of this broader perspective. I would pick out a few points from the wealth of things one can learn from these publications.

First, I think they do show that it remains a legitimate and important question to ask why Germany, unlike the other countries of western Europe, had not become a parliamentary state by 1914. There seems to be no doubt that the rise of mass politics in a modernising economy with a powerful and autonomous and complex civil society but without a sovereign parliament is something special and this needs explaining and its consequences considering. In this sense the question of the ›critical historians‹ concerning the German Sonderweg remains as important as ever.

Second, however, some of the original answers to that question are clearly no longer tenable. There is no simple story of bourgeois or liberal failure in the face of pre-modern forces. Rather it is a story about differences within bourgeois society and differences within the original liberal project. Bourgeois society is as much about the professional provision of goods and services as it is about the entrepreneurial ethic, and that professional ethos can more easily take on a statist, anti-capitalist veneer. If the dominant institutions are not so much those which stress competition (the free market, parliament) but those which stress expertise and hierarchy, then this aspect will take precedence. Liberalism was as much about the *creation* of free individuals as it was about the institutional framework in which those individuals should exercise their liberty. And as liberals grew defensive – a general phenomenon – so the form of that defensiveness would also vary according to whether it was the cultivation of individualism or the liberty of individuals which had earlier been stressed, and whether that liberalism was oriented through hierarchical or egalitarian, closed or open institutions.⁷²

Future research surely will build upon this work, stressing different kinds of bourgeois culture, different kinds of capitalist economy, and different kinds of liberalism. I think that work will still support a Sonderweg notion, but it will be a Sonderweg understood in terms of a particular question (rather than some meaningless idea of uniqueness per se), namely about the lack of parliamentary sovereignty, and it will be a Sonderweg based upon well-informed and disciplined comparisons with other countries. These studies of liberalism and the bourgeoisie have sketched out some lines along which research might proceed.

72 This notion of a shift from offensive to defensive, and the different strategies involved according to whether the type of bourgeoisie involved was state officials, free professions or capitalists is elaborated in a fine example of sociological model-building by *Rainer Lepsius*, *Zur Soziologie des Bürgertums und der Bürgerlichkeit*, in: *Kocka, Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit*, pp. 79–100.